

**March 31, 2021**

**RE: Gardiner Green, Dresden Ave, public comment for 4/13/2021 meeting**

**Dear Planning Board and City Staff:**

My name is Lisa St. Hilaire, and I live at 63 River Ave. As you know, I am an abutter to this project and provided public comment on it in December. I am therefore recusing myself from discussion of Gardiner Green as a Planning Board member. I am also no longer representing the neighborhood in the comments that follow.

I have many concerns about this project, they are bulleted here and discussed below.

- What exactly is being reviewed/phased nature of the project
- The oddly shaped lot
- Character of the neighborhood (density, proposed glass/steel exteriors & heat gain)
- Financial capacity
- Open Space Design (number of units, affordable housing density bonus, height variance)
- Lighting plan
- Minor "Ministerial" comments

#### **What is being reviewed?**

We learned from Mark Eyerman at the December meeting that the Planning Board will be reviewing the entire project, not a first phase of the project. At the 2/15/2021 meeting, I heard that this project is before the Planning Board as a "concept", and that the board would be approving the project concept, not the project itself. This seems to contradict what was said in the December meeting. Has the Planning Board approved "concept" development in the past?

There are several places on the Site Plan Application where the applicant references work on successive buildings and increased green space compared to the plan submitted. I understand that there is a financial commitment to get architectural details, and that this may not be appropriate at this time, but it would extremely helpful if the applicant supplied the Planning Board and the public with an overall "planned conditions" rendering that is a little more informative than the concept rendering and concept site plan that was included with the 2/15/2021 application.

There are so many different maps for this project that are included in the 2/15/2021 submission and follow up documentation that it's hard to understand which is the subdivision map that will be the map of record. The latest Proposed Site Plan 3-26-2021 conflicts with the Landscape and Buffering Plan 3-29-2021 in terms of parking spaces, parking arrangement, asphalt, and green space. Additionally, there is no key on the Proposed Site Plan, so it's difficult to understand which building is which, and what the different colors on the buildings represent, and what is that blue rectangle on the southeast corner of the property?

#### **The oddly shaped "flag" lot**

I ask that the Planning Board reconsider this question and make a clear finding regarding the status of this oddly shaped lot. I would like to remind the board that Mr. Boghossian stated in the December meeting that this area was "added because it did not meet the minimum lot size for his plan".

Though the lot as shown in the 2/15/2021 application looks less “flaggy” than previous iterations, it is not just the trapezoidal shape that is under consideration. This additional lot includes a long, narrow, bent area that travels around the easterly edge of the hospital lot to the driveway to the Alzheimer’s Care Center.

I believe Mr. Boghossian was incorrect when he stated at the 2/15/2021 meeting that the area “is all one lot”. Currently the City tax maps show three different lots: Map 32 Lot 23 is the larger “hospital” lot, Lot 23A is an inholding for the Gardiner Family Medicine building, and lot 23B is a separate lot for the Alzheimer’s Care Center. Currently only Lots 23 and 23B are in the City’s Tax Commitment book, under two different entities: MaineGeneral Medical Center (Lot 23) and MaineGeneral Rehabilitation and Long Term (Lot 23B).

This has no bearing on the decisions of the Planning Board, but I found it interesting. It may be that the last time this area was a single lot was in the Kennebec Purchase from the Plymouth Company or around that time. By the time John McKechnie made his maps (late 1700s), the area that is currently Lot 23 was owned by at least two lot holders. And in 1923, Mabel Weeks (the holder of our lot, Lot 32) deeded a portion of her lot (that previously was described as going westerly to Dresden Ave) to the hospital, presumably for expansion.

### **Character of the neighborhood**

This is an awkward property in terms of character of the neighborhood. In its original configuration the Gardiner Hospital fit in with the character of the neighborhood and served the needs of the community-the neighborhood and the City. Though there was likely some push back from neighbors for the 1970s rebuild, the hospital continued to serve the needs of the community, though one could argue it no longer fit in with the character of the neighborhood.

I appreciate that Mr. Boghossian wishes to convert this space to residences, a use that clearly does fit the character of the neighborhood. However, putting essentially almost one and a half times the population of the neighborhood of Dresden Ave into a single lot would drastically change that character.

Additionally, though I enjoy the architecture of Louis Kahn, I question that this architecture would fit in with the character of an old Maine neighborhood. The proposed introduction to the large hospital building of large glass curtain walls with cantilevered precast decks with glass and stainless steel balusters is not in keeping with the character of the neighborhood. I also worry that these features, as well as recloaking building 5 in metal panels along with similar glass and steel design features as the main hospital building will result in heat gain in this neighborhood as these are relatively large buildings surrounded by asphalt.

### **Capacity of the Applicant**

I am amused that the byline for consulting group that supplied the financial reference (DelamaterFarris) is “*Complete solutions for the business in crisis*”. This made me want to know more about Mr. Boghossian’s previous projects. I am aware of the lovely Hathaway Shirt Factory project. I’m also aware that the Kennebec Arsenal project still sits vacant, though I recognize that there were issues with a previous partner in Hathaway Holdings.

Mr. Boghossian references Gehring Green in Bethel. From what I can find about this project, he purchased the property in 2009, but didn't get funding for the project until 2014. It appears that there has been no work done on this project, and the site still sits undeveloped.

One issue that has not been discussed at Planning Board meetings for this project is remediation of lead and asbestos. At a Public Meeting held in the parking lot of the site, the CEO of the hospital stated that remediation of lead and asbestos was a major reason that it was no longer fiscally responsible for the hospital to occupy the site. I am not sure where this fits under the LUO, or if it's an issue for the Code Enforcement Officer, but I feel like it should be addressed. Remediation of these hazards adds to the expense of the project. I feel it is important to understand specifically that the resulting units would be safe from lead and asbestos hazards, and that the neighborhood would be safe during any remediation of those hazards.

