Cite

36: Winter 1996

FOLLOW THE MONEY

$

PUBLIC SPENDING

Metro
ISTEA

$

PRIVATE SPENDING

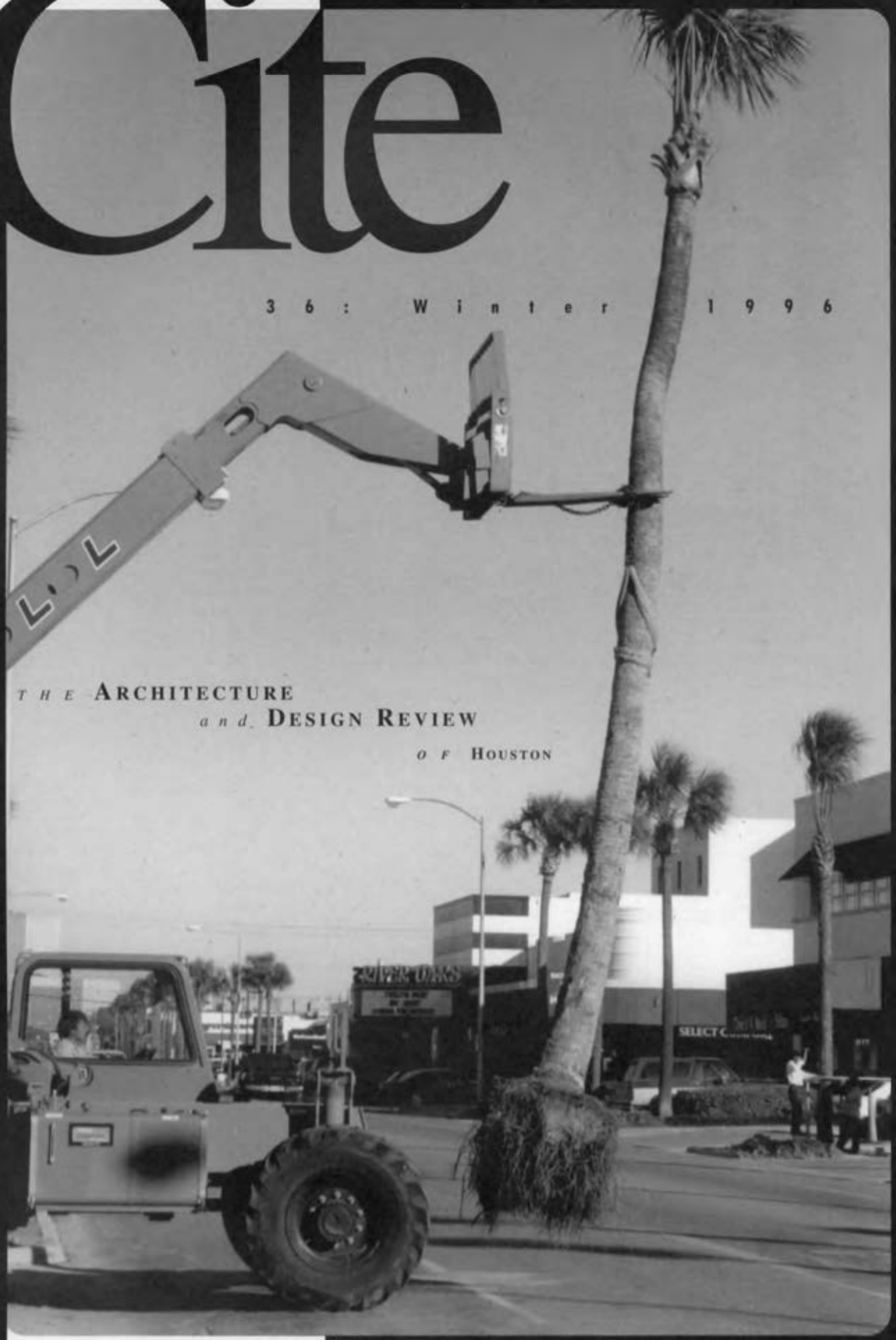
River Oaks Center
The Village

$

NON-PROFIT SPENDING

Shrine of the Black Madonna

$



THE ARCHITECTURE and DESIGN REVIEW OF HOUSTON

$5.00

Guest Editor
Barry Moore

Editorial Committee
Chairman
Rives Taylor

Jay Baker
Nonya Grenader
Gabriella Gutierrez
Karl Kilian
Charles D. Maynard, Jr.
Barry Moore
Ann Walton Sieber
William F. Stern
Drexel Turner
Bruce C. Webb
Joe Douglas Webb

Managing Editor
Barrie Scardino

Graphic Design
Minor Design Group

Photography
Paul Hester

Advertising
Lynn Kelly

Rice Design Alliance
Board of Directors

President
Louis H. Skidmore, Jr.

President-Elect
Gwendolyn H. Goffe

Vice President
Marilyn Archer

Treasurer
David H. Watkins

Secretary
Kathy Heard

Jory Alexander
Natalye L. Appel
Keiji Asakura
Jay Baker
Daniel W. Bankhead
Minnette Boesel
James D. Burnett
Paul D. Chapman
Rudy Colby
Nahila Cronfel
William Curtis
Frank E. Douglas
Fares el-Dahdah
Leslie K. Elkins
Edwin A. Eubanks
Gary L. Ferguson
David T. George
Jennifer Harding
Kathy Heard
Robert J. Heineman
Carlos Jiménez
Catherine M. Johnson
Susan Booth Keeton
William D. Kendall
Lars Lerup
Rafael Longoria
Rick Lowe
Charles D. Maynard, Jr.
Thad Minyard
Robert Morris
Judy R. Pesek
Charlotte A. Rothwell
Danny Marc Samuels
William F. Stern
Rives Taylor
Phoebe Tudor
Drexel Turner
James Vick
Karen D. Walker
Bruce C. Webb
Joe Douglas Webb
L. Burke Windham III
Paul Winkler

