



David Lassman / The Post-Standard

THE CORRIDOR project includes installing a fountain in Forman Park.

CATCHING UP ON CONNECTIVE CORRIDOR

What's going on with the Connective Corridor?

The project is designed to tie Syracuse University with Syracuse, the city, particularly to the Near West Side neighborhood. The SU chancellor, Nancy Cantor, has called it a "1.5 miles signature strip of cultural development."

It's mostly financed by federal grants to the university, state and city. University Avenue, which runs down University Hill, is getting a makeover. Eventually, according to Marilyn Higgins, SU vice president for community engagement, the street will be two-way, as it used to be.

Most of the physical work on the changes is on hold, waiting for spring, which arrives officially in only 20 days. According to Marilyn, the enthusiastic honcho of the corridor project, work is expected to stretch over four years.

Pieces are falling into place, by Marilyn's measure. One of them is happening on the patio outside of Syracuse Stage, on East Genesee Street.

People already are dancing on patio pavers, which hide sensors that turn on music and sound. This part of the project was designed by Joseph Cisco and overseen by Jeff Woodward from Syracuse Stage and is part of the mission of the corridor project to "energize the city," in Marilyn's phrase.

When complete, the patio program will in-

clude flashing light screens. Marilyn said it will open with the arrival of good weather and before SU students leave at the end of the semester.

I guess this one has to be experienced to be understood.

Moving west, toward downtown, we have redesigned Forman Park, which is one of Syracuse's oldest public spaces, dating to 1839 as a park. My concern with this redo is that we're trying to stuff too much into a small space.

The park's only 1.3 acres and already is committed to the Syracuse Police memorial and the so-called Redfield memorial statues. The Redfield statues, dating to 1908, were cleaned by artist Sharon BuMann and returned to the park in December. The large stone bench that used to sit at the park's east end was removed to clear space for an SU sculpture. It's to be put back at the same end as the Redfield monument.

The Post-Standard published Lorraine Mavins' letter to the editor Wednesday, which was critical of the park's redesign.

Forman Park also has a new fountain, which is a replica of the 19th century fountains that used to grace Syracuse parks. Concrete benches have been placed to circle the fountain. Marilyn said they are covered with plastic just now to prevent a repeat of crow droppings on them earlier this winter.

This spring will bring installation in the park of a stereoscope viewer which will show "what was and what is" in the park neighborhood. This is a project of Syracuse artist Colleen Woolpert and Onondaga Historical Association.

Another aspect of the Connective Corridor was the removal last year of some 67 "dying, damaged or past their usefulness" trees along the route, mostly on University Avenue and East Genesee Street. They were to be re-

placed by 148 "hardy street trees."

About J.J.

Martha Belden Moore, of Cazenovia, emailed me about the Belden family, who donated their home on West Genesee Street to what became First Presbyterian Church. The building now is the church's parish house. I wrote of the church's closing last month.

"James Jerome Belden was my grandfather's uncle and my sister and I still live in the Syracuse area," Martha Moore says. "Belden, known as J.J., was mayor of Syracuse in 1877 and 1878. After serving as mayor, he was elected to five, one-year terms in Congress. In 1880, he founded Robert Gere Bank, which merged with First National Bank in 1900.

"In 1897, he built the elegant Manhattan Hotel in New York City ... two of his last acts of public beneficence were donating the land and house to First Presbyterian Church and the erection of the Soldiers' Monument in Fabius, upon the site of the house in which he was born.

"Belden Avenue on Syracuse's Near West Side was named after J.J."

Peggy Liuzzi of Child Care Solutions writes that McConaghy Youth Center, which the church has for sale, is still being used by Enable, as a preschool and child care center. Enable is planning to move the program to its main campus on the city's North Side.

Based on information I got, I shortened the list of Presbyterian churches in the city of Syracuse. Add Park Central, Westminster and the Korean Presbyterian Church to the two I mentioned: South Valley (formerly South Presbyterian and Onondaga Valley) and Elmwood Presbyterian. Thanks to Laurie Sanderson for the clarification.

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