

## A New Casino Raises Hope (And Eyebrows)

Written by Administrator  
Friday, 25 January 2019 15:50 -

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Across the street from a sprawling power plant on the edge of Everett is an unlikely building: a gleaming glass tower emblazoned with the name of the Boston-area's first casino, Encore.

"It's wonderful, it looks beautiful from anywhere you see it," said Alicia Guevara, as she wrapped up a run to the Everett Target store. The casino was visible just across the parking lot behind the Home Depot, but she has also noticed it from the highway as she commutes from Boston to her home in Medford.

"I'm not a casino person, I don't gamble," she said. "It's there and it looks beautiful."

The Wynn Company is wrapping up construction on the casino at the same time the [Massachusetts Gaming Commission is investigating whether the company should be able to keep its gaming license, amid sexual misconduct allegations that last year forced company namesake Steve Wynn to resign](#)

. Despite the uncertainty around the casino's future, one thing's clear: it has changed the skyline north of Boston. Its fate may impact the future of the neighborhood that surrounds it.

Ashley Seybold of Boston's North End has trouble imagining high rollers dropping big money at a casino located in an industrial neighborhood.

"I think it's bizarre to spend the amount of money people are going to spend on a hotel room to look out on a metal crushing facility and a highway and a power plant," she said.

As for the casino building itself, Seybold said, "It looks like something in Vegas."

From the Everett strip mall to the [Las Vegas](#) strip to [Macau](#), Wynn casinos all look the same. That signature design left some in Boston's design community underwhelmed.

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When the [Massachusetts chapter of the American Institute of Architects \(AIA\)](#) first got a look at the plans for the casino four years ago, they offered the state gaming commission a scathing critique, calling the design “flat,” “uninspired” and “atrocious.”

“We weren’t particularly fond of what they proposed,” said John Nunnari, executive director of the Massachusetts AIA chapter.

Nunnari was on a top floor of the Massachusetts State House recently when he looked out the window and got his first glimpse of the nearly complete casino. His reaction: “They built exactly what they designed.”

The AIA was hoping for something unique, a nod to Boston’s innovation economy and Everett’s industrial heritage.

“It’s like a mini-Disney,” said Ludmilla Pudlova-Gillham, the incoming president of the Massachusetts AIA chapter.

But, she said, looks aren’t everything. The casino is a game-changer - a \$2.5 billion project that included [the clean up of a toxic waste site](#) and opening access to the Mystic River.

“If it failed in the exterior innovation category that we tend to care about in architecture,” said Pudlova-Gillham, “that can be certainly softened if it survives and thrives on a financial basis.”

A successful casino, she said, will attract more development, and could mean new life for the old industrial buildings that surround it. In other words, the casino has the potential to transform not just the view from Somerville and the strip mall, but an entire urban neighborhood.

Whether it will ultimately look more like Vegas or Boston — or something altogether different — is anyone’s bet.

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