

## REMAKING ROBERT MOSES: INFRASTRUCTURE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN NEW YORK

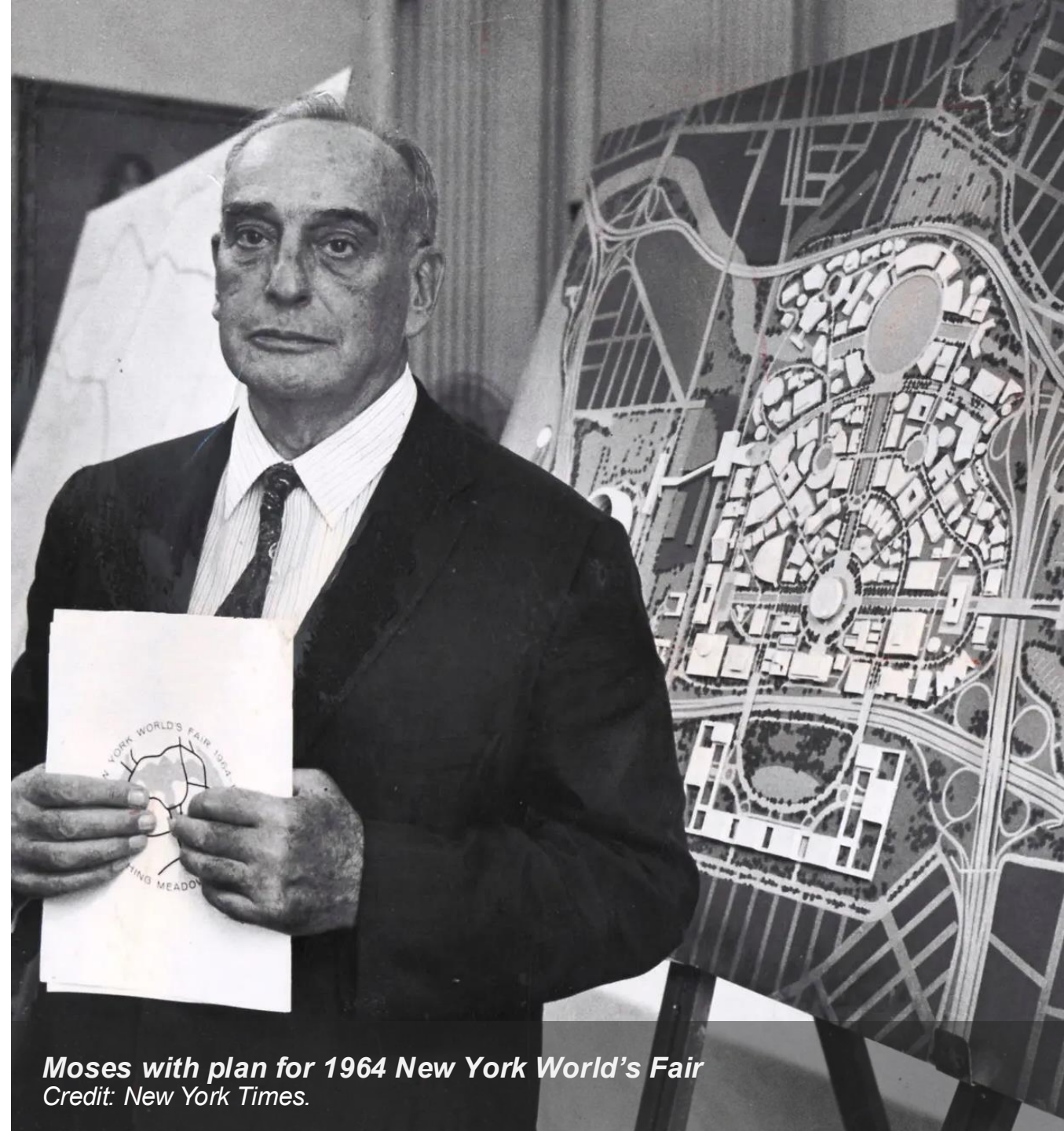
Chris Calvert, AICP | Steven Gates, AICP | Jim Finegan, AICP

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NAEP 2026 Annual Conference  
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## SESSION AGENDA

- Introduction: Robert Moses' Legacy
- BQE Central Project
- Reimagine the Cross Bronx Expressway
- Niagara Scenic Parkway Reimagined



*Moses with plan for 1964 New York World's Fair  
Credit: New York Times.*

## NEW YORK'S "MASTER BUILDER"

**"If the end doesn't justify the means, what does?"** – Robert Moses

- Lived 1888-1981 / in power: 1924-1968
- Held up to a dozen city and state offices at a time, key posts included:
  - NY State Parks Commissioner
  - NYC Parks Commissioner
  - Member of NYC City Planning Commission
  - NYC Construction Coordinator
  - Head of Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority
- Could propose, approve, and build projects
- Dramatically changed NYC and its region
- Auto-dominated vision of the city
- Equity was not a priority / Projects incorporated discriminatory practices



*Moses with model of proposed Brooklyn Battery Bridge  
Credit: New York World-Telegram & Sun Newspaper Photo Collection.*