The Gardiner Green project is a large, expensive, multi-phased project with some potential health issues. My concern is that the site will sit vacant and unused. Nobody wants this site to sit vacant and to become a blight to the City. I ask that the Planning Board consider if 8.10 Performance Guarantee is appropriate here.

### **Open Space Issues**

It appears that Mr. Boghossian is benefitting from several items under the 10.23 Open Space Design ordinances. I strongly feel that he should be held to ALL of the requirements of this section if he is going to use it. Mr. Boghossian's attorney, Mr. Lahti, noted that this section only applies to the Rural District. I ask that the Planning Board make a clear finding on this issue.

#### *Number of units*

Per the ordinance (10.23.2.6), calculations should be based on 10,000 square feet vs 5,000, which would essentially halve the number of units allowed.

#### *Low income density bonus*

Section 10.23.5 is the only part of the LUO where I can find anything about low income density bonus. My major concern here is that by not seeking federal or state funding for low income housing, the onus on managing this will fall to the City.

Mr. Boghossian has repeatedly stated that these will be "high end" apartments. I'm having trouble figuring out how "high end" and "low income" mesh. The February 3, 2021 memo from Dovetail Consulting indicates that low income rents for a studio apartment would be \$1,056 and for a one-bedroom \$1,131 (section 2d). I know rents are expensive in this area, but these seem exorbitant. A local friend just rehabbed one of her apartments with new high end everything. It is a 650+ square foot one-bedroom apartment with river views and additional storage. On advice of a rental referral agency (and price shopping for the highest rent), she's getting \$950 with heat and electricity included. I have a hard time believing that the 248-271 square foot studio apartments proposed in earlier iterations (and presumably still on the table, though that detail is lacking from the current application) will be merchantable at over \$1,000/month for the low income units and higher for the market rate units.

### *Height variance*

I have no issues with the height waiver as requested. However, if the Open Space Design section is not utilized, I don't believe that the project can be granted a height variance (per Title 30-A MRS §4353 (4) regarding variances and undue hardship).

### *Other Open Space / Multi-Family Dwelling Requirements*

I ask that the Planning Board consider these issues, along with the other parts of 10.23.

- Common open space areas and facilities should be dedicated, shown on plans, and provisions made for maintenance (10.23.4 and subsections).
- Land considered unsuitable for development (that oddly shaped lot) should not be counted towards the required open space area (10.23.3.3).
- No parking in front yard (10.16.3.6)-is there parking planned between the hospital building/building 5 and Dresden Ave? The two newest maps show two different layouts for this area.
- 1,000 square feet/unit for yard/garden/playground (10.16.3.9)

### **Lighting Plan**

Mr. Boghossian states that he doesn't need a lighting plan as existing lighting will be reused with no changes. I ask that the Planning Board discuss this at the meeting and make a clear finding if it is agreed that a lighting plan is not needed. I have a hard time believing that the change of use to residence will not result in a change in lighting use. Residents will need safe lighting to get back and forth from parking to their living spaces in the buildings.

I very much value the relatively dark night sky we have here in Gardiner. I have found it much harder to see the Milky Way at night since the expanded parking at the Alzheimer's Care Center, and I am concerned that additional lighting from safer parking/building lighting at Gardiner Green will add to this nighttime light pollution. The decks planned for the apartments will result in additional outdoor lighting, and there will no doubt be light cast from the windows of the units at night. If the project is constructed with a lot of glass and steel as noted above, this will increase reflectance back up into our night skies, even with downcast/dark sky lighting.

### **Ministerial/Minor comments**

The Site Plan Application (page 7, item 6.5.2.12) notes amenities will be provided to make the setting attractive and comfortable for residents and visitors. These should be shown someplace.

Referencing 14.5.8.3.4.1.2.5.5, the wetlands map is missing the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) PFO (forested wetland) that is between the railroad and the river and the Riverine wetland, as named in the NWI maps. The riverine wetland is the area that is also mapped as a Freshwater Tidal Marsh, a rare habitat type in the state and an important natural feature in the City). Both wetland areas are within 1,000 feet of the easterly edge of Lot 23.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these points.

*Lisa St. Hilaire, 63 River Ave*

Public Comment regarding Gardiner Green

Site Plan Hearing March 9, 2021

I appreciate the opportunity to submit the following technical questions on behalf of a group of neighbors who live in the vicinity of the project. I have been advising this loosely organized association and have worked to translate what I understand of their concerns by considering options and protections that the Gardiner Land Use Ordinance provides. We would like to ask that as you weigh the merits of the project, and make Findings of Fact, that the Planning Board makes specific findings on the following provisions and circumstances, and that those findings be included in the minutes of the meeting and/or included as a separate document along with any approval or denial of the application. We would like to respectfully ask that you make findings specific to our interpretation of the ordinance language, below. We believe that as presented, the proposal does meet these provisions of the ordinance. If you come to a different interpretation, we respectfully ask that you describe how you interpret the language differently. In order to help organize your review of our comments, I have included these issues in the order in which they appear in the Land Use Ordinance.

