Reconnecting Communities:
An Opportunity to Repair Harm

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Congressional Black Caucus Foundation

Environmental Justice

The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies (US EPA).

Environmental Racism

Racial discrimination in environmental policy-making and enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of communities of color for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of the presence of life-threatening poisons and pollutants in communities of color, and the history of excluding people of color from leadership of the environmental movement (Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.).

By Design

Chrysler Freeway construction in Detroit, MI

By Design

Hastings Street, a main street running through Paradise Valley and Black Bottom, predominantly Black neighborhoods in Detroit, MI

Chrysler Freeway, as viewed from the same location

By Design

State Capitol
Demolition for I-75/85 in Atlanta
1950's

Interstate completed,
neighborhoods gone.

By Design

VIEUX CARRÉ COURIER

What's Now and to Do in Those Fabled Environs 10¢

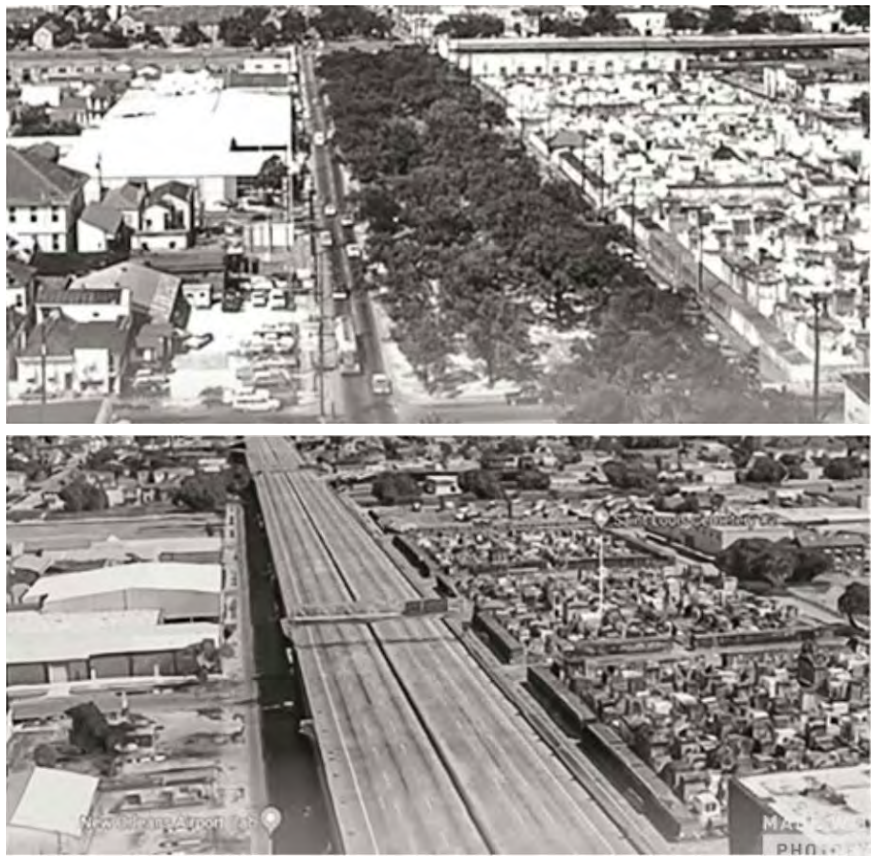
Vol. 5, No. 16 Vieux Carre, New Orleans, La. July 5, 1968

Move over, trees

Beautiful, serene major route between river and lake.

Six-lane elevated expressway would blight and practically erase the route.

Rendering of I-10 in New Orleans, LA



Construction demolished Black homes and businesses, along with over 200 oak trees

"The interstate bridge, erected in 1968 to provide access to New Orleans East and beyond, ran above part of what was once a thriving black community, above what was once more than 150 homes, over what was once the black shopping district with tailors and clothing stores, five-and-dime stores, restaurants. Joseph, Elaine, and Ivory shopped there as children. My mother shopped there when she had children. The neutral ground where the homeless lived in 2008 was lined back then with more than two hundred great oaks – the longest continuous line of oaks to be found anywhere in America – all of them bulldozed to make way for the concrete bridge. MOVE OVER, TREES, read the headline in the *Vieux Carré Courier*, which could afford to be flippant. The French Quarter avoided a similar expressway that would have wiped out the neighborhood, but the city's political and business elite put up a winning fight; for the bridge on Claiborne, there was a battle, too, but black people – underresourced and overextended – had bigger wars to win, like basic civil rights. The bridge won" (Broom, *The Yellow House*, p. 272).

