

URBN.

Edited and Designed by Ava Schully



Illustration by Hanna Barakat

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Letters

Letter from the Director

Hello URBN folks,

Here we are at the end of another fall semester, and another year under our new pandemic reality. Thanks to everyone involved in the Urban Studies community for your efforts to make Urban Studies a vibrant learning community in the face of all the challenges we've faced together. This semester has no doubt been a bit unique here on the first floor of Maxcy Hall. Quite a few core faculty have been on leave, but at the same time we've welcomed a host of new faces. Many of you have gotten to know our new faculty member Prof. Lauren Yapp. She has been an invaluable addition to our community—and to the program's curriculum and advising structure. Some of you have also taken classes with our visiting faculty, Professors Teo Wickland and Aimee Bourassa. Thanks to each of them for the fresh perspectives they've brought to Urban Studies at Brown. I know all of you will join me in



The view from the Pedestrian Bridge; Photo by Nitzayah Schiller

wishing Suzanne Brough the best of luck on her return to the Political Science Department. She was only with us about a year, but kept the ship afloat amongst some choppy waters these past months! I appreciate what she's done for us. We look forward now to a new administrative structure for Urban Studies: we welcome Jeff Cabral as our new

Program Manager, and await the arrival of a new Academic Coordinator to fill Suzanne's role in Room 103.

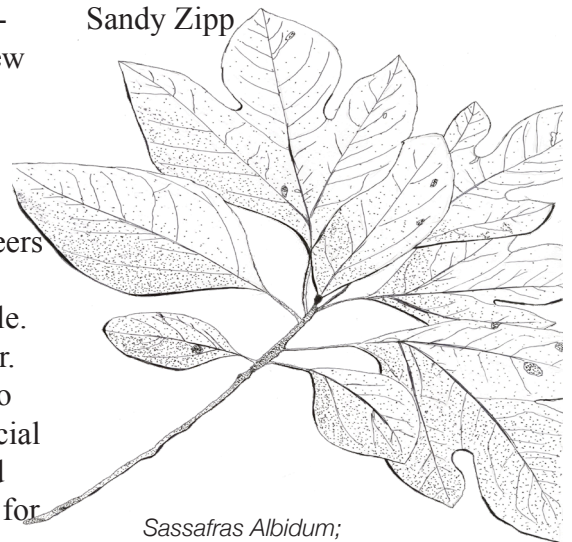
Happy Holidays to everyone, and we'll see you back in Maxcy in the New Year.

Thanks,
Sandy Zipp

Letter from the Editor

As we approach the end of the semester, I'd like to share how thankful I am for the passion and earnest I saw so many of my peers bring to class. The return to in person activity brought us back to Maxcy 109, where it warmed my heart to sit around the little table. Additionally, I'd like to greet you in my first publication as editor. It has been a true pleasure putting everything together, and I'm so honored to publish such thoughtful words and beautiful art. Special thanks from this year's editor to Sandy Zipp for his guidance and editing, to the URBN DUG for their support, Zachary Federman for design advice, and to Sam Kimball and Department Professors for their participation.

-Ava Schully



*Sassafras Albidum;
Lime Rock Preserve,
Lincoln RI.*

By Sierra Bornheim

From the Department

Thank you, Suzanne Brough!!

The Urban Studies Department would like to thank Suzanne Brough for her great work as Academic Program Manager! After a year of piloting a new hybrid position (four days in Urban Studies and one day in Political Science), she will be returning full-time to Political Science in January. Last spring she helped build community with the 2021 Honors and Capstones event and Senior Celebration, and this semester she helped organize a virtual conference with The Brown Community Organizing Initiative. In reflecting on her time with the department, Suzanne says “it’s been incredibly rewarding! This is my first experience working with undergrads. Everyone’s always said they’re wonderful, bright, and creative. I can say with certainty, that’s true!”



Illustration by Hanna Barakat

From College Hill

In Conversation Sam Kimball

Archaeology Student Sam Kimball class of '23 talks about their work as the leader of the Public Space Taskforce of Decolonization at Brown (DAB), and shares opinions on the impacts of monuments in urban spaces.

Ava Schully: So, why don't we start off by talking a little bit about DAB's Public Space Taskforce and your work.

