

## Preservation Society's plan is tasteful and appropriate

I think the Preservation Society of Newport County should be commended for the proposed welcome center at The Breakers. It has done a fine job of researching and exploring every option and has come up with a plan that is tasteful and functional. The landscaping has been designed to envelop the building so that it will be hardly seen. The most important viewing point, standing at the gates, will have a clear, unobstructed view of The Breakers in front of you.

Newport is a world-class destination and we need more world-class amenities to maintain our reputation as such. In my business, as a destination management company, we book events and activities for groups and conventions and a tour of the Breakers is one of the most popular activities. Many of our attendees from high-level corporate groups are world travelers and have very high standards and expectations.

With the number of visitors the Breakers welcomes (more than 20 million to date), there is no doubt that they need to welcome visitors in a friendly and efficient manner. There is an expectation that there will be sufficient restrooms, a place to rest and the availability to refresh with a quick beverage or snack (not a full-service restaurant). While the Preservation Society has this captive audience, it can assist visitors to make their entire visit to Newport more enjoyable by having additional local information available. This also helps local businesses.

I do not think of this as a visitors center that you can put anywhere else in Newport; that would defeat the purpose of this particular

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welcome center serving guests already at The Breakers. We presently have the Discover Newport visitors center downtown and the Preservation Society is not trying to replace that service.

One cannot overlook the importance of the Preservation Society to the local economy. By checking out [www.TheBreakersWelcomeCenter.org](http://www.TheBreakersWelcomeCenter.org), one can see the economic impact on our city. The Preservation Society spends a great deal of marketing dollars to attract visitors to Newport helping all the other local businesses — not to mention the 400 local people the Preservation Society employees.

I trust that the Preservation Society would not do anything to jeopardize the historic integrity of its own precious mansions and landscaping. As shown in the presentation, the original historic character of the landscaping has been lost over the years from hurricane damage and original plantings becoming overgrown. This well-designed plan creates a welcome center and rehabilitates a beautiful landscaping at the same time. I recommend the Historic District Commission and Zoning Board approve this project expeditiously.

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