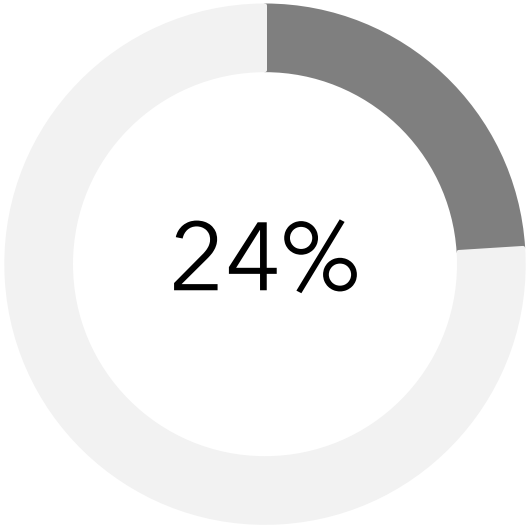
By Design

5:07
5G E 77%
Tweet
Calvin Gladney
@SmartGrowthCEO
Name a highway that razed or divided a Black or brown neighborhood in your city, or a city you know. I'll start: I-95 through the Overton neighborhood, in Miami, Florida. Tag someone. @atlurbanist @BethOsborneT4A @CityFoodLover @ctbrown1911 @DrDesThePlanner @andreperryedu @rkbtwo
Smart Growth America @Sm... · 10 Dec 20
Interstate highways were often intentionally placed to raze or divide Black and brown neighborhoods. It's long past time to repair the damage. Read new @T4america & @ThirdWayEnergy policy proposal. bit.ly/2VX...
Tweet your reply

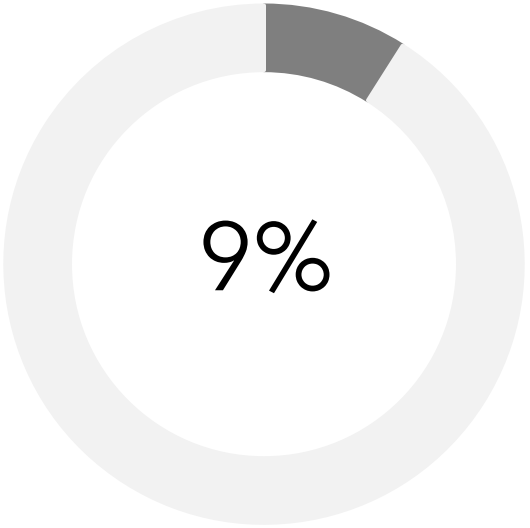
Consequences

- The consequences of freeway investments include:
  - Automobile-dominated transportation system
  - Restricted mobility
  - Stolen wealth & concentrated poverty
  - Increased air & noise pollution
  - Heightened risk of pedestrian injuries

