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## A Sense of Place: Syracuse sets the stage for an intricate urban ballet

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By **The Post-Standard Editorial Board**

In her seminal 1961 book, "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," the late Jane Jacobs wrote how city streets and neighborhoods appeal to all ages, residents and visitors alike. "A sense of place is built up, in the end, from many little things," she wrote; "irregularities in level ... different kinds of paving, signs and fireplugs and street lights ... ."

Her recipe for "exuberant" city streets: short blocks, buildings of different ages and condition serving multiple purposes, a mingling of styles and a dense population. She likened a successful city street to "an intricate ballet," where dancers and ensembles "miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole ... ."



Dick Blume / The Post-Standard

Clinton Square

Syracuse's urban neighbors continue their "intricate ballet." And enterprising Syracusans continue to raise public awareness of the city's special qualities. Some examples:

- On May 19, the Erie Canal Museum is due to lead a Historic Erie Canal Walking Tour through downtown. The decorative fountain/skating rink at Clinton Square uncannily resurrects the image of the waterway as it once bisected the city.



Lauren Long

Downtown living

- Also May 19, the 6th annual Downtown Living Tour offers a peek inside newly refurbished apartments in historic buildings. Last year's tour set a record — and available apartments are a hot commodity. "As fast as they can build, they're leased out," says Merike Treier of the sponsoring Downtown Committee.

- "People, Places and Progress," an exhibition running June 2 through Sept. 2 at the Everson Museum, features illustrations of local scenes through history.

- On June 25, Onondaga Historical Association Curator Dennis Connors is due to talk at OASIS about "University Hill: The Evolution of a Distinctive Syracuse Neighborhood." (Note: You need to be fairly "historic" yourself — 50 or over — to attend.) Last month, Connors led a "Creekwalk Crawl" along the 2.6-mile

pedestrian greenway following Onondaga Creek from Armory Square to Onondaga Lake. There was also a “Cathedral Square Organ Crawl,” celebrating the awe-inspiring instruments installed in some of the city’s major churches.

- Architectural historian Sam Gruber’s mission to explore Syracuse University area neighborhoods continues. Last month he led two-hour tours of “stately” Allen and Cambridge streets, as well as the “gridded garden” of Victoria, Concord, Clarke, Strong and Euclid. June 3 he plans to move “west of Westcott” to Avondale, Trinity and Greenwood.

- With the warmer months comes festival season, a time to appreciate the diversity of the city’s cultures, arts and public spaces.

- Then there’s the “Cuse Mob” — a gaggle of enthusiastic shoppers who descend on a local retail establishment to browse and buy. More than 100 “mobsters” showed up at Craft Chemistry last Saturday.



David Lassman

Cuse Mob

- The Connective Corridor is creating new spaces as it links Syracuse University and downtown. University Avenue is becoming a two-way, bike-friendly thoroughfare. East Genesee Street’s makeover includes interactive displays at Syracuse Stage and a redesigned Forman Park.



David Lassman

The Loch West Monster

- Syracuse has its share of public art, from Forman Park to Schiller Park, Clinton Square, the Everson and elsewhere. New examples are popping up — the curved-hand construction near City Hall, playful messages painted on railroad bridges around West Street, the “monster” cavorting at Armory Square. There’s more on the way, as the city’s Public Art Commission completes its master plan.

- On the Near West Side, WCNY’s relocation to the old Case Supply headquarters is energizing a long-neglected neighborhood, complemented by the quirky Lipe Art Park along West Fayette Street.

Why not be part of celebrating Central New York’s urban hub? As Jacobs puts it: “Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”

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