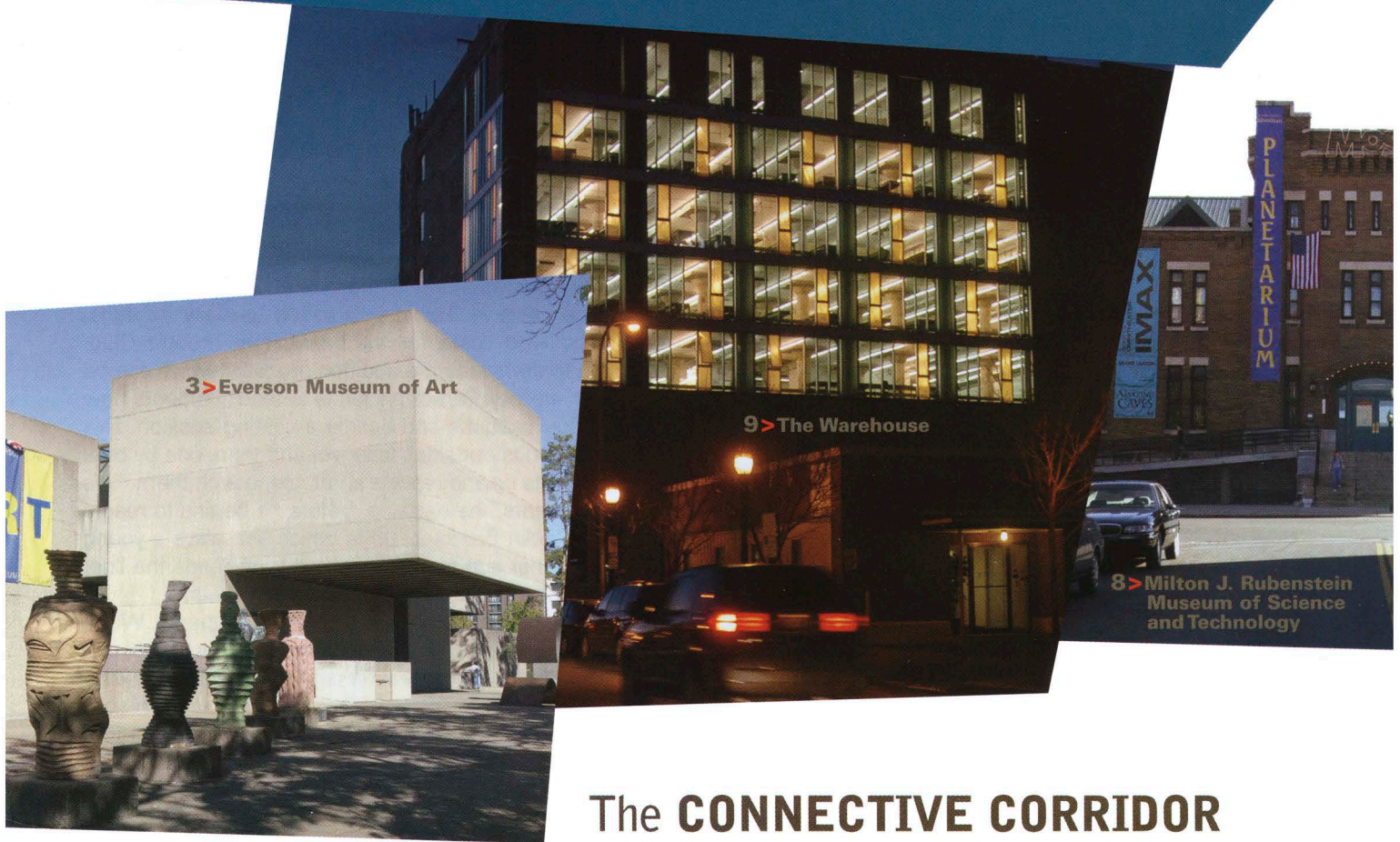


Connecting the Arts

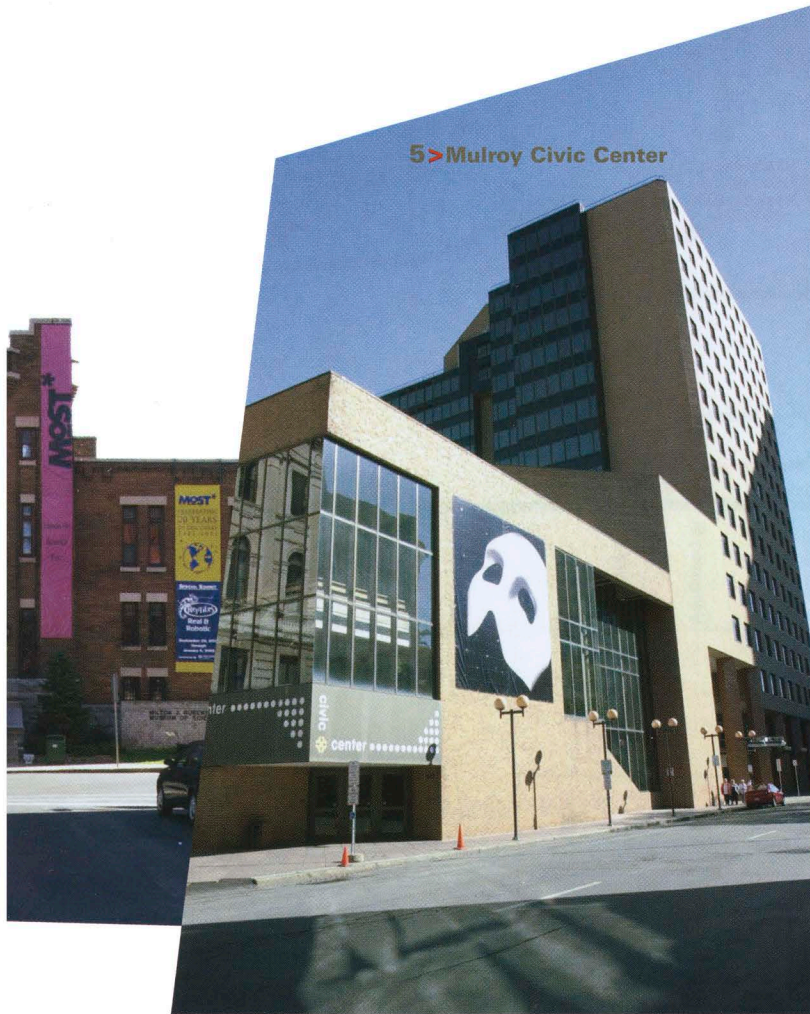


The **CONNECTIVE CORRIDOR** will link the arts and entertainment venues of the University and downtown Syracuse

By **Margaret Costello**

Photography by **Steve Sartori**

Last spring, Syracuse University and community partners announced plans to create the Connective Corridor, a three-mile pedestrian pathway that links Syracuse University arts and entertainment venues with those in downtown Syracuse. The project—which includes an accompanying public shuttle bus route—aims to enhance access and increase use of Syracuse’s rich artistic resources by developing a well-lit, aesthetically landscaped, and user-friendly trail to the various museums, theaters, exhibition spaces, and other arts areas.



One year later, the project has received more than \$10 million in public and private funding and has launched a design competition to attract some of the nation's top design firms to develop a master plan for the corridor's conceptual and physical creation. "This is a tremendously exciting project," Chancellor Nancy Cantor says. "Syracuse has a well-earned reputation as a crucible for innovative thought. The Connective Corridor will enhance this by facilitating the convergence of our many talents and energies."

