

CITY OF NEWPORT
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

Meeting:	08/13/2013	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New	<input type="checkbox"/> Summary
Log #:	HDC Jun 18	<input type="checkbox"/> Continued	<input type="checkbox"/> Summary w/Conditions
		<input type="checkbox"/> Violation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full Review
		<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Application Mtg	<input type="checkbox"/> Continue
			<input type="checkbox"/> Deny

Location: The Breakers, 44 Ochre Point Avenue
Plat/Lot: Plat 36/Lot 59

Applicant: The Preservation Society of Newport County
Authorized
Representative: Trudy Coxe, CEO and Director

Characterize Application: Construct a new building, the Welcome Center, near the main entrance to the estate and rehabilitate the existing landscape in the northwest quadrant of the estate.

Background:

The application requests the following alterations:

Welcome Center:

- Construct a new single-story structure (3,700 square feet) on a site that is currently vacant adjacent to the north and east elevations of the existing caretaker's cottage;
- Remove and reroute a segment of the existing serpentine walking path around the proposed construction site;
- Remove approximately 25 existing trees or shrubs from the proposed construction site, some of which may be transplanted after the proposed construction; and
- Make various site improvements around the proposed construction site including installation of pavers, handrails, and stone steps.

Landscape Rehabilitation of the Northwest Quadrant:

- Maintain the majority of the existing large canopy trees, and remove/crop the understory growth;
- Introduce new plant material in a layered understory; and
- Install additional evergreen trees in order to screen the proposed new construction.

Findings of Fact:

1. 44 Ochre Point Avenue, known as "The Breakers" and constructed in 1892-1895, is located within the boundaries of the Ochre Point-Cliffs National Historic Landmark District (National Register of Historic Places) and the Newport Local Historic District and it is a contributing

property within both districts. It is also individually listed as a National Historic Landmark (National Register of Historic Places).

2. The property contains three buildings, each of which retains an exceptionally high degree of integrity: the main house; the caretaker's cottage; and the children's playhouse. The property also contains historic archeological resources such as the heating plant and appurtenant structures.
3. Character-defining features of the property include: Beaux-Arts, Italian High Renaissance style architecture; rectangular building masses; hipped roofs; terra cotta roof tiles; limestone façades; columns, pilasters, rustication, arcades, bracketed cornices, heavily capped chimneys, and sculptural elements; a formal landscape containing a forecourt, a north parterre, a south parterre, gravel drives, and meandering walking paths; and a wrought iron fence.
4. The plantings associated with the historic landscape currently lack integrity due to plant loss over time and overgrowth resulting from decades of deferred maintenance. Nonetheless, the historic landscape is a character-defining feature of the property, due to the intact spatial relationships of the landscape areas and the intact route, alignment, and width of the serpentine garden path.

Applicable Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, Standards for Rehabilitation ("Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation") and Newport Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties ("Newport Standards"):

See attached table.

Staff Comments:

The proposed project is consistent with the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10, and the Newport Standards A.3, A.5, and A.6.

The proposed project is partially consistent with the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation 2 and 5, and the Newport Standards A.1, A.4, A.7*, and B.2.

The proposed project is not consistent with the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation 3 and 9, and the Newport Standards A.2, C.1, and C.3.

*Newport Standard A.7 correlates to the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation 9 (not consistent) and 10 (consistent). Therefore, the project is partially consistent with Newport Standard A.7.

Staff: Matt Weintraub, Historic Preservation Planner
Date: August 7, 2013

The Welcome Center at The Breakers, 44 Ochre Point Avenue
 Analysis of Consistency with the City of Newport's Standards by the Historic Preservation Planner

