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UMI
Many Many Many Many Parking Spaces

Andrew Shannon Albers

A THESIS SUBMITTED 
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE 
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE 

Master Of Architecture

Approved, Thesis Committee:

[Signatures and names]

Rice University, School of Architecture

Houston, Texas
May 1999
Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank Keith Krumwiede for having faith that I would actually finish my thesis. I would also like to thank him for the encouragement and insight over the past three years here at Rice.

A special thanks goes to Ernesto Alfaro, Maria Cruz, Keith Koski, Ali Mahjouri, Elizabeth Maletz, Alane Truitt, and Rusty Walker for their vital contributions towards the completion of my thesis. Without these people there wouldn't have been much to talk about. I would also like to thank Itohan Osayimwese and David Sisson for their last minute help with putting the finishing touches on the Big Model.

Most of all I would like to thank my fellow students for making the past three years well worth it.
Abstract:

"Houston is the first major city without streets".

It is a city of parking space. And mostly surface parking at that.

Economic incentives and automobility dictate the ground rules by which the contemporary city is created.

It is cheaper and easier to have a surface parking lot. It is more advantageous for a developer to build farther and farther out from the city. Cars are relatively standard items. Architectural Graphic Standards will tell you the types of spaces they need. Parking designers have a codified system. Levels of Service (LOS) to dictate design. The automobile is perhaps the most convenient form of personal transit ever invented. Automobiles are becoming more accessible to more people. These same cars remain parked for 18-20 hours a day on average.

Our city is created by these rules. In order to change the city – the ground rules must be adjusted.

Begin
Potential Site: Northline Mall
Northwest Houston, Texas

Potential Site: Greenspoint Mall and surroundings
Northwest Houston, Texas
Potential Site: Garden Oaks Center
Northwest Houston, Texas

Potential Site: Almeda-Genoa and I-45 South
Southeast Houston, Texas
remember
buildings are easy
“It is not built form which characterizes the contemporary city, but the immense spaces over which built form has little or no control. These spaces, which overwhelm the architectural gesture, ultimately dominate the contemporary urban environment. Vast parking lots, continuous or sporadic zones of urban decay, undeveloped or razed parcels, huge public parks, ..., high speed roads and urban expressways, ..., industrial parks, theme parks, malls and subdivisions are all spaces which have failed to become the focus of significant investigation. As a result the characteristic spaces of contemporary urban production remain virtually unseen and under theorized. Without adequate conceptual access to these amorphous, unquantifiable spaces, the contemporary city remains inaccessible not only to those who live in it, but often to those who specify its design.”
“Only by abandoning the primacy of built form is it possible to reposition form so that it may effectively respond to a city dominated by space.”

[Note: Copy of the reference at the end of the page]
One diagram to explain the structure of the contemporary city is that of
the Ladder
Within the ladder there exists a secondary structure, that of
the Puddle
“What we now see is the proliferation of ad hoc public spaces where the interaction and confrontation of the marketplace prevails: the flea market, the competitive sports event, the commercial street in the blue-collar part of town temporarily transformed into a fairgrounds, the parking lot transformed into spaces for games and spectacles, and the popularity of those small downtown spaces ..., where the presence of others is the main source of pleasure and stimulation. The park as a total experience for all classes of citizens is gradually becoming merely one space out of many, now serving an invaluable function primarily for children, older people, and the dedicated student of nature, while the more mobile, more gregarious elements seek recreation in shopping malls, in the street, on the open road, and in sports arenas. Do they find it? Not as often as they should; and those ad hoc spaces are the ones to which the designer/landscape architect or developer or architect should give form and meaning.”

