

RHODE ISLAND

**Economic Development Corporation**

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August 22, 2013

Mr. John M. Shehan  
Chairman, Historic District Commission  
43 Broadway  
Newport, RI 02840

Dear Mr. Shehan:

I am pleased to write in support of plans by The Preservation Society of Newport County to build a new welcome center at The Breakers commensurate with the property's stature as an internationally recognized historic house museum and one of the five most visited historic houses in America.

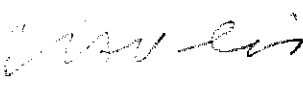
Supporting over 40,000 jobs in the state, Travel and Tourism is one of Rhode Island's top industries and is a vital part of promoting the state's long-term economic growth. The new welcome center will create an appropriate, positive first experience for the 400,000 people who visit The Breakers annually from around the world. This will give them a place to learn about all of the Preservation Society's properties and other attractions in Newport.

Since its inception in 2001, the current Breakers welcome center has generated over \$18 million in incremental revenue for historic preservation at Preservation Society properties. That additional income accounts for over 40% of the total \$42 million in historic preservation spending at the Newport Mansions since 2001.

The proposed new welcome center to replace the existing facilities will provide an opportunity to further expand revenue growth as a result of increasing multi-house visits by travelers who come expecting to only see The Breakers. This revenue pays direct dividends to our local and regional economy. With 600,000 people taking nearly 900,000 tours of Preservation Society properties annually, the total economic impact is over \$100 million throughout the region.

After a decade of work, the Preservation Society's Board of Trustees has selected a design that meets sound historic preservation criteria, while providing for the comfort and orientation needs of visitors. With this new welcome center, the Preservation Society will be able to meet the world-class standards of hospitality expected at internationally recognized historic sites, while positioning its properties to generate more visitor revenue in the state.

Sincerely,

  
Marcel A. Valois  
Executive Director  
RI Economic Development Corporation