



REFLECTIVE FUTURES

REFLECTIVEFUTURESPK.ORG

Onera Prize for Historic Preservation

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VALUE

History informs the present through the shape of everyday spaces...

DESIGN

We believe that by learning how these urban spaces came into being -- how they were planned and developed, heralded and disputed -- we can become better able to participate their improvement. HISTORICAL LITERACY BUILDS COLLECTIVE AGENCY. This is an experiment in leveraging history through place towards the development of better, more collectively-informed design solutions.

MISSION

to unlock and uplift broad-based, historically-informed collective ownership of the built environment in the City of Poughkeepsie, New York

CHANGE

rather than remain a shrouded source of shame and frustration, the history of the built environment in cities like Poughkeepsie is reframed as a resource for meaningful planning and design solutions, made better by investments in intentional platforms for cultivating collective agency



METHOD

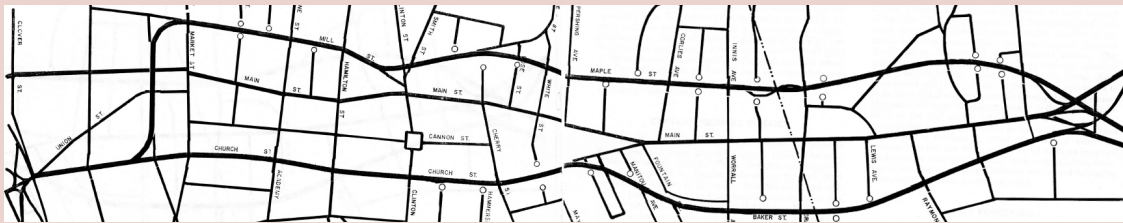
to make the past legible in place through the creation of visually compelling, content-rich, and publicly accessible biographies of the city's built spaces, to which readers are invited to contribute their own reflective narratives and become involved in active design and planning initiatives today

IMPACT

the website's interactive narrative format is able to make the city's infrastructural and economic transformations more widely understood and more spatially intelligible, modeling greater civic participation through shared reflections upon urban space

CONTENT

This project's first episode tackles the issue of frustrated mobility; of roads and their brokers; of people, boats, trains, and cars.



The circulation of people and goods over the urban landscape is a reflection of systems of power. Transportation infrastructure dictates who has the right to access the city. When the City of Poughkeepsie widened its city streets to allow for the construction of a state-owned, east-west arterial loop, it recut the keys to the city for the privileged use of the automobile.

The ways we move through urban spaces are critical to how we relate to the city, how we understand its shapes and attend to its contours. Yet these connective channels do not always function in our favor. We have designed this website to be a tool for collective reflection upon Poughkeepsie's past so that together we may design a this city better future.

Throughout the post-war era of urban planning in Poughkeepsie, a number of proposals for traffic alleviation called for a range of dramatic alterations to the city's built environment. The chosen plans resulted in a north-south arterial at Route 9, constructed between 1963-1969, as well as an east-west arterial at Route 44/55, constructed between 1974-1979. Route 9 plowed through a densely inhabited residential neighborhood and severed all but one pedestrian access point to the river with the construction of an elevated highway. Route 44/55, or the East-West Arterial, was designed by contrast to retain many existing residences, while nevertheless transforming a consecutive series of two-way residential streets into an extended loop of one-way, three-lane speedways, whose curbs would now lie at each building's doorstep. Both resulted in dramatic spatial segregations throughout the city, and Poughkeepsians continue to grapple with the socio-spatial consequences of these decisions today.

EPISODE ONE

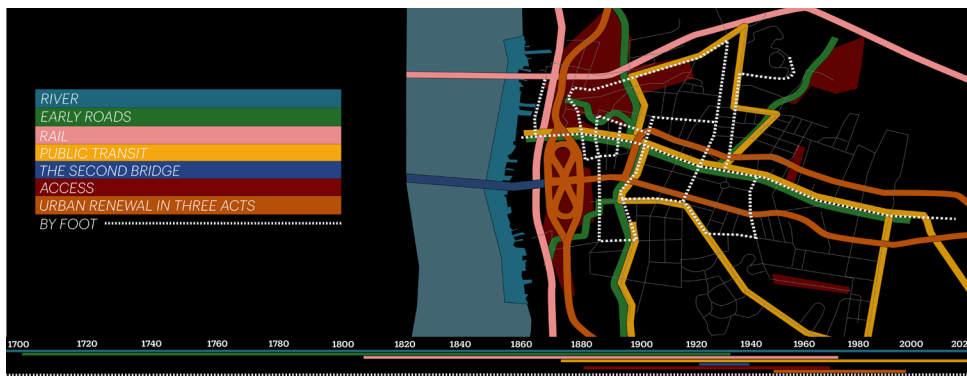
ROAD RECALL: HISTORY AND AGENCY ON THE EAST-WEST ARTERIAL