“It needs a designer to give it form and visibility and even a certain monumentality, a sense that it is permanent and public. It needs skillful organization of spaces and structures to provide for varied uses ... including parking. But in my opinion it emphatically does not need elaborate or tasteful design. It does not need “atmosphere”, it is not a place for contact with nature or with art. It is not and should never be a place for private experience or the indulging of private emotions. It is a public space, a place where people came to exchange goods, services and ideas, and we need such spaces in every city and town, and in every community.”
Compare
New York  Las Vegas  Almeda
The **Puddle** is the *new american vernacular space*. The Puddle is a secondary structure; the resultant of commercial development within the structure of the ladder. The individual parking fields of discrete buildings bleed into one another forming a continuous surface that short circuits the structure of the ladder. The new surface reorganizes the city. This is where we shop, interact, exercise, socialize, scandalize... The Puddle around Almeda mall is exemplary of the diversity that can be found in the contemporary city. The Puddle provides the infrastructure for economic adventure.
Programs currently on site:

Specific Programs
November 1989

- Star Tobacco
- Country Liquor
- $1.25 Degree Cleaners
- Mail Services Plus
- Dentist 943-3456 (Dr. Long D Tran dds)
- TCBY Yogurt
- Little Caesar's
- Insurance - Attorney
- Phe 21 Restaurant
- Spectra (Tanning)
- Classic Hair and Nails

# Hataburger
- Beachhouse Seafood Kitchen
- On Time Video
- Skills Toys and Gifts
- Lila's Cantina Mexican Restaurant
- Eyecare Masters
- Anchor Box
- Dancewear Etc
- Lucie Nails
- Eckord's
- Warsaw Jr (Fitness)
- Microcopy
- Salli Beauty Supply
- Tn Health
- TGF Haircutters
- Randals's (open 24 hrs - Wells Fargo)

- Tesaco
- Taco Bell
- Taco Cabana
- IHOP
- Boston Market
- Black Eyed Pea
- Golden Corral
- Sam's Club
- Sears Hardware
- Q5 Pizza
- Radio Shack
- The Mattress Firm
- MOJO - Burgers and Wings
- Subway
- Best Computer USA
- Fantasict Sam's
- Express Travel
- Dentist
- 125 Cleaners
- Joe's
- Casa Ole
- My Amigo's restaurant
- Avi ABC Appliance
- Bizare Bazar
- Foodjit Apt. Locations