Executive Director
Linda L. Sylvan

Program Director
Molly Cumming

Office Assistant
Mary Swift

Rice Design Alliance
Corporate Members

A & E Products Co. Inc.
Anchorage Foundation of Texas
Baker & Botts
W. S. Bellows Construction Corporation
Berger IronWorks, Inc.
Brochsteins Inc.
cord partners
Clarke Condon Associates
Cokinos Bosien & Young
Compaq Computer Corporation
Constructors & Associates, Inc.
A. Crain Construction Company, Inc.
Creative Flooring Resources
L. Barry Davidson Architects AIA, Inc.
The Decorative Center of Houston
Gamma Construction Company
Gensler
Gilbane Building Company
Haynes Whaley Associates, Inc.
Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum, Inc.
Hines Interests Limited Partnership
Houston Chapter–Associated General Contractors of America
Houston Lighting & Power Co.
Jackson & Ryan Architects
Kendall/Heaton Associates
The Knoll Group
Lesley & Associates, Inc.
Lockwood, Andrews & Newnam
Marek Brothers Systems, Inc.
Harris Masterson III
Matrix/Structural Engineers, Inc.
McCoy Inc.
McDugald-Steele Landscape Architects & Contractors
Minor Design Group, Inc.
Walter P. Moore and Associates, Inc.
Morgan Personette Properties
Morgan Texas Inc.
Moriarty & Associates
Moss Landscaping, Inc.
PanEnergy Corp.
PGAL
The Powell Group
Ridgway's
Karen Rose Engineering & Surveying
Louisa Stude Sarofim
William F. Stern & Associates, Architects
Taft Architects
Tellepsen Corporation
Thomsen Company, Inc.
3D/International
Threshold Interests
Treebeards on Market Square
Truffles & Flourishes Catering
Phoebe and Bobby Tudor
Vanguard Environments, Inc.
Karen D. Walker
Wall Company Printing
Watkins Carter Hamilton
Weingarten Realty Management
Wells Design, Inc.
Mrs. Wesley West
Tom Wilson and Associates Architects
Windham Builders

Notes on Contributors

Shaila Dewan is a freelance writer living in Houston.

George Greanias served six years on the Houston City Council and eight years as city controller. He has taught at Rice University and is presently a mediator and financial and management consultant.

Vincent P. Hauser AIA is the editor of *Texas Architect*.

David Kaplan is a freelance writer in Houston.

Richard Longstreth is a professor in the American Studies Program at George Washington University.

Barry Moore FAIA, an adjunct professor and director of the Center for Historic Architecture at the University of Houston College of Architecture, is president and managing partner of SJKB/Houston.

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner FAIA, professor and chairman, Department of Architecture at the University of Washington, Seattle, formerly practiced in Houston and taught at the Rice School of Architecture.

Barrie Scardino is managing editor of *Cite*.

Ann Walton Sieber is a writer and editor in Houston.

Phoebe Tudor, a preservation consultant, is secretary of the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance and was cochair of its 1996 Good Brick Awards.

Drexel Turner, a city planner and architectural curator, is a visiting critic in the College of Architecture, University of Houston.

Bruce C. Webb is dean and professor of architecture in the College of Architecture, University of Houston.

Cite

The Architecture and Design Review of Houston

A Publication of the Rice Design Alliance

36: Winter 1996

Copyright © 1996 by the Rice Design Alliance. Reproduction of all or part of editorial content without permission is strictly prohibited. The opinions expressed in *Cite* do not necessarily represent the views of the board of directors of the Rice Design Alliance. Publication of this issue of *Cite* is supported in part by a grant from the City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council.

Cite (ISSN: 8755-0415) is published three times a year by the Rice Design Alliance and is indexed in the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals. The Rice Design Alliance, established in 1973, is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to the advancement of architecture and design.

WebCite
Visit RDA and *Cite* on the internet:
http://riceinfo.rice.edu/projects/RDA

Cite is printed on recycled paper.

Cover: New palm trees being installed along West Gray in the River Oaks Shopping Center, November 1996.
© *1996 Hester + Hardaway*

Cite

The Architecture and Design Review of Houston

Subscription
One year: $12 Two years: $20

Name

Address

City/State Zip

❑ Check for $_____ enclosed.

❑ Gift subscription ❑ Bill me

The Rice Design Alliance
The Rice Design Alliance, established in 1973, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of architecture, urban design, and the built environment in the Houston region through educational programs; the publication of *Cite*, a biannual review of architecture and design; and active programs to initiate physical improvements. Membership in the RDA is open to the general public.

Individual Membership $35
Ticket discounts for RDA programs
Free subscription to *Cite: The Architecture and Design Review of Houston*
Invitations to "members only" events
Discounts on selected titles from the Brazos Bookstore
Participation in the annual membership meeting and event

Student Membership $15
All of the above benefits

Family Membership $50
All of the above benefits for your family

Sponsor Membership $125
All of the benefits accorded to Family Members
Courtesy tickets to two selected RDA programs

Patron Membership $250
All of the benefits accorded to Sponsor Members
Courtesy tickets to three selected RDA programs

Sustaining Membership $500
All of the benefits accorded to Patron Members
Courtesy tickets to all RDA programs

Corporate Membership $1000
All of the benefits accorded to Sustaining Members
Recognition in the RDA journal *Cite* and at special events

Membership Application

Name

Address

City/State Zip

Telephone

Occupation

Membership Category

Amount enclosed

Checks should be sent to Rice University, Rice Design Alliance – MS 51, 6100 South Main Street, Houston, Texas 77005-1892.

Rice Design Alliance Events

LECTURE SERIES

Northern Lights: New Canadian Architects
For its Spring 1997 lecture series, RDA has invited five Canadian architects to present and discuss their work. *Wednesdays February 26 through March 26.*

February 26
Phyllis Lambert, director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal. "Mies van der Rohe and the CCA – A Personal Perspective."

March 5
John Patkau, Vancouver, British Columbia

March 12
Peter Cardew, Vancouver, British Columbia

March 19
Brigitte Shim, Toronto, Ontario

March 26
Brian MacKay-Lyons, Halifax, Nova Scotia

All lectures will be held in the Brown Auditorium, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 8 p.m. Series tickets are available in advance at the RDA office. RDA and MFAH members $25, students $12, nonmembers $40. If available, single tickets will be sold at the door: RDA and MFAH members $7, students $3, nonmembers $10. For further information, please call 713.527.4876.

The Houston Talks
The Rice Design Alliance, the Rice University School of Architecture, and the University of Houston College of Architecture are for the first time collaborating on a lecture series that continues in the spring. The lectures are free and open to the public. Speakers will not only give a public lecture but also spend time informally with students at both schools. In addition to Enric Miralles who lectured on October 23, speakers are:

February 3
David Chipperfield, London. Lecture at 8 p.m. in the Grand Hall, Rice Memorial Center, Rice University.