Sam Kimball: Yeah sure! So DAB's Public Space Taskforce kicked off in February 2020 when the University's Public Art Committee proposed to repair and relocate the Caesar Augustus statue (which is by the ratty), and this started a conversation about the representation of problematic legacies through monuments. We got endorsements from over 40 student groups to get rid of the statue, and although it is still standing today, Brown decided not to repair or relocate it, which we see as a win.

Ava Schully: Gotcha, that's really impressive! What is the task force up to now?

Sam Kimball: over the course of the whole statue campaign, we realized that the work we were doing was more responding to things, which is important, but we really wanted to take initiative to construct something meaningful. So, we decided to move away from focusing on removing classical-era monuments and start working on uplifting Narragansett stories. And one thing that came up in a meeting with Professor Steven Lubar from Public Humanities was that in 2011, a Narragansett stonemason named Robin Spears Sr. built a stone wall on campus. It was never given a plaque or any meaningful recognition, which is a little bit shocking considering Brown U. puts plaques on basically everything possible. Unfortunately, Robin Spears Sr. passed away in November of 2020, so now we're working with the family on getting him some recognition - whether that be through a plaque or something else - and also having an unveiling ceremony where the Spears grandkids could potentially come and perform a dance.



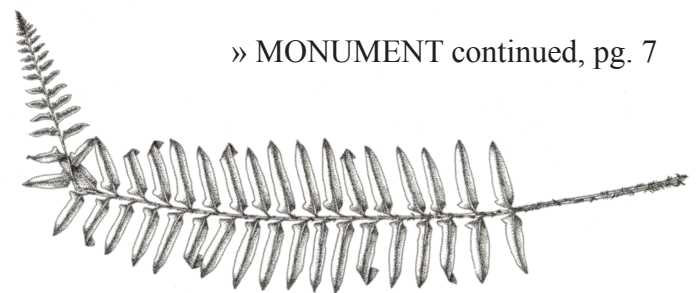
*The stone wall built by Robin Spears Sr. on the Main Green outside of the Haffenreffer Museum.
Photo by Sam Kimball*

Ava Schully: What would be the significance of the plaque?

Sam Kimball: Well, the thing is you have to consider who a monument is for. And in this case, the significance would be a memorial for Robin Spears' family. It also kind of serves as a physical land acknowledgment, making people stop and think about Brown's colonial legacy.

Ava Schully: I see, do you think it will have any impact on the larger public art/monument landscape of Providence?

» MONUMENT continued, pg. 7



*Aolystichum Acrostichoides;
Lime Rock Preserve;
Lincoln RI*

By Miauxoc Haskie

From Rhode Island

Trader Joe's Under Development

Kendall Krantz

When I think of an Innovation & Design District, I find myself called to the imagery of hand-scrawled signs, fair trade coffee, and hairy toes in Birkenstocks. All of this, branded snacks, and more will soon be available at the new Trader Joe's currently under development. This opening is part of a larger Innovation & Design District development plan ten years in the making. This may be the worst kept secret in Providence, but the Trader Joe's will be part of the new development going up on Wickenden between South Water and South Main Street.

The development on the East Side is not without controversy, however. Some say Wickenden is about to become a nightmare for commuters, as the Trader Joe's is arriving alongside a reduction in lanes for South Water Street. According to GoLocalProv.com, "the existing logjam of traffic trying to exit the city to get to the I-195 on-ramp in Fox Point will now be funneled into a single lane headed directly into a new retail development featuring what is expected to be a highly popular retailer." There are also concerns that the entrance of chains onto the commercial street will turn Wickenden away from its funky origins.

On the plus side, bike advocates are excited for the accessibility of the location by various mobilities. The Trader Joe's will also be extremely convenient for Brown Students. It's only a twelve-minute walk from the Wayland Arch, as opposed to nearly twenty to Eastside Market or nearby Whole Foods.

Bike lane completed on South Water Street despite U. Objections

Katy Pickens – Originally published in *The Herald* on 10/29/2021

Construction on the South Water Street bike lane recently concluded, ending a saga of tensions and legal back-and-forth between the City of Providence, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation and local groups and businesses, including the University.