# NOTABLE PROJECTS

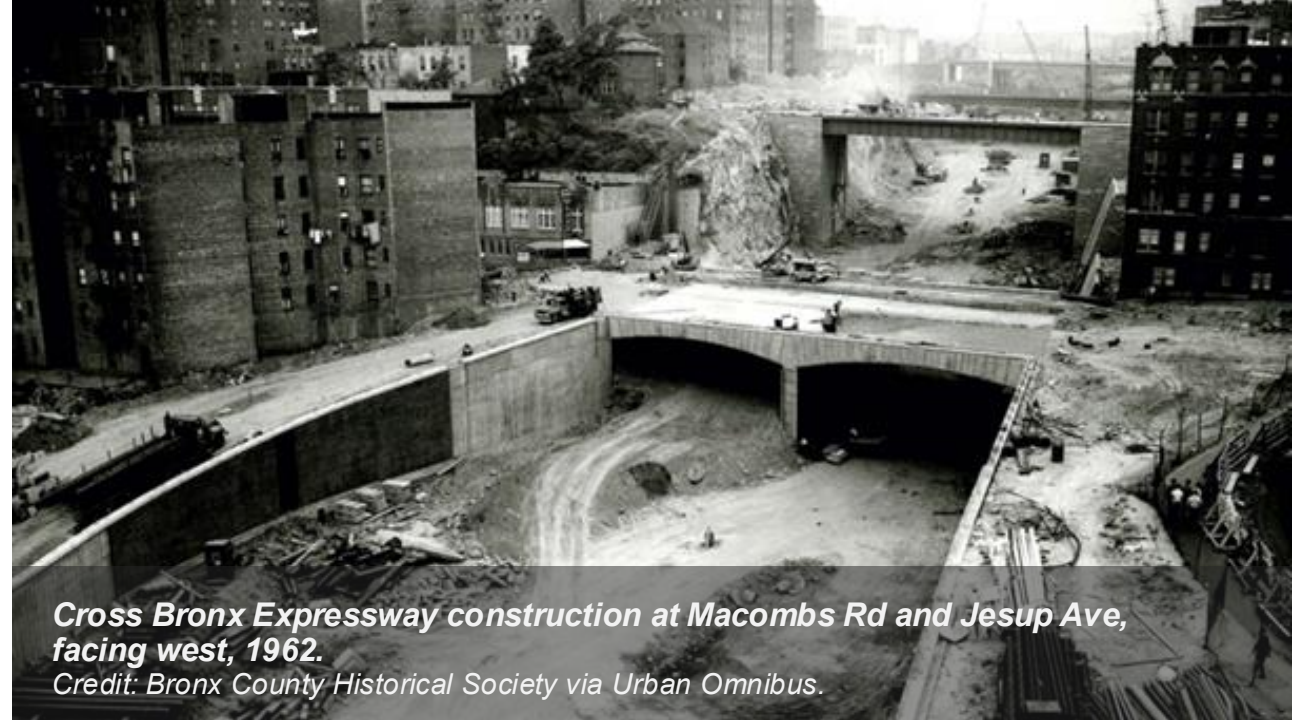


## MOSES' LEGACY, THEN AND NOW

**“It is impossible to say that New York would have been a better city if Robert Moses had never lived... only that it would have been a different city.”**

- Robert Caro, *The Power Broker*

- Unparalleled influence on physical shape of the city
- Shaped socioeconomic / development patterns of the region in an irreversible way
- Appetite today to revisit Moses' projects and modify them to suit 21st century needs and undo some of the damage



*Cross Bronx Expressway construction at Macombs Rd and Jesup Ave, facing west, 1962.*

*Credit: Bronx County Historical Society via Urban Omnibus.*



*Demolition of San Juan Hill neighborhood to construct Lincoln Center, 1960.*

*Credit: John Rooney / Associated Press via New York Times.*

## BQE CENTRAL PROJECT



# BQE CENTRAL



*Demolished blocks awaiting BQE construction, Downtown Brooklyn, 1956.  
Credit: Segregation By Design.*