The project buzz has stirred to action those most crucial to its successful completion: campus and community members. More than 200 community leaders and residents attended public sessions the University sponsored in December to gather feedback and ideas about the project. "We had a much larger turnout than expected, and all areas of the community were represented—businesspeople, church leaders, members of community organizations, residents, and government officials," says

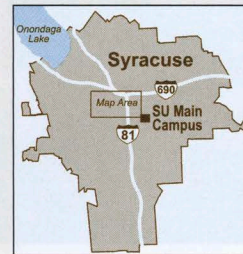
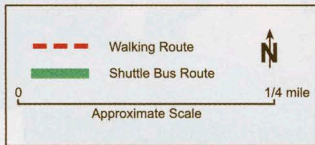
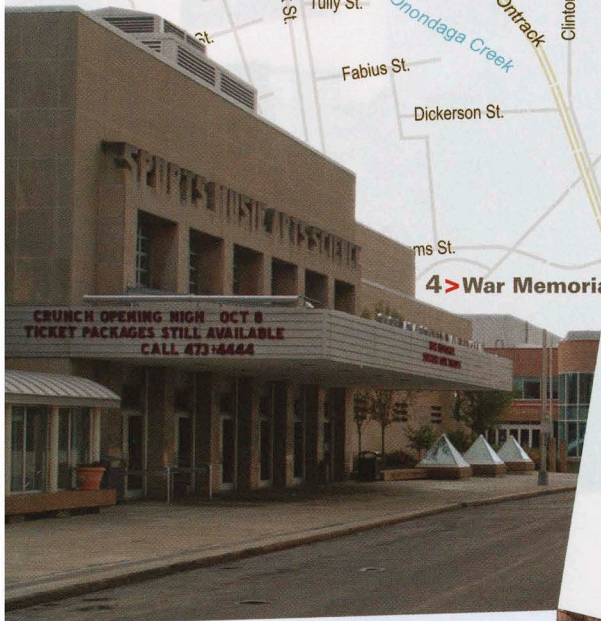
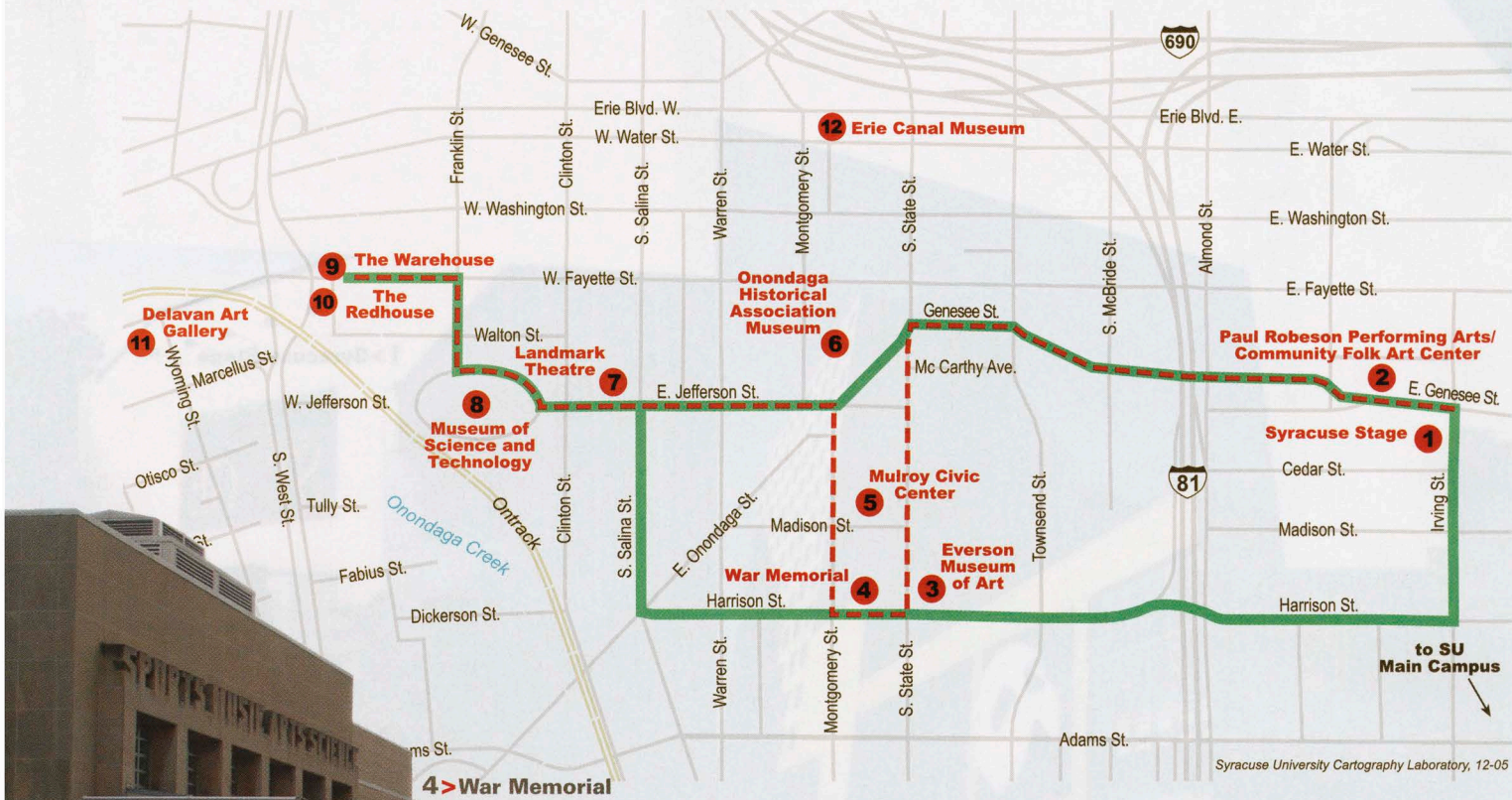
Eric Persons, director of the Office of Engagement Initiatives, who coordinated the meetings. "We wrote down their visions of what the corridor can be as well as their concerns, and we passed this information along to the design firms."