The lane was built as part of the Providence Great Streets Initiative, an effort by the city to make streets more accessible for pedestrians and vehicles other than cars. RIDOT requested that the City halt construction until the project received approval from the Federal Highway Administration, but ultimately work on the

trail proceeded uninterrupted and the FHWA declined to intervene.

Businesses along South Water, the University, RISD and community leaders cosigned a letter Oct. 1 to RIDOT asking for construction to be stopped because of traffic considerations and safety concerns with the design of the two-way bike path. One lane of traffic was closed off in September to create the bike trail and additional parking along South Water Street.

The group of signatories had concerns that this would increase traffic congestion extending onto nearby streets.

>> S. WATER ST. continued pg. 8



Juniperus Virginiana;
Johannis Rock Preserve,
Barrington RI.

By Marin Warshay

Features

Superman Building's Kryptonite: a Lack of Imagination

Thomas Wilson

After over 8 full years of vacancy, Providence's Superman Building is once again involved in seemingly unlikely redevelopment rumors. In September, GoLocalProv.com reported that High Rock Development, LLC had submitted a development plan to state authorities that involved \$215 million to turn the former office building into a set of residences that would – in High Rock's own words – “provide much-needed housing in Providence.” Since September, very little has been heard about the project, making it feel as though these plans for Providence's architectural icon have cooled off.

The Industrial National Bank Building, more commonly known as the Superman Building, has occupied Providence's urban imagination since the early 20th century. In 1928, the building was constructed for the Industrial Trust Company in an art-deco style that was prevalent in many growing cities. The setbacks, or staggered ledges, on the building were meant to let light down from above. Architects included these as they were optimistic that Providence was soon to be a booming metropolis where skyscrapers would be so prevalent that setbacks for light would be necessary. Even the nickname for the building, which stems from its likeness to a prominent building from the Superman comics, represents the

ways in which Providence saw itself through the building's reflection.

If we fast forward to 2013, when Bank of America left the building, we can still see the Superman Building as an indicator of where Providence's self-image may have been. Following the Great Recession in 2008, the building was abandoned and left in poor condition. While Providence has recovered from much of the typical post-industrial decline that was felt through New England, there are still financial issues for the city. Similarly, the Superman Building still remains empty, standing as a symbol of a city that has yet to fully recover from an economic downturn.

Since it has been vacated, the Superman Building seems to have been trapped in a cycle of redevelopment proposals amounting to nothing. The list of formerly rumored tenants includes companies like Samsonite and Hasbro. Proposals from these tenants have varied from those who simply wanted to renovate the building's offices to plans to tear the building down and start from scratch. Recently, there have even been calls from local politicians, like Ward 1 Councilman Goncalves, to invoke eminent domain and have the city reclaim the building. Each of these proposals has been blocked by a hesitancy to use any large amounts of



The Superman Building , submitted by Thomas Wilson from Trip Advisor.

public funds to meet these goals.

It's unclear what could change the current state of the Superman Building, outside of several hundred million dollars falling out of the sky. Today, the building still stands as an iconic representation of Providence's post-industrial decline; in fact, many who visit the city may be unaware that the building is even abandoned. At some point, the question must be asked: do we have to do anything with it? Why not let the Superman Building stand as a monument to both what Providence once saw as possible for itself and also to what decline has done to this image?

Ultimately, the building will likely be redeveloped in one form or another, but if the Fane Tower is coming to reshape Providence's skyline (and it seems like it might be) it could be refreshing to let the Superman Building live on as a relic dedicated to the history of its city and its imagination.

Features

Summer Internship Reflection: Hanna Wells

Written and Photographed by Hanna Wells

During my summer internship with the City of East Providence Planning Department, my task was to implement a bike lane on an infamous segment of First Street, a short stretch spanning three blocks between the end of the Redman Bridge and the beginning of the East Bay Bike Path. Since it is already used similarly to a bike path, First Street was a natural candidate for official transformation. However, as East Providence's first bike path, it was met with fire and fury (a.k.a. several irritated residents).