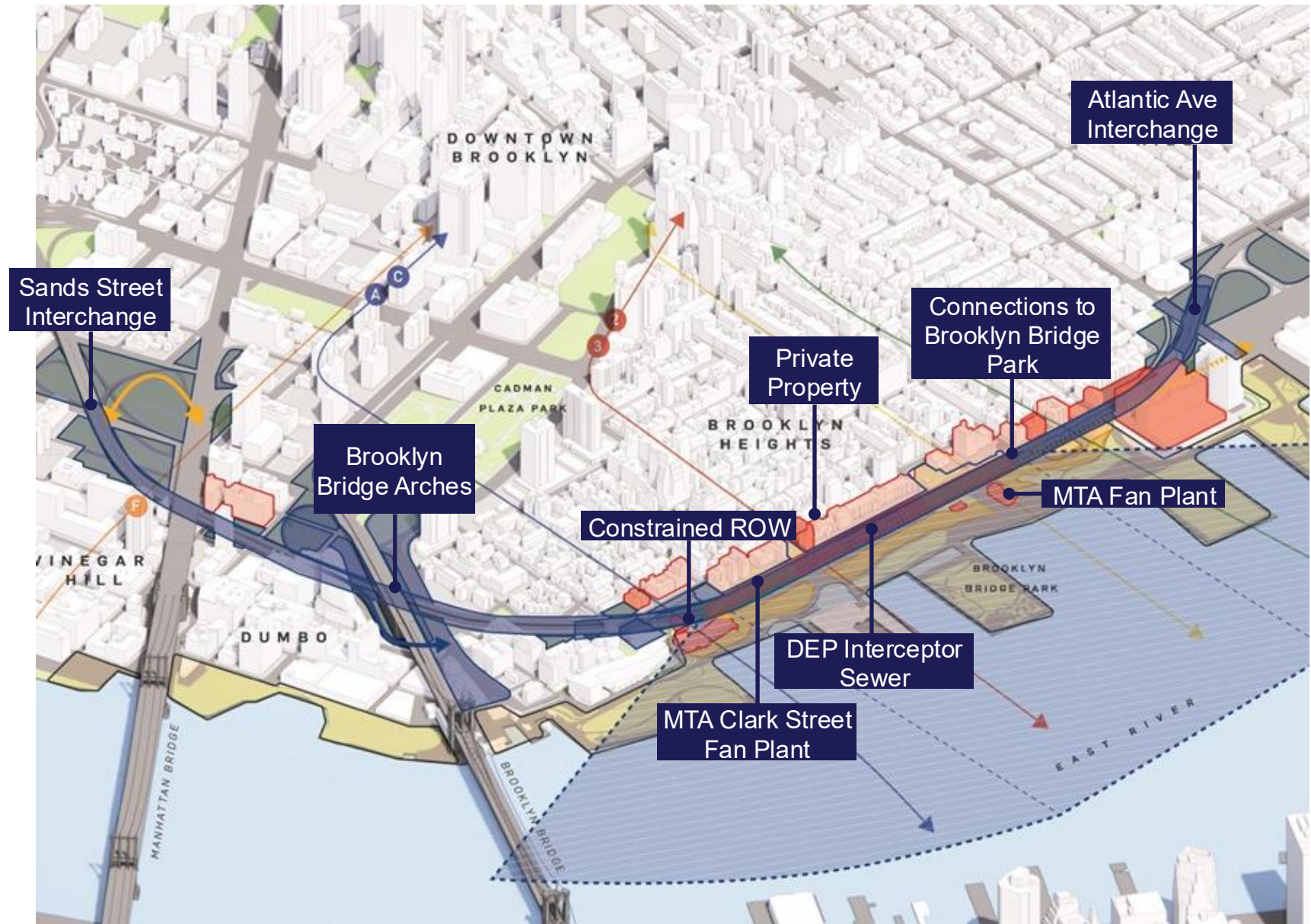


*BQE Triple Cantilever construction, early 1950s.  
Credit: NYC DOT.*



## BQE CENTRAL: CHALLENGES

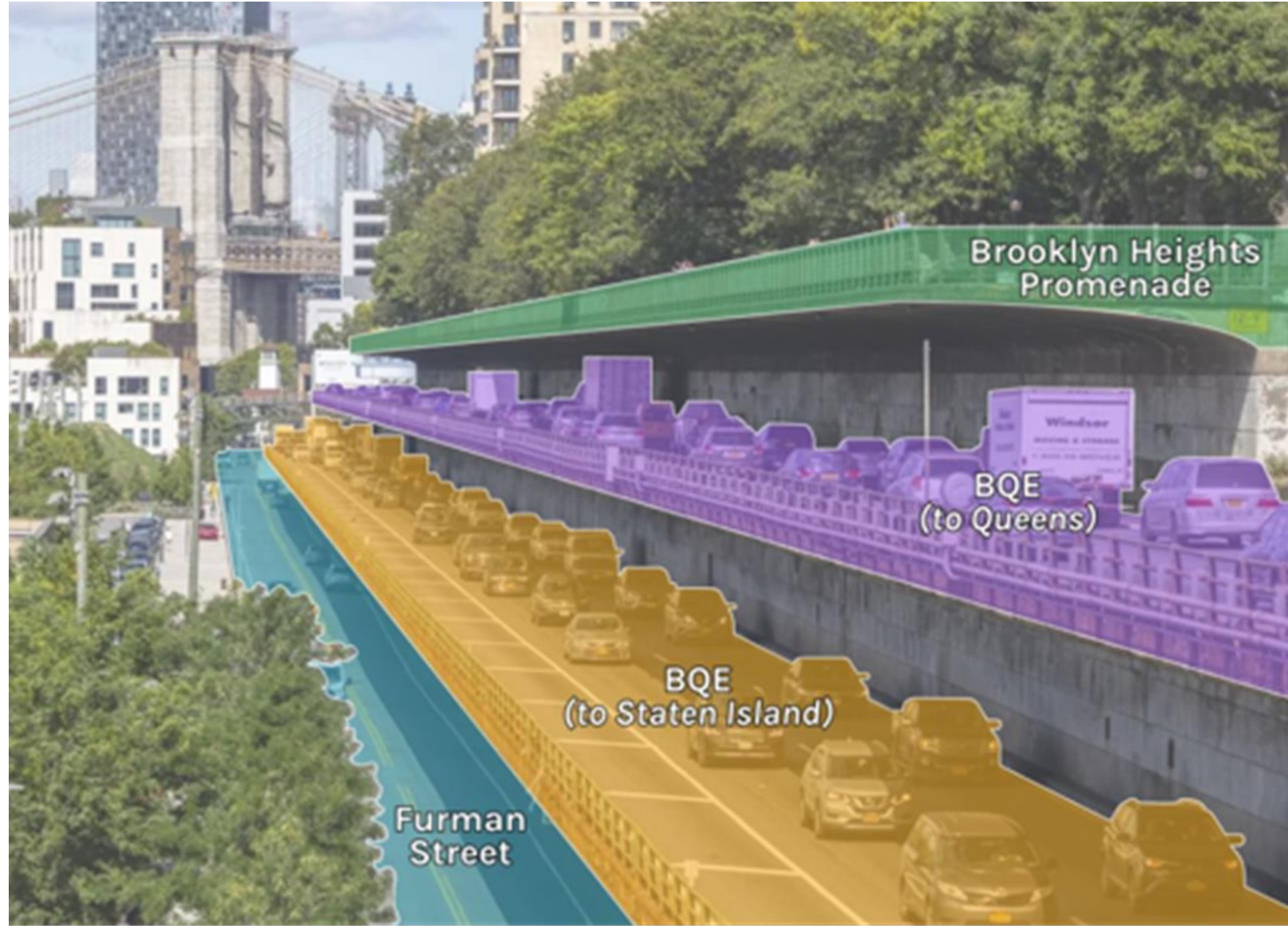
- Complex and constrained built environment
- Developed since 1700s
- Major infrastructure: Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges, six subway tunnels, major sewer interceptor
- Numerous parks
- Dramatically changed neighborhood
- Conflicting community and political interests



