

**Lifelong Learning Collaborative Spring 2026 Course Syllabus:
Explore Providence's Public Art, Meet Jane Jacobs,
and Co-Lead a Walking Conversation**

**Shriners Center, Friday mornings: 10:00 – 12:00
March 20 – May 8**

Coordinators:

Gayle L. Gifford
401-316-4695
gaylegifford@gmail.com

Catherine B. Hurst
617-851-9507
catherine.b.hurst@gmail.com

"We need art, in the arrangements of cities as well as in the other realms of life, to help explain life to us, to show us meanings, to illuminate the relationship between the life that each of us embodies and the life outside us. We need art most, perhaps, to reassure us of our own humanity."

*-- Jane Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities**

Course Description: Providence, the Creative Capital, has an abundance of public art. It's one of the amenities that add to the fabric of great cities as championed by journalist and city activist Jane Jacobs in the 1960's and 70's. Since 2007, her work and writing have been celebrated in cities worldwide during the first weekend in May when "walking conversations" take place. Providence is one of those cities. And you will be part of those conversations.

In this class we will explore four themes of public art in Providence: the murals of Wickenden Street, the murals of the downtown area, the memorials and monuments of the riverfront and downtown Providence, and the embellishments (stained glass, sculptures, bas reliefs, architectural details, etc.) on downtown's great old buildings. You'll learn how to facilitate a walking conversation with a team. All of this will lead to facilitating a walking conversation for Jane's Walk. The walks led by our LLC class last year were great fun and well-attended.

NOTE: Class members need to be able to walk in an urban setting where sidewalks and pathways may be uneven. A requirement of this class is for members to co-lead one public walking conversation in a festival called Jane's Walk on May 1-3.

Format: There will be a mix of formats including classroom discussion, guest lectures, and walking conversations on Wickenden Street and downtown Providence.

Coordinators:

Gayle Gifford co-facilitated the popular Fox Point Jane's Walk class in 2025. She is a retired consultant to nonprofits and has participated in many Providence Jane's Walks. She was adjunct faculty for many years in master's programs at both Simmons University and Brown University. Gayle chairs LLC's special project team on organizational alliances.

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Catherine Hurst has been a Providence walking tour guide for 14 years and this will be her 12th LLC course as a coordinator. Her career has included editing a college alumnae magazine, technical writing and editing, direct marketing consulting, teaching marketing and management to undergraduates at Simmons University, and managing the box office of a theatre in Santa Fe, NM. She has conducted two previous Jane's Walks (one on the Providence riverfront and one at North Burial Ground).

Bibliography

Books

Caranci, Paul F. & Caranci, Heather A., ***Monumental Providence: Legends of History in Sculpture, Statuary, Monuments and Memorials***. Gloucester, RI: Stillwater River Publications, 2015.

- Ch. 7: The Dorrance Building
- Ch. 8: Providence City Hall
- Ch. 9: Federal Courthouse - Post Office
- Ch. 11: Turks Head Building
- Ch. 19: Downtown
- Ch. 26: Burnside Park
- Ch. 34: Memorial Park

Freeman, Robert & Vivienne Lasky. ***Hidden Treasure: Public Sculpture in Providence***. Providence: Rhode Island Bicentennial Foundation, 1980.

Jacobs, Jane, ***The Death and Life of Great American Cities***. New York: Random House, 1961.

Kanigel, Robert, ***Eyes on the Street: the life of Jane Jacobs***. New York: Alfred A . Knopf, 2016.
(comprehensive biography)

Laurence, Peter L., ***Becoming Jane Jacobs***. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.
(focuses on her intellectual development and career leading up to her 1961 book)

Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Foundation, ***Outdoor Sculpture of Rhode Island***, 1999. (recommend pp. 1 – 23)

Simister, Florence Parker, ***Streets of the City: an anecdotal history of Providence***. Providence: the Mowbray Company, 1968.

- Market Square and the Providence Tea Party, p. 25
- Westminster Street, p. 127
- Dorrance Street, p. 129
- The Mall (Kennedy Plaza), p. 141
- The Arcade, p. 143

**Lifelong Learning Collaborative Spring 2026 Course Syllabus:
Explore Providence's Public Art, Meet Jane Jacobs,
and Co-Lead a Walking Conversation**

- The Bajnotti Fountain, p. 147
- The George M. Cohan Blvd., p. 157

Woodward, Wm McKenzie and Edward F. Sanderson, *Providence: a Citywide Survey of Historic Sources*. Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1986.