February 13
William Bruder, New River, Arizona. Lecture at 8 p.m. in the Cullen Performance Hall, University of Houston.

EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS

Houston Works
The Rice Design Alliance will be calling for entries for a spring exhibition at the Lawndale Art and Performance Center. RDA plans to exhibit a variety of work by Houston designers, including furniture, interior and landscape design, and architecture. *April 3 through May 17.*

Rancheros Deluxe
RDA's annual members-only architecture tour will feature the best Houston examples of the American ranch-style house, which had its heyday just after World War II and is newly eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *April 26 and 27.*

CITE 35 PUBLICATION PARTY

Left to right: *Cite* assistant editor Molly Kelly; Stephen Fox; *Cite* editorial committee chairman Rives Taylor; and *Cite* 36 guest editor Barry Moore.

CITE OFFICE

The offices of *Cite* magazine are located in the River Oaks Shopping Center, Suite #1, 1973 West Gray, 77019 in architecturally approved space generously donated by Weingarten Realty Management.

To the Editor

Thank you for sending the issues of *Cite: The Architecture and Design Review of Houston*. Copies were made available to our faculty and students and sent to the Technical Reference Center. *Cite* is a first-class publication with a broad range of articles, and the layout is well thought out. I especially enjoyed the articles by Stephen Fox, Richard Ingersoll, and Michael Benedikt. All three have presented lectures to our college and were well received. We look forward to the next issue of *Cite*.

Julius M. Gribou, AIA
Head of Department, Department of Architecture, Texas A & M University

•••

The copies of your fall issue of *Cite* arrived today, and I am still trembling from excitement. The layout and design is simply fantastic. I am especially pleased with the spread on Texas Southern University. Alvia Wardlaw did a wonderful job in capturing the essence of TSU. I know the entire university family would join me in saying thank you for including Texas Southern University. I have shared copies with our 36 student organizations, the Office of the President, our Board of Regents, and the University Archives in the Robert J. Terry Library.

Again, we thank you for having the vision, thought, and insight to include Texas Southern University. We wish you continued success with a wonderful publication.

Eva K. Pickens
Director of Communication and University Relations, Texas Southern University

•••

The extraordinary sculptor Carroll Simms happens to be male, and thus should have been referred to by the pronoun "he" in the article about the TSU campus in *Cite* 35.

Since the campus was nominally the focus of the article, and the central plaza was recently dedicated to him, Simms's works deserved more than the passing notice they received.

His works at TSU, UH, in the Music Hall, and other locations demonstrate that his true peers are Jacques Lipchitz, Jacob Epstein, and Henry Moore.

We want to encourage everyone with an interest in sculpture to visit the Carroll Simms Plaza at Texas Southern.

Bill Howze and Jeannette Dixon, *Houston*

•••

As a minor correction, the illustration of the University of Virginia (*Cite* 35, p. 27) shows the northern extension of the rotunda. It was added by Robert Mills in 1853. In disgust, Mr. Jefferson's ghost started a fire that destroyed it in 1895.

In its history and design, I thoroughly enjoy learning about my city from your magazine.

Lynn N. Hughes
United States District Judge, Houston

•••

In a recent article regarding playgrounds designed by Robert Leathers (*Cite* 35), the writer questioned whether children playing on the equipment at Hidalgo Park are safe. The article illustrates why the Houston Parks and Recreation Department no longer uses such playground equipment and gives us an opportunity to introduce the steps we have taken to ensure that YES, our children are reasonably safe on all of our city's playgrounds.

In February 1994, this department created five two-man teams dedicated to playground safety, maintenance, and repair. These teams inspect approximately 250 playgrounds an average of twice monthly. They have special trucks equipped with the necessary tools and parts for immediate repair of playground equipment. The supervisor of the team is a certified playground inspector as designated by the National Recreation and Parks Association.

The City of Houston has some older playground equipment that was manufactured and installed prior to the establishment of American Society for Testing Materials and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission safety guidelines. It is the responsibility of our playground safety teams to inspect older equipment and make sure it is as compliant as possible with the current safety guidelines.

The playground at Hidalgo Park was designed and constructed before the safety standards were adopted. Although the equipment has always been in fairly good repair, its age and construction present challenges in keeping it up to standard. Since April 1994, the playground has been inspected more than 70 times and over $7,670 has been spent on repairs. Hidalgo Park is part of the Parks to Standard Program, a $52 million renovation project designed to bring Houston's parks up to a uniform standard of safety, security, and accessibility. In June 1996, we began renovations to provide Hidalgo Park with $155,932 of improvements, not only to the playground but also to other facilities throughout the park.

Your article specifically questioned the condition of the wood surfaces. On October 30, 1996 our crews conducted an inspection of the Hidalgo Park playground and found that the overall condition of the wood facing appeared to be weathered but good. The inspector found only a few areas of minor splintering and noted that a recent water power cleaning may have contributed to the weathered appearance. The wood equipment is resealed annually, however, the process has been delayed this year until completion of the Parks to Standard improvements.

To avoid these high repair costs and to improve safety, we now install composite playground equipment designed to be smoother, sturdier, and made of more durable materials. The equipment at Hidalgo Park does not meet the current standards and carries a certain set of liability issues; therefore, it will probably be the last of its kind in a City of Houston park. The new Heights playground referred to in the *Cite* article is located in Donovan Park, which is privately owned and maintained.

It is important to note that one of the most common problems we have with our park equipment is vandalism. Hidalgo Park is on a routine twice monthly maintenance schedule. Our graffiti abatement program maintains a 72-hour response time. In addition, we have a 24-hour Citizens' HELPLINE (645-HELP) so that citizens can report any problems. The City of Houston has set new standards in park excellence and playground safety, and we continue to improve and upgrade our facilities. We feel that the implications in the article could have been presented more accurately if we had been given the opportunity for our input. We firmly believe that the City of Houston has gone above and beyond to ensure that we are providing the safest play opportunities for Houston's children at Hidalgo and all City parks.