Part of the due diligence of the bike path project was a month-long pilot, during which the street would be striped and flexposts would be set up. The purpose of this pilot was to conduct research on usage, and compare it with data collected before the pilot, which would better inform the city council's decision regarding a permanent bike path implementation. The debacle on the bike path started before the pilot even began: wouldn't this temporary change (which made the street a one-way) entirely disrupt traffic flows? I prepared a presentation to be presented at

a City Council meeting, hoping to garner support of a councilman who was still undecided—the council was otherwise split evenly on the issue. At the end of this meeting, the Council voted to shorten the pilot to one-month, significantly shorter than the originally proposed three-month long test run.

I spent most of my summer on First Street, observing, counting, and note taking, working under the shade of the Black Duck Tavern in the morning, and in the blaring sun in the afternoon. I tallied approximately one car going down the one-way the wrong way for every twenty. I watched cars drive in the bike lane. I conversed with supporters and appreciated their thumbs up, and I politely responded to the frequent curses and rants. One resident took it upon herself to observe the traffic across the street from me. I found out she was a known character in the city (formerly a city council member), and saw myself on Facebook Live, dubbed “data girl.” Colleagues of mine suggested that the black truck that had gone the wrong way down the street too many times during a two-hour period was probably planted there to get the streamer's followers riled up. Still, drivers were adjusting to the new traffic pattern within two weeks (I should know—I counted the incidents). Despite having the Mayor and Planning Department on my side, the Council decided after two weeks to end the pilot early



due to perceived chaos. It took the striping company three more weeks to get around to sandblasting the paint off the roads, so the pilot did run over a month in the end.

Regardless of the outcome, the First Street Pilot Project was a success: it got the City, and its residents, thinking about cycling, bike safety, and alternative street plans. The Department of Public Works and the Planning Department have been working together to ensure that future roadways are analyzed as candidates for mixed use purposes. For First Street, there are plans underway that may appeal to drivers and cyclists alike. As for myself, my internship was a success. I decided to continue working with the planning department throughout the school year. Parts of the summer project were nothing short of scenes from “Parks and Rec,” but more importantly I learned a lot about local government. And as for the swears and insults—I didn't take that personally, it's just one form of civic engagement.



...Continued

MONUMENT cont. S. Water Street cont.

Ava: Can you elaborate on that?

Sam: The idea is that monuments are always meant to reflect the people who construct them - uphold the ideas that they want to uphold. So, when Brown contributes to Providence's larger landscape with a bunch of Roman statues and no Narragansett memorials, it's telling Providence that we value some masculine, dominant, white scholar over Narragansett people who are still living here and actually have connections to this land. It's kind of a settler-colonial thing to do to absolve guilt by not recognizing this and thinking that people are just not living here - there are Narragansett people living in Providence and they are here.

Ava Schully: Agreed! That is so important. And you think this project will help communicate this?

Sam Kimball: This project will hopefully make Robin Spears' work a little bit more known, but obviously there is still a lot of work to do. Because that's the issue with land acknowledgments right, recognizing existence does not magically solve all problems - but I'm hopeful it's a step in the right direction, towards meaningful, practical change

"We want to be clear; we do not oppose creation of a bicycle path along South Water Street, but we do not think it should come at the expense of a lane of travel which is needed for travel, deliveries, RIPTA service and which is the only access road to the interstate highway I-195 East," said the letter, which was also signed by representatives from the Jewelry District Association and restaurants along the bike path.

Albert Dahlberg, assistant vice president of government and community relations, signed the letter on behalf of the University.

"Our signature on the recent letter to RIDOT was intended to signal our concerns about safety issues associated with the current design of the South Water Street bike lane, particularly behind a Brown-owned building (121 South Main St.) during deliveries," University Spokesperson Brian Clark wrote in an email to The Herald, reiterating that the University ultimately supports the two-way bike path. 121 South Main St. houses University departments such as the School of Public Health.

Clark wrote that because the trail takes up a full lane of traffic, it impacts deliveries made to the University's building, which also houses Hemenway's Restaurant, since larger trucks are forced to "extend into a single, active lane of vehicle traffic immediately near a corner with limited visibility for

drivers traveling on the street."

RIDOT wrote a letter to Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza Oct. 6 asking to stop construction on the bike lane, citing the Maintenance Agreement — a 1999 agreement that put modifications to South Water Street under the jurisdiction of the Federal Highway Administration. RIDOT threatened a \$4.4 million lawsuit if the project went forward without approval from the FHWA.

