

The Future of Urban Freeways

Repairing Our Cities, Restoring Our Neighborhoods



August 3, 2021

Sam Schwartz



Why Reexamine our Urban Highways?

How did it happen?

- 1930s: Private streetcars go out of business
- 1930s: Automakers, AAA, etc. form National Highway Users Conference: “highways are a public good”
 - “Free Roads” → “Freeways”
- 1930s-1970s: Redlining (induced “blight”)
- 1939: “Futurama” at World’s Fair
- “Urban Renewal” movement
- 1947 map, 1955 Dept of Commerce “yellow book”
- 1956: Federal Air Highway Act – build out toll-free network
 - 90-10 funding split (previous bills had 50-50 or 60-40)

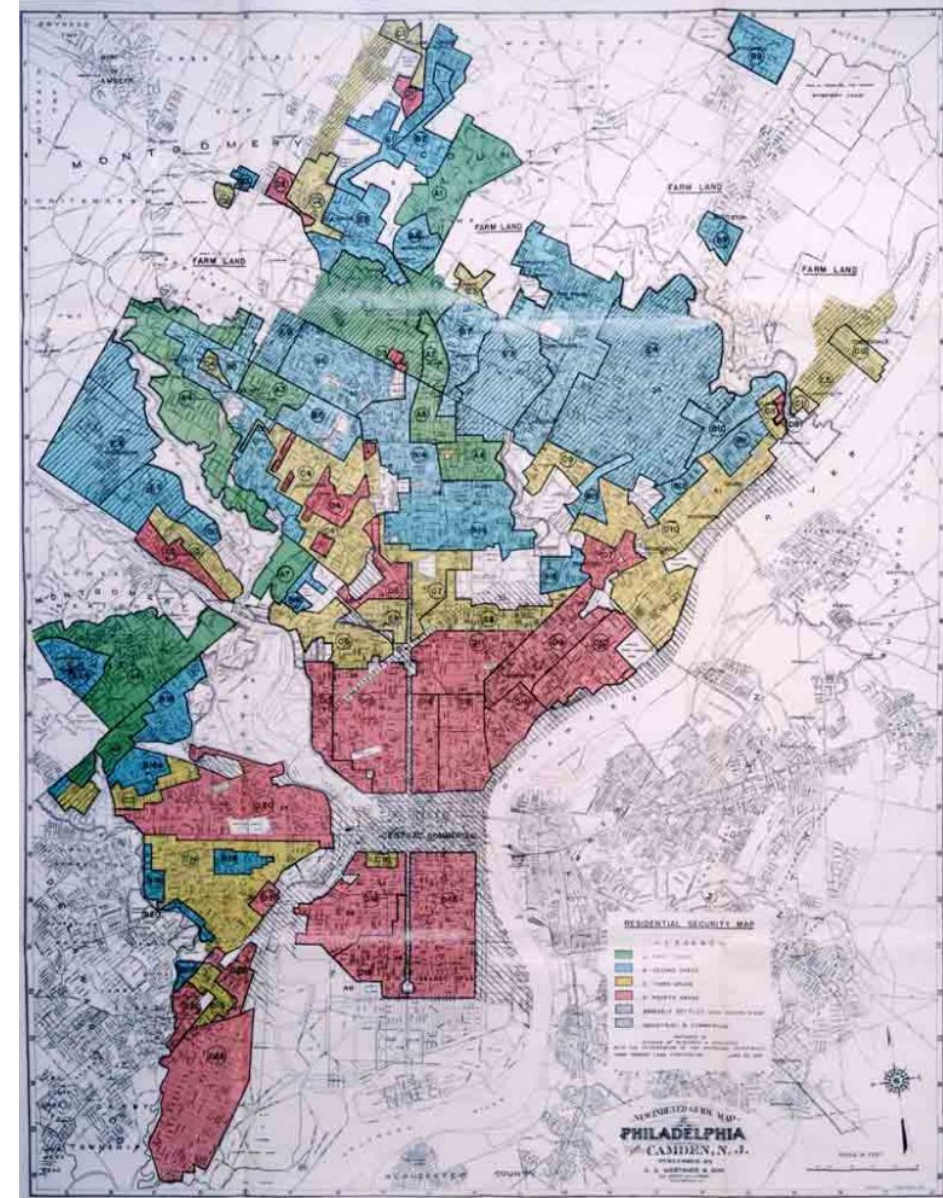


West End, Cincinnati, OH

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“Redlining” map of Philadelphia, PA

