

**PENN SQUARE PARTNERS AND LCCCA**  
**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**  
**INTELLIGENCER JOURNAL**

Dear Mr. Shaw:

We're responding to a letter you published on December 16, from Victor Capecce, in which he decried the "horrendous scenario" of preserving the façade of the former Watt & Shand Building as "keeping the façade like a Hollywood set to veneer another building of dubious benefit."

We find it ironic in the extreme that this "artist/designer/scenic artist/magician and puppet maker," who designs façades for a living, can't fathom why and how we are responding to the demands of our community, including the Historic Preservation Trust, to preserve this "beloved landmark." Perhaps he has not had the time to read the countless news reports that have made it abundantly clear that the historically certified façade of the building is the only salvageable part of it. Behind the façade stands a collection of wood-framed buildings that are completely unacceptable for use in any modern commercial project.

Mr. Capecce finds it "more disturbing," however, that "this demolition might occur before bids and funding for the project are obtained" and that it represents a "strategy to prevent any alternate, more affordable renovation plan from being considered." May we repeat? *Behind the façade stands a collection of wood-framed buildings that are completely unacceptable for use in any modern commercial project.* They cannot be "renovated." Not for this project, not for any other project.

Perhaps Mr. Capecce, who is certain the project will fail, will be comforted by the agreements between Penn Square Partners, the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Lancaster and the Lancaster County Convention Center Authority. In the unlikely event that the current project does not proceed, the city will control the property and can require Penn Square Partners to take it back.

Last year, Mr. Capecce also "applauded" the efforts of our two County Commissioners to derail this project. In a widely circulated letter he wrote to the Commissioners, he asserted that his "credentials meet or exceed those of most of the Convention Center proponents [and] their consultants" and he had the gall to charge that "most of the avid supporters of a Convention Center have never worked in the exhibit/trade show/convention industry and they are not aware of its function, logistics, and economics."

These claims would be laughable were they not so offensive. The hotel and convention center project team includes licensed professional architects and engineers of every specialty who have designed many projects of similar and larger sizes. The plans have been reviewed and approved by Marriott Hotels and Resorts, which has 2,700 properties located in the United States and 65 other countries and territories. The designs also have been reviewed and approved by Interstate Hotels & Resorts, the nation's largest independent hotel management company, which manages more than 300 hotels in 40 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, Russia and Portugal.

Mr. Capecce's claims of expertise, based on such hotel/convention center experience as designing a trade show booth in Opryland for a shop-at-home women's clothing company, are equivalent to a parking lot attendant commenting on the engineering of the garage in which he parks and retrieves vehicles. When it comes to his evaluations of the hotel and convention center project, he's simply out of his depth.

Nevin D. Cooley  
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Penn Square General Corporation

David W. Hixson  
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Lancaster County Convention Center Authority

[Click here for a briefing on the quality standards of the Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square](#)