#### **Section 8 – General Performance Standards**

***8.1.4 Flag lots and other odd-shaped lots in which narrow strips are joined to other parcels to meet minimum lot-size requirements are prohibited except for rear lots meeting the requirements of 8.3.***

My clients and I have read the City Solicitor's response to the question regarding flag lots. Though we have an opinion on the matter, it is clearly up to the Planning Board's judgment as to whether or not the lot being created constitutes an odd-shaped lot, as defined. To that end, rather than make an argument one way or another, we would simply like to request that as suggested by the solicitor, you make clear the specific development purpose or other bona fide "facts and circumstances" that lead you to believe that the inclusion of this portion of the lot is to accomplish something other than meeting dimensional standards of the ordinance.

#### **Section 10 – Special Activity Performance Standards**

The Developer is proposing to create 51 new dwellings in the HDR district – this section establishes that specific performance standards in the section apply -

***10.16.3 New Multi-Family Dwellings: All new multi-family dwellings shall meet the lot, dimensional, and density requirements for the zone in which they are located and the following criteria:***

There are several criteria, many of which the proposal seems to meet, but many of which the proposal does not seem to meet.

***10.16.3.4 Multi-family developments involving more than one detached structure shall conform to the requirements for clusters except in the Cobbossee Corridor District.***

Since this development includes more than one detached structure, it must adhere to the standards of for clusters and subsequent "Open Space Design" requirements. The ordinance seems to recognize how a significant project like this one might have an outsized impact on a neighborhood,

and so, to allow a more context-sensitive design, it allows for more specific standards – and more flexibility – some of which the developer seems to be benefitting from, and others that help protect the character of the neighborhood. I'll address the specific standards in the appropriate section, below.

**10.16.3.6** *Except in the Downtown Area as defined and the Cobbossee Corridor District, no accessory building or parking area shall be located in the front yard.*

The Site Plan drawings all seem to show some parking within the “front yard” located between the building and Dresden Av.

**10.16.3.9** *Except in the Downtown Area as defined and the Cobbossee Corridor District, a minimum open space area of 1,000 square feet per dwelling unit consisting of a yard, garden or playground area shall be provided.*

Notwithstanding other provisions listed in the “Open Space Design”, below, to meet this standard, the proposal should calculate and show on the plan that sufficient open space is provided as required.

**10.16.4 Multi-Family Conversion:** *Any existing structure to be converted or expanded into a multi-family dwelling shall meet all the dimensional, density and performance standards for new multi-family dwellings.*

In case there was any question as to whether these standards apply to a change of use or conversion of an existing building, the ordinance clarifies that conversions are required to follow the same standards as new construction.

### **10.23 Open Space Design**

As indicated previously, the specific performance standards in 10.16.3.4 require that this development follow the “Open Space Design” section which allows for subdivisions to cluster lots and buildings to allow for flexible dimensional standards while still maintaining a well balanced and livable site and neighborhood. The developer seems to be following – and benefitting from part of these standards, but not following all of them.

**10.23.2.4** *Any reduction in lot size, density, setbacks or standards which are part of meeting the design criteria of this Ordinance shall be approved by the Planning Board and shall not require a variance.*

The applicant seems to have asked to exceed the maximum height variance in order to add a 2<sup>nd</sup> floor to the former Gardiner Family medicine building (plan shows height of 42'11”, maximum height in district is 35”). This section seems to allow the Board to approve this under Open Space design without a variance. While we don't have an issue with this particular variance, if the developer is going to benefit from the Open Space Design, he cannot pick and choose which components to use; he must follow all of the Open Space Design requirements.

**10.23.2.6** *To determine the maximum number of dwelling units or structures permitted on a tract of land, the land suitable for development shall be divided by the minimum lot size required in the district in which it is located.*

To our knowledge, the total developable land figure has not been found, but even if the entire parcel was found to be developable, the maximum allowable units should be calculated per 10,000 s.f. – the minimum lot size in the district- rather than 5,000 s.f. per unit as shown in the Land Use Table in Section 7. It seems as though the authors of the Land Use Ordinance wished to place this additional burden upon multi-family developments that are comprised of more than one building, and/or those that propose making use of any of the other Open Space Design provisions.

#### **10.23.5 Density Bonus**

**10.23.5.1** *The number of dwelling units may be increased by 20% over the number of units allowed in the district in which the development is located provided that at least one of the following conditions is met:*

**10.23.5.1.1** *At least 10% of the dwelling units are affordable housing as defined by 30-A M.R.S.A. Section 4301.*

Though the application does not say the developer is using this provision specifically to achieve the 20% affordable housing bonus, we were not able to find a density bonus in any other section of the ordinance, though it certainly could exist. We would appreciate it if the developer and/or Planning Board could specify which portion of the ordinance they are applying the 20% density bonus from if not from this Open Space Design provision. Again, if this Open Space Design density bonus provision is used, we believe that the proposal should meet all of the Open Space Design provisions.

#### **10.23.4 Dedication and Maintenance of Common Open Spaces and Facilities**

**10.23.4.1** *Common open space shall be dedicated upon approval of the project. There shall be no further subdivision of this land, which shall be used only for noncommercial recreation, agriculture or conservation. However, easements for public utilities or utility structures may be permitted.*

**10.23.4.2** *The common open space shall be shown on the development plan with the notation on the face thereof to indicate:*

**10.23.4.2.1** *The common open space shall not be used for future building lots.*

Common open space is not shown on the plan, nor is any deed restriction or note on the subdivision or Site Plan.