- Music to Round
- Red Carpet
- American General Finance
- Longhorn Grill
- Liberty Loan
- Play It Again Sports
- Dawn Beauty
- Dollar General Store
- FACT Furniture
- Home Depot (gone)
- Houston Cellular
- Texas Credit Union Service Center
- Southwest Teacher Supply
- Leslie's Pool Supplies
- Fantasy Cabaret
- Sherwin Williams Paints
- Brown Sugar's Bar & O
- Hobby Shop - Texas Model Rent Inc
- Smart Buy Finance
- Bomb Body Piercing
- Eru Night Club (renounced on)
- G. Powerworks
- Suppermats
- Hair Design by Henry
- Crafts - Satellite Home Theatre
- Weight Watchers
- Mobile One
- Island Tan
- 24 Hr Fitness
- Insurance
- 0 Curs
- DMC Beepers
- B&C Lock and Safe
- Golf Super Store
- Barony Billiards and Bar
- Fun Wear (Unique Dresses and Exotic Uniforms)
- Vertes - Camera Repair
- EZ Pawn
- Steak & Ale
- Michael and Son Custom Jewelers
- Plus Sires Plus Savings
- 59th Store
- Tanning Studio
- Bank of America
- Recreational Factory Warehouse
- Texas State Optical
- Dan More - State Farm Insurance
- Ultimate Hair and Nail Design
- World Travel
- Olsen Mills
- Karais Jewelers Watch and Clock
- Tire Station
- Lost for Feet
- Almeda Mall
- Houston Kennedy Center
- Secrets
- South ELL Workshop
- Mills Care Home
- Touch of Class - Auto Detaking
- IM Hair Designs
- Cacique Sports
- Lise - Staffing Services
- Elegant Photography
- Han Han Bakery and Cafe
- Vietnamese
- Nation's Bank
- The Reparers Church
- Master Tire Showroom
- Mexico Lindo Imports
- Popovo's
- Colonel Video and Audio (empty)
- Dasey's Liquor
- Atom Computer
- Bread-n-Butter Food Store
- Ho A Man Video Rental
- Milos Chau BIDA (pool hall)
- Thang Ong Lam DDS - Dentist
- New Goodland Restaurant
- Nails by Sandra
- Almeda Custom Jewelry
- Gifts
- Sweet Dreams Grill
- Sara's Pub
- Kim's Hair Tech
- Sanora's Kafare
- Dais Hair Market - Oriental Food
- P & J Auto Repair
- Goodyear
- Meineke
- Pasadena 39th Car Raceway
- Ambassador Christian Day Care and School
- Natural Chiropractic
- Dung Joe xu DC
- Almeda Houston
- Glen's Hair
- Arby's
- General Joe's Chopstix
- Pancho's Mexican Buffet
- Supercuts
- Wendy's
- Office Depot
- Big K Mart
- Brinett's Shoes
- Prince $1.00
- The Candle Works
- Milos's Barbershop
- Exxon
- Monterey's
- A & J Sewing Depot
- Tweedle's Tanning Salon
- Club Cleaners
- The Office's Club - a unique place for men and women
- Professional Hair Design Salon
- Almeda Jewelry and Repair
- Savae
- Pizza Inn
- The Lamp Factory
- Target
- All Time
- US Golf and Games
- Academy
- LC Brascwell Branch Houston Public Library
- Burger King
- Best Buy
- Pinkless Shoes
- Hancock Fabrics
- Circuit City
- Treado Outlet - All's Formal Wear
- Modern Lines
- Suits Unlimited
- Texas Shoe Sale
- Joe's Fabrics and Crafts
- Discount Tires
- Chevron
- Toys 'R' Us
- K-Furniture
- Babtist Book Store
- Fabrics World Drapery and Upholstery
- K-Furniture Greenway
- Intertek Testing
- ABC Autotitle Service
- RH Tropical Fish
- 5th Ave. Jewelers
- Saudi's Auto
- Compro Tax
- Premier Stress Management
- Theo's Guitars
- Maxwell's Stress Management (non-therapeutic)
- BP
- In The Weeds Salon
Summary of Programs
Currently Existing on Site.
November 1996