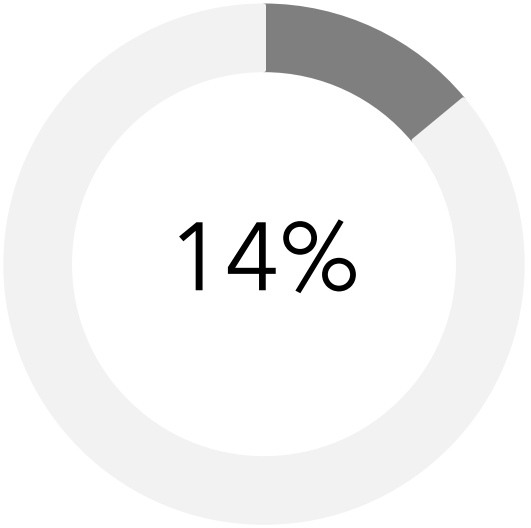
Air Pollution



Percent of African-Americans living near highly trafficked roads

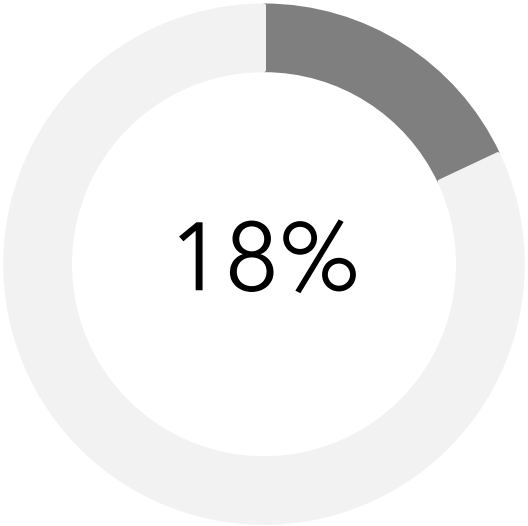


Percent Black adults with asthma



Percent Black children with asthma

Safety

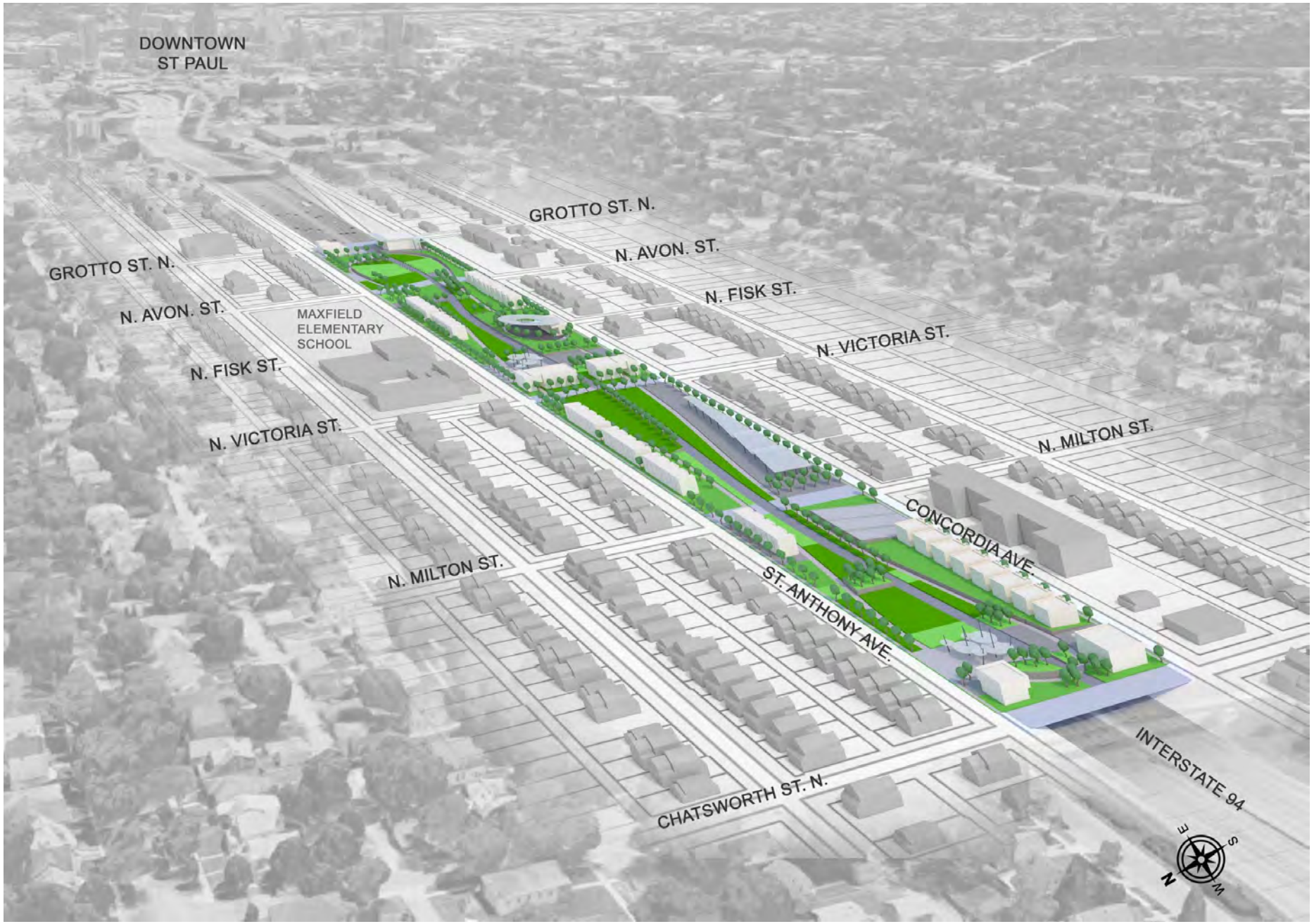


Percent of traffic-related pedestrian deaths that are African-American

Reconnecting Communities

A rendering of the proposed plan for I-375 in Detroit, Michigan. ***Michigan Department of Transportation***