In closing, it is important to remember that the 2014 Gardiner Comprehensive Plan, which lays out the vision and the foundation for the Gardiner Land Use Ordinance. In the Future Land Use Plan of the document, the vision provides two zoning districts for residential growth – Residential Growth Zone and Cobbossee Planned Development zone. The HDR area allows for some “limited growth”. Regarding the “limited growth” concept, the plan says:

*Limited Growth Areas* – These are areas that are either essentially fully developed and, therefore, have limited development potential or that have vacant or under-utilized land where the City desires a limited amount of growth and development over the next ten years. Limited Growth Areas include the established neighborhoods where the City’s objective is to maintain the current development pattern while allowing limited infill or redevelopment that is in character with the adjacent neighborhood. (Page 90 City of Gardiner Comprehensive Plan)

The Comp plan suggests that the designated “High Growth” areas should allow densities as high as 7,500-5,000 s.f. per unit. It make sense, then that in the “Limited Growth” areas, high impact developments, including multi-family projects containing more than one detached structure, should

revert back to the prevailing overall density of the zone, and the existing development pattern. The 10,000 s.f. per unit density is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and is a unit density that most neighbors feel is more appropriate for the area than what has been proposed. The calculation of 5,000 s.f. per unit plus a 20% bonus does not seem consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, nor does it seem to be congruent with the provisions of the Land Use Ordinance. My clients in the neighborhood would be much more amenable to the unit density that both the Land Use Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan seem to support, which might allow up to 28 units on the lot in question.



My name is Cheryl Clark. I live at 35 Dresden Ave, and until recently we owned an abutting property to the hospital lot, at 165 Dresden Ave. I don't have any experience with planning boards, or zoning, or any real understanding of how to read these ordinances. My interest is in building community. Six years ago, I moved to Gardiner from Pennsylvania. I chose Gardiner as a place to live because even from as far away as Pennsylvania, I had heard about the Heart and Soul initiative that Gardiner had begun. I began to investigate and envision a life here, based on community values and responsive governance.

That is what I would like to talk about here today. I bought my home, on this street because it was a walkable, safe community. It is a street made up of a mixture of single and multifamily homes and neighbors of different income brackets. There is a pride of ownership and a welcoming attitude. It is a community where you can meet and get to know your neighbors. Over the six years I have lived here, I have come to rely on those relationships. In snow storms and fires we have responded to each other's needs. This is an intrinsic part of the "Character" of this neighborhood...it is established, it is safe, it is welcoming. Back in the late 1800's when the hospital was originally moved to this end of Dresden Ave, it was built very much in the architectural style of the neighborhood, it was welcomed because it *served* the needs of the community. I imagine the planning board in 1971 faced some opposition to the enlarged and more modern annex that we are reconsidering today. But again, it *served* the needs of this community. Until it was deemed unusable. And so, what now?

I am part of a welcoming committee here in Gardiner, and *I truly would* welcome new neighbors here on my street, in what might otherwise become a blighted part of our neighborhood. I recognize the need to develop this property. We need starter homes and places for young families to begin their lives.

Three years ago, my husband and I bought that small house across the street from the hospital. We bought it because we recognized the value in owning and renting a small house, and because we hoped to lure my West coast daughter to Gardiner. We also recognized the rental trap many young families get caught in. Owning and renting out this home gave us the opportunity to help two families move from an affordable rental situation to home ownership here in our community. Last month my daughter and son in law did relocate from San Francisco with our two young grandchildren. They bought that house from us, and this is where my grandchildren will grow up.

I am telling you this because my concerns about the Gardiner Green Project could be seen as a "not in my backyard" issue. The underlying question I ask myself whenever I am considering my community is "How and Who does it *serve*?" I want our neighborhood to remain a safe place, where we know each other and can be responsive to each other. Almost doubling the number of residences on our street, in a fraction of the acreage, does not seem like community. It may be considered economic development, but when you are considering density, and square footage *are you* envisioning the individuals and families that will live there? Who will live in a 240 square foot "home"? Where is the "Green" to be found for the families to enjoy, when there will need to be 100 parking spaces? When is a flag lot not a loophole, and an affordable housing allowance not a strategy for profit? When an application lacks specificity, or When Mr. Boghossian asks for special considerations, when you consider all provisions and ordinances that could allow 100 + new "neighbors", I hope this Planning Board will consider how and who this project serves?

I understand that there are many competing interests for the redevelopment of this property. I would very much like to see a sustainable, prosperous, and appropriately scaled project at this location. I understand that any developer needs to expect a reasonable rate of return, but I believe that this return

cannot and should not be achieved at the expense of the character of our neighborhood. I'm grateful that the comprehensive plan and that the land use ordinance contains provisions that allow and require the board to consider the neighborhood. If the developer will not or cannot achieve this result willingly then we request that you follow the guidance contained in our laws to deny the project as presented.

Dresden Ave is NOT a "Growth Area", NOT according to the comprehensive plan, NOT according to the values of Heart and Soul, and we believe NOT according to the ordinance as written.

Respectfully submitted for public record,

Cheryl Clark

A Look at the Physical Character of Dresden Avenue  
Part 1 of 2  
9 March, 2021

To whom it may concern:

This brief document contains photographs and some simple housing density estimates that is intended to be of use in defining the "character of the neighborhood" as the City considers the appropriateness of the "Gardiner Green" project. Taken in order, the photographs depict a walking tour of Dresden Avenue starting at Cottage Street and ending at School Street. The photographs are titled according to their identifying City Tax Map Number.

The estimated housing density calculations were made using information taken from the City of Gardiner tax maps and an in-person verification that the number of houses shown on the maps is correct (a new house at Map 32, lot 25A was not on the map but was added into the calculations). Please contact me with any questions regarding the calculations or the photographs.