"This is completely a legal matter that RIDOT responded to at the request of local businesses, including Brown University," wrote Charles St. Martin, RIDOT chief of public affairs, in an email to The Herald.

Construction pushed forward despite RIDOT's request. "The City has engaged the public in our Great Streets Plan from the start, ensuring the changing needs of our residents, the majority of whom overwhelmingly support our street

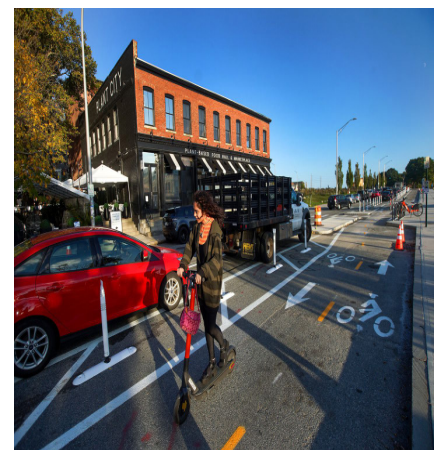


Photo of S. Water Street from The Boston Globe

...Continued

safety improvements, are met,” Elorza wrote in an email to The Herald.

Representatives from RIDOT and the FHWA met with legal counsel regarding the South Water Street Trail Oct. 19. The FHWA decided it would not “implement any penalties against the City of Providence for the breach of contract” or intervene in the project, according to an Oct. 21 statement from RIDOT.

“It is our opinion that taking a lane of traffic on South Water Street creates traffic and safety issues but the FHWA, which was a signatory to the contract, does not want to get involved,” the RIDOT statement said. “Therefore, we will not press the issue any further.”

Ward 1 Councilman John Goncalves ’13 MA’15 said he received “hundreds of emails from constituents in support” of the new bike lane, and that critical constituents’ primary concern was about the reduction from two lanes to one on South Water Street.

He also said that the bike lane would reduce noise along South Water Street and improve pedestrian safety.

In a recent statement to supporters, Goncalves emphasized the importance of investing in pedestrian and bike infrastructure. “I understand why cars and trucks are the primary priority of highway engineers,” Goncalves wrote. “But creating well-designed city streets that are accessible and safe for all residents takes far more care and

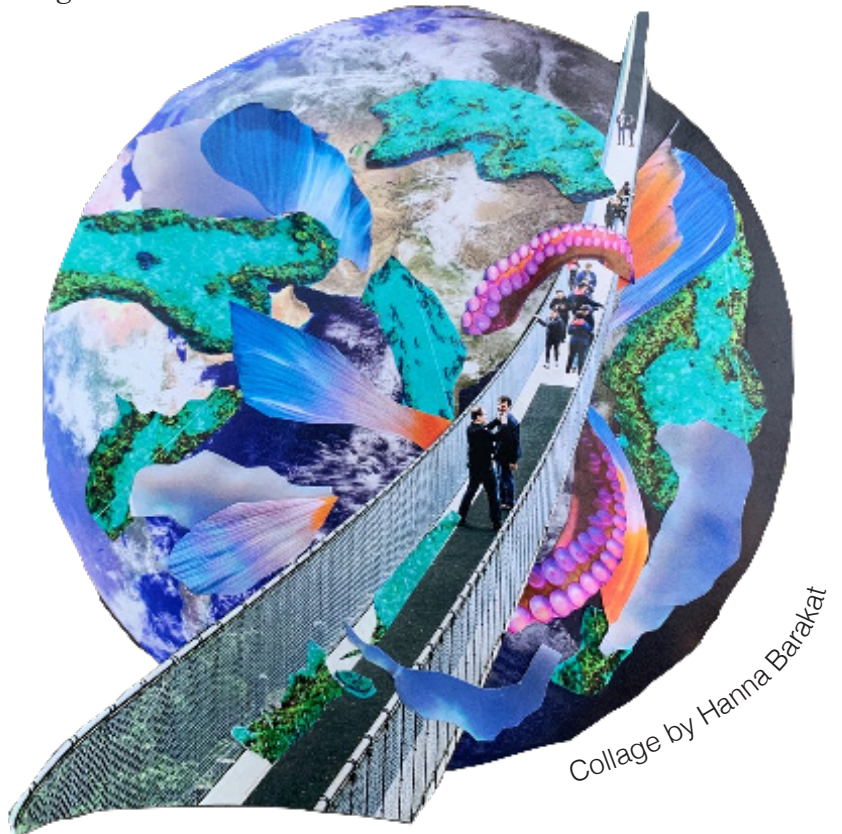
consideration.”