William R. Smith II
Director, Parks and Recreation Department
City of Houston

From the Editor

FOLLOWING THE MONEY

The issue behind this Issue is capital — money — the force that makes built projects happen. As political and social changes occur in this millennial decade, *Cite* thought it was time to look at projects around us, how they are funded, and in what ways they influence our community. With the help of four new writers to our pages, *Cite* 36 examines publicly and privately funded initiatives:

- Richard Longstreth and Drexel Turner reflect on West Gray and River Oaks Shopping Center, while David Kaplan explores the Rice University Village. In both cases private dollars have been plowed back in to make older retail developments economically viable.
- Vincent Hauser writes about federal dollars put to work to preserve our architectural heritage.
- Jeffrey Ochsner examines the expenditure of Metro tax dollars that hope to transform the downtown streetscape and challenge the pre-eminence of a formidable, well-financed private tunnel system down under.
- Ann Walton Sieber contemplates the Shrine of the Black Madonna and its African American utopian mission, philanthropically funded on the disadvantaged fringes of the Third Ward.
- And, in an introspective arc, George Greanias considers the framework of the city's infrastructure, the proper role of public tax dollars in influencing the development of the private sector, and how we should frame the dialogue about public-private partnerships that shape a city.

No one person, corporation, board, administration, or referendum has autonomous power to make decisions about how money is spent that effects our public environment. Awareness and discussion might raise the level of community involvement — so that what is built around us is an accurate reflection of the public will.

Barry Moore, FAIA

FRANK ROGIN INC

20th CENTURY OBJECTS OF ART & DESIGN

Table. 1930's, ebonized wood, parchment and brass

21 MERCER STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10013
TEL: 212.431.6545 FAX: 212.431.6632
Tuesday through Saturday, 12 – 6 and by appointment,
www.rogin.com

THE NATURAL SOURCE

carpet, rugs & flooring

wool
stone
sisal
wood

CREATIVE FLOORING
RESOURCES
2410 Bissonnet • Houston, Texas 77005 • 713-522-1181

VENEER TO ETERNITY

RDA Honors Raymond Brochstein

RDA honoree, Raymond Brochstein, with his wife Susan Brochstein and his daughter Deborah Brochstein at *Veneer to Eternity*.

The tenth annual Rice Design Alliance fundraising gala, *Veneer to Eternity*, was held on Saturday, November 9, 1996, at the newly retrofitted Houston Industries Plaza, 1111 Lousiana. A sellout RDA crowd of 700 turned out to honor Raymond Brochstein, president of Brochsteins Inc. Raymond's friends and supporters were given a chance to admire the beautiful bird's-eye-maple veneer millwork installed by Brochsteins in the lobby spaces of Houston Industries Plaza.

Raymond Brochstein, a graduate of the Rice University School of Architecture, has carried on the fine tradition established by his father and his uncle, who founded Brochsteins Inc. in 1935. As one of the nation's leading manufacturers of architectural woodwork and custom-designed commercial furniture, Brochsteins has made an enormous contribution to the built environment by bringing impeccable craftsmanship to the interiors of corporate and professional offices, banks, retail establishments, hotels, museums, and clubs. Raymond Brochstein has worked with some of the nation's most outstanding architecture firms and has demonstrated a sensitivity to the requirements of architects and interior designers alike. His deep commitment to education is demonstrated by his support of Houston Independent School District programs as well as architecture programs at Rice University, the University of Houston, and the Rice Design Alliance. Raymond Brochstein, who this year was named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, has helped make Houston a better and more beautiful place to live through both his professional work and his support of many civic and cultural efforts.

RDA president Louis Skidmore and his wife, Margaret, and gala chairman Julie Baker and her husband, Jay, greeted the guests as they entered the marble, granite, wood, glass, and stainless-steel interiors of the building, which is the new corporate home of Houston Lighting & Power and its parent company. The architect, Richard Keating of DMJM Keating, flew in from Los Angeles for the gala, as did the interior designer of the elegant executive floors, Debra Lehman-Smith, who traveled with her partners from Washington, D.C. HL&P's David Barker with his wife, Carol, David George (who also served as gala underwriting chairman) with his wife, Norma, and Hugh Rice Kelly with his wife, Molly, received accolades from gala guests. Many of the professionals whose companies worked on the project were on hand as well, including Charlie Baughn of Hines Interests (development manager), Jory Alexander and Wayne Shull of Kendall/Heaton (document architect), Scott Ziegler of Ziegler Cooper Architects (interiors architect), and contractors George Miner of Miner-Dederick Constructors and Bobby Surles of the Tellepsen Corporation.

Introduced in a memorable veneer-clad invitation by graphics designer Deborah Brochstein, the gala's theme, *Veneer to Eternity*, was interpreted by architect and designer Charley Kifer with a 12-foot-high veneer Mobius strip, built and installed by Brochsteins, that guests passed through on their way up the escalator to the second-floor lobby. There auction cochairs, Sarah Balinskas and Judy Kugle, had more than a hundred auction items on display, including a figured-maple-and-stainless-steel serving cart designed for the occasion by Debra Lehman-Smith and fabricated by Brochsteins; a week in a 300-year-old stone farmhouse near Saintes, France, renovated and donated by Taft Architects; and a tour of Hakeem Olajuwon's Sugar Land home by the owner and his architect, William T. Cannady.

For dinner, catered by Truffles & Flourishes, guests made their way down to the tunnel-level court, where each table featured its own Mobius-strip centerpiece, designed by Kifer and constructed by Rice architecture students under the direction of Brochsteins craftsmen. Following dinner, Mr. Brochstein was "roasted" by Keating, Lehman-Smith, and his longtime friend, Ben Brewer. The program concluded with the presentation by Louis Skidmore of the 1996 RDA Award for Design Excellence, a

"Magnolia" Steuben glass bowl donated by Neiman Marcus, to honoree Brochstein, who responded with lighthearted comments.