Restaurants 1
Gas Stations 1
Automobile Dealers 1
Area (e.g. Mall) 16
Tanning and Fitness 1
Dentists 3
Stress Management 1
Other Health Related 9
Pharmacists 1
Banks/Credit Unions 4
Schools 1
Libraries 1
Lawyers/Insurance/Financial 9
Electronics 10
Appliances 1
Camera Repair 1
Drugs 1
Photographers 1
Travel 1
Cleaners 1
Pizza Slices 1
Weight Watchers 1
Leases 1
Adult Entertainment 1
Bars 2
Recreational 1
Jewelry 1
Gaming/Food 1
Video 1
Music 1
Kaszas 1
Golf 1 and Other/10 Specialty 10
Sports/Recreation 1
General (Misc) 1
Pawel Shop 1
Beauty Supply 1
Fabric/Sewing 4
Carpet 1
Furniture 1
Pets 1
Books 1
Clothing 1
Luggage 1
Taxis 1
Mailbox 2
Hardware 1
Apartment Locations 1
Staffing Services 1
Body Piercing 1
Necklace Shop 1
Plants 1
Locks and Safes 1
Fabb 1
Baptist Church 1
Site (as is): Almeda-Genoa and I-45 South
Southeast Houston, Texas
The Puddle around Almeda Mall is approximately two miles long by one mile wide where Almeda-Genoa road intersects with the Gulf Freeway. The site is southwest of the freeway. Currently, there is an abundance of empty land [and empty retail space]. Built in 1972, Almeda Mall has been surpassed as a shopping destination by other newer malls. It has become secondary shopping locality; arguably, it has always been such. Appealing to a local audience, it features a number of standard places and a wide variety of unique ones.
The Puddle for all its diversity in program is characterized by empty space, either in the form of parking lots or undeveloped land. Each mall/stripmall/building has its own parking lot, and its own connection to the road.
parking lots, empty land
On the “busiest shopping day of the year”, the day after Thanksgiving, one would expect to find the greatest number of shoppers at the stores, resulting in the greatest number of automobiles in the parking lots. During this moment of potential maximum usage, many of the parking lots were observed to be empty. People use the parking spaces nearest their programs. A diagram of the spaces used shows the obvious surplus of parking (land) built into the structure of the puddle.
Somewhat outside of the space actually used for parking, there are also areas in the parking lots that are never used. These spaces are not used for parking or for transit. In conjunction with the undeveloped land there appears to be an abundance of underutilized space. Much of this land is paved over in order to avoid maintenance costs. Unnecessary space is built into the structure because of ill-perceived needs. The perceived parking need becomes surface parking. The cost of which is artificially low to the developer. The Puddle is partially the resultant of this surplus.
empty land, unutilized space
Currently, residential areas are separated from the commercial areas. The empty land sometimes plays the role of buffer zone. Residential areas are developed in the same fashion as the Puddle. Large tracts of land are used to create neighborhoods or apartment complexes using the ladder structure. However, because the connective tissue of residential development is the individual lawn, there is not a comparable puddle type structure associated with residential ladders. Because of this difference there is currently almost no integration of the residential zones with commercial zones.
The quality of this space is dictated by the fact that it is not truly public space. Developing on the basis of hidden subsidization it is a place of profiteering by developers. The subsidized development creates a low density sea of interconnected parking lots serving individual buildings. While the expanse of paved surface is what makes these places undesirable, it is this same interconnected surface that make these places interesting

Within the surface of the parking lot there is the subtext of the park. Unconsciously, we have built whole cities intrinsically invested with vast park lands. Unfortunately, this land is now only an unfortunate resultant of our culture and the developers that profit by serving it.

From their *ad hoc* public space characteristics to their nature as urban blight, parking lots are often the subject of critical inquiry. They are, however, rarely addressed as a design issue. When design is an issue, the results are “ineffectual often pathetic ‘design’ gestures [ignoring] rather than [confronting] the overwhelming scale of the context”⁶. This type of formal solution is exemplified by the results of a competition to design a parking lot in Columbus, Indiana in 1985. To address this issue, the parking lot must be mined for the qualities that it has. These must be amplified.

One unforeseen and perhaps unrecognized consequence of this is that the secondary structure of the Puddle forms a secondary system of navigation (Walker’s Westheimer diagram⁷, page 33) that short circuits roads and provides new sites for programs. The ubiquitous space of the parking lot is navigable in almost any direction (middle page 33). Thus, it allows for programs to be dropped into this structure without regard to traffic or street. By placing programs into the parking lot, the navigation of that lot changes. It adjusts to the new program without changing its infrastructure (bottom page 33). The ubiquitous space is one of endless potential. It allows for a “plug in city” to actually become real⁸. This potential has, so far, only been timidly explored by architects, developers, or city planners.

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Walker's Westheimer Diagram

scale: 1"=16'

parking space are undifferentiated space when not in use

scale: 1"=16'

when moments of resistance are applied

scale: 1"=16'
This thesis attempts to address the Puddle and the parking lot without falling into the traps that formal games create in this landscape. It is an experiment in planning a place. An attempt to redesign what the Puddle is. There are no formal dictates to the architecture, only guides to land use and urban growth. This thesis outlines a set of guides for the chosen site (page 35). These guides were given over to a set of individuals (page 38), along with an equally important set of “guides for the guides” (page 36). The experiment was conducted on a 1:100 scale model of the site. The scale was chosen because of the size of the site and to avoid formal games that might be played with the architecture of the individual buildings. The result of the experiment was the Big Model (page 37). Which was then explored in collage and drawing.
Guidelines for Parking

Development will be focused into defined boundaries within the city. In these zones, property owners will only be allowed to own the built upon land. Built upon land is defined as land that is used to hold buildings not used for parking.