## BQE CENTRAL: TRIPLE CANTILEVER



*The Completed Promenade, 1953.  
Credit: New York Times.*



## BQE CENTRAL: BROOKLYN HEIGHTS PROMENADE



*View along the Promenade.  
Credit: The Cultural Landscape Foundation.*

## BQE CENTRAL: A DIVERSE AND EVOLVING NEIGHBORHOOD



*Church of the Open Door / Farragut Houses in the BQE's shadow.  
Credit: AKRF.*



*Brooklyn Bridge Park on former industrial waterfront.  
Credit: Michael Van Valkenburg Associates.*



*Brooklyn Queens Expressway at Washington St, DUMBO.  
Credit: NYC DOT.*

## BQE CENTRAL: TAKEAWAYS AND NEXT STEPS

- Neighborhood constraints made this project difficult for Moses – and it's no easier today
- After decades of false starts, the path forward remains unclear
- **Key choice:** Undertake a full rebuild now, or pair a temporary fix with a more visionary planning process for the whole corridor?
- **Failure is not an option:** Structural deterioration is accelerating and local streets cannot accommodate the highway's capacity



*BQE Triple Cantilever today, threaded through the neighborhood.*



## REIMAGINE THE CROSS BRONX EXPRESSWAY

*Photo Credit: "Reimagine the Cross Bronx Expressway,"  
NYCDOT, NYC Health, NYCDCP, NYSDOT*

## REIMAGINE THE CROSS BRONX EXPRESSWAY: HIGHWAY OVERVIEW

- Designated as I-95
- Travels through the Bronx between the George Washington Bridge and Bronx-Whitestone and Throgs Neck Bridge
- Continues northeasterly as Bruckner Expressway to Westchester County and Connecticut
- Intersects with Major Deegan Expressway (I-87), Bronx River Parkway, Hutchinson River Parkway
- Serves 150,000 vehicles per day, including 27,000 trucks

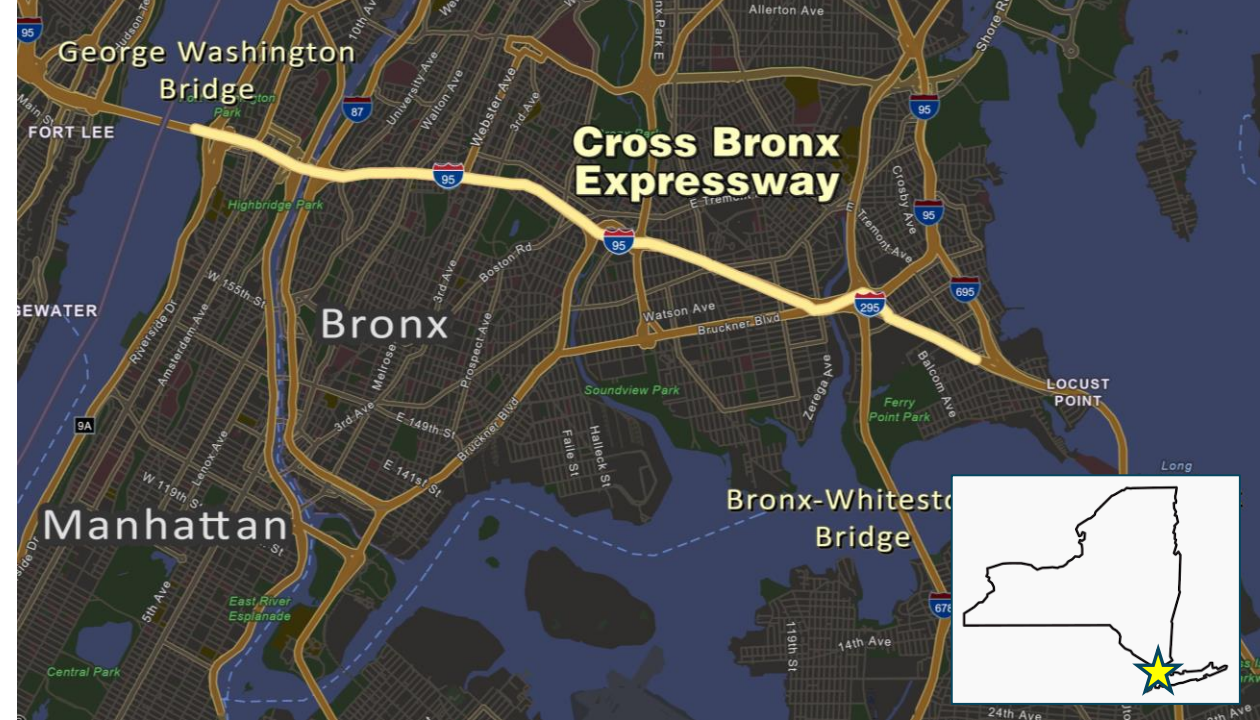


Photo Credit: "Reimagine the Cross Bronx Expressway,"  
NYCDOT, NYC Health, NYCDP, NYSDOT

