Stephen Ross Makes Over $30 Million Gift to WRI to Advance Sustainable Cities

LARGEST SINGLE DONATION TO WRI WILL CREATE NEW WRI ROSS CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 20, 2014)—Stephen M. Ross, a world-recognized business leader, real-estate developer, and philanthropist announced today a $30.5 million contribution to the World Resources Institute (WRI) to galvanize action that will help cities grow smarter and more sustainably in developing countries around the world. This gift, which is the largest single donation to WRI, will establish the WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities, an innovative new initiative to integrate expertise and on the ground experience in urban planning, sustainable transport, energy and climate change, water resources, and governance. The Center will build upon WRI’s successful track record working on urban activities and spur action to develop accessible, healthy, equitable, and environmentally-friendly cities.

“We are deeply grateful to Stephen Ross, whose remarkable vision and experience has set the pace when it comes to transforming urban landscapes,” said Dr. Andrew Steer, President and CEO, WRI. “For the expected 1.5 billion new urban residents by 2030 and the 3.5 billion who live there already, cities are becoming the focal point for sustainable development. The WRI Ross Center of Sustainable Cities will enable us to greatly scale up our urban activities, as we conduct independent research and analysis, develop policy and design recommendations, and provide on-the-ground guidance that will benefit millions of people.”

The Center will drive the full integration of WRI’s urban focus and greatly increase WRI’s reach, building on the work of EMBARQ, WRI’s sustainable transport and urban development program that was founded in 2002, which has improved the quality of life for millions of people in emerging markets. The new Center will bring together international best practices with an embedded understanding of local issues to become the premier source of technical expertise and performance tracking for sustainable city planning and development. The Center will inspire the development of discrete, city-specific solutions in the rapid timeframe that developing countries need.

WRI has more than a decade of experience developing solutions for urban development, transport, and road safety. Today, the institute has over 170 team members who focus on cities and transport, 80 percent of whom work in 55 cities in Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and Turkey. WRI’s experts have been supporting the design of low-carbon cities in Chengdu and Qingdao in China, renewable energy development in Bangalore, and land use planning in Mexico City. The institute has also partnered with C40 and ICLEI to develop tools to measure city-level greenhouse gas emissions that have are being road tested by more than 60 cities.
“I have long been passionate about city-building and truly believe that well-designed cities can transform how people live by creating conditions where all people can thrive and innovation can take hold,” said Stephen M. Ross, Chairman and Founder of Related Companies and a WRI Board member. “Sustainable urban development poses one of the great challenges of our times. Cities are the major drivers of economic growth, and should also offer a higher quality of life, and healthier environments. WRI has proven that it can translate global ideas into tangible practices and catalyze sustainable solutions in developing countries through a network of on-the-ground practitioners, global expertise and partnerships, and credible research. I am thrilled to be able to make such an impactful contribution that will build on WRI’s work and I am confident that together we will be able to help usher in an era of more vibrant cities and better transport around the globe.”

Ross serves on the board of directors of WRI and Culture Shed, and is a member of the Executive Committee and a trustee of Lincoln Center, New York-Presbyterian Hospital, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the Jackie Robinson Foundation. Last year, Ross committed to give half or more of his wealth to charity and signed the Giving Pledge, a long-term, global initiative created by Warren Buffett and Bill and Melinda Gates that aims to inspire deeper engagement in philanthropy and increase charitable giving globally.

“I am very pleased about the launch of this important new initiative, which will bring greater attention and support for sustainable cities,” said Rio de Janeiro Mayor Eduardo Paes, who is also Chair of C40 Cities. “As I know firsthand, cities are on the front lines of many challenges, but they can also bring great opportunities for robust growth that can benefit people and natural resources. I am looking forward to working with WRI and EMBARQ on the new WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities to advance urban solutions for Rio de Janeiro and cities around the world.”

Ross and Related Companies have long been visionaries in urban development and community revitalization. Their over four-decade commitment to affordable housing has ensured that communities of all economic levels can live, work, and thrive in cities and they have been a vocal proponent of strong green building codes. Related is best known for its transformative mixed-use projects that integrate green building innovation and dynamic open spaces, with Hudson Yards as its latest most notable example.

Hudson Yards is a new 28-acre, $20 billion mixed use neighborhood development in New York City. The development will be a model for the 21st Century urban experience and integrates every aspect of city life from commercial and residential uses to vibrant retail, cultural, educational amenities and vast open space. Hudson Yards aspires to be the most connected, clean, efficient, resilient, and responsive neighborhood ever created. Hudson Yards features state-of-the-art infrastructure and green building technologies, unprecedented wired, wireless, broadband, and satellite connectivity, a microgrid with significant on-site power generation, and a neighborhood vacuum waste system. At Hudson Yards, Related will also employ an advanced technology platform with inputs from environmental sensors and building management systems to continually innovate optimize and enhance the employee, resident, and visitor experience.
“Cities are on the front lines of today’s most pressing sustainability challenges, whether it’s battling climate change, improving mobility, or addressing public health. Responding to these challenges takes big ideas and analytical rigor—and this new initiative has both,” said Dan Doctoroff, President and CEO of Bloomberg LP, former deputy mayor for economic development and recovery for New York City, and a WRI board member. “I’m excited to see how WRI and its partners scale up solutions to ensure that tomorrow’s cities are drivers of sustainable growth and opportunity for millions of people.”

The Center will build on WRI’s relationship with the private sector to catalyze demand for sustainable solutions where markets do not already exist. WRI and the Center will also continue to work closely with leading financial, business, and city institutions—like the World Bank and Regional Development Banks, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), C40, ICLEI, and UN Habitat—to expand its influence and expedite the shift to sustainable cities.

“This new Center will bring together the leadership and experience of Stephen Ross with the analytic rigor and innovation of the experts at the World Resources Institute,” said James A. Harmon, Chairman, Caravel Management LLC and Chairman of WRI’s Board of Directors. “The future of sustainability depends in a large part on how we design cities around the world. It is a critical time for this venture that can bring together diverse partners to create robust economic growth and ensure our natural resources are sustained for future generations.”

WRI’s work in cities and transport, especially through its EMBARQ Network, which catalyzed the market for sustainable transport, like Bus Rapid Transit, has been supported by a number of significant contributors. Through these supporters, EMBARQ has reduced greenhouse gas pollution, saved people time and money, and prevented traffic-related accidents and deaths. This includes critical, long-standing support from Shell Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, and Caterpillar Foundation.

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The World Resources Institute (www.wri.org) is a global research organization that spans more than 50 countries, with offices in the United States, China, India, Brazil, and more. Our more than 450 experts and staff work closely with leaders to turn big ideas into action to sustain our natural resources—the foundation of economic opportunity and human well-being.