In daily observation of the challenges to urban mobility that these arterials pose, the Hudson Valley Design Lab has undertaken an initiative to facilitate greater public conversation about the nature of these challenges in hopes to unlock appropriate measures of intervention. The broad mission of HVDL's arterial initiative is to promote a safer and healthier Poughkeepsie. To these ends, their initiative seeks to develop creative ways to re-stitch Poughkeepsie's urban fabric to foster greater integration and cohesion, to advocate for a more walkable and bikeable downtown core, and to reduce traffic related incidents in problematic intersections.

The first episode of our platform's content seeks to serve this initiative as a form of historic advocacy, putting these narratives of development to work for the public by equipping Poughkeepsie's residents with a rich historical perspective and a roadmap to engage meaningfully with the planning process.

STRUCTURE



In pursuit of our mission to spatialize the history of Poughkeepsie—and specifically, in this first “episode,” the history of transportation infrastructure—we created a non-linear chapter structure, designed to centralize a series of infrastructural geographies with discrete narratives of development, despite having

integrated or overlapping timelines. We hope, in this way, to underscore the significance of place, rather than time alone in the public’s understanding of history. History is not merely something that has been passed through and left behind but in fact continues to live with us spatially in the present.

NARRATIVE

EPISODE ONE: ROAD RECALL

RIVER

EARLY ROADS

RAIL

PUBLIC TRANSIT

THE SECOND BRIDGE

ACCESS

URBAN RENEWAL IN THREE ACTS

BY FOOT

HISTORICAL
COMPARISONS

SHARE
YOUR
STORY

SURVEY

RESOURCES

KEY COMMUNITY ACTORS AND ORGANIZATIONS
ACTIVE INITIATIVES

ORAL HISTORIES

ABOUT

WORKING PAPER



RELEASE

An opening reception and release event for the REFLECTIVE FUTURES project is scheduled to be held at the newly rehabilitated, historic Trolley Barn on Main Street in the City of Poughkeepsie, upon its completion. We are thrilled to be able to share stories of transportation and the built environment inside a key location in this chapter of the city's history.

Large-scale maps and images will be presented in a gallery-style exhibition to introduce the public to the website's content, with monitors available to explore the site and its interactive components live, with human feedback that night. It is important that the site be understood as an interactive tool, to which anyone is invited to contribute their personal perspective.

Planned activities include a storycorps-style, self-moderated, audio and visual recording booth where event participants may share their experiences with or memories of the transforming transportation geographies of Poughkeepsie. These videos be uploaded into the website's Oral History Library, with permission and acknowledgement. Event attendees will also be invited to participate in an active mapping activity,

reflecting upon the safety, efficiency and inclusive character of the arterial highways, based on preferred modes of transit. The Hudson Valley Design Lab will help moderate the event, hoping to run additional design exercises with high school students through an ongoing community design initiative with Art Centro.

We hope to have this exhibition and its interactive components open to the public for an extended period of time following the opening reception. We are currently seeking supplemental funding to produce the show, which we are promoting through our friends and collaborators at the Mid-Hudson Heritage Center, Hudson River Housing at the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory, Adriance Memorial Library, the City of Poughkeepsie, Art Centro and Vassar College.

Continuous narratives, co-generated.

