

NMM in Winnipeg

Winnipeg is an isolated city on the Canadian Prairies – the closest major centre is Minneapolis, Minnesota, eight hours drive south. Its location marked the gateway to the fertile Prairies while topography and geology funnelled railways through the city. Early expansion was fuelled by agricultural and transportation roles. The Exchange District downtown still accommodates a fine collection of early twentieth century warehouse buildings that attest to its former economic strength.

Although economic circumstances changed with the opening of the Panama Canal – reducing the importance of trans-Canada rail transportation – the population continued to grow rapidly, fuelled by post-war immigration and the Baby Boom. However, since the early 1960s, growth has slowed. Between 1961 and 2001, the population grew from 475,989 to 619,544, less than 1% annually.

Since the 1960s, the footprint of the city has continued to expand and at rates that far outstrip demographic growth. In 1961, Winnipeg's urbanized area covered approximately 150 km2. By 1991 this had doubled, and in 2005 the

area exceeded 350km2. Despite continued slow population growth, large new residential neighbourhoods and commercial "power centres" are still being built on the south side of the city. In a time frame that saw the population increase by one third, the footprint of the city more than doubled.

The growth at the fringe is happening at the expense of the Downtown and the inner city. Although Downtown still provides 25% of the city's employment, only 2% of the population call the core "home." Those who continue to live in the inner city tend to be lower income households and the centre of the city accommodates much of the city's fast growing aboriginal population. However, it lacks the general amenities of everyday life (grocery stores, pharmacies, etc.) and Downtown is no longer a preferred shopping or entertainment destination for most Winnipeggers.

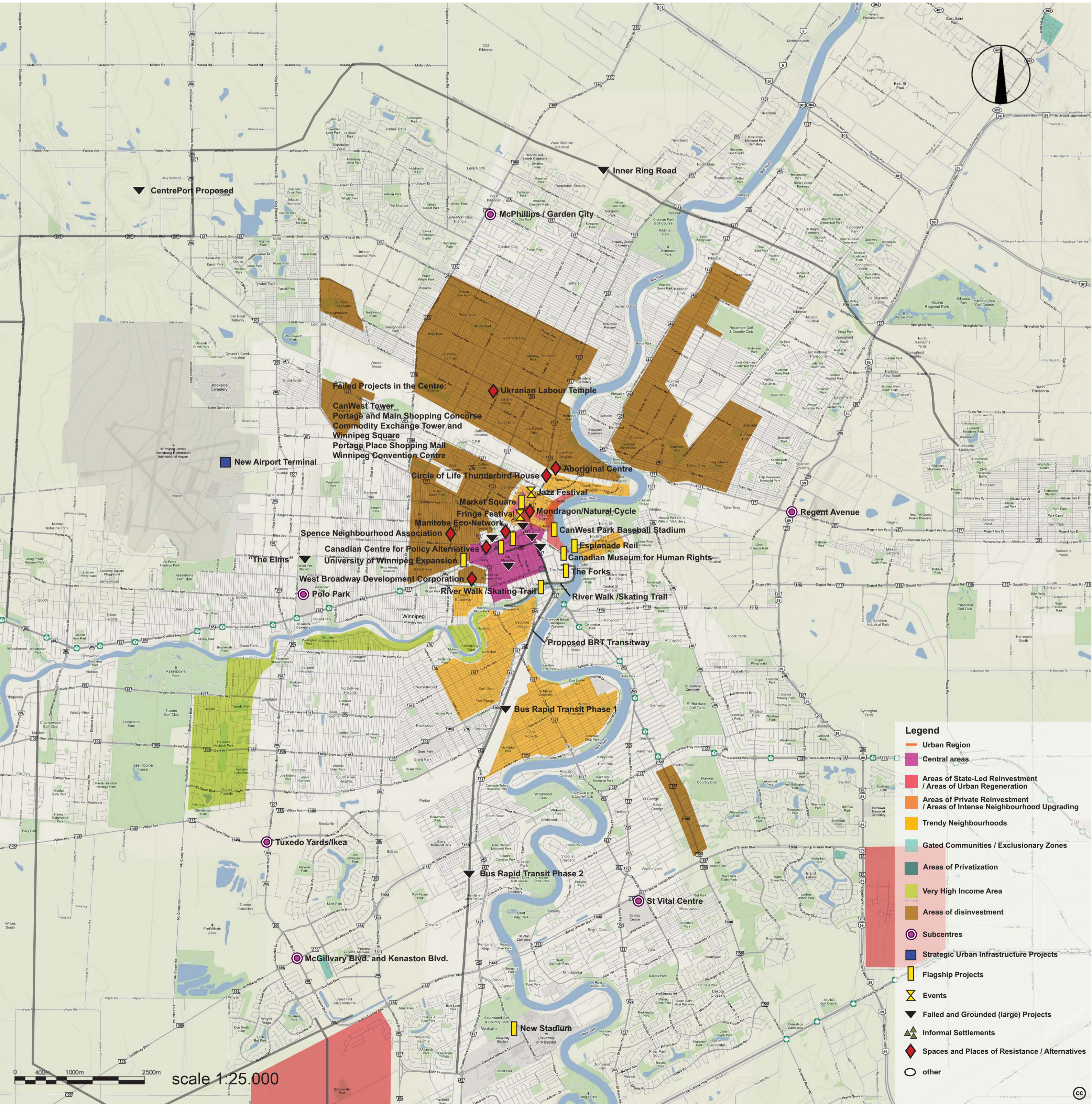
This pattern of development and distribution of wealth has significant ramifications for infrastructure and services: the efficiency of public transit has declined; this has supported the increased use of automobiles and demands for wider and faster roads; schools and recreation centres in the cen-

