

Editorial: Casino design is better, but public needs to see more

Daily Gazette, The (Schenectady, NY) - July 12, 2015

- Edition: Schenectady/Albany; Final
- Section: D
- Page: D2

You have to give them credit. It's better than the last version.

But is it enough?

The developers of the Rivers **casino**, to be located on the old Alco site on Erie Boulevard in Schenectady, on Thursday released a revised revised version of their **design** for the new facility.

The first **design**, a shiny white edifice, drew nary a whisper of objection. But designers over-thought the process when it came to making the drawing site-specific. As a result, they were clobbered by public opinion when they released a new version intended to reflect historic Schenectady, but instead looked like a combination of a 1980's shopping mall and a 1880s glove-making factory.

So last week, they came back with a newer version designed to reflect a "new Schenectady." From the limited drawings we've seen, it appears to be an improvement. It's got less old-style red brick and more white stone, metal panels and glass. It bears a much closer resemblance to the original **design** that people liked than the newer **design** that people hated.

And that's great. They did listen.

Still, this shouldn't be the end of the debate about the **design**. The city Planning Commission is meeting on July 22 to discuss the **design**, during which time the community will have a chance to offer their first public comments on it. We have urged the commission in the past, and continue to do so, not to vote on the new **design** that night. Rather, commissioners should listen to the comments and factor them into their final decision before voting at a subsequent meeting. We hope that's their plan.

One concern over the new renderings is that they don't seem to show

enough. Past **design** plans offered multiple views of the project, including what the TV people call a "wide shot" showing the entire building and its place on the site.

The drawings released Thursday show little of the building other than the entrance and one shot from the river. They also don't show the perspective of the pylon sign in comparison to the new structure.

It might seem nit-picky to want to see more. But as we've said before, we're all going to have to live with this thing for a few decades, and we want to make sure it's going to look like what they say it's going to look like.

If the public is going to offer intelligent comments to the Planning Commission, they need to see more of the new **design** so they have a more complete perspective. In the 10 days leading up to next Wednesday's Planning Commission meeting, we urge **casino** developers to post more renderings of the new redesign online and share them with the community.

In the meantime, the public should be gathering up their questions and making their concerns known, through our online poll, letters to the editor, comments on our Facebook page and by reaching out to commission members via City Hall.

The more information the people have about the project, the more transparency government affords them, the more likely it is that they will accept it.

That should be the goal of the developers, and most importantly, the city's government.