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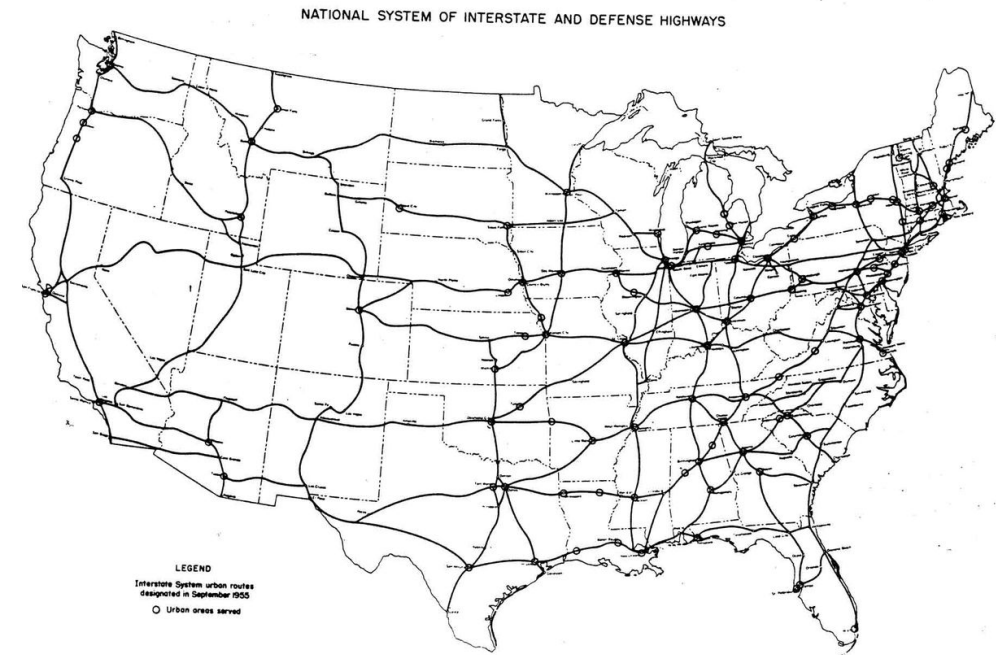