tre are underused, while affluent residents of new neighbourhoods lobby for new facilities.

This expansion of the urban footprint and a rapidly increasing infrastructure deficit are coinciding with a period of neoliberalism where the City government and its pro-business mayor support developers' agendas – arguing that home builders know best what customers want – and are set on continuing a thirteen year property tax freeze, while reducing business taxes.

The city's political and business leaders desire growth and this has been reflected in planning documents that have not simply taken into account the possibility of population growth, but have required this growth (growth that has not occurred). They have approved new suburbs (e.g. Waverley West) that provide an illusion of growth but increase the desire for roads rather than transit; advocated for major flagship projects to attract global attention (e.g. Canadian Museum of Human Rights); all of these without improving the lives of the city's most vulnerable inhabitants.

Canada 9'984'670Km2 * Inhabitants 34'019'000
Urban Region 7'500Km2 * Inhabitants 750'000



Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit Populations (2006)

Canada:	1,172,790	(3.8%)
Manitoba:	175,395	(15%)
Winnipeg:	68,380	(10%)

Population Growth 2001-2006

Canada total growth	5.4%
Winnipeg total growth	2.2%
Winnipeg Aboriginal growth	22.0%

Unemployment Rates 2006

Non-aboriginal	3.4%
Aboriginal	9.1%

Living in Poverty

Non-aboriginal	16%
Aboriginal	43%

Source: StatsCan 2006 Aboriginal Population Profile for Winnipeg

Purpose

Intended as a show case suburb with environmentally friendly, new urbanist design standards. The sales pitch included geothermal heating, front porches, back lanes, a village square, good transit, municipal profits and tax revenues. Under construction but delivering few of the promises.

Dimensions

Over 12 km² encompassing about 10,000 housing units in 6 new neighbourhoods and a central commercial district.

Project Costs

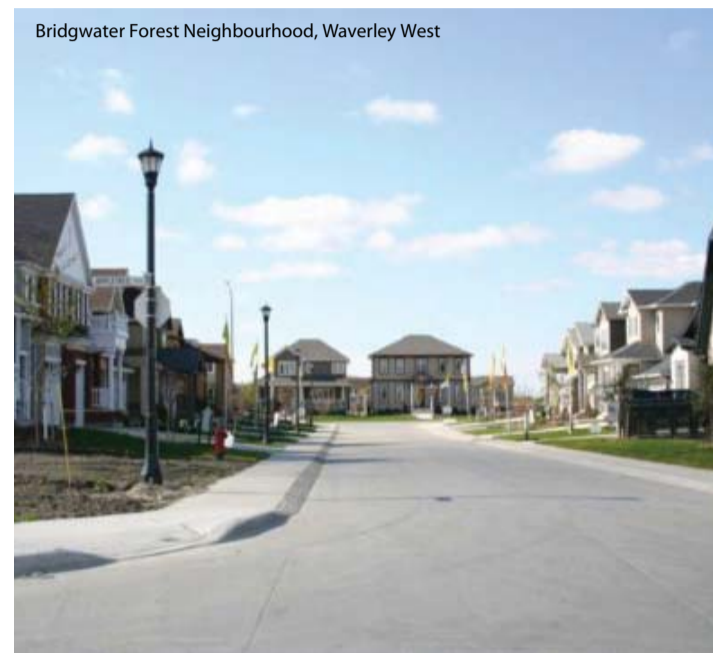
Developer projections profit to the city of about \$1,200 per home per year. Actual capital costs are higher than initial estimates and costs for city services were underestimated.