## REIMAGINE THE CROSS BRONX EXPRESSWAY: CBE DEVELOPMENT

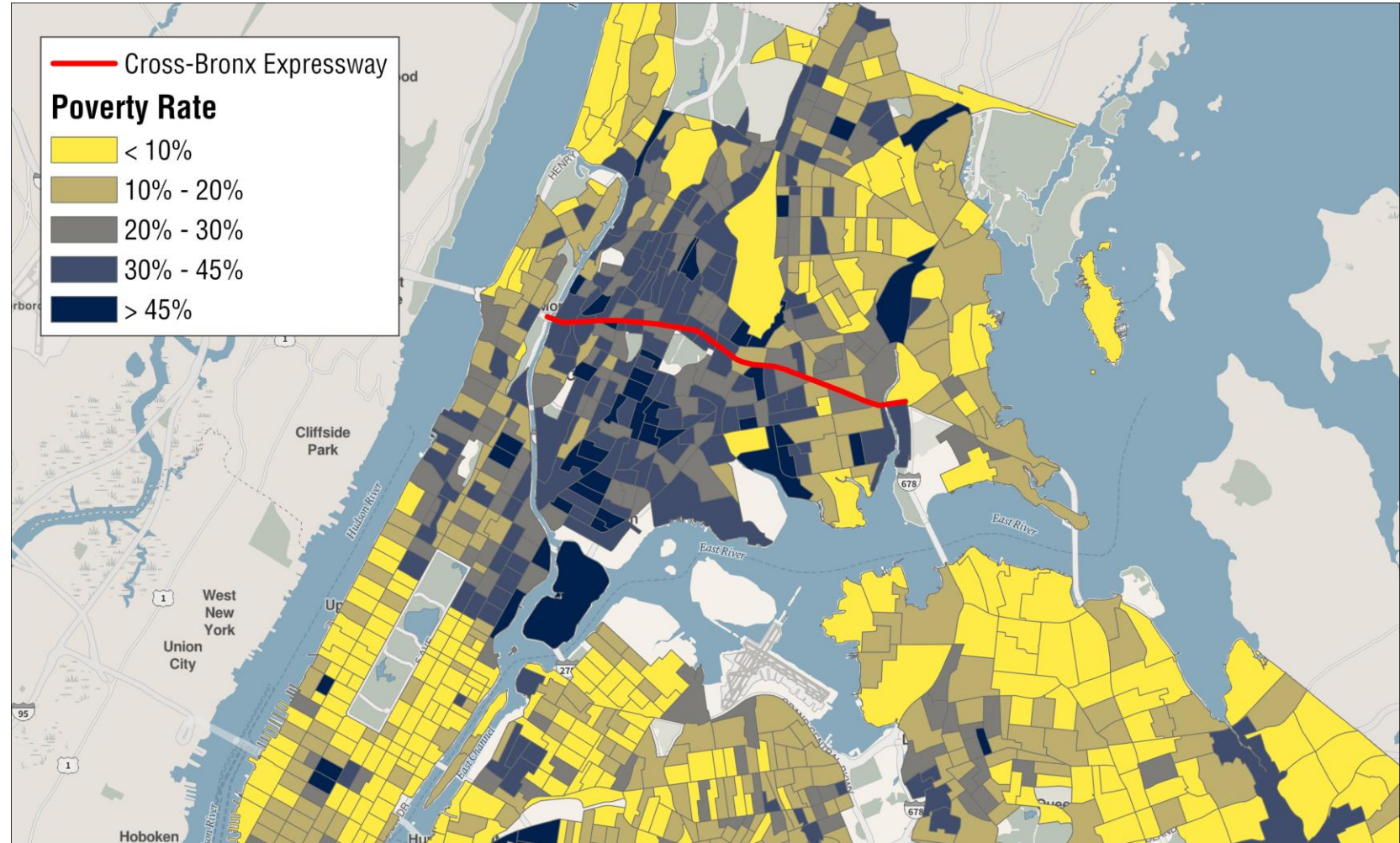
- Bronx Crosstown Highway proposed in 1940 to connect major bridges and thoroughfares
- CBE Primarily constructed throughout the 1950s and early 1960s
- Displaced 60,000 residents
- Legacy of disrupting urban fabric and creating economic blight and poor health



## REIMAGINE THE CROSS BRONX EXPRESSWAY: SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

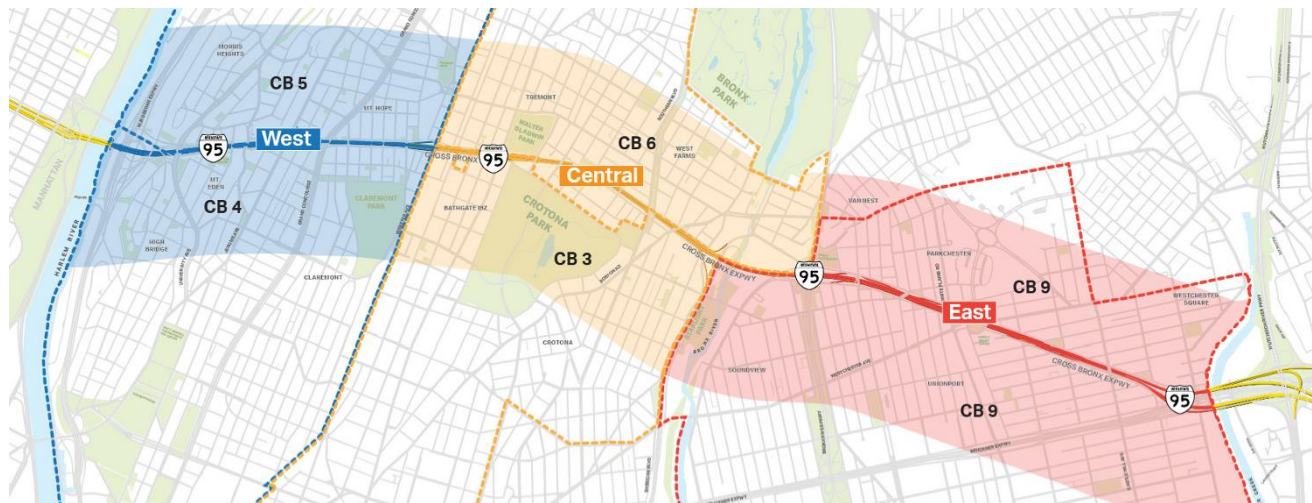
- 45% of households in the Bronx study area make less than \$35,000 a year compared to only 28.5% of households citywide<sup>1</sup>
- Rates of asthma-related emergency department visits due to exposure to outdoor pollutants are more than three times higher in the Bronx study area than citywide<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>“Reimagine the Cross Bronx Expressway,” NYCDOT, NYC Health, NYCDOP, NYSDOT