Proceeds of $217,000 from the gala will help support the educational programs of the Rice Design Alliance. The RDA board of directors would like to thank all of the gala committee chairmen and volunteers as well as Houston Industries for making their building available and the RDA staff for their support. We would also like to recognize our generous underwriters, whose contributions will help make possible the 1997 programs and publication of *Cite*. ■

UNDERWRITERS

Master Craftsman
Mrs. Wesley West

Foremen
Baker & Botts
W. S. Bellows Construction Corp.
Brochsteins Inc.
McCoy Inc.
Louisa Stude Sarofim
Truffles & Flourishes Catering

Crew Leaders
Architectural Woodwork Corp.
Compaq Computer Corporation
Comsco
S. L. Crawford Construction Inc.
DMJM Keating
Douglas/Gallagher
J. A. and Isabel M. Elkins Foundation
Enron Property Company
Gensler
Gilbane Building Company
Alfred C. Glassell, III
D. E. Harvey Builders
Haynes Whaley Associates, Inc.
Hines Interests Limited Partnership
Houston Lighting & Power Company
JMB/Houston Center
Kendall/Heaton Associates, Inc.
Kirksey and Partners Architects
Karol Kreymer and Dr. Robert J. Card
LTB Constructors, Inc.
Lehman/Smith/Wiseman & Associates
Marley Hutt/Jim Murdaugh
Christiana and Luke McCann
Miner-Dederick Constructors Inc.
Walter P. Moore and Associates
Mr. and Mrs. S. I. Morris/
Jackson & Ryan Architects
The Powell Group
Ridgway's
Shell Oil Company
Specified Components, Inc.
Susman Godfrey L.L.P.
Tellepsen Corporation
3D/International
Vinson & Elkins/Darrell C. Morrow
Watkins Carter Hamilton
Ziegler Cooper Architects

Journeymen
A & E Products Company, Inc.
Mrs. Nancy C. Allen
American General Corporation
Julie and Jay Baker
Berger Iron Works Inc.
cord partners
Dr. and Mrs. Patrick Davidson
Day Brown Rice, Inc.
General Woods & Veneer Group, Architectural
Division
Gowan, Inc.
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel K. Hedges
Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum, Inc.
Houston Chapter, Associated General
Contractors of America, Inc.
The Knoll Group
Linbeck Construction Corporation
The Marek Family of Companies
Vicki and Winston McIntosh
Milam & Co. Painting, Inc.
O'Donnell/Snider Construction, Inc.
Pierce Goodwin Alexander & Linville
Ms. Charlotte A. Rothwell
Barrie and Peter Scardino
Texas Commerce Bank
Phoebe and Bobby Tudor
Turner Construction Company of Texas
Erla and Harry Zuber

Apprentices
Advanced Technologies, Inc.
Anonymous
Bank One, Texas, N.A.
Brookstone Corporation
Mr. and Mrs. Larry W. Buck
Mr. and Mrs. Wm. T. Cannady
Chapman Design, Inc.
Clark Condon Associates
Comsul Ltd
Elouise A. Cooper
Duddlesten Foundation
Mr. and Mrs. C. Richard Everett
Mr. and Mrs. Eric Fryar
Furniture Marketing Group of Houston, Inc.
Gwendolyn H. Goffe
Harding Design
Mrs. Ray Watkin Hoagland
Catherine M. and Richard E. Johnson
John E. Jonter, AIA
Susan Booth Keeton
The Lentz Group
Lesley & Associates, Inc.
Mr. and Mrs. Elton S. Lipnick
Lonestar Plywood and Door Corp.
M/MA Partners, Inc.
Mr. and Mrs. Rodney H. Margolis
Charles and Michelle Maynard
The Moshacher Foundation, Inc.
Moss Landscaping, Inc.
PanEnergy Corp.
Laura Stehr Peters
Mr. and Mrs. Steven Peters
Karen and Harry Pinson
Reconstruction Management Company
Sally and Norman Reynolds
Glen A. Rosenbaum and guest
Mr. William C. Ross, C. P. A.
Margaret and Louis H. Skidmore, Jr.
William E. Steen & Associates
Hill Swift Architects
Linda and Dick Sylvan
Karen D. Walker
Wall Company Printing
Joe Douglas Webb AIA
Windham Builders

Contributors
A & E Products Company, Inc.
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Adler
Dottie and Gus Block
Brochsteins Inc.
Central Parking System
Stephen Fox
Elizabeth Glassman
Houston Lighting & Power Company
Mr. and Mrs. Wm. James Miller
Robert Morris
Neiman Marcus
Mr. and Mrs. Shoel Schuleman
Isabel Brown Wilson
Lorraine and Ed Wulfe

Auction Donors
Alexander's Fine Portrait Design
Alley Theatre
American Institute of Architects
Claire and Doug Ankenman
Natalye Appel Architects
Cameron Armstrong, Architect
Art Guys
Artists Bookworks Houston
Leonard Bachman, Architect
Backstreet Cafe
Kenny Baldwin, LMSW-ACP, Psychotherapist
Sarah Balinskas Fine Framing, Display
Alternative, Art Services
Balinskas Imports
Gertrude Barnstone, Artables Gallery
Baroque Ceramic Restoration
Baroque Restaurant
Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens
benjy's Restaurant
Barbara Biel
Bissonnet/Southampton Veterinary Clinic
Minnette Boesel
Cathy Boswell
The Brass Maiden
Brazos Bookstore
Brochsteins Inc.
Bruegger's Bagels
James Burnett
President George Bush
Elizabeth Byrd
CLR Architects
Cafe Annie
William T. Cannady
The Children's Museum of Houston
Colby Design
Contemporary Arts Museum
Creative Flooring Resources
Ann Criswell, Houston Chronicle
Doug Crosson
Da Camera of Houston
Damian's Cucina Italiana
Dr. Patrick R. Davidson, Montrose Veterinary
Clinic
The Decorative Center of Houston
Paige DeShong
DiverseWorks
Pamela Dreef Designs
Ed Eubanks
Express Theatre
Joan Farmer
59 Diner
Foelber Pottery
Foley's
Formica Corporation
Four Seasons Hotel
Stephen Fox
Fred Nevill
Galleria Area Chiropractors
Don Glentzer
Lynn Goode Gallery
Joseph Gregg, Point Five
Gremillion & Co. Fine Art
Tara C. Guffroy Designs
H. T. S. Industries, Inc.
Guy Hagstette
Phyllis Haid Photography
Hilary Harnischeiger
Dan Hasselbrook
Haworth, Inc.
Jackson Hicks, Jackson and Company
High Gloss/High Gloss Two
Houston Ballet
Houston Grand Opera Association
Houston Museum of Natural Science
Houston Public Television
Houston Symphony
The Houstonian Hotel
Kathy Huber, *Houston Chronicle*
J & J Industries
George O. Jackson
Jerry Jeanmard/Wells Design
KHOU-TV Channel 11
KI/Krueger International
Kam's Fine Chinese Cuisine
Bonnie Kastel
Kinko's in the Village
Koelsch-Fritsch Gallery
Judy Kugle
La Strada
The Lancaster
Lawing Gallery
Lawndale Art & Performance Center
Heng-Hui Tiffany Lee
Lehman/Smith/Wiseman & Associates
Ines Lombardi
Looking At Art
J. M. Lynne Co., Inc.
Main Street Theater
Diane and Lester Marks
Muriqura Masterson
Maxim's
McGonigel's Mucky Duck Pub
The Menil Collection
Mimi's Kitchen Children's Cooking Classes
Mitchell Energy & Development Corp.
Jaime Mize
Moody Gardens
The Moose Cafe
David Morello Garden Enterprises
Robert Morris, Architect
Judy Y. Mundy
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Melissa Noble
Ocotillo Gallery
Odeon Art Deco Gallery
Office Pavilion
Hakeem Olajuwon
Omnitek Kitchen Designs
The Orange Show Foundation
Charles Orsburn
Ouisie's Table
Painted Ladies' Studio & Finishing School
Jerry Penteck
Gaylynn Perrone Photography
Judy Pesek and Ron Skipper
Carol Piper
Carol Radney Skin Care
Redwood Grill
Rice University Campus Store
Rice University Department of Athletics
Rice University Media Center
Rice University Press
Rice University School of Architecture
Rice University School of Continuing Studies
The Ritz-Carlton Houston
Kenneth D. Rosenbaum, C.G.
Jim Rothbauer
Charlotte Rothwell
Royers Round Top Cafe
Nolan Ryan
George Sacaris
Karen Sachar
Danny Samuels
The Sitting Room, Ginger Barber
Smith & Hawken
Society for the Performing Arts
Rex Spencer
Spinneybeck
Francesca Stedman
Sunset Settings
Surroundings, Inc.
Talt Architects
Tejada Leather
Theatre Under The Stars
Dan Tidwell
Toby Topek
Treesearch Farms Inc.
Truffles & Flourishes Catering
Tricia Tusa
Karen D. Walker
Winery Associates
Dennis Wright

