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Boston City Hall named world's ugliest building

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It's official now. Boston City Hall is the ugliest building . . . in the world!

Bostonians didn't need VirtualTourist.com and City Hall's top billing on the World's Top 10 Ugliest Buildings and Monuments list to figure that out. Residents have known it pretty much since the hard-on-the-eyes pile of concrete and bricks went up.

And like a good hard-nosed pol, Mayor Thomas M. Menino isn't sulking. He plans to use the slur as ammo in his long-running battle to abandon the architectural eyesore for a City Hall on South Boston's waterfront.

"Coming out and saying it solidifies it in my opinion," Menino said. "People all around the world agree with me."

City Hall was singled out for its dreary facade, cold interior, its big, empty, windswept plaza, as well as the way its monstrous, angular frame dominates its surroundings, said VirtualTourist.com general manager Giampiero Ambrosi.

The Web site, which claims 1 million members, placed the Hub horror ahead of such architectural atrocities as the Port Authority bus station in New York City, Montparnasse Tower in Paris and the LuckyShoe monument in Tuuri, Finland, a golden horseshoe overshadowing the Baltic country's second-largest shopping mall.

Menino noted a bright side. The world's ugliest building could be a tourism boon. "We really do have it all, the most historic places in the world and the ugliest building in the world," he joked.

But whether a tourism campaign can be built around that blockhouse remains to be seen. Yesterday, out-of-towners passed it by without giving it a second thought.

"That's gotta go," said Ivette Arenas of San Francisco, when it was pointed out to her on her way to the Common. "You have some of the best (buildings), and right here you have the worst."

"It is a pretty ugly building," agreed Carol Sue Graves of Orange, Va., as she walked to Faneuil Hall.

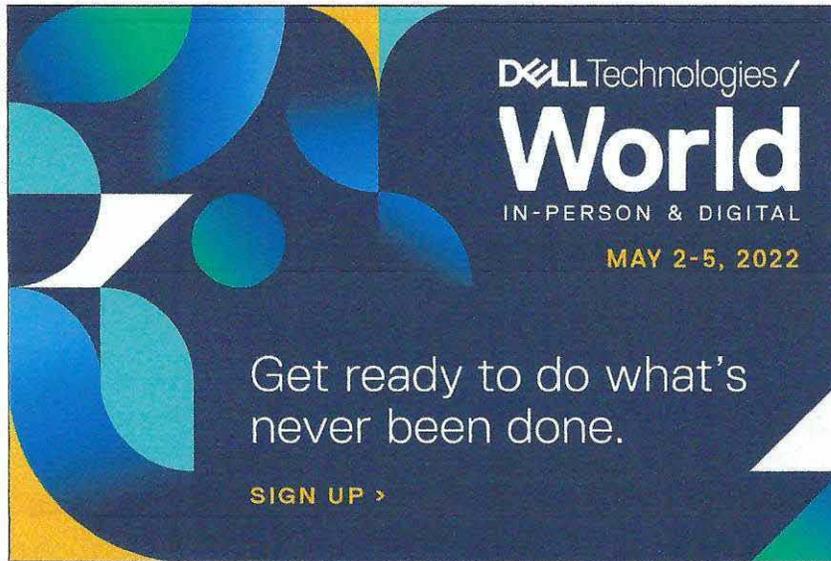
An example of the "New Brutalism" school of design, City Hall was seen as a clean break from Boston's past, said Jeff Stein, dean of the Boston Architectural College.

"They were looking for something new and startling," Stein said. "And boy did it succeed."



But Councilor Michael Flaherty, a skeptic of moving City Hall, said that even with the world's ugliest edifice, it's what on the inside that counts.

"You can have the best-looking building in the world, but what matters most is accessibility, transparency and accountability," Flaherty said.



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