	Houses	Frontage (ft)	Average lot depth (ft)	Area (sq ft)
Map 31	5	650	225	146,250
Map 32 (east side)	8	858	170	145,826
Map 32 (west side)	8	1090	165	179,850
Map 34 (east side)	7	800	150	120,000
Map 34 (west side)	12	1090	170	185,300
Map 35	3	627	260	163,020
Total	43			940,246

Total occupied area (acres)                      21.6 (1 acre = 43,560 sq ft)  
Houses per acre    2

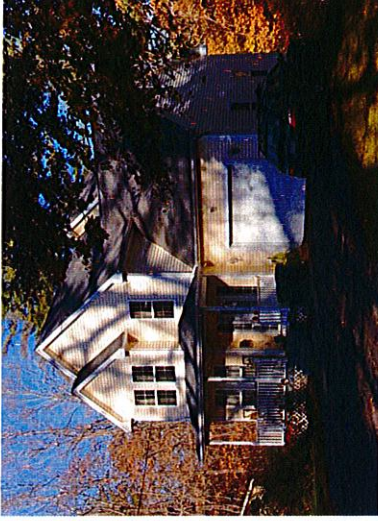
Respectfully submitted,

Michael Gent and Cheryl Clark, residing at  
35 Dresden Ave  
Gardiner, ME 04345

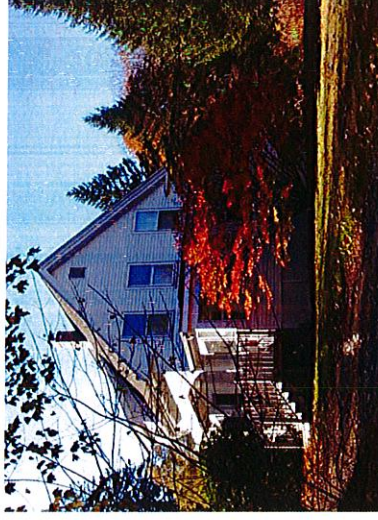
The tour starts at Cottage Street and continues toward the Common, ending at School Street



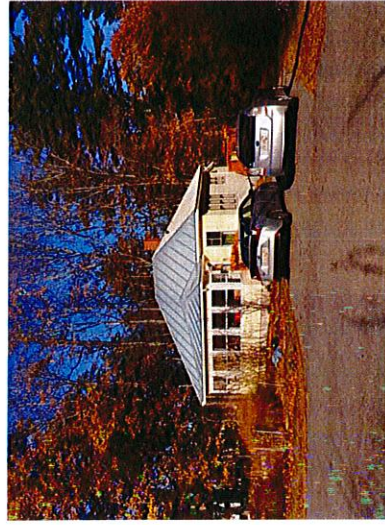
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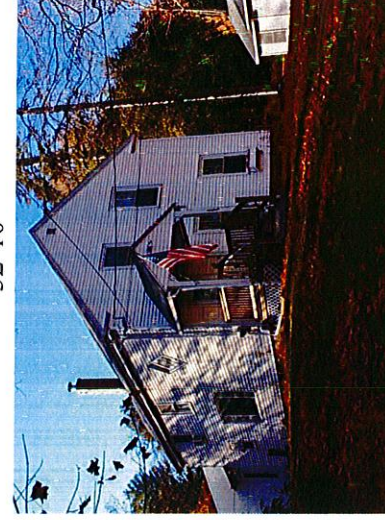
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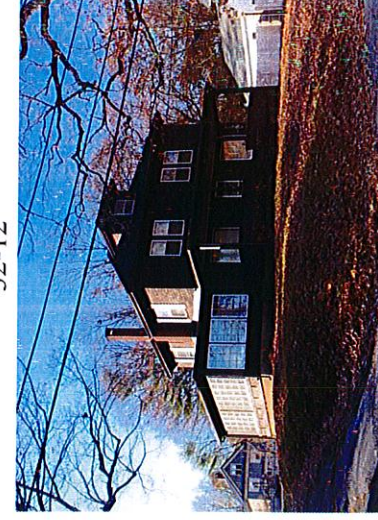
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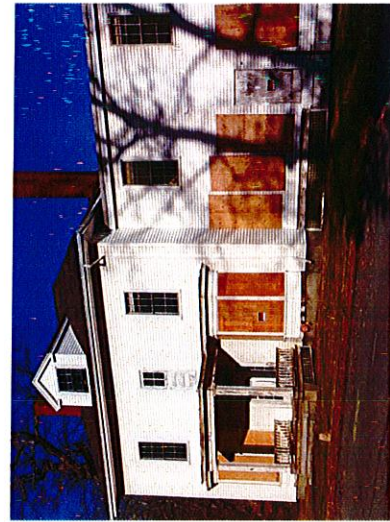
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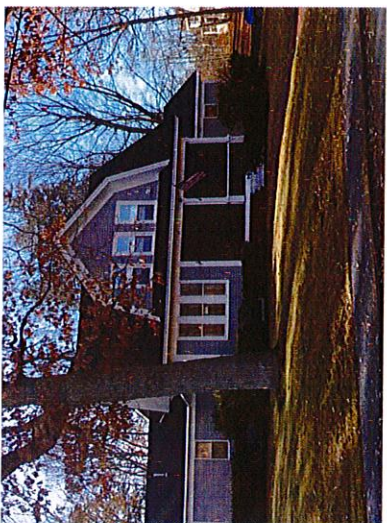
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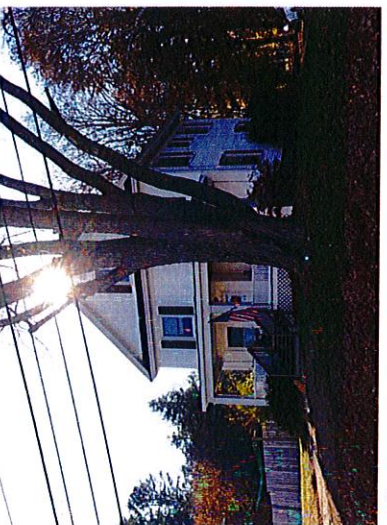
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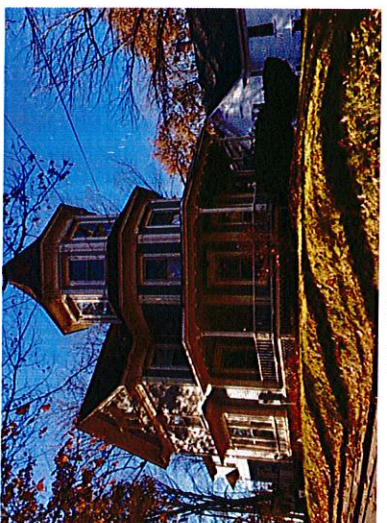
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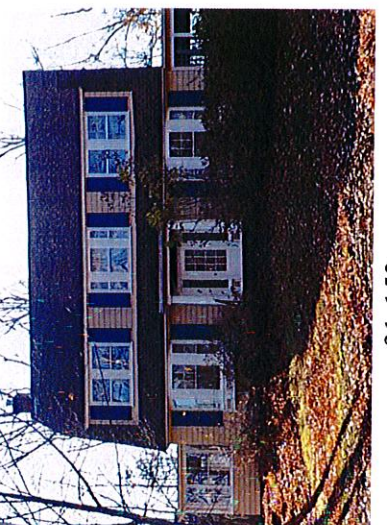
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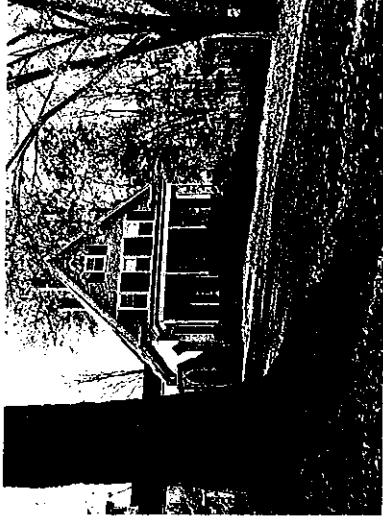
A Look at the Physical Character of Dresden Avenue

