

SEND US YOUR LETTERS

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OPINION

The Newport Daily News

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"Our view" represents the opinion of the editorial board, above

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READERS' LETTERS

Breakers welcome center will benefit all hospitality businesses

The Breakers welcome center proposal by the board of the Preservation Society of Newport County is a well thought-out and planned project that has consistently reached out to the local business and restaurant community to ensure that any concerns were addressed.

By any hospitality standards, the Preservation Society's current amenities hardly deserve the name. The proposal to upgrade them is overdue. As one of the top 10 historic houses in America by attendance, it needs to and deserves to be able to provide visitors with a comfortable experience. Newport is a world-class destination and needs to be able to offer our visitors a world-class experience.

Understanding the importance of preserving the historic grounds of The Breakers, the proposed pavilions are about one half of 1 percent of the total area of the Breakers grounds. This 3,650-square-foot cluster of three small pavilions is among the smallest such

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museum facilities built or proposed for similar destinations, yet will serve 16 times the population of Newport, 400,000 people a year. It could hardly be smaller and do the job.

At the request of the Preservation Society, the Newport County Chamber of Commerce recently once again reached out to the restaurant community to address any concerns. With the exception of wanting to be sure the Preservation Society has no plans to expand to real food service, which it doesn't, and a question about equity in whether it will pay food tax, which it will, we are not aware of this plan being of concern

to the broader restaurant community.

What has been proven by the current welcome facilities is that given a chance to understand all that Newport has to offer, visitors will spend more and more time here. That translates into more attractions added to the itinerary, more dinners served, more nights in lodging and a tremendous economic driver to our local economy.

This is a modest request to address a vexing problem that reflects poorly on Newport. This project last month won approval of the state Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, which is a very thorough and difficult process. I hope that the Newport Historic District Commission will also approve this plan and ensure that in the future, visitors to one of New England's most popular attractions can get out of the heat, enjoy permanent, clean restroom facilities and offer their children a drink and a snack.

Jody J. Sullivan, executive director,
Newport County Chamber of Commerce