Each property owner will declare a parking need required by their business or housing. These requirements will be met by the Zone in the form of municipal infrastructural parking.

Parking requirements shall be no less than 1:1 (floor area to parking surface area required) and recommended to be 1.2 or 1.3. 30-50% of the parking area will be fluctuating parking.

Fluctuating parking is defined as Non-paved surface that is continuous with the park surface. It is at minimum 80% planted. It can be used to park cars on or for other park activities.

With the construction of every 90,000 square feet of paved surface there must be 30,000 square feet of surface set aside for non-paved/non-automobile/non-built uses. These surfaces can be used for agriculture or recreation or private enterprises.

There will be no streets in the zone. All navigation will occur through the park. Each paved surface must be linked to other paved surfaces in a way that creates a network of paths through the zone. Therefore, dead ends (cul de sacs) must be avoided.

There will be a network of pedestrian paths linking all businesses in the development zone. These paths can and will be created through the linking of fluctuating parking and non-automobile areas. There should never be more than 80 feet between any of these places (preferably 40 feet).

As the parking infrastructure is created it is also eligible to be built on for new buildings. An individual or group might also purchase or lease an area in the park to conduct business or reside and build into the park.

When a business or other wishes to vacate their property the land is then bought back by the park and the building either reused or disassembled. The building components will be salvaged and used elsewhere in new construction.

As the park is used it shall be maintained or vacated. Heavily trafficked routes will be reinforced and frequently maintained. Less used zones will not be maintained or replanted using or transformed to non-automobile uses. Unused non-automobile land will be left alone.

The park will be free and open to the public. It will be land owned by the city and operated by a joint public/private venture. It will be patrolled by the city police.

The park will make all attempts to sustain itself infrastructurally (through a retaining system for runoff water, a system of solar power collectors, attempts to make the buildings environmentally responsive, etc.)

Residential development in the park will be encouraged.

An effort will be made to find sites for new business within the existing infrastructure before new infrastructural construction is allowed.
These guides are intended as just that - guides - for building the model. The model is at 1:100. The materials listed on front are the starting point for construction. The buildings placed on the model should be mostly just boxes - dimensioned and proportioned to buildings typically built in this type of environment (gas stations, big box stores, malls, mini malls, restaurants, suburban houses, apartment buildings, etc.). Two sections of the model have been completed and serve as a guide to the rest of the model. They should not be taken as the rule though. Each person working on the model should interpret the guides differently and make suggestions as to how they might change. Write those suggestions on this paper and return when you are done. New modeling materials may be introduced as long as they are explained - please include a sample of the new material and a brief explanation (also on this paper). One last thing, each person working on the model should write their name on their list of guides. Remember, the big thing is to have fun with it. Thanks a lot.
The Big Model

built at 1:100 overall model dimensions 32" x 63"
Ernesto Alfaro
Maria Cruz
Keith Koski
Ali Mahjour
Elizabeth Maletz
Itohara Osayi
David Sisson
Alane Truitt
Rusty Walker
Potential Program
Potential Programs
Potential Programs
Index of images and drawings pages 39 through 53