Investors/Developers

The Province of Manitoba and Ladco Company Ltd.

Architects/Planners

ND LEA Engineers and Planners Ltd.



Bridgewater Forest Neighbourhood, Waverly West

Background Context

The optimism of Winnipeg's early years has persisted. Many decades of slow growth reality has not dampened the dreams and fevered desires for a fast growth and a rapidly evolving urban landscape.

Waverly West represents the most recent, and most outrageous, example of development in Winnipeg that fails to take into account the current realities of being a slow growth winter city. With a declining inner city, decaying inner ring suburbs and a mounting infrastructure deficit, Waverly West commits Winnipeg to a further diffusion of city resources. Decreasing density and a thinner tax base are insufficient to cover an expanding infrastructure and service base. In a slow growth city, rapid expansion at the fringes comes at the expense of the older neighbourhoods and the downtown core, and serves a narrow demographic slice of the overall population.

Significance for New Metropolitan Mainstream

Waverly West was predicated on the continuing illusion and promise of fast growth. The Manitoba Homebuilders Association, along with other organizations, created a false sense of panic about the lack of available lots suitable for new housing developments. Population and demand projections continue to be overstated. As Waverly West develops, demand is lagging far behind developer projections.

Deals and Stakeholders

A significant portion of the land in Waverly West is owned, and being developed, by the (vaguely social democratic) provincial government. The Province, as proponent and developer, is also the regional development regulator.

The second largest landowner is Ladco, a private developer that will see the value of its properties increase dramatically through provincial and municipal infrastructure investments, such as the extension of regional highways. Almost none of this increased value will be captured by the public.

The University of Manitoba Faculty of Architecture also facilitated a design charrette that gave the developers the language and ideas they needed to sell this project.

Impacts

Despite the "new urbanism" sales pitch, Waverly West will increase car dependency, as the commercial district will be segregated from the residential elements by a highway, and the isolated low-density development coupled makes public transit too expensive to be effective.

The increased car dependency will further increase the demand for cheap/free parking in the downtown and inner city neighbourhoods - creating more pressure to level existing buildings to create parking spaces.

Growth at the fringes will further the decline of Winnipeg's core and will force the redirection of social services and infrastructure such as community centres and schools away from the inner city and out to the fringes.

Winnipeg is a winter city, and the extreme temperature fluctuations would more easily be mitigated through a denser pattern of development. It is easier and more cost effective to deliver high quality and physically warm services such as heated transit shelters in higher density neighbourhoods.

Purpose

A new national museum to promote the understanding of human rights (projected to open in 2012).

Dimensions

4,400m² (47,000 feet²) of exhibit space, with a 100m tall glass "tower of hope" adding to the city's skyline and providing views to the horizon.

Project Costs

\$310 million (CAD) and rising.

Investors/Developers

Public-private partnership between federal, provincial & municipal governments, The Forks North Portage Partnership and private donors. The CMHR will receive its operational funding from the federal government.

Architects

Antoine Predock Architect PC, Albuquerque MN
Smith Carter Architects & Engineers Inc., Winnipeg MB



CMHR Architect's Rendering

Background Context

Planning for the museum was started by the late media mogul and billionaire Izzy Asper, whose daughter has since taken on the project. Once completed, the CMHR will be the first national museum outside of the Ottawa region (Canada's capital).

The site is located on The Forks National Historic Site, where the Red and Assiniboine Rivers meet. Aboriginal people have used this junction as a meeting place for over 6,000 years. The Forks is now a mixed-use "festival market" area that includes recreational, historical, cultural and commercial uses. There is a strong sense of public ownership over The Forks and recent proposals to build housing on the site have sparked controversy and debate.

Significance for New Metropolitan Mainstream

This project is a deliberate exercise in city image building. This flagship project, designed by the prestigious architect Antoine Predock, is being touted by politicians and museum organizers as "Winnipeg's Bilbao". The CMHR is being promoted as a major tourist attraction and as a catalyst for Downtown regeneration.