He added that new infrastructure can be an adjustment for residents and businesses, but that he thinks the bike path will improve the street in the end.

“There will certainly be bumps in the road, as folks get used to the new arrangement,” Goncalves wrote, “but ultimately, this infrastructure will create a myriad of benefits for neighborhood residents.”

Note from the Editor: It should be noted that following the University’s decision to oppose the new street design, a group of Brown faculty led by URBN director Samuel Zipp sent a letter objecting to this decision to

President Christina Paxson and Vice President Russell Carey. The University responded in the form of a letter to Providence Director of Planning Bonnie Nickerson. There, they explained that Brown is not in opposition to the creation of a bicycle lane along South Water Street and is even highly supportive of bike lanes in general, but objected to the bike lane on account of safety concerns. The logistics of delivery trucks reaching a Brown-owned building (121 South Main Street- which houses Hemmenway’s Restaurant) amidst cyclists and other mobilities was cited by the University to be an “unecessary safety hazard.”



Collage by Hanna Barakat

Just For Fun

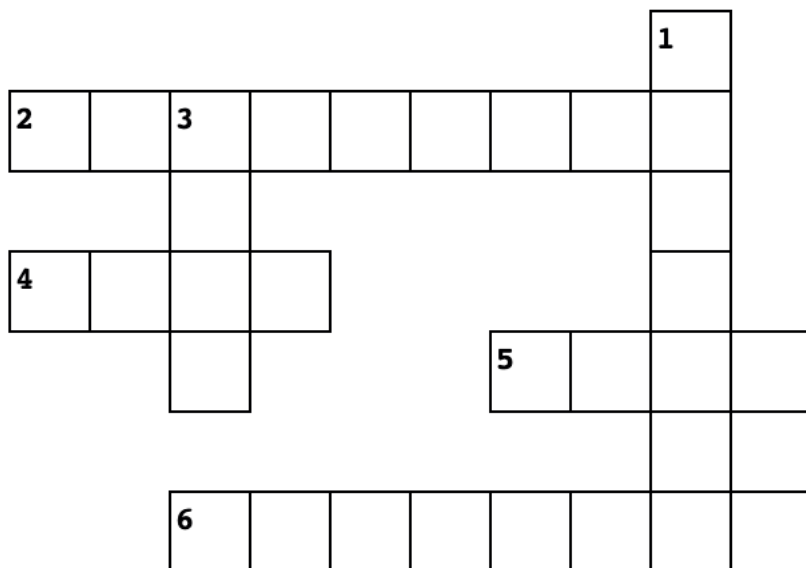
From the DUG!!

At an unbelievable 7 members (that's basically a graduating class), The Urban Studies Department of Undergraduate Students is bigger than ever! Since so many of us are aspiring urban planners, we figured we'd share our totally realistic vision for a new transit system in Providence. Special thanks to Rose Weinbaum for sketching our ideas!



Crossword: URBN Profs Edition!!

*Solve this puzzle by matching the last name of your professors to their fun fact :)
Across*



2. "I am fascinated by the design and planning philosophies of utopian communities, past and present, and once considered joining an intentional community."
4. "I worked as a bike messenger."
5. "In my spare time I enjoy playing music. Right now I'm focused on the piano, but my first instrument was the trumpet and I've sung in a number of musical groups, including Opera Providence."
6. "I was once kidnapped by racketeers in Delhi."

Down

1. "I like running in my spare time. I like travelling to different cities, run half marathons or marathons, have a good meal or two, a little sightseeing and then come back. I am not super fast, and it actually isn't all that much fun while you run (especially towards the end of the race), but afterwards it feels great."
3. "I used to be a competitive Irish dancer (like, I used to travel to Irish dance competitions around the country when I was in high school)."

Across: 2. Osayimwese 4. Zipp 5. Azar 6. Wickland
Down: 1. Neumann 3. Yapp