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, Standards for Rehabilitation (SIS)	Newport Zoning Ordinance Chapter 17.80.060. The Newport Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties (NS) C = Contributor Standard NC = Noncontributor Standard New = New Construction Standard	Staff Analysis of Consistency with SIS and NS
1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.	No correlating standard	SIS: Consistent . The proposed new use would require minimal change to the 13-acre property. It would involve construction of a new accessory building that is relatively small (3,700 square feet) behind the caretaker's cottage and adjacent to the underground heating plant, which is a non-distinctive space that was historically utilitarian in use and character. It would involve minimal changes to some landscape materials and features, including a historic walking path and historic plantings. It would not affect the historic buildings or structures on the site. NS: Not applicable.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.	A.1. Retain Historic Character. Retain and preserve the historic character of a contributing structure. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a contributing structure should not be undertaken. [C]	SIS/NS: Partially Consistent . The project would not affect the historic buildings or structures on the site. The proposed new construction would alter a non-distinctive space, the area behind the caretaker's cottage and adjacent to the underground heating plant, which was historically utilitarian in use and character. However, it would remove and reroute a segment of the existing serpentine walking path located on or adjacent to the proposed construction site, which is a

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		<p>distinctive feature of the property. It would also remove some existing vegetation, including two historic beech trees located adjacent to the proposed construction site, which are distinctive materials and features of the property, as well as some smaller trees and shrubs, some of which may be transplanted. Therefore, the project would avoid the removal and/or alteration of the majority, but not all, of the distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize the property.</p> <p>National Park Service Advice: Throughout the preservation planning process, it is important to ensure that existing landscape features are retained. Preservation maintenance is the practice of monitoring and controlling change in the landscape to ensure that its historic integrity is not altered and features are not lost. Preservation maintenance practices differ from standard maintenance practices because of the focus on perpetuating the historic character or use of the landscape rather than beautification. For example, an old hedge or shrub should be rejuvenated, or propagated, rather than removed and replaced. A mature</p>

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		<p>specimen tree may require cabling and careful monitoring to ensure that it is not a threat to visitor safety. (National Park Service Preservation Brief 36, Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment, and Management of Historic Landscapes)</p>
<p>3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.</p>	<p>A.2. Avoid Conjecture. The buildings of Newport are a physical record of their time, place and use. Avoid changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding a conjectural feature or architectural elements from other buildings. [C]</p>	<p>SIS/NS: Consistent with regards to Landscape Rehabilitation. The project would rehabilitate the historic landscape to an orderly and layered state, in keeping with the original design of the property's formal garden. It would restore the character of the landscape in the northwest quadrant of the site by adding and maintaining plantings that are not conjectural. The proposed landscape rehabilitation is substantiated by historic plans, photographs, and narratives of the original landscape.</p> <p>SIS/NS: Not Consistent in regards to New Construction. The project would introduce a change that could create a false sense of development by adding an element from other historic properties, which did not exist on the site. It would result in a new building, the Welcome Center, that is "inspired by park pavilions and conservatories of the 19th</p>

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		<p>century and Gilded Age, such as Calvert Vaux's work in New York City's Central Park and Brooklyn's Prospect Park, as well as the garden pavilions found on other Newport properties by the Preservation Society (for example, the Chinese Tea House at Marble House and the sunken gardens of the Elms)" (The Preservation Society of Newport County, Historic District Commission Application Narrative, page 1). While this "garden pavilion" building type was historically constructed on some properties during the period, it was never planned or constructed on the site of The Breakers.</p> <p>National Park Service Advice: Maintain the architectural character associated with the historic buildings rather than using details and elements typical of other building types. (National Park Service Preservation Brief 14, New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns)</p> <p>Distinctive historical features (buildings) in one location should not be replicated in another location without documentary or physical evidence. (National Park Service Interpreting the Standards Bulletin 56,</p>

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		<p>Alterations without Historical Basis)</p> <p>False historicism in every treatment should be avoided. This applies to individual features as well as the entire landscape. Examples of inappropriate work include the introduction of historic-looking benches that are actually a new design, a fanciful gazebo placed in what was once an open meadow, or executing an unrealized historic design. (National Park Service Preservation Brief 36, Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment, and Management of Historic Landscapes)</p>
<p>4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.</p>	<p>A.3. Maintain Significant Alterations. Retain and preserve changes to a contributing structure that have acquired historic significance in their own right. [C]</p>	<p>SIS/NS: Consistent. The project would rehabilitate the orderly and layered character of the historic landscape by reversing changes (plant loss over time and overgrowth resulting from decades of deferred maintenance) that are contrary to the original design of the property's formal garden, and which have not acquired significance in their own right.</p>
<p>5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.</p>	<p>A.4. Preserve Character, Defining Features and Workmanship. Preserve distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a</p>	<p>SIS/NS: Partially Consistent. The project would not affect the historic buildings or structures on the site, which exhibit distinctive finishes, construction techniques, and examples of craftsmanship. However, it would</p>