Unlike the "Bilbao effect" (in which the Guggenheim Museum was one piece of a broader and long-term commitment to regeneration), the CMHR is driven primarily by the private sector and can only be considered an ad-hoc attempt, if any, at urban regeneration.

Stakeholders and their interests

The Asper family has been the driving force behind this project; they believe that a national cultural institution can exist outside the national capital and that Canada's social history should be told.

The federal government has contributed significantly to the project's financing, however whether or not it has any vested interests in the project remains unclear. The promise of federal funding may be a thinly veiled attempt to gain favour with Winnipeg voters. The public sector has loosely identified the CMHR as an opportunity for the tourism industry and downtown renewal. The municipal government provided in-kind contribution - the land.

The CMHR will operate as a national crown corporation governed by a board of trustees. The lack of diversity of board members has been criticized, as well as the appointment of the CEO has raised controversy. The CEO is a former conservative member or parliament opposed adoption and pension rights for same-sex couples.

Deals

The federal government has committed 22 million in annual operating and 100 million in capital funding. Despite this substantial amount, there has been limited public criticism or debate on the museum's reliance on public funding in order to be viable.

Impacts

Tensions about the purpose of the museum cannot be dismissed - is this a genuine effort to promote human rights or is it a tourist enterprise under the guise of human rights or can these two purposes co-exist?

There are questions about how it will address local human rights issues and contribute to improving local conditions. This is particularly relevant, given that only a few city blocks away, the City's growing homeless and disadvantaged populations, many of whom are Aboriginal, are lining the streets in need of services.

Purpose

A new transportation option, to reduce traffic congestion on regional streets, decrease need for expansion of roads, bridges, and parking supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen the Downtown. Stage 1 of the first route is currently under construction intended to connect Downtown with the suburban University of Manitoba.

Dimensions

Stage 1: 3.6 km transitway; Stage 2: 6 km transitway

Project Costs

\$138 million for construction the Southwest Rapid Transit Corridor (Stage 1). Stage 2 has no funding commitment.

Investors/Developers

City, Provincial, and Federal funding programs.

Architects/Planners

GPP Architecture; Dillon Consulting; McGowan Russell; Landmark Planning and Design Inc.



Proposed BRT Vehicle

Background Context

Winnipeg's existing transit system is treated as a luxury good by the City (i.e., restricted hours) and designed to be the transportation of last resort (used primarily by the poor, senior citizens and people with disabilities).

While plans for rapid transit date back to the 1950s, recent planning began in 2004. When the current mayor came into power later that year, he cancelled plans for the 50 million BRT project and redirected the funds to pay for new and renovated recreation centres. He later commissioned a Task Force to further study RT development, resulting in additional delays. The Task Force recommended virtually the same plan that was proposed earlier.

Three years later, in 2008 as oil prices peaked, the City secured federal-provincial funding to build the first stage of the Southwest BRT Corridor. However, when the City released its five-year Capital Plan it included no commitment to Phase 2. This year, with the Phase 1 under construction, the mayor is openly musing about changing course again, to light rail, and has commissioned yet another study, creating further delays in the implementation. Council has not allocated funds for the Stage 2, and is proposing to use federal money to repair roads and bridges.

Significance for New Metropolitan Mainstream

The BRT project is representative of the NMM in two distinct yet contradictory ways. In its uncompleted state, Winnipeg's BRT system is a massively delayed project with an uncertain prospect. It remains a marginal project controlled by the interests of a select group of politicians. The public is denied authentic access to the process and ultimately the product.

Sustainable and active transportation has become a general ideological and physical architectural standard of the metropolitan. If realized, the BRT project has the potential to become a key element in creating a dominant urban culture that acknowledges a new understanding of quality of life.

Deals

Each iteration of the BRT project has involved some form of funding arrangement between the three levels of government. The City's recent decision to re-evaluate its plans for BRT in light of new evidence of lower LRT costs has sparked some suspicion (that the mayor is using this appeal of a sexier option as a way to delay doing anything) and frustration, including from provincial and federal officials and transit advocates.

Impacts

The lack of a conclusive decision-making and commitment to Rapid Transit is troublesome from a planning, environmental and financial perspectives. The lack of an accountable and transparent process has also eroded public confidence in municipal government and the political process.

Possibly the only positive impact to emerge from the delayed BRT project, is the mobilization and maturation of local environmental and active transportation activists in the City. These individuals and organizations (both informal and formal) have become an influential force, and if BRT is ever realized can be directly attributed to their tireless efforts.