“Futurama” at 1939 World’s Fair

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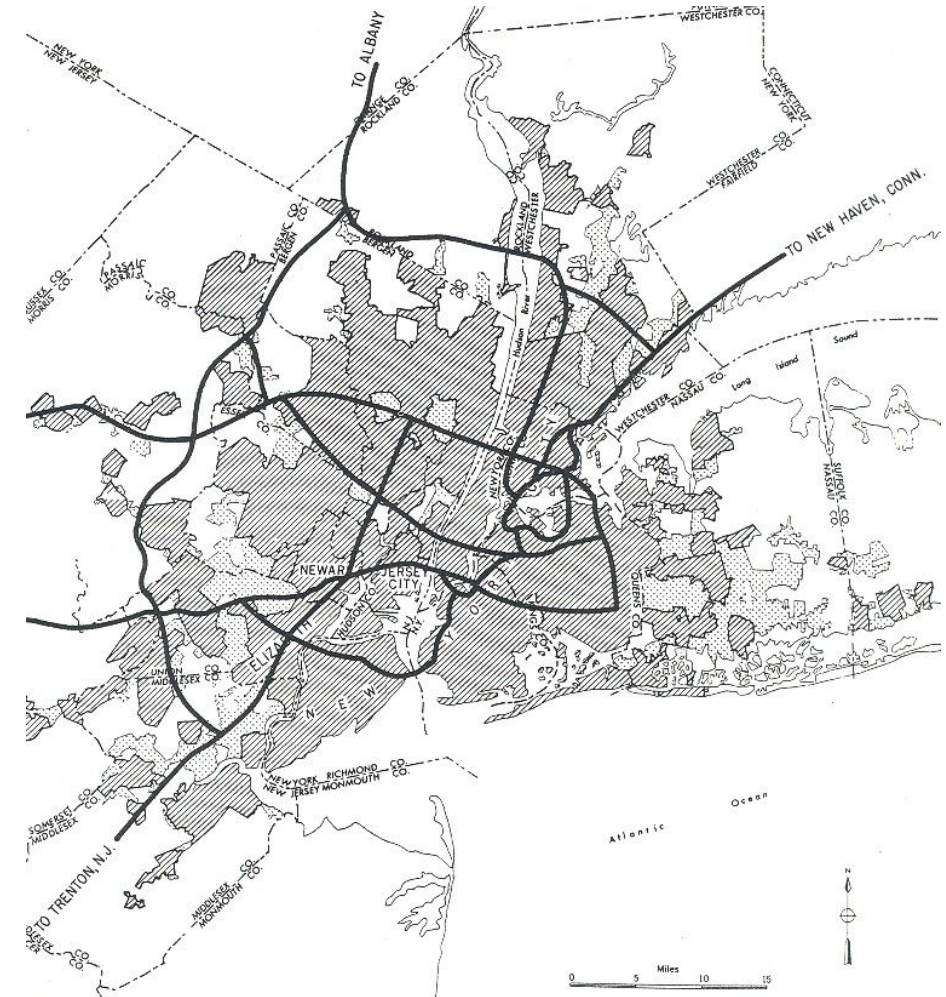


1955 “yellow book” map of Interstate Highway System