Part 2 of 2

G.M. Gent

9 March, 2021

A continuation of the photo tour of Dresden Avenue



31-156



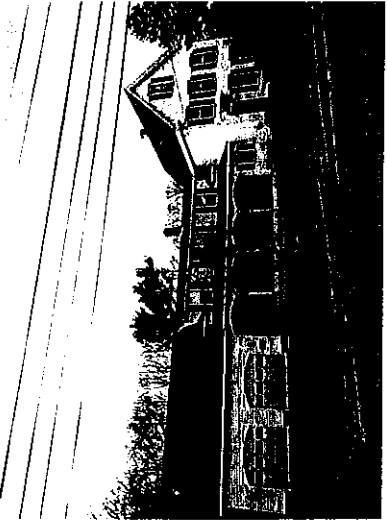
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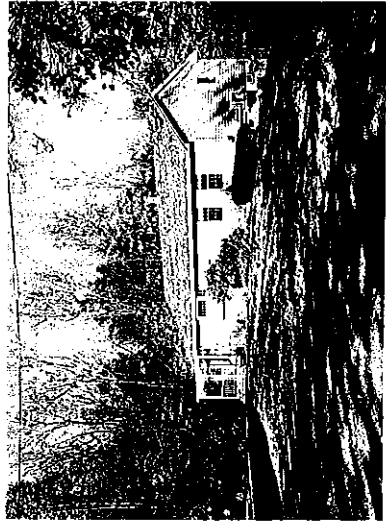
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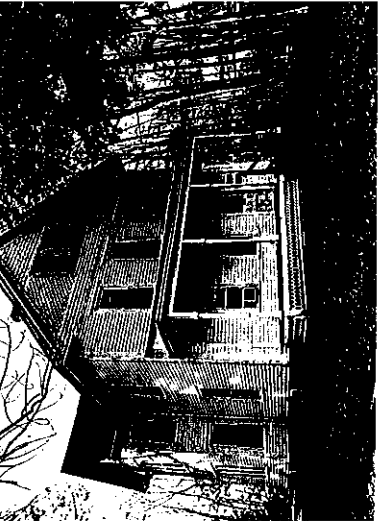
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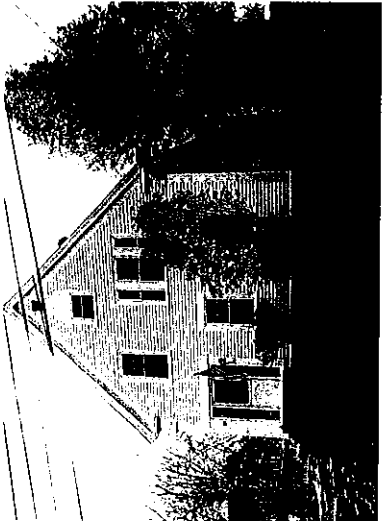
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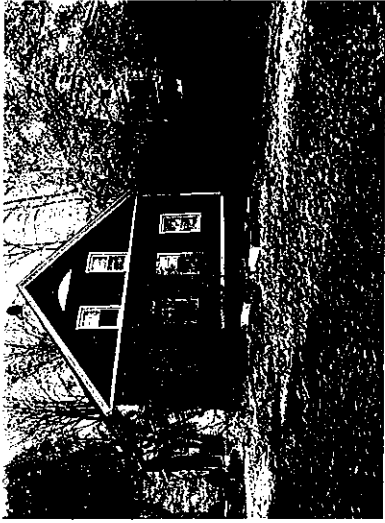
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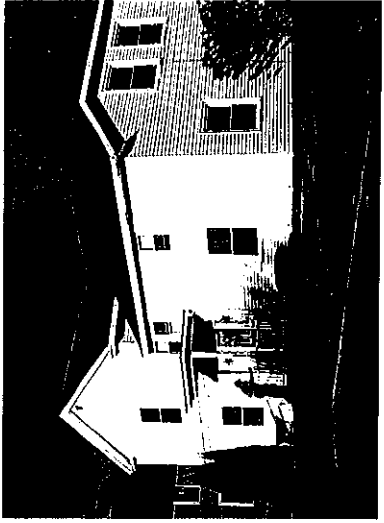
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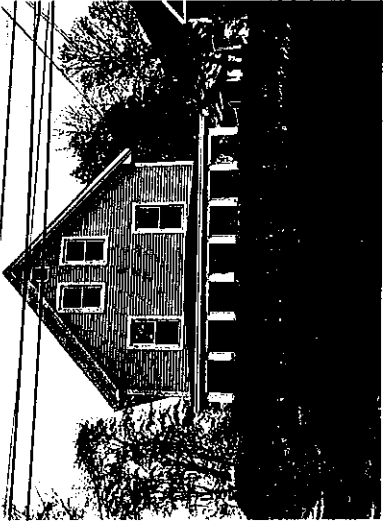
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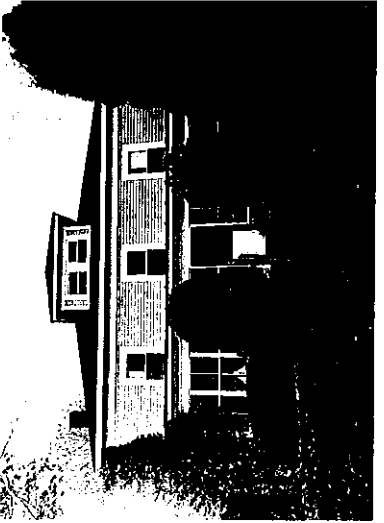
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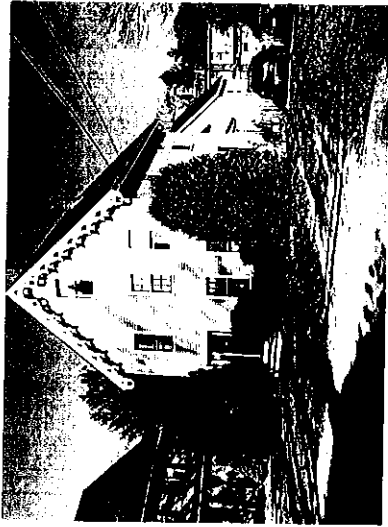