- Downtown, p. 9
- Fox Point, p. 16
- Civic Architecture (City Hall, Federal Building), p. 92
- Commercial Architecture (numerous downtown buildings), p. 104
- Ecclesiastical Architecture (downtown churches), p. 116
- Inventory: Alphabetical listing of streets and their histories beginning on page 131

Articles and Reports

Ater, Renée with photography by Eric Sung. "Providence Commemorative Works Inventory." *City of Providence Department of Art, Culture, Tourism*. 2025. <https://artculturetourism.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/providence-commemorative-works-inventory-report-final-2025-11-20.pdf> (includes information on a number of the monuments on our list, and some interesting analysis of their diversity or lack thereof, and the challenge of maintenance)

Avenue Concept, The. "Adventures in Public Art, Explorer Edition." <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oFnH2BqFvMZnxKMR5V86tHPsGCEfykbEKLhQX8yPL-/edit?tab=t.0> (ways to think about public art)

City of Providence Department of Art, Culture, Tourism. "Art in City Life Plan: Charting a Future for Public Art in the City of Providence." 2018. https://artculturetourism.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2018.09.21_Art-in-City-Life-Plan_Final2.pdf

Providence Journal. "Rhode Island Monuments on the Move." 22 Jan 2015. <https://www.providencejournal.com/picture-gallery/news/local/2015/01/22/ri-monuments-on-the-move/740625007/> (history of the relocation of two of the monuments on our list)

Public Art Network Council. "Green Paper: Why Public Art Matters." *Americans for the Arts*. https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/PublicArtNetwork_GreenPaper.pdf

Websites

Hurst, Catherine B. "Marsden Perry's Skyscraper: The Union Trust Company Building." *Choosing Providence*. 9 Aug 2013. <https://choosing-providence.blogspot.com/2013/08/marsden-perrys-skyscraper-union-trust.html>

**Lifelong Learning Collaborative Spring 2026 Course Syllabus:
Explore Providence's Public Art, Meet Jane Jacobs,
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Mellon Foundation. "The Monuments Project." <https://www.mellon.org/article/the-monuments-project-initiative> (this first page has some great questions for how to think about monuments and memorials)

Pickens, Katy. "In Photos: The Many Faces of the Old Providence Journal Building." Providence Preservation Society. 28 Jan 2026. <https://ppsri.org/in-photos-the-many-faces-of-the-old-providence-journal-building/>

Project for Public Spaces. "Jane Jacobs." 2 Jan 2010. <https://www.pps.org/article/jjacobs-2> (good short summary of her life and key principles)

Providence Art Club. "Commemorating the Life & Legacy of Edward Mitchell Bannister." <https://providenceartclub.org/bannister-project/> (Click through to the Bannister.info page, and then click again to get to the Bannister Community Art Project: Inside the Sculptor's Studio pages)

Audio/Video

Dots on a Map. "The Coolest U.S.City You've Never Heard of. (Providence, Rhode Island.)" *YouTube*, 9 Dec 2025. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ODAQZbFjt4> (terrific visuals of Providence; a way to think about Providence as a beautiful city; includes a section on city murals starting at 20:48)

Goncalves, Councilman John, "Transforming Providence with Public Art," *YouTube*, 1 Jul 2025. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0S250eBNvo (a look at some of the Wickenden Street murals)

Providence Art Club. "The House That Jack Built - The Fleur de Lys, a National Historic Landmark." *YouTube*, 18 Jun 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x941u7QX4AI> (full detail on all the exterior elements of the Fleur de Lys Studios)

LLC Policies

Food: Food and drink may be consumed in the coffee room. Beverages with a lid are permitted in the classroom.

Parking: The parking lot is adjacent to the Shriners Center. You can park in any available space.

Cancellations: All information about class cancellations for any reason (including weather) will be communicated to the class by the coordinator through email.

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Week	Date	Content/Topics for Discussion	How	Who	Where
1	3/20	Welcome		Cathy & Gayle	Shriners Center
		Introductions	Favorite public art	Everyone	
		Overview of syllabus	Class		
		Glossary development	<u>Homework – define terms</u>	Assigned terms	
		Sense of place and role of public art	Small groups	Everyone	
2	3/27	Why Jane Jacobs & what is a Jane's Walk	Present & discuss		Shriners Center and in village
		Experience a Jane's Walk (abridged)	Walk and observations in Pawtuxet Village	Everyone	
		Outline the four walks; review homework assignment	<u>Homework – for walks 1 and 2, read the handouts and walk the walks</u>	Cathy & Gayle	
3	4/3	Ways of looking at art		Jenn Wilson, Director of Programming and Advocacy, New England Museum Association; RISD museum – freelance educator	Shriners Center
		Building embellishments		Cathy	
		Reminder re homework assignment	<u>Homework – for walks 3 and 4, read the</u>	Cathy & Gayle	

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Week	Date	Content/Topics for Discussion	How	Who	Where
			<u>handouts and walk the walks</u>		
4	4/10	Public art in Providence		Kamryn Hoag, Development and Communications Manager, The Avenue Concept	Shriners Center
		The role of monuments and memorials		Rebecca Noon, Deputy Director, Department of Art, Culture, and Tourism, City of Providence	
		Choose your walk, also day and time preferences			
5	4/17	Jane’s walk preparation – teams meet, develop questions and content	In class	Teams	Shriners Center
6	Week of 4/20	Orientation/training with Jane’s Walk Committee			TBD

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Week	Date	Content/Topics for Discussion	How	Who	Where
7	4/24	Prepare Jane's Walk			On site based on walk choice
8	5/1-3	Jane's Walk Weekend	Teams lead four walks over the weekend	Teams	Walking sites
9	5/8	Debrief walks & then celebrate!		Cathy & Gayle with class	Shriners Center