ROCKY’S FOLLY

Modernism, Urban Renewal, and Albany’s Empire State Plaza

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The Dynamic City: Futures for the Past | April 2, 2016
ALBANY’S EMPIRE STATE PLAZA
ALBANY AT HEIGHT OF URBANISM

Map of Albany, 1895

Pearl Street, 1951

Aerial photograph of low-rise rowhouses in South End, 1950s
ALBANY AT HEIGHT OF URBANISM

1. CAPITOL BUILDING
   Romanesque Revival, 1899

2. STATE EDUCATION BUILDING
   Beaux Arts, 1912

3. ALFRED E. SMITH BUILDING
   Art Deco, 1928

Aerial Photograph of Downtown Albany, 1951
ALBANY’S DECLINE

ALBANY’S POPULATION BY YEAR

Churchmen Lash South End Slums As ‘Shocking’ and ‘Disgraceful’
ROCKEFELLER TAKES ON “HISTORIC BUT SHABBY” ALBANY

“Historic but shabby fell short of properly symbolizing the spirit of a great and vital state.” - Nelson Rockefeller

Nelson Rockefeller and Queen Beatrix, 1959
URBAN RENEWAL

- WWII - 1970s: public efforts to revitalize aging and decaying inner cities
- Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954 provided federal funding
- Characterized by massive demolition, slum clearance, and rehabilitation
- Displaced 2 million people between 1964 and 1972
STATE SEIZES 98 ACRES IN DOWNTOWN ALBANY

State Buys 40 Blocks In Heart of Albany

Project Largest of Its Kind in Nation
SOUTH MALL DESIGN
SOUTH MALL DESIGN

Wallace K. Harrison

United Nations Building

Rockefeller Center
SOUTH MALL DESIGN
SOUTH MALL DESIGN: Influences

Le Corbusier’s Radiant City

Versailles
SOUTH MALL DESIGN: Influences

Brasilia
SOUTH MALL DESIGN: Art
SOUTH MALL CONSTRUCTION: Destruction and Displacement
SOUTH MALL CONSTRUCTION: Delays

Mid-1960s  1968  1970
Rockefeller Concedes State Housing Short of Mark
DEBATING THE DESIGN
INTEGRATION WITH URBAN ENVIRONMENT?
INTEGRATION WITH URBAN ENVIRONMENT?

“A fortress or fundamentalist mentality not only shuts itself off from dynamic influences originating outside but also, as a side effect, ceases influencing the outside world.” - Jane Jacobs