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	<p>contributing structure. [C]</p> <p>B.2. Preserving Character Defining Features. The commission may encourage but shall not require owners to preserve distinctive features, finishes, construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that are present in a noncontributing structure or existing walls, gates, gateposts and fences made subject to review pursuant to <u>Section 17.80.100(6)</u> of this Chapter which add to the character of the surrounding district. [C]</p>	<p>remove and reroute a segment of the existing serpentine walking path located on or adjacent to the proposed construction site, which is a distinctive feature of the property. It would also remove some existing vegetation, including two historic beech trees located adjacent to the proposed construction site, which are distinctive materials and features of the property, as well as some smaller trees and shrubs, some of which may be transplanted. Therefore, the project would preserve the majority, but not all, of the distinctive materials and features that characterize the property.</p> <p>National Park Service Advice: Throughout the preservation planning process, it is important to ensure that existing landscape features are retained. Preservation maintenance is the practice of monitoring and controlling change in the landscape to ensure that its historic integrity is not altered and features are not lost. Preservation maintenance practices differ from standard maintenance practices because of the focus on perpetuating the historic character or use of the landscape rather than beautification. For example, an old hedge or</p>

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		<p>shrub should be rejuvenated, or propagated, rather than removed and replaced. A mature specimen tree may require cabling and careful monitoring to ensure that it is not a threat to visitor safety. (National Park Service Preservation Brief 36, Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment, and Management of Historic Landscapes)</p>
<p>6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.</p>	<p>A.5. Repair before Replacement. The historic materials out of which contributing structures buildings are constructed are significant and once lost, they cannot be recovered. Every effort should be made to repair rather than replace deteriorated historic fabric and features. When the severity of deterioration requires replacement of features or fabric, the replacement should match the old in materials, dimensions, design, configuration, texture and visual appearance. [C]</p>	<p>SIS/NS: Consistent. The project would rehabilitate (repair) the historic landscape in the northwest quadrant of the site, which is deteriorated due to plant loss over time and overgrowth resulting from decades of deferred maintenance. This would include maintaining the majority of the significant trees and replacing missing plant materials in an orderly and layered manner, in keeping with the original design of the property's formal garden as substantiated by historic plans, photographs, and narratives.</p>
<p>7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.</p>	<p>A.6. Avoid Damaging Treatments. Do not use chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials. [C]</p>	<p>SIS/NS: Consistent. The project would not use any type of chemical or physical treatments that could damage historic materials. It would not affect the historic buildings or structures on the site.</p>

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8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.	No correlating standard	SIS: Consistent. The project would protect and preserve the existing historic archeological resources (heating plant and appurtenant structures) in place on the site. Measures would be taken during construction to avoid disturbance of the resources (such as avoiding construction directly above the boiler room and limiting heavy equipment traffic over the tunnel). NS: Not applicable.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.	A.7. Minimize Harm from Alterations. (...) Make proposed additions or exterior alterations to a contributing structure compatible with the existing materials, features, size, visual relationships and massing to protect the integrity and scale of the original historic structure or site. Make new alterations or additions clearly discernible from the old. The differentiations may or may not be stylistic, and may be as subtle as a change in footprint or material. [C] B.1. Compatibility. The alteration of a noncontributing structure or existing walls, gates, gateposts and fences made subject to review pursuant to Section 17.80.100(6) of	SIS/NS: Not Consistent. The project would construct a new building, the Welcome Center, which would not be compatible with the Beaux-Arts, Italian High Renaissance style architecture of the historic buildings on the site. The historic buildings are characterized by compact rectangular massing, hipped roofs, terra cotta roof tiles, limestone façades, and classical details rendered in stone. The proposed new construction would introduce stylistic elements to the property that are not present on or harmonious with the historic buildings, such as complex curvaceous roofs, extensive use of copper, and curvaceous ornamental window mullions. This would