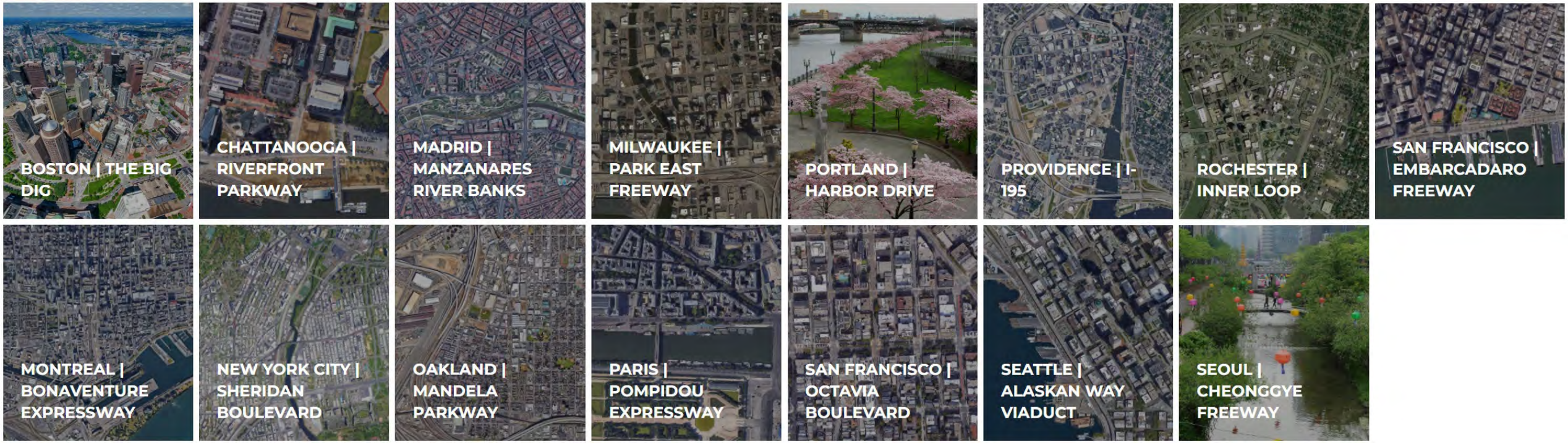
Source: grist.org



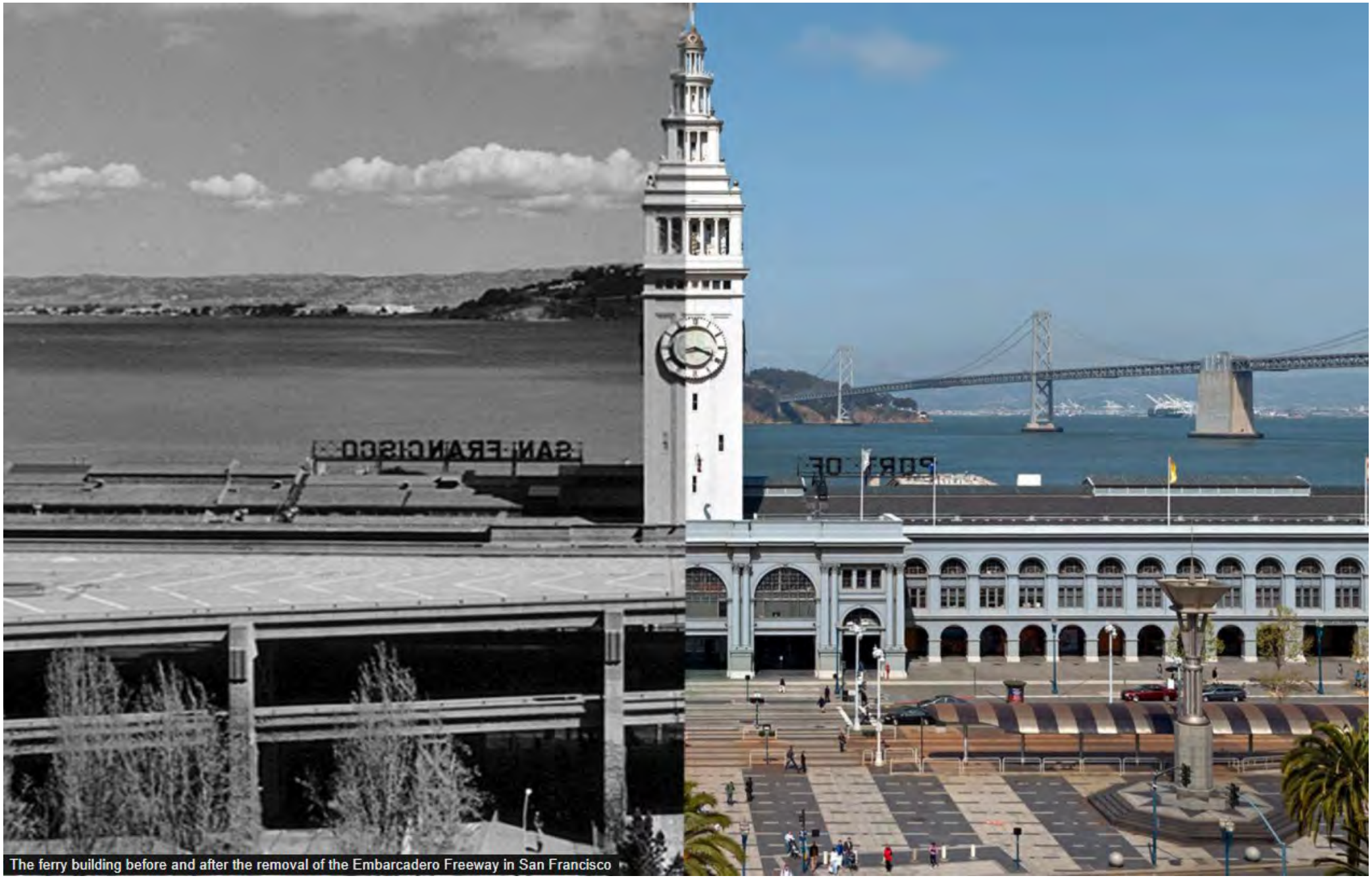
Architectural rendering courtesy Design by Melo and Visuals by James.