# REIMAGINE THE CROSS BRONX EXPRESSWAY: VISIONING STUDY

- Final Vision published in March 2025
- Included robust public engagement
- Centered on four main themes:  
    **Connected Communities** || **Safe Communities**  
    **Healthy Communities** || **Strong Communities**
- Evaluated short-, mid-, and long-term design concepts, including transit options and highway capping options



Credit: "Reimagine the Cross Bronx Expressway," NYCDOT, NYC Health, NYCDPC, NYSDOT

# REIMAGINE THE CROSS BRONX EXPRESSWAY

Connected, Safe, Healthy  
Communities

Final Vision  
March 2025

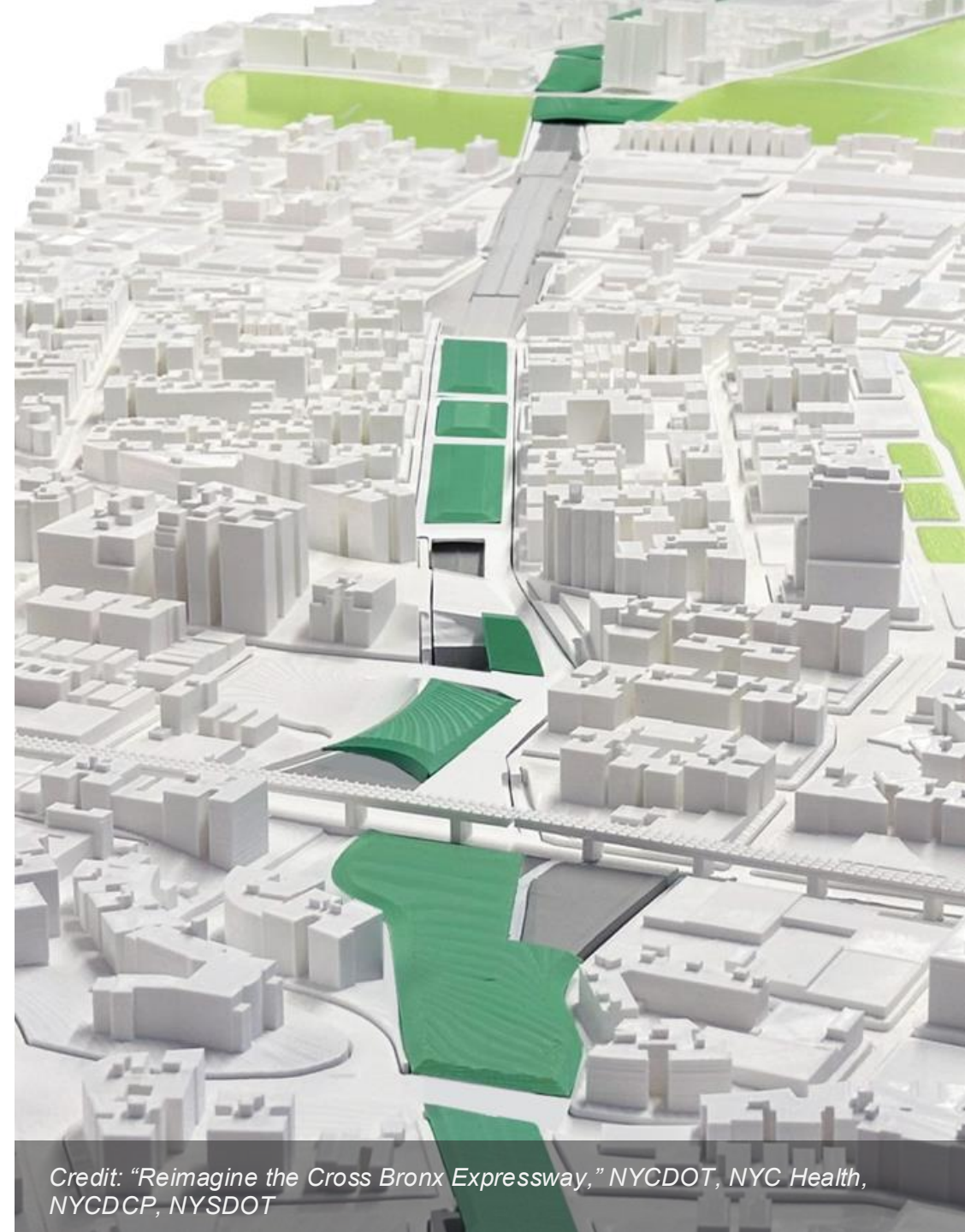


# REIMAGINE THE CROSS BRONX EXPRESSWAY: NEXT STEPS



**A collaborative and integrated approach to transportation decision-making**

- In 2026, NYSDOT embarked on a PEL Study for Reimagine the Cross Bronx Expressway
- Developing concepts to address transportation and community cohesion challenges
- Implementing extensive outreach program to continue community engagement
- Setting the stage for subsequent environmental review