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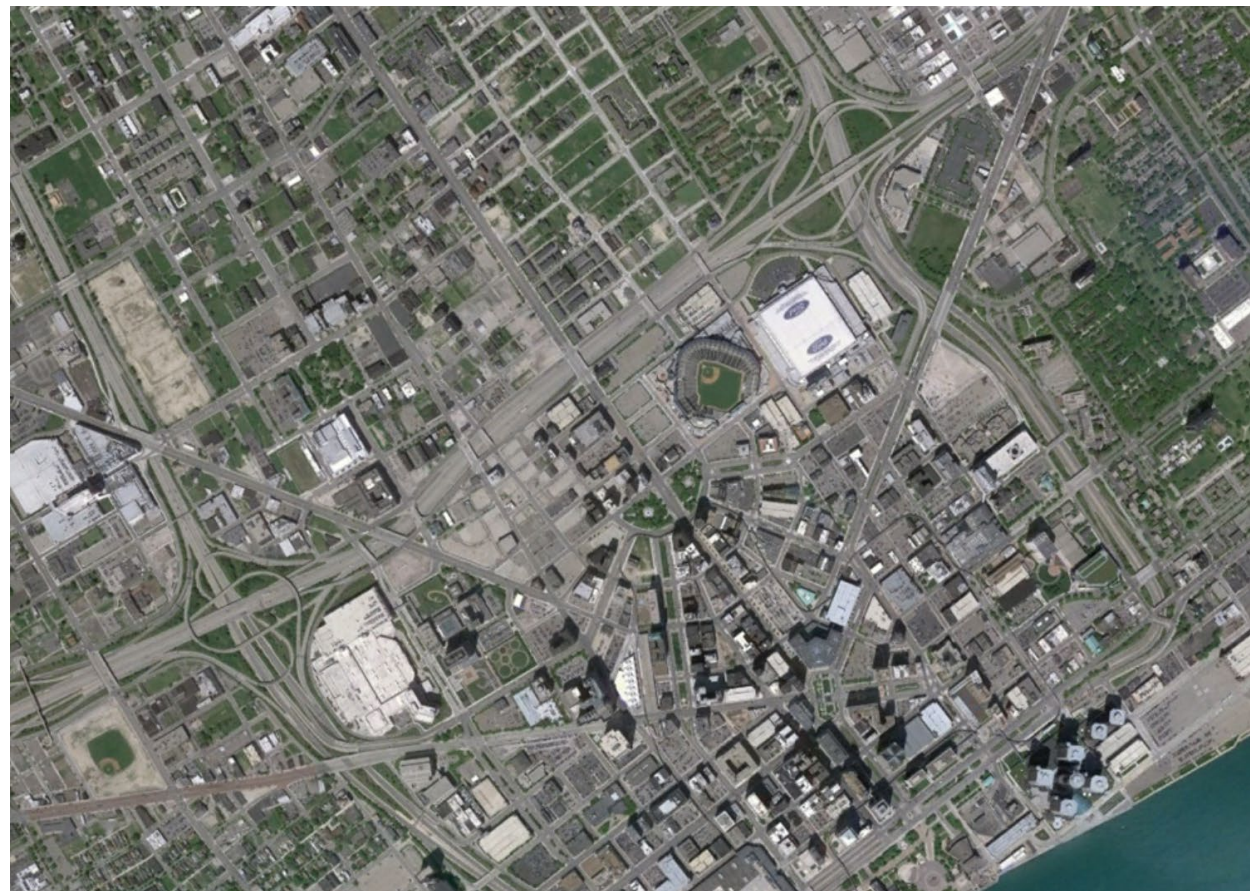
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1955 “yellow book” close-up of NYC region

