

---

### Jane Jacobs and the Future of New York

Curators: Elizabeth Werbe (direction), Christopher Klemek and Grady Turner

---

Municipal Art Society, New York

25 September 2007 to 5 January 2008

On 25 September, the Municipal Art Society's exciting new exhibition "Jane Jacobs and the Future of New York" opened in the Urban Center Galleries of the MAS in New York. Sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, this ambitious show reevaluates the legacy and values of renowned urban activist Jane Jacobs through the lens of the city of today and tomorrow using images, text and multimedia. This interactive exhibit explores contemporary New York through Jacobs's groundbreaking views on the elements of a healthy city, the value of small blocks, the importance of civic activism and the benefits of a diverse and dynamic neighborhood. It also encourages citizen involvement by helping visitors to engage in community-building efforts in their own neighborhoods. It is the centerpiece of a major MAS campaign aiming to energize a new generation of New Yorkers to observe and recognize the best of their city and become citizen activists advocating for positive change.

In her seminal book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs famously articulated the magic of large cities and the magnitude of the social destruction that can be caused by ill-conceived redevelopment plans. Jacobs's writings and public advocacy are best-known for having successfully opposed urban planner Robert Moses's plans to bulldoze large portions of historic downtown to build the Lower Manhattan Expressway (LOMEX) in the 1960s. In doing so, she changed the way we look at cities and showed us the wonders that arise in communities of every sort.

Highlighting the context and continued relevance of Jacobs's work, the exhibit draws visitors' attention to the many elusive elements that together make a vibrant city. The final station in the exhibit is a purpose-built website providing interactive maps, tools and resources designed to promote communication and action among activists for a sustainable future.



View of the exhibition *Jane Jacobs and the Future of New York*,  
Municipal Art Society, New York  
Photograph: Giles Ashford

A series of public programs with panelists during the fall will accompany the exhibit and continue to expand on its message by promoting provocative discussion and further action on a range of topics related to Jane Jacobs's legacy and the future of planning, zoning and development in New York City.

Jane Jacobs believed that everyone can contribute to advocating for a more livable city, and MAS hopes that the exhibit, public programs and interactive website will encourage viewers to do just that.

Media related to the exhibition:

Jo Steffens, Timothy Mennel, Christopher Klemek, eds., *Block by Block: Jane Jacobs and the Future of New York*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007, 64 pp., 12 color and 10 b/w illus. \$17.95, ISBN 1568987714  
[www.futureofny.org/home](http://www.futureofny.org/home)

John Casey  
New York