

# PRESERVATION TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATES, LLC

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May 17, 2020

Mr. Michael Jones, President  
Newburyport Institution for Savings  
93 State Street  
Newburyport, MA

Re: IFS Office Addition

Dear Mr. Jones:

In my professional capacity as an architectural materials conservator and historic preservation consultant, you have asked for me to review the latest design for new construction on the bank's site that will be linked to the 1980's building. I have served as a consultant to the bank for over ten years, designing and overseeing the repair and replacement of primary roofing systems and, most recently, masonry restoration of the original building. I have been actively involved in preservation consulting for over forty years and have been qualified as a Recognized Professional by the Association for Preservation Technology.

Historic Preservation Background:

The Institution for Savings has continuously been providing banking services at 93 State Street for almost 150 years in a brownstone-clad building designed in the Italianate Style by Rufus Sargent in 1872. The original building was enlarged by architect Edwin S. Dodge in 1903 in a style that seamlessly blends to the earlier structure. In 1980, Woodman Associates, a firm whose founder Jonathan Woodman was instrumental in the revitalization of Newburyport, designed an addition, again using red brick cladding, but in a "modern" architectural style to serve the needs of growing bank. *Each of these prior alterations reflected the architectural communities contemporary approach to adding on to an historic structure.*

The historic bank building is listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places and located within the Newburyport Historic District and the building is further recognized as part of the Newburyport Downtown overlay District (DOD). Both the Historic District and DOD guidelines give some guidance on the design of new buildings and additions in these districts, as does the Secretary of the Interior's Standards (Standards). Specifically the DOD states that "new construction and additions within the DOD may reflect non-historic styles so long as they remain compatible with the historic character and scale of the subject historic building, ..., its lot, and its setting within the DOD. So long as new construction and additions are so compatible, the SPGA shall not

require reproduction of historic styles, and, on the contrary, shall encourage contemporary styles of architecture to aid in the differentiation of old from new." This statement, which is reflective of the current approach to new construction in an historic context, is *general rather than prescriptive* and broadly allows for the design of new construction.

#### Analysis of the Design Revisions.

The design of the new building has evolved since the first plans that I saw in January of this year. Details and proportions have been modified to be more reflective of the original bank building, and aspects of the surrounding residential neighborhood. A copper cornice and corner quoins were added to reflect, but not copy, details of the historic building. Window proportions have changed to be more sympathetic to the surrounding late nineteenth century houses; the windows and first floor openings now have muntins dividing the lites. Bays with pitched copper roofs assist in breaking the facade into a more residential scale and are reflective of the double bayed houses that line Otis Place. Parking has been expanded by the use of a mechanical parking lift system; adequate parking is provided within an architecturally designed enclosure. The current design also takes advantage of more opportunities for landscaping. All of these changes improve the scale and detailing of the building while still accommodating the bank's programmatic requirements.

#### Evaluation of the Building in the Context of the Downtown overlay District and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards (Standards)

*A parking lot fronting on a street is not appropriate and does not contribute to an historic district - it detracts from it*

The proposed new building will be located on what is now an open parking lot located on Prospect Street; the intersection of State and Prospect Streets is an significant location in the DOD. Newburyport was a dying City in the 1950's and 60's, the historic preservation movement to revitalize the downtown that started in the early 1970's brought life back to the City though the development of a vital retail, commercial and cultural downtown. And, in planning to bring back energy to the City, the main provision for parking was made behind the commercial facades on State, Pleasant and Merrimac Street.

Exposed street level parking as currently exists, does not add life to the historic environment and is not consistent with the Secretary's standards.

*The proposed building conforms with Standard 9 and 10 that deals with new construction in an historic environment.*

- The proposed building does not damage, obscure or destroy the character defining features of the historic building.

- The new construction will be distinct from the old and, while taking some cues from the historic building and the nearby residential development, does not replicate them.
- The substantial distance between the historic bank and the new construction make the size, scale and design less critical. This is specifically stated in the interpretation of the Standard related to new construction and additions.

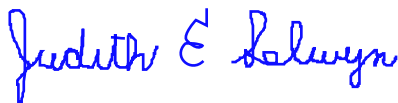
*The proposed building bears a relationship to nearby houses that is characteristic of the DOD . The building density and open space is consistent with the neighborhood.*

The surrounding residential structures are very closely spaced and, in effect, produce an almost continuous building line along the street. Larger masonry building frequently adjoin wood houses. Wood "worker housing" adjacent to larger masonry mill-type buildings are characteristic of Newburyport, as well as other manufacturing and waterfront centers of the period including New Bedford, Fall River, Lowell and Lawrence. The history of these communities is read in these adjacencies. Specific examples within one block of the bank are:

- The Newburyport Public Library is located diagonally across State Street from the historic bank. The current library building replaced the historic YMCA building that was badly damaged by fire; a strict preservation approach would have repaired renovated the Y's building for use by the library. Rather a new brick library building, including a three storey wings extending on Harris Street was built adjacent to residential construction. This relationship is not dissimilar from the relationship between the proposed building and existing houses on Otis Place.
- Prince Place is off State Street just beyond the library. Here historic mill buildings, now converted for alternate uses, stand opposite historic wood residences. The spacing between the proposed new construction and the houses on the opposite side of Prospect Street is greater than on Prince Place as Prospect Street is substantially wider than Prince Place.

Over the past several months the design of the new building for the bank has been adjusted to reflect, to the greatest extent possible, the goals for the DOD. In a district of many building types and many uses, I believe that the proposed structure will be an asset to the DOD.

Sincerely,



Dr. Judith E. Selwyn