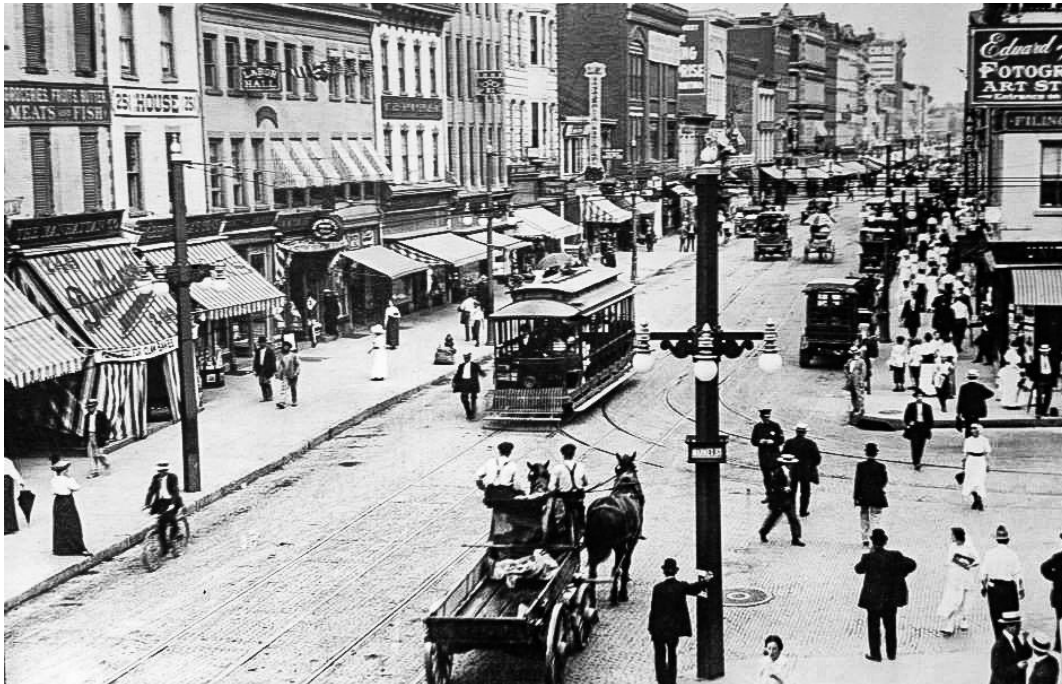
VALUE

Histories of the built environment serve as invaluable metrics of changing human needs, expanding technological capacities, and our persistent, collective frustrations with spaces both private and shared. Yet in text, these histories serve only an interested few.

REFLECTIVE FUTURES endeavors to bring historical narratives of development, planning and design into public consumption and review, so that the systems of built spaces we inhabit may be read for what they truly are: ongoing, collaborative experiments. History and memory are imperative dimensions of urban spatial transformation whether or not they are explicitly considered by its brokers and builders, yet historically sensitive design decisions can produce smarter, more inclusive places. For these stories to take part in this process of change, they must not only be exhumed from the archives, but actively broadcast to those who might otherwise be out of earshot. Wrapped in brick and paved over with asphalt, the biographies of public infrastructures must be made available to the future as a resource.

The preservation strategies modeled by REFLECTIVE FUTURES engage the fields of participatory planning, community design, public history, social geography, and archival science. We believe that successful preservation initiatives require a warm embrace of each of these, and that without them, many efforts to save meaningful places can easily fall victim to producing counter-productive cultures of non-collaboration. This project posits that preservationists should reach beyond the archive, beyond local government, and beyond the advocacy organization to participate actively in crafting inclusive and well-informed communities of design.

The future of the REFLECTIVE FUTURES project is bright, with an enthusiastic administrative end-user in MASS Design Group at the Hudson Valley Design Lab. Onera Prize co-recipient Morgan O'Hara is now employed full-time at MASS in Poughkeepsie, guaranteeing a permanent home for the project so that it may continue to be deployed as a dynamic, ongoing platform of community engagement and historical advocacy for



the city, as designed. Through this inaugural award, the Onera Prize for Historic Preservation has done more than test new ideas for preservation in practice; it has enabled the demonstration of new models for practicing preservation. Change is inevitable, but we can track it, and we can learn. Practiced together, we can improve.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Columbia University GSAPP

The Onera Prize for Historic Preservation

Madeline Blount, web design & development

Evelina Knodel, MASS Design Group at the Hudson Valley Design Lab

Chris Kroner, MASS Design Group at the Hudson Valley Design Lab

Vrinda Sharma, MASS Design Group at the Hudson Valley Design Lab

Kira Thompson, Poughkeepsie Public Library District

Joshua Simons, The Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz

Paul Hesse, Community Development Coordinator, Dutchess County

Natalie Quinn, Senior Planner, City of Poughkeepsie

Harvey Flad, local historian & geographer

