The real power of a city can be found in its infrastructure. This civic element not only bridges geographic, but social divides as well.

The Bridgeport (Ward 11) and Chinatown (Ward 25) neighborhoods are split from one another by the I-55 and I-90/94 expressways, and divided internally by Union Pacific rail lines and the underutilized 16-acre Canal Street Intermodal. This design proposal reconnects the two communities through a new hybrid infrastructure that celebrates the basic needs of habitation – the production of food, water and energy – creating the social spaces that are the institutions of the community.

It provides economic stimulus in the form of job creation, and bridges the physical and psychological divide of the expressways, an area of the city previously labeled as “nowhere,” becoming “somewhere.”
Our precedent is the Roman aqueduct, a tool that served the health and social welfare of this epoch so successfully that some even continue to function to this day.

In the United States, our infrastructure can be a deadening monotony of standardized bridge, road, energy and water treatment plants and warehouse design — utility without poetry. Combining superb engineering and design, Roman aqueducts were well integrated into the landscape and cityscape.

As large-scale interventions, they were also multifunctional, serving as roadways, warehouses, retail and even residential spaces.

From Louis Kahn to Le Corbusier’s “Viaduct Architecture,” they’ve been a constant source of inspiration for architects down through the ages.