Detroit: 1951 | 2010



Credit: Shane Hampton
(<http://iqc.ou.edu/2014/12/12/60yrsmidwest/>)

Why Reexamine our Urban Highways?

What were the impacts?

- Isolated + divided neighborhoods
- Physical + psychological barriers to access opportunity
- Further economic harm to disadvantaged neighborhoods
- Reduced opportunities for physical activity + recreation
- Pollution + asthma rates
- Urban heat island + stormwater issues
- Maintenance costs / SOGR

What can we do?

- Highway removal
- Highway narrowing
- Highway-to-boulevard
- Capping
- Tunneling
- Design mitigation

What can we do?

Highway Removal – Inner Loop East (Rochester, NY)



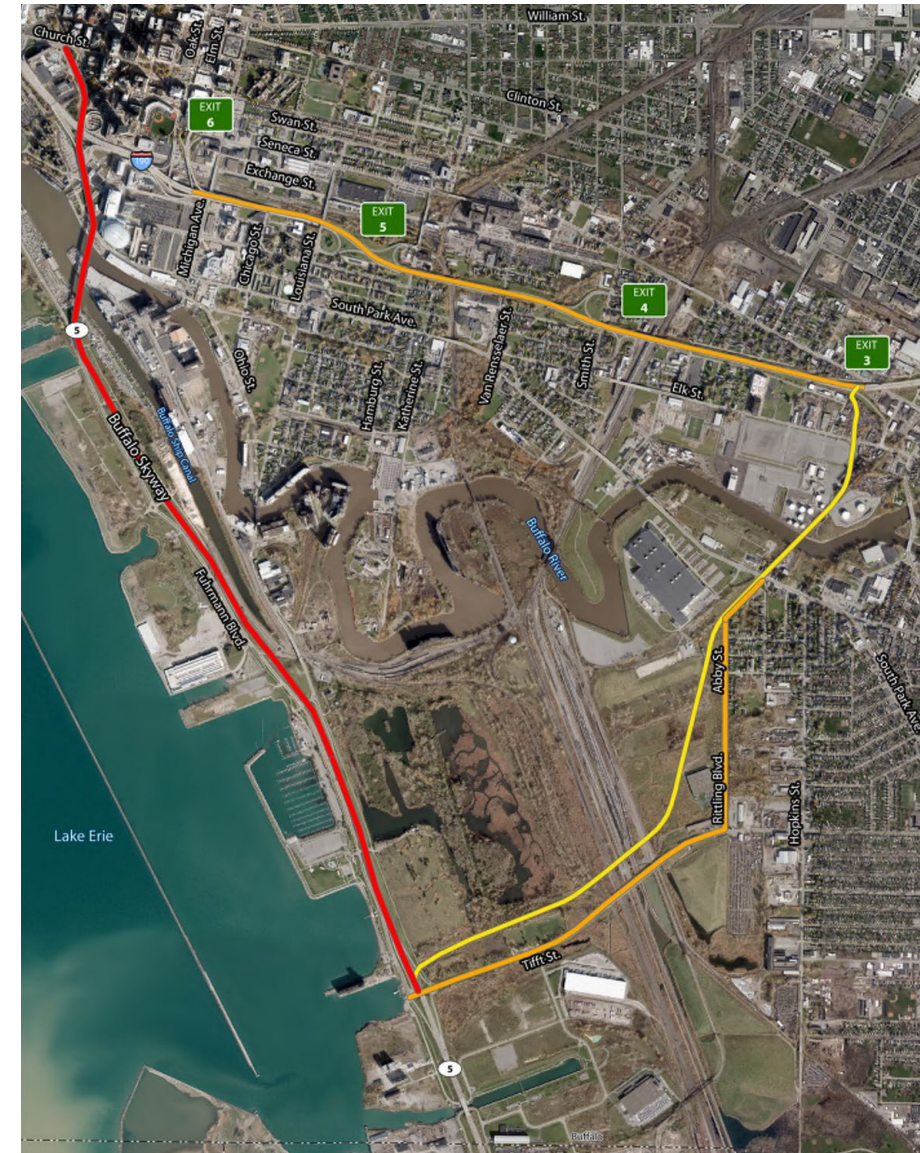
Credit: New York Times



Credit: CNU

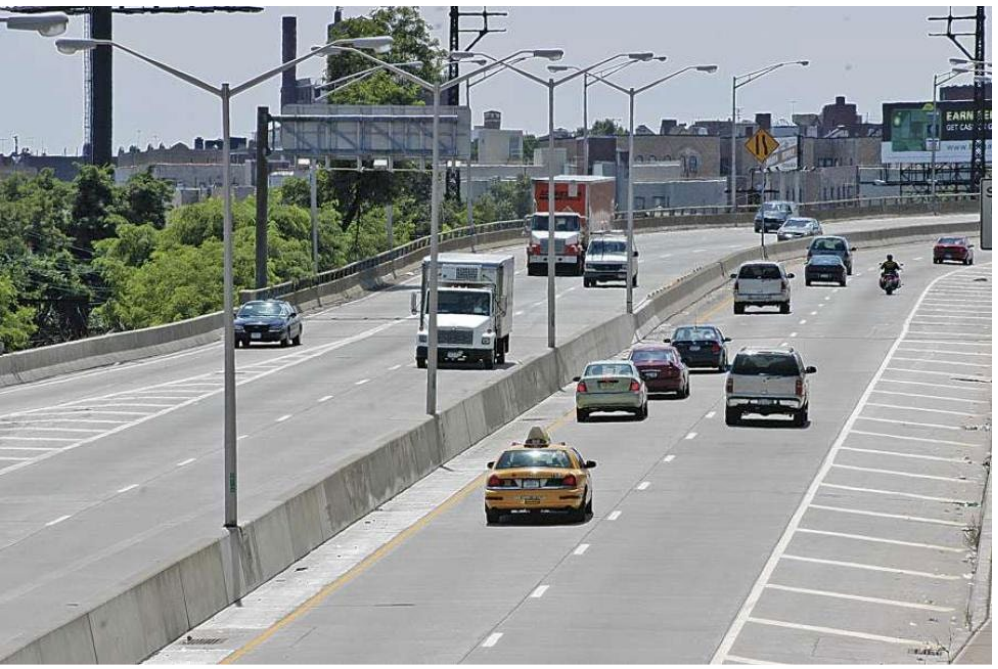
What can we do?