© Scott Cunningham

Left to Right:

1. **Louis Skidmore, Raymond Brochstein, David George, and Julie Baker.**
2. **Shawn Wallis, Sara Balinskas, Jim Sanders, and Judy Kugle.**
3. **Louis and Margaret Skidmore, their son Christopher Skidmore with his fiancee Anne Goettee.**
4. **Charley and Ann Kiker.**
5. **Jay and Julie Baker.**
6. **Guests looking over auction items.**
7. **Möbius-strip centerpieces at the gala and under construction by Rice architecture students at Brochstein's Inc.**

Edward M. Armstrong House, 1128 Bissonnet Avenue, William Ward Watkin, architect, 1923-24, after recent restoration by Ray Bailey Architects, Inc.

St. Joseph's Church, restored interior; Patrick S. Rabbitt with George E. Dickey, architects, 1901. Restoration team: John J. Dasek, AIA, architect; Leslie Barry Davidson, AIA, interiors consultant.

Good Bricks

On October 15, 1996, the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance presented its annual Good Brick Awards, which honor outstanding projects in renovation, restoration, and preservation planning. As in the past few years, the event was held in the Brown Auditorium of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

For the first time Honor Awards were given to projects considered by the jury to have been particularly outstanding. The first Honor Award went to St. Joseph's Parish and the Catholic Diocese of Galveston-Houston for the restoration of St. Joseph's Church, the second oldest Catholic church in the city. Located just north of downtown at 1505 Kane Street, St. Joseph's was designed by Patrick S. Rabbitt with George E. Dickey in 1901. Rabbitt trained in Galveston with N. J. Clayton, and Dickey was Houston's foremost architect in the 1890s. In 1995, while the restoration was underway, fire seriously damaged the building. Despite this setback, the parish renewed their commitment to the project. Each part of the church was carefully restored to its original splendor by architects John J. Dasek and Leslie Davidson and Fretz Construction Company.

The second Honor Award went to the law firm Moriarty and Associates for adaptive use of the buildings in the 1100 block of Bissonnet. Architects for the project were Ray Bailey Architects, and the contractor was Fretz Construction. The two main buildings that now house offices were built as residences in 1924 by William Ward Watkin, professor and head of the department of architecture at the Rice Institute. The exteriors of the Watkin buildings were carefully cleaned and restored to their original appearance. Two other buildings in the same block were also renovated. The parking area, sensitively located on the interior of the site, is screened by extensive landscaping. The complex is a welcome addition to its historic neighborhood.

Good Brick Awards were given to Gary Warwick for the façade restoration of the Larendon Building at 309 Travis Street; to Gensler and Associates, Architects and the Harris County Heritage Society for technical excellence in the restoration of the Jack Yates House; to Louise and Rob Jamail for the renovation by Jay Baker Architects of their Troon Road residence; and to the Foley Building L.L.C. (Minnette Boesel, Guy Hagstette, Doug Lawing, Jamie Mize, and Dan Tidwell) for adaptive use of the interior of the W. L. Foley Dry Goods Co. building on Market Square, which was designed by architect Eugene Heiner and built in 1889.

Three new awards were created this year. The first winner of a Good Brick Award for appropriate new construction within a historic context was the Mathes Group, with Barry Moore, architect, for the Louis and Anne Friedman Clock Tower located across the street from Market Square. The Neighborhood Revitalization Award was created to recognize the restoration of four buildings in the 700 block of Silver Street in the Sixth Ward by the Silver Street Properties Group (Kathy Hubbard, Steve Kirkland, Annise Parker, and Mark Parthie). And the first Craftsman of the Year Award, which was created to recognize craftspeople whose special abilities and expertise allow projects to be executed in a historically sympathetic manner, went to blacksmith Tim Bailey.

Additionally, GHPA President Anita Garten gave two President's Awards. The first went to Mayor Bob Lanier for his efforts to use historic preservation as a tool for urban revitalization; the second to the Municipal Arts Commission and chairman Artie Lee Hinds for restoration of the Sam Houston Monument in Hermann Park.

Each year, the actual bricks presented as awards are salvaged from a historic building that has been demolished. This year presentation bricks, white on one side and unpainted on the other, were recognizably from Sakowitz Post Oak (1959, Eugene Werlin & C. H. Kiefner, architects) demolished in 1995.