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34-239

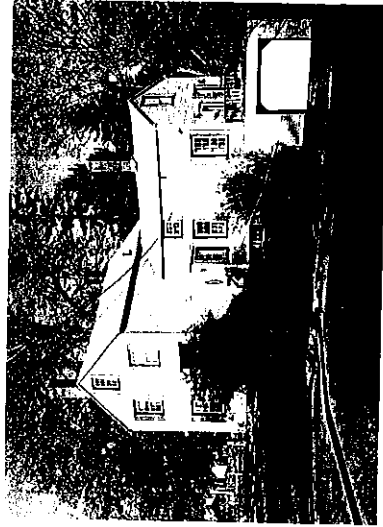




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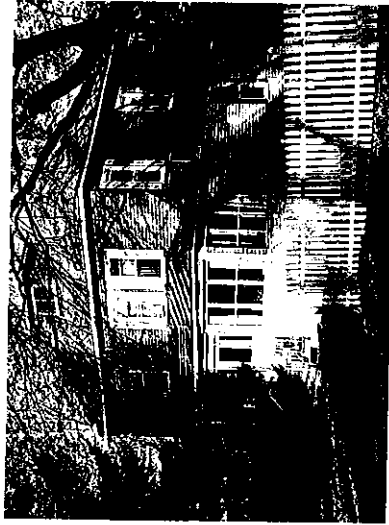
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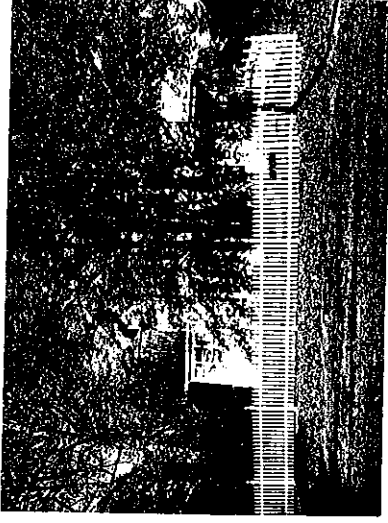
34-241



34-208



34-217



34-209



34-243

End of tour

April 5, 2021

To:

Mayor Patricia Hart

Gardiner Planning Board Members:

Debby Willis, Chair

Zachary Hanley

Lester Young

Pam Mitchel

Adam Lemire

Kristine Johnson

Lisa St. Hilaire

Shawn Dolley

### **Paul Boghossian and the Bethel, Maine, ‘Gehring Green’ Development**

This report was created to address the city’s “Application Guarantee Performance” (6.5.1.14 The applicant has the adequate financial and technical capacity to meet the provisions of this Ordinance) for the proposed development of Maine General’s hospital site on Dresden Avenue in Gardiner, Maine.