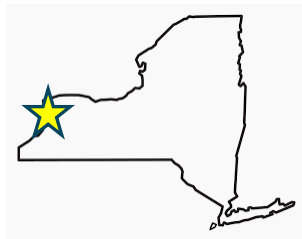
*Credit: "Reimagine the Cross Bronx Expressway," NYCDOT, NYC Health, NYCDOP, NYSDOT*



## NIAGARA SCENIC PARKWAY REIMAGINED



# NIAGARA "SCENIC" PARKWAY TODAY



# NIAGARA SCENIC PARKWAY: PROJECT PHASES

## Phase 1:

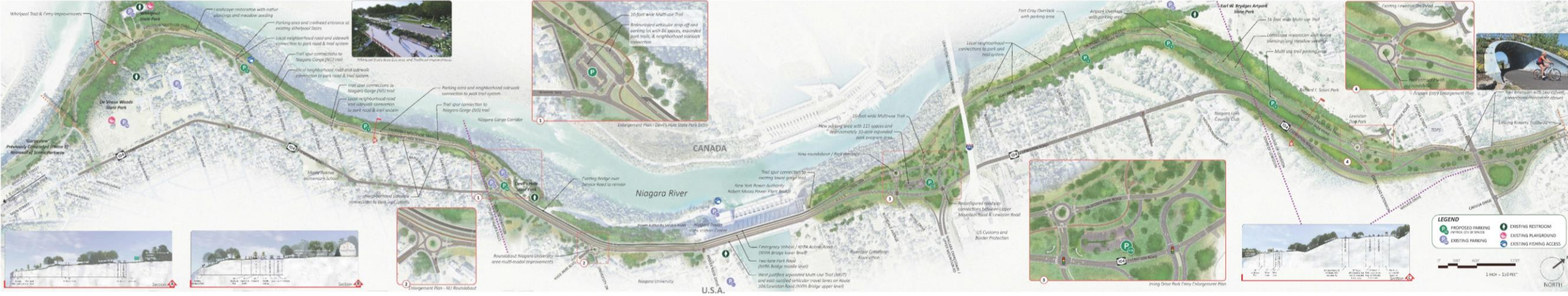
Niagara Falls State Park /  
Downtown Niagara Falls