Jurors for the awards were Madeleine McDermott Hamm, *Houston Chronicle* design editor; Robert Litke, director of the Department of Planning and Development, City of Houston; Gerald Moorhead, architect and architectural writer; Randy Pace, preservation officer, City of Houston; Richard Payne, architect and photographer; and Bart Truxillo, chairman of the Houston Archeological and Historic Commission. The Good Brick Award chairs were Phoebe Tudor and Russell Windham. This year's awards were underwritten by Stewart Title Company, Fayez Sarofim and Company, Max Watson, Mitchell Energy and Development Corporation, and W. S. Bellows Construction Company.

Phoebe Tudor

Hair Dance

Large scale vine sculpture, tentatively titled "Do-si-do," by Patrick T. Dougherty, artist-in-residence, University of Houston Department of Art. Dougherty lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and has installed large temporary sculptures throughout the United States and in Europe – particularly Denmark and England. Funded by grants from Buffalo Bayou Artpark and CACHH. Constructed with the assistance of students from the University of Houston.

Down and Out

This disciplined ten-story building, described by architectural historian Stephen Fox as having "antiseptic elegance," will be demolished early next year because its site has been deemed more valuable (in money) than its significance (in architecture). The Finger Cos., a Houston apartment development firm has purchased the property with plans to replace the Great Southern Life Building with a residential complex. Tenants, including the Houston Engineering and Scientific Society (HESS), have been notified to vacate the building by the end of the year. HESS plans to move to the old Carlyle restaurant space on Westheimer in February.

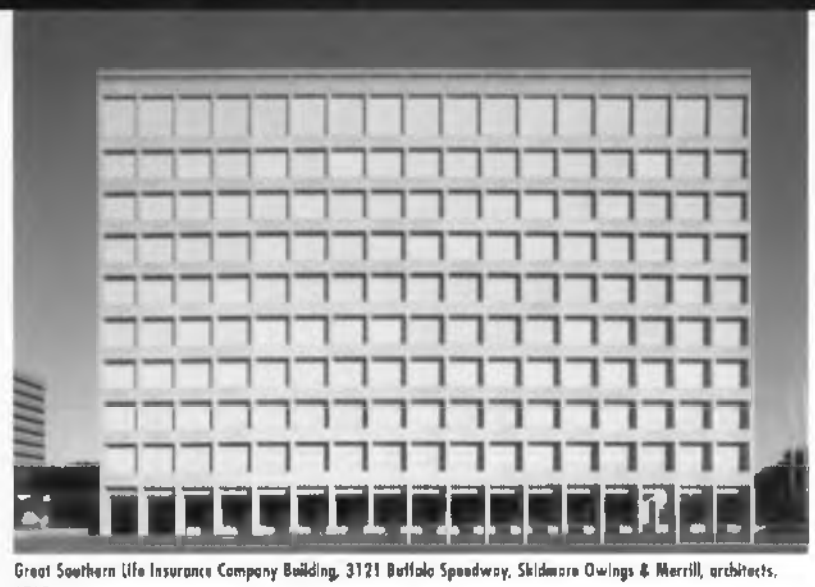
According to Larry Lambright, chief engineer and building superintendent, the building is in excellent structural condition. At the time of construction it was the costliest building per-square-foot in Houston. Once a real traffic-stopper, the Great Southern Life Building was set into a reflecting pool that surrounded the building; a two-story water-spray fountain cooled the Buffalo Speedway façade. Lambright said that the fountain and pools cost $2,000 a month to maintain, easily leading to the decision to drain them.

The 13.5-acre site has probably the most attractive parking lot in the city. Behind the building, each double row of parking places is lined with mature live oak trees. How these soldierly trees can be preserved within the confines of a land-hungry, 298-unit apartment complex is anyone's guess.

The salt-and-pepper pebble-clad building, designed by S.O.M.'s New York office, has two completely windowless long elevations, facing the rear parking lot and the street. The grid frame carries air conditioning ducts and service equipment. The two shorter elevations are lined with floor-to-ceiling windows forming a horizontal glass grid similar to the concrete grid on the front and back. The wide corridors on the interior bring bright natural light from each end of the building into the windowless offices.

Once again, a significant Houston building is being lost, not to progress, but to prosperity.