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	<p>this Chapter shall be generally of such size, scale, siting, massing, setback, materials, and detail as will be compatible with other structures in the surrounding historic district. [NC]</p> <p>C.1. Compatibility. New construction, reconstruction and new walls, gates, gateposts and fences made subject to review pursuant to <u>Section 17.80.100(6)</u> of this Chapter shall be compatible with the surrounding historic area in terms of size, scale, siting, massing, setback, materials and details. [New]</p> <p>C.2. Architectural Quality. New construction, reconstruction and new walls, gates, gateposts and fences made subject to review pursuant to <u>Section 17.80.100(6)</u> of this Chapter should be of thoughtful and considered architectural design. [New]</p> <p>C.3. Appearance. New construction, reconstruction and new walls, gates, gateposts and fences made subject to review pursuant to <u>Section 17.80.100(6)</u> of this Chapter may clearly read as such and need not present a false historic appearance. [New]</p>	<p>result in a new addition to the property that is very different in style from the historic buildings.</p> <p>National Park Service Advice: To preserve a property's historic character, a new addition should not be very different in terms of design, materials, and other visual qualities. Instead, the new addition should take its design cues from, but not copy, the historic building. A variety of design techniques can be effective ways to differentiate the new construction from the old, while respecting the architectural qualities and vocabulary of the historic building, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use building materials in the same color range and value as those of the historic buildings. The materials need not be the same as those on the historic building, but they should be harmonious; they should not be so different that they stand out or distract from the historic building. • Base the size, rhythm, and alignment of the new addition's windows and door openings on those of the historic building.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An addition should maintain the architectural character associated with the historic property rather than using details and elements typical of other building types. <p>(National Park Service Preservation Brief 14, New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns)</p> <p>Successful additions can result from quite varied design approaches, but common to most additions that meet the Standards are the general concepts of similarity and subordination. Although similar in form and materials, the composition and details of the new façade should be more simplified.</p> <p>(National Park Service Interpreting the Standards Bulletin 18, New Additions to Mid-size Historic Buildings)</p> <p>The architectural features of new construction on the site of a historic building must be compatible with those of the historic building. When visible and in close proximity to historic buildings, the new construction must be subordinate to these buildings. (National Park Service Technical Preservation Services, New Construction within the Boundaries of Historic</p>

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		<p>Properties)</p>
<p>10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.</p>	<p>A.7. Minimize Harm from Alterations. Undertake exterior alterations, including new additions, in such a manner that minimizes harm to historic materials and that if removed will not change the essential form and integrity of a contributing structure. (...) [C]</p>	<p>SIS/NS: Consistent. The project would construct a new building, the Welcome Center, that is not structurally integrated with the nearby historic building (caretaker's cottage) or the historic archeological resource (heating plant). It involves minimal physical connection to the caretaker's cottage via a new trellis structure. This could allow for removal of the new construction without impairing the essential form and integrity of the caretaker's cottage, the heating plant, or the site.</p>

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References:

Newport Zoning Ordinance Chapter 17.80.060. The Newport Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties
(<http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientID=16524&stateID=39&stateName=Rhode%20Island>)

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, Standards for Rehabilitation
(http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/rehab/rehab_standards.htm)

National Park Service, Preservation Brief 14, New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns (<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/14-exterior-additions.htm>)

National Park Service, Preservation Brief 36, Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment, and Management of Historic Landscapes
(<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/36-cultural-landscapes.htm>)

National Park Service, Interpreting the Standards Bulletin 18, New Additions to Mid-size Historic Buildings
(<http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS18-Additions-MidSizeBuildings.pdf>)

National Park Service, Interpreting the Standards Bulletin 39, Site and Setting: Changes to Historic Site
(<http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS39-HistoricSite-Changes.pdf>)

National Park Service, Interpreting the Standards Bulletin 41, Incompatible Alterations to the Setting and Environment of a Historic Property
(<http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS41-Environment-Changes.pdf>)

National Park Service, Interpreting the Standards Bulletin 56, Alterations without Historical Basis (<http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/its-bulletins/ITS56-Alterations-NoHistorical.pdf>)

National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, New Construction within the Boundaries of Historic Properties
(<http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/successful-rehab/new-construction.htm>)