Highway Removal (potentially) – Buffalo Skyway (Buffalo, NY)



What can we do?

Highway-to-Boulevard – Sheridan Expwy (Bronx, NY)



Credit: CNU



Credit: Office of NY Governor

What can we do?

Capping – Highway 401 (Windsor, ON) / Klyde Warren Park (Dallas, TX)



What can we do?

Tunneling – Alaskan Way Viaduct (Seattle, WA)

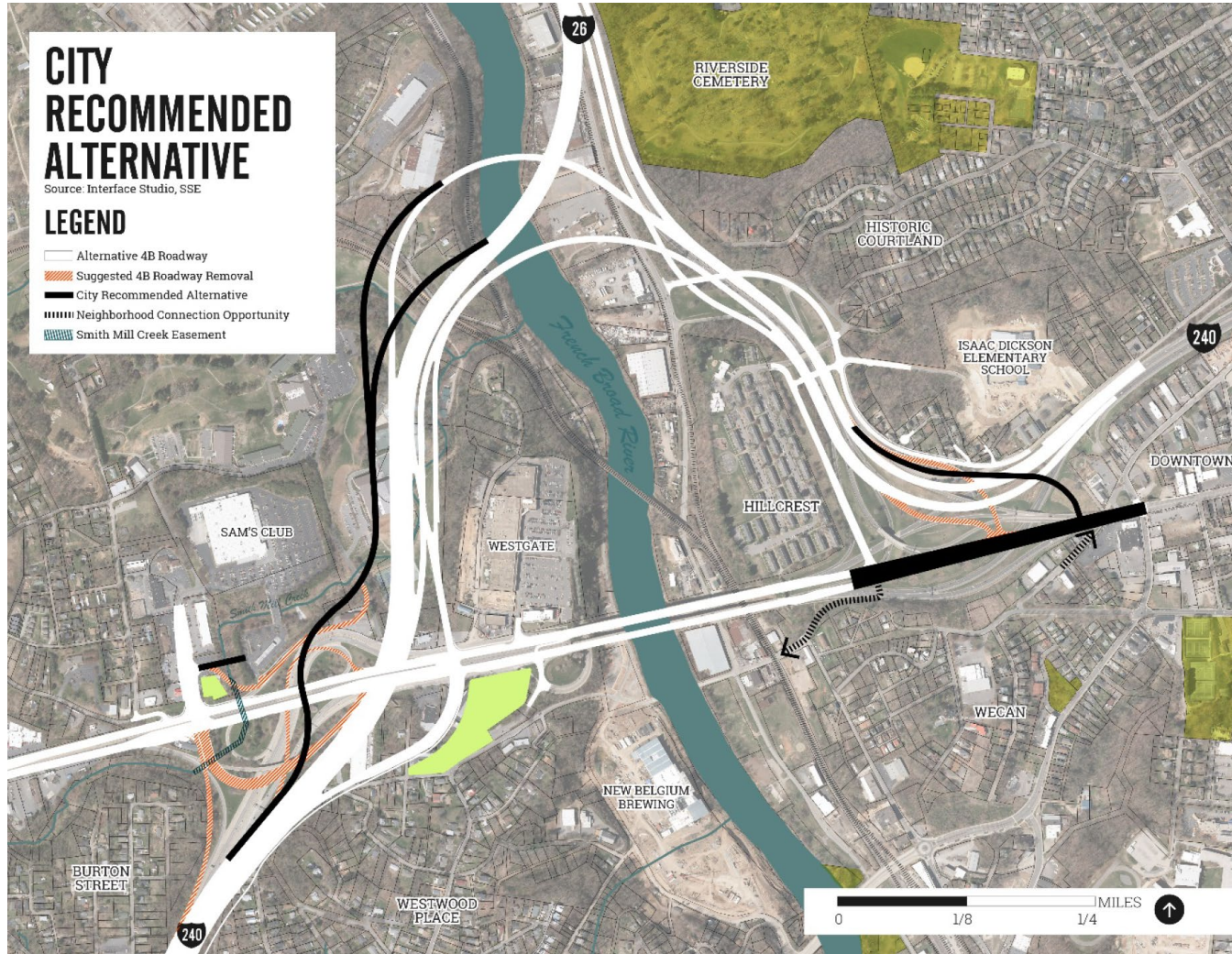


Credit: Grist.org

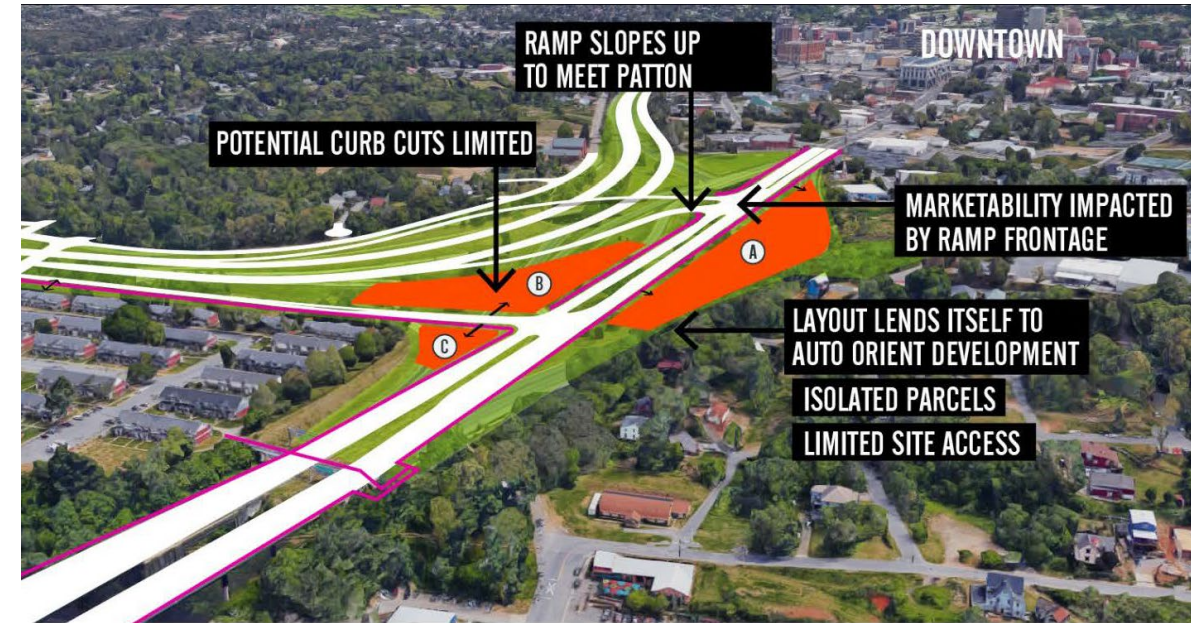
Credit: Waterfront Seattle

What can we do?

Design Mitigation – I-26 Connector (Asheville, NC)



Credits: Sam Schwartz / Interface Studio / City of Asheville



- Pedestrian Access
- Potential Parcel
- (A) 2.5 acres
- (B) 3 acres
- (C) .6 acres

How can ITE help? What should we focus on?

- Research
 - Literature Review
 - Traffic Evaporation / Induced Demand
- Case Studies
 - Built projects
- Guidance
 - Regional/macrosopic modeling
 - Urban-oriented freeway design

Thank you

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