

A TIMES UNION PUBLICATION

AUGUST 2016

Travel
special
section
pg.46

518 Life

the style issue



STYLE SOS

Need fashion help? Get it here

HOW WE DRESS

A local lookbook

VOGUE EATS

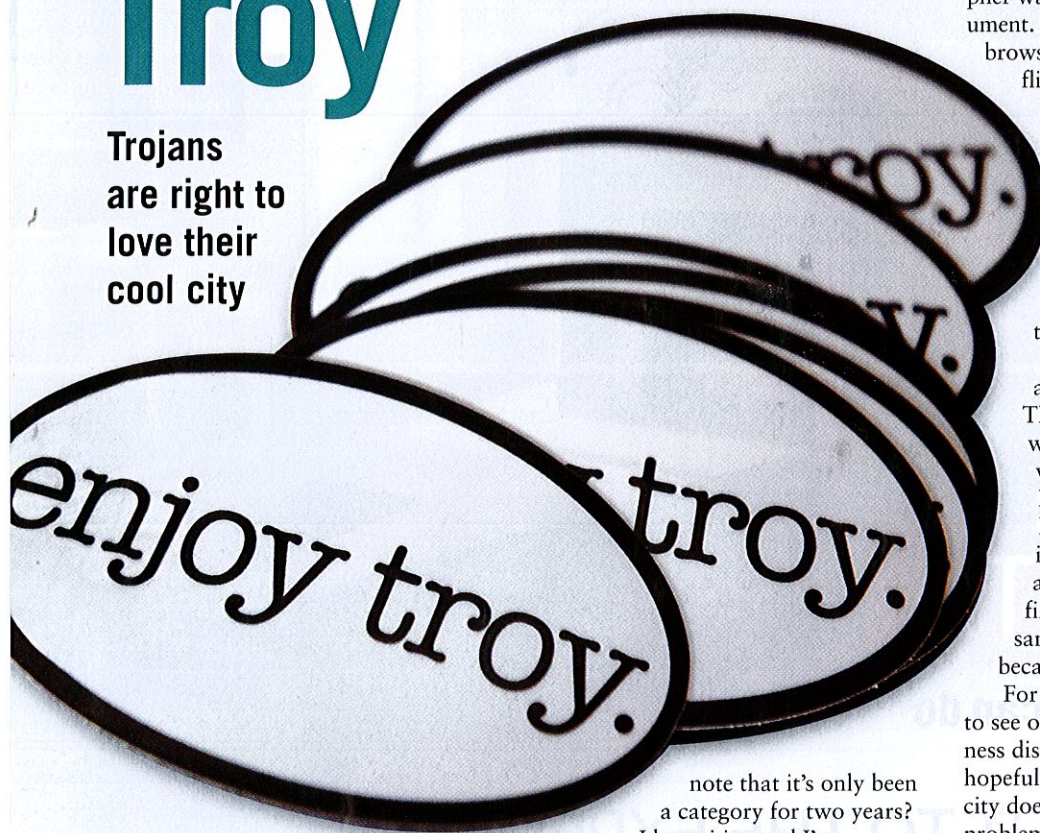
Out: coconut water. In: matcha tea

518 LIFE | THE STYLE ISSUE

518LIFEMAGAZINE.COM

Enjoying Troy

Trojans
are right to
love their
cool city



What is it with Trojans and Troy?

At Troy Cloth and Paper on River Street, you can find as many as 10 different T-shirts that celebrate the Colar City. "Troy is SAMTASTIC," one declares. Want retro cred? Here's the city name scrawled in an '70s baseball jersey font, or written like the "Tron" logo. And there's the Troybot, which is what you'd get if the Green Island Bridge went rogue, stood up, rearranged itself and zoomed over to Monument Square.

A week-plus worth of Troy fashions. And you know what? People wear them.

People in Troy love Troy. They want you to see them loving Troy. Troy makes them look cool, and they make Troy look cool. And the rest of us wish we could be as cool as Troy.

In the Times Union's Best of the Capital Region 2016 poll, readers voted Troy as "best urban community" for the second year in a row — and may I

note that it's only been a category for two years?

I love cities, and I've

long thought that the cities of the Capital Region are well suited for the new urbanism that is drawing young adults back into metropolitan centers. We've got a lot of the right ingredients: walkable, mixed-use districts, interesting neighborhoods, architecture with character, a sense of place and history. Over the past few years I've watched with admiration as Troy has become the downtown destination of the 518. And as an advocate for Albany, I'll admit I feel a little envy, too. What are they doing that we aren't?

I went over to downtown Troy one recent Friday to conduct a little out-of-office research at a sidewalk table with a wrap sandwich and a craft beer.

The sidewalks were lively on a workday afternoon: office workers, artsy types, students, the lady with the dog under her arm. Across the way, construction guys were spiffing up a building facade. Thanks to a street

tree and the restaurant's vintage metal awning, I sat in cool shade.

Afterward, I took a stroll, and the streets beckoned with wide sidewalks and great old architecture. A videographer was setting up a shot near the monument. Posters touted local arts events. I

browsed in a couple of quirky stores, flipped through clothing racks, bought some handmade soap.

And I felt what I've noticed on other visits to downtown Troy: It has energy. It feels like a place where interesting things are happening.

But I also noticed something else: It's not perfect. And that's what most encouraging.

Empty storefronts dot the area. Parking can be a pain. There's an uncomfortable gap where City Hall used to be, and where nothing replaced it. And I'm not even touching on Troy's larger problems, such as failing infrastructure that the city can't afford to fix. I'd be far from the first to note that Troy's renaissance has happened in spite of, not because of, city governance.

For the rest of us who would like to see our urban neighborhood business districts thrive, Troy's flaws are a hopeful sign. They're a reminder that a city doesn't need to solve every single problem before it can get something good going.

What *does* it need? People who care.

Troy's secret weapon seems to be the people who love the city and want to see it thrive. The ones who take a gamble — opening a shop, renting an apartment downtown, relocating a business — they're the pioneers who can help us reimagine a neighborhood. But they're not the only ones who matter. It also takes the rest of us putting our feet on the pavement: to shop, dine, come down to see what's happening — because that's part of what makes things happen.

Downtown Troy's revitalization is fueled by a sense of ownership, and, yes, civic pride. The fact that people love Troy is a big part of what makes Troy so lovable. Buzz works.

So go on, Trojans. Wear your shirts. They look good on you.



Akum Norder is an Albany writer.