Among community members' top concerns are:

- > changing the current physical and/or mental perception of the Route 81 overpass as a division within the city;
- > ensuring safety along the corridor;
- > providing family-friendly activities and venues;
- > creating more green space;
- > improving signage, especially relating to the area's unique role in history; and
- > bringing more retail businesses and restaurants to downtown.

The University also held focus groups with Syracuse high school students to find out what would attract them to the corridor.

SU campus members, too, are developing ways to contribute their ideas and talents to the project.



7>Landmark Theatre



11>Delavan Art Gallery

12>Erie Canal Museum

Last fall, students from across the University began research related to the arts corridor, and efforts will continue during the spring and summer semesters to coincide with the project's design competition. Last semester, a transportation planning class in the L.C. Smith College of Engineering and Computer Science studied the flow rates of cars, traffic congestion levels throughout the day, and driver behavior along the three-mile route. Industrial design students in the College of Visual and Performing Arts are exploring design concepts to reflect the creative energy along the corridor. Fine arts students are investigating the historical preservation of a downtown church. An S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications class is assessing the public's perception of the corridor area. Students in the School of Information Studies are exploring the feasibility of installing interactive kiosks along the corridor. The results of the projects will be posted online at connectivecorridor.syr.edu for the general public and will also be shared with the design firms competing to win the corridor contract.

Others are expressing their support and interest in the project through financial donations. For example, National Grid pledged \$1 million to get the design competition and project planning started, and elected officials secured federal funding to assist in road improvements and public transportation. The University is heading up a fund-raising

campaign to help pay for kiosks, lighting, landscaping, and other elements that may be outlined in the final master plan chosen through the competition.

The University has hired architectural and design professional Casey Jones to oversee the competition, which was officially launched in March. A selection committee consisting of city officials, community members, and SU representatives will select the four most qualified design firms to participate in the competition. Jones coordinates the communication and information sharing among the public, regulatory and government officials, and the design firms, so that the public's ideas can be incorporated into the final designs. "All around the country, towns are grappling with the issue of how to knit their communities back together and create more vital, pedestrian-friendly environments," Jones says. "The lighted path of Syracuse's Connective Corridor will become a beacon that others will follow." The design teams will have about two months to develop their plans, which will then be presented to the public for a six-week review.

"Bringing downtown and the University closer together could have a transformative effect," Jones says. "The corridor could be the catalyst that makes everything happen. Cities that have a good integration between 'town' and 'gown' are routinely voted the best American cities to live in. Who wouldn't want to be the best?"