Source: reconnectrondo.com

Completed Projects



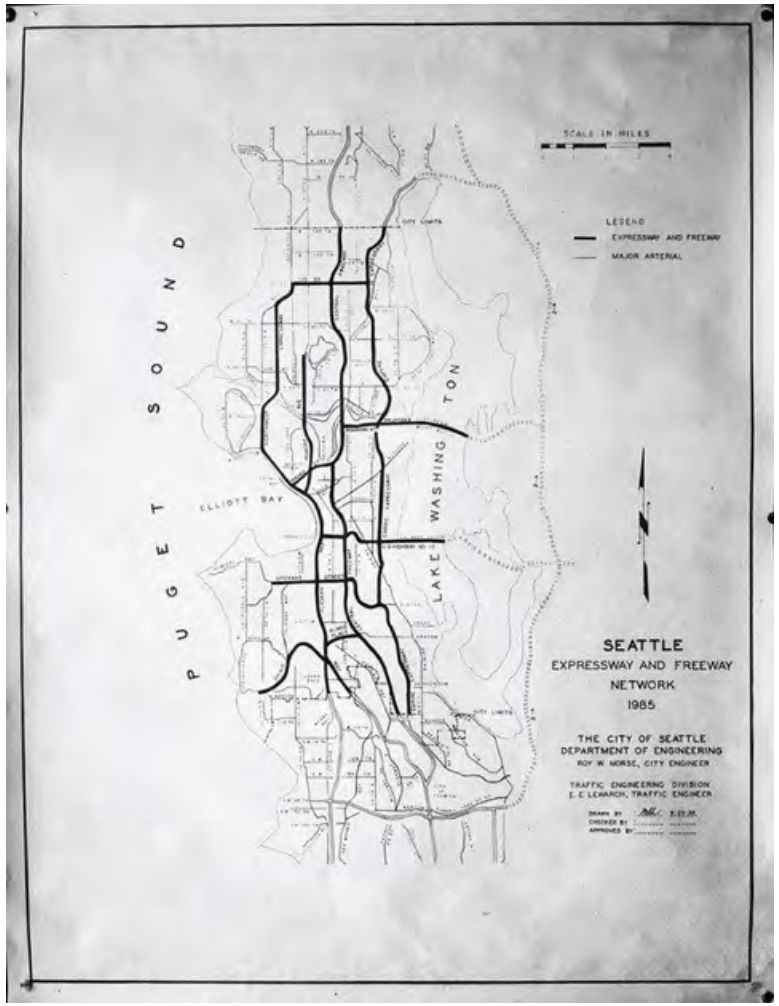
Source: cnu.org



The ferry building before and after the removal of the Embarcadero Freeway in San Francisco

Source: cnu.org

Legacy



1959 map of proposed freeways in Seattle. Source: nextcity.org