## Phase 2:

Main Street to Findlay Drive



# NIAGARA SCENIC PARKWAY: PROPOSED PHASE 3 CONCEPTS



**CONCEPT A**



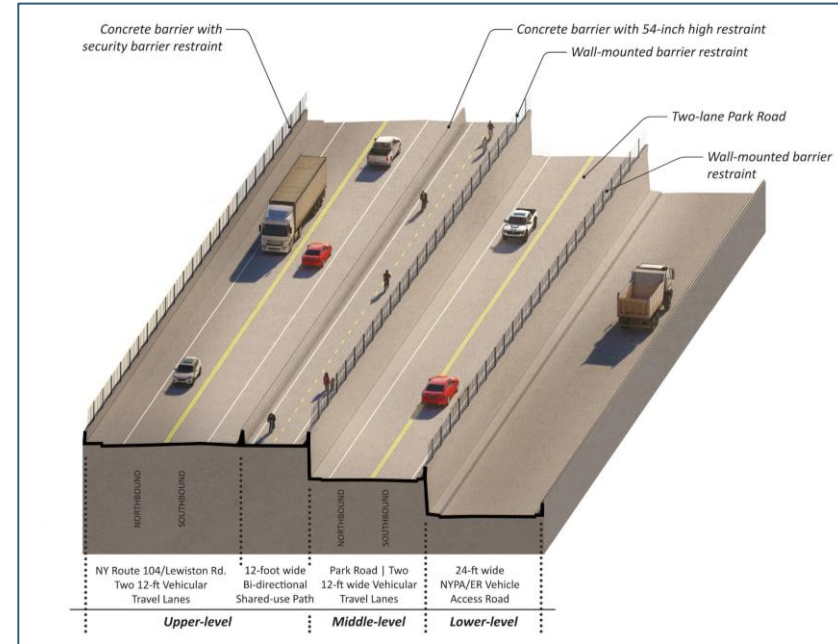
**CONCEPT B**

# NIAGARA SCENIC PARKWAY: NYPA-ROBERT MOSES POWER STATION BRIDGES PROJECT

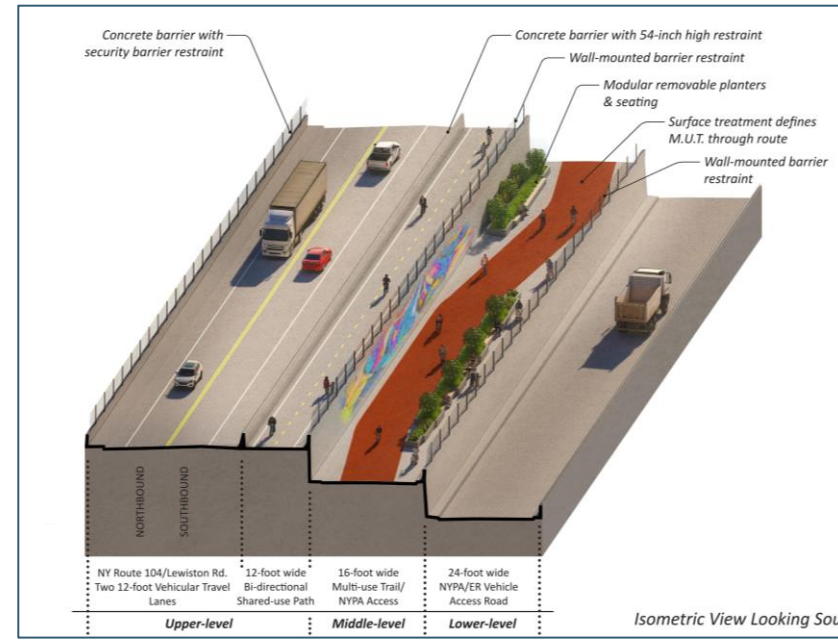


Looking South from Lewiston-Queenston Bridge

## Concept A

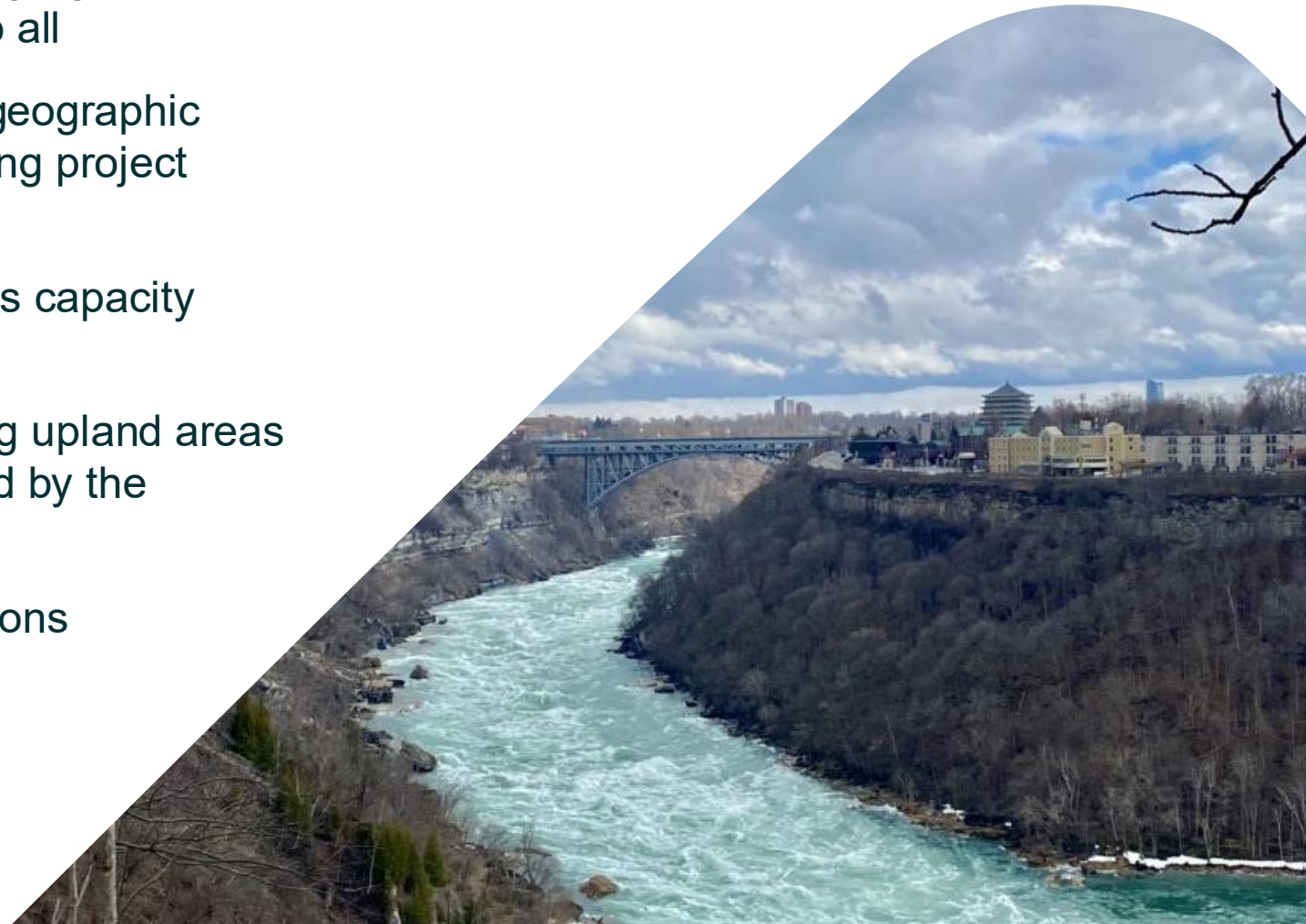


## Concept B



## NIAGARA SCENIC PARKWAY: LESSONS / CONSIDERATIONS

- Parkway serves purpose of connecting the gorge destinations but does not provide access to all
- Project is woven through topographic and geographic features that make developing and assessing project alternatives difficult
- Some members of the public like the excess capacity (NSP and Route 104)
- Some residents resist or reject reconnecting upland areas to the riverfront / prefer the isolation created by the original parkway
- Robert Moses Dam constrains corridor options



## CONCLUSION: THE WORLD MOSES BUILT / PATHS FORWARD

“His guiding hand made New York, known as a city of mass transit, also the nation’s first city for the automobile age.”

– Paul Goldberger, from his obituary for Moses in the New York Times

- Our challenge is to:
  - Work within a truly democratic process
  - Knit communities back together
  - Without losing the real economic benefits that Robert Moses left us

### Sheridan Expressway

BEFORE



AFTER





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