

Transportation ALTERNATIVES

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STATEMENT ON THE DEATH OF JANE JACOBS April 25, 2006

Jane Jacobs was a friend to cities at a time when they sorely needed one. Born in a dying industrial town, Ms. Jacobs had a keen sense of what was destroying cities. And she knew what could redeem them.

Ms. Jacobs prophesized that cities could serve the car or the pedestrian, but never both. For more than thirty years, community activists have held up her victories over the Lower Manhattan Expressway and the Spadina Expressway (in Toronto) as proof that vibrant neighborhoods can resist destructive car-centric planning.

Never losing her affinity for New York, Jane Jacobs spoke out for a car-free Central Park in 2003, saying, “I enthusiastically endorse the campaign to close Central Park’s loop drive to regular automobile traffic. We had the same sort of fight in Washington Square Park in the late 1950s and in my neighborhood here in Toronto a couple of years ago: same prediction of traffic chaos, same result of no chaos... Isn’t it curious that traffic engineers are so loath to learn something new even after repeated demonstrations?”

We are thankful for the life of Jane Jacobs. Those of us who consider ourselves her disciples will feel her absence profoundly, and with a sense of responsibility to fight for livable streets, car-free parks and dynamic public spaces.

Transportation Alternatives is a 5,500 member supported non-profit working for better conditions for walking, bicycling and environmentally sensible transportation in New York City.

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