At the public meeting held in the Gardiner firehouse bay, Mr. Boghossian cited the Gehring Green development, and his personal connection to Bethel, as a reference for his proposed Gardiner Green project. Words and phrases that will sound familiar to anyone who attended that meeting have been underlined.

From the Bethel History Club, August 11, 2011:

In 2009 Mr. Boghossian expressed interest in developing the historic Gehring House, a mix of Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles in Bethel, Maine. It was built in 1896 and served as the private home and clinic for Dr. John George Gehring (1857-1932) and his wife, Marian True Gehring. Mr. Boghossian named the project, Gehring Green.

On Oct 21, 2009 the phased development was approved by the Bethel Planning Board.

When Mr. Boghossian presented the initial project in 2009, he owned 2½ acres at the site. But during the next three years, he added 7½ acres for a total of 10 acres.

The main house sits on the north end of a ten acre lot which will be developed into an array of condominium cottages and townhouses south of the existing house.

January 26, 2014, "**The Lewiston Sun Journal: Developer plans to start work on 2009 Bethel housing project** by Terry Karkos, Staff Writer.

BETHEL — It took five years, but Gehring Green developer Paul Boghossian said he finally has funding for his previously approved 15-unit subdivision project.

The initial project, which was approved by the Planning Board on Oct. 21, 2009, was to convert the interior of his 1896 Gehring House at 70 Broad St. into six luxury apartments.

Additionally, he wanted to build four duplex condominium units on the property, along with a carriage house with a first-floor garage and one condominium unit on the second floor. (Bethel Planning Board, Nov. 26, 2011.)

"We are gearing up to break ground this spring," Boghossian said Friday afternoon at his Kennebec Land Co. business in Waterville. "Finally, the financing is coming around and I've got two banks lined up."

He said the lengthy hiatus was caused by a bank that stopped lending him money. He said if he'd had enough money in his checkbook, he would have started the project himself.

"It's a great project. I love Bethel. My son was a student at Gould Academy and he introduced me to Bethel."

#### FIRST EXTENSION

Mr. Boghossian came before the Planning Board in November 2011, asking for an extension on his 2009 site plan review and subdivision approvals which expired on Oct. 21, 2011. Because Mr. Boghossian had yet to begin construction on the Gehring House Apartments and Condominiums project, the Planning Board approved a one-year extension from Oct. 27, 2011, to Oct. 26, 2012.

#### SECOND EXTENSION

When that expired, Mr. Boghossian returned Nov. 14, 2012, to amend his initial plan and to seek another extension. At this November meeting, Mr. Boghossian said he hadn't yet begun work on the project.

After further review, the Planning Board approved a one-year extension, from Nov. 15, 2012, to Nov. 14, 2013.

Boghossian "Gehring Green" Timeline Con.

According to Planning Board Assistant Sarah Tucker, the extension deadline of Nov. 14, 2013, came and went without word from Mr. Boghossian.

She said Mr. Boghossian could return for another extension. But at this point, he would have to go through the Planning Board process again in order to get approval for the project he has yet to build.

Mr. Boghossian said he wasn't aware that the deadline was Nov. 14, 2013. He thought that he was approved for a two-year extension.

*Reporting by Terry Karkos, staff writer for Bethel Citizen and the Lewiston Sun Journal in 2013. Confirmed March 9, 2021 by Mark Morganstern at the Sun Journal.*

At this point there is no more public information from the Bethel Planning Board or any other city entity. No one in the city has heard from Mr. Boghossian since 2013.

March 9, 2021

To find out the current status of the Gehring Green project I contacted the Bethel Town Office; the Bethel Public Library; Amy Chapman, the current director of the Bethel Historical Society; Jesse Perkins of the Chamber of Commerce and Toby Walker, Bethel's current code enforcement officer. He has been employed by the city for the past three years. He confirmed that Mr. Boghossian is the current owner of the Gehring House property and has not submitted any new applications, nor extensions, for the project.

The once grand Gehring home is tragically falling into disrepair. Which sounds eerily similar to the fate of the Dresden Avenue defunct nursing home, Merrill Manor.

Returning to the Application Guarantee Performance: 6.5.1.14 The applicant has the adequate financial and technical capacity to meet the provisions of this Ordinance

Ordinance 6.5.1.14 has two requirements of applicants: They must have a) adequate financial and b) technical capacity to meet the provisions of this Ordinance.

Financial Capacity:

It took five years for Mr. Boghossian to find the funding for Bethel's "Gehring Green" development. And then it seems to have disappeared without explanation. Given the Bethel

Boghossian "Gehring Green" Timeline Con.

experience it would not be unreasonable for Gardiner's Planning Board to require a bank's reassurances that Mr. Boghossian has the resources to carry out the "Gardiner Green" project and/or a letter of commitment.

As proof of financial assurances Mr. Boghossian submitted a letter from a firm called Delamater & Farris. A simple Google search of Delamater and Farris finds their motto: "Complete Solutions for the Business in Crisis." Delamater and Farris is a consulting firm. It is not a bank.

Technical Capacity:

By Mr. Boghossian's own admission he is not an architect, an engineer or a property manager. He is a salesman. If his proposed "Gardiner Green" development is completed, he would sell it. Since Mr. Boghossian doesn't know who he would sell it to, no one in the city of Gardiner has any reassurances of the development's management.

For the "Gardiner Green" development to move forward the Gardiner Planning Board must find Mr. Boghossian has the where-with-all, as a matter of fact, to meet the stipulations in this ordinance.

This information suggests he does not.

Helen Stevens  
128 Dresden Ave  
Gardiner, Maine  
April 5, 2021