page 49  top, collage, “there’s flowers up there”
page 50  top, collage, “got to get some new keys”
page 51  top, program drawing number one, image taken from model
page 52  top, collage, “athletics next to your truck, how great is that?” bottom (left to right) drawing “24 spots to each court”, photo of model, aerial photo of model.
page 53  top, collage, “you can park and play out of the sun”, bottom (left to right) photo of model, photo of model, drawing, “Level Of Service” for typical big box store, outer line is LOS dictated by rules of thumb, inner line is actual LOS, chart, “how long/how far”
page 54  top, collage, “going for a family picnic in the park, under the park”, bottom (left to right) drawing, “0.083 equals a mailbox”, aerial photo of model, photo of model.
page 55  top, collage, running one, “on the track through the park”, bottom (left to right) photo of model, drawing, “0.79 equals elevation”
page 56  top, collage, “Fred Schwartz on his farm, in the park”
page 57  top, program drawing number two, image taken from model.
page 58  top, collage, running two, “through the flooded part of the park”, bottom (left to right) drawing, “striping the park”, drawing, LOS for typical strip mall, outer line is LOS dictated by rules of thumb, inner line is actual LOS, photo of model, photo of model.
page 59  top, collage, “missionaries riding home through the park”, bottom (left to right) aerial photo of model, photo of model, drawing, “a house in the park”
page 60  top, collage, “the Christmas tree farm’s on top”
page 61  top, program drawing number three, image taken from model
page 62  top, running three, “all by himself”, bottom (left to right) drawing/collage “Corbu! GO HOME!” drawing, “sleeping in the park”, aerial photo of most of model, photo of model.
page 63  top, “there used to be nowhere to go mountain biking in Houston”, bottom (left to right) photo of model, collage, “forgot my keys”, drawing, “targeting 568 places”, drawing LOS for Almeda mall, outer line is LOS dictated by rules of thumb, inner line is actual LOS, photo of model, photo of model.
The Fab nc of Our Lives™

**1998 Parking**

On Thanksgiving Day, 1998, a bold advertising campaign was introduced that portrayed Cotton as an integral part of the American experience. The Fab nc of Our Lives™ was a ground-breaking marketing strategy, Featuring real people in everyday situations, and against a musical background featuring singer-songwriter Richie Havens, the commercials utilized a series of vignettes subtly depicting how Cotton is involved in the day-to-day rituals of American life. Widely acclaimed for its innovative treatment, the campaign has won several awards for excellence in advertising, including a Clio.

Since that time, three new generations of The Fab nc of Our Lives™ campaigns have been launched, still focusing on the traditional values of optimism, sincerity and honesty.

To reinforce The Fab nc of Our Lives™ advertising, a three-part consumer promotion appeared in the Reader’s Digest in late 1994 and early 1995. That push reached more than 50 million readers and generated more than 55,000 photo entries, all showing how Cotton fits in with people’s everyday lives. About 500,000 people voted for the winners.

**1999 Parking**

In addition, Cotton Incorporated launched another interactive, reader-supported special section in the pages of Reader’s Digest. The program calls upon readers to submit personal stories exemplifying “The Fab nc of Our Lives.”

In 1998, The Fab nc Of Our Lives™ advertising program introduced a third set of television commercials, utilizing a solid schedule of network television programming including news, prime-time specials, major movies and sports events and daytime. Sports events included Wimbledon and U.S. Open Tennis, the World Series and Cotton Incorporated’s Skates of Gold, a figure skating exhibition of 22 Olympic Gold Medalists.

Each of the new seven commercials celebrated a significant moment in life focusing on traditional American values. The advertising has dramatically succeeded in creating a strong emotional relationship linking Cotton products to the human life experience.

In other marketing efforts during 1998, Cotton Incorporated expanded its research program with the introduction of a major ongoing behavioral research study, The Lifestyle Monitor™. This broad-based, on-going research program is designed to capture a thorough understanding of the social and behavioral factors which influence consumer purchases of Cotton and Home Furnishings. Trends covered by the research include attitudes towards shopping, fashion, appearance, fiber preference, dream and home furnishings. A newsletter that disseminates the Monitor findings is sent out on a quarterly basis.

Parking, The Fab nc of Our Lives!

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3. This was taken and modified from the Cotton Incorporated Web page: http://www.cottoninc.com/AboutCotton/homepage.htm?PAGE=33614689&DTOKEN=22245 or can be found at www.cottoninc.com under the heading: company history.
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Web Pages:

http://www.cottoninc.com/AboutCotton/homepage.cfm?PAGE=3&64689&CFTOKEN=22249

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