

## Letter: Preserving our civic center

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To the editor:

With dismay I studied the renderings for the proposed new library.

Do they really want to disrupt library services and disrupt our civic center for a couple of years for a gain of 25 percent more or less?

Folks, take a hard look at the existing building. It is only 40 years old, contemporary in a restrained and comfortable way. I like it ... a lot.

Other things to consider: It was designed by local architect, Don Monell. It isn't a fake colonial but it communicates beautifully with the 1764 Saunders house to which it is attached. Both have hipped roofs. Even the subdued colors of the old and the new blend seamlessly. To me the Monell design is a perfect compliment to the old Saunders house.

But maybe you don't know how this all came about.

Cape Ann Museum at the other end of Warren Street was also designed by Don Monell. These two buildings were deliberately designed to face each other in harmony at each end of the Warren Street block. Both buildings flank City Hall but don't compete with it. City Hall is the centerpiece forming our civic center. All is compatible. Both buildings were planned and designed to work together and be in concert with one another. Both are attached to old houses. It was a challenge and it is a success story. It is our civic center.

What about the fountain? What about the beach tree? What about the new amphitheatre, the new walkways, the new fencing and landscaping? What about the Saunders house? Is it even connected? A lot of money and effort has very recently been spent on the grounds. It is beautiful as is its partner, Cape Ann Museum.

I have nothing to say about the design of the proposed building except that it interrupts the planned harmony of the streetscape. It screams "Look at me!" Monell was able to design two modern buildings that didn't disrespect the Gloucester Historic District in which they are located.

For a long time there has been talk of the shortcomings of the building considering the high traffic that it receives. I say they should get creative and figure it out. Figure out how to air condition the building, add on to the back and solve the problems. Don't let this lovely design that we are so lucky to have become a victim of our throwaway society for only a small gain in space. The neighborhood needs to be considered as a whole without each building trying to steal the show and outshine the others.

What are they thinking of?

Prudence Fish

Gloucester

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