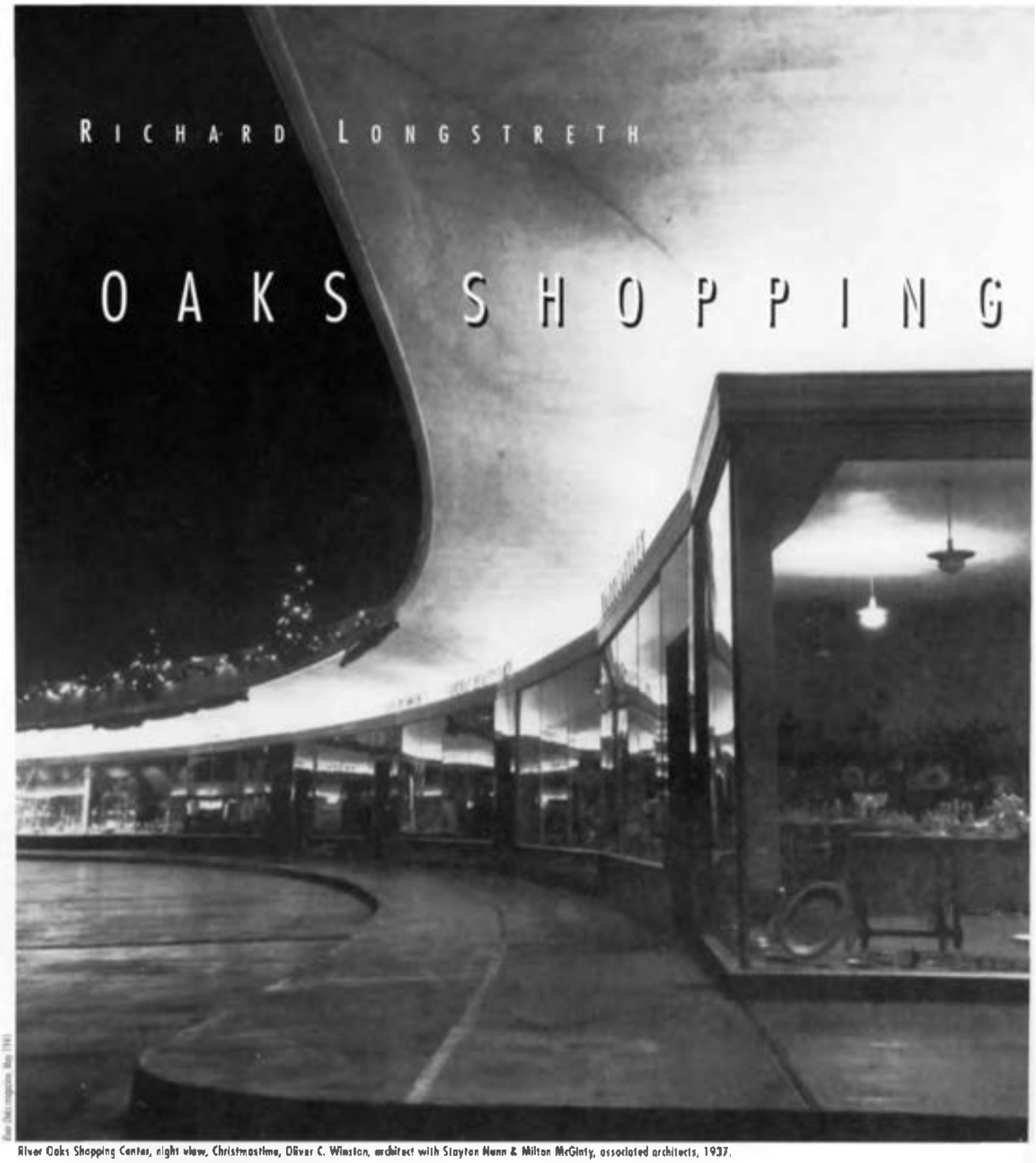
Barrie Scardino



Great Southern Life Insurance Company Building, 3121 Buffalo Speedway, Skidmore Owings & Merrill, architects, 1965.

Great Southern Life Building, first floor loggia.

RIVER OAKS SHOPPING



River Oaks Shopping Center, night view, Christmastime, Oliver C. Winston, architect with Stayton Nunn & Milton McGinty, associated architects, 1937.

CENTER

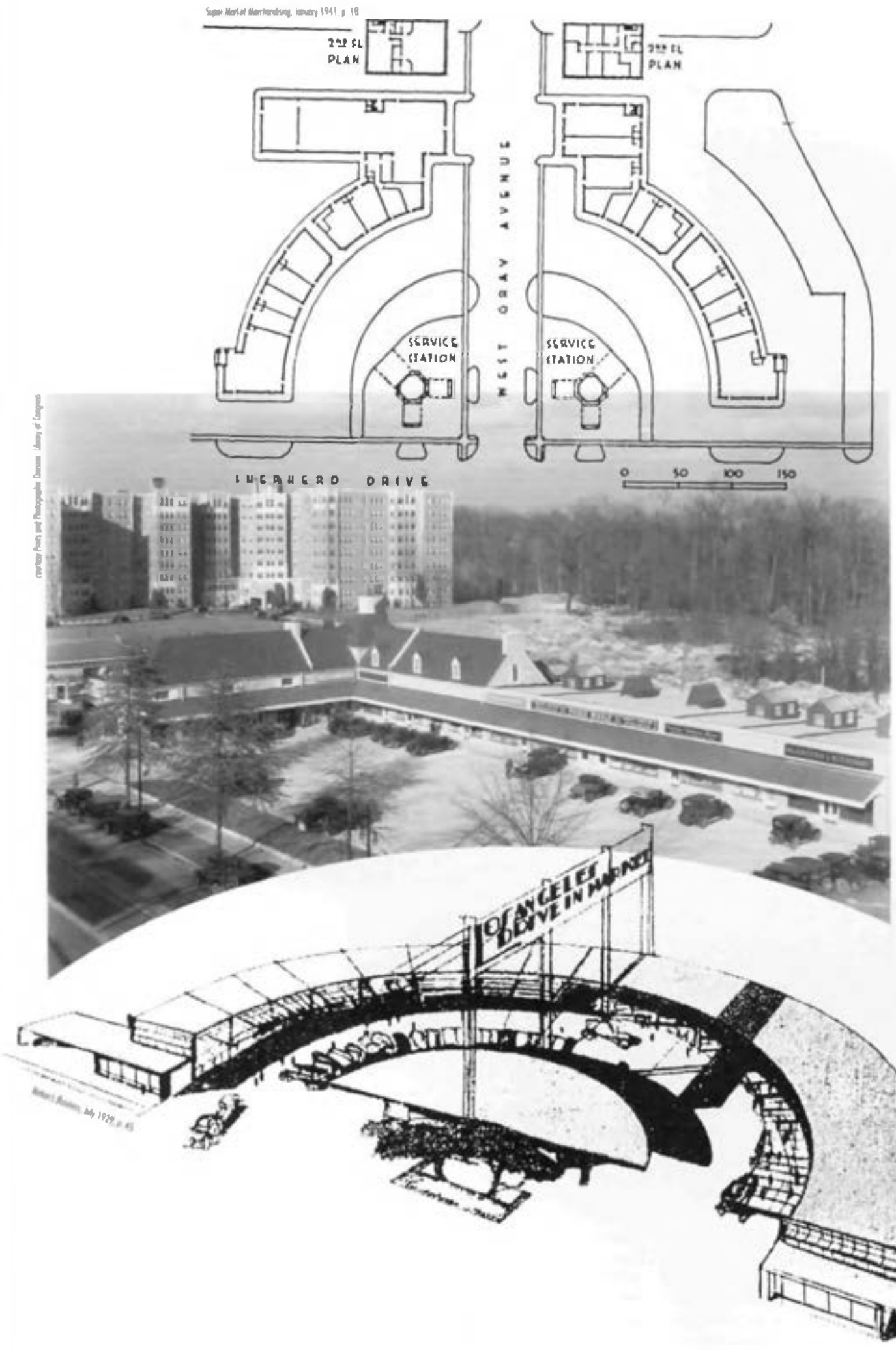
The shopping center that lies at the intersection of West Gray Avenue and South Shepherd Drive on the eastern edge of River Oaks seems to be of a kind that is so ubiquitous in the urban landscape that it is easily taken for granted. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of developments more or less like it line arterial routes in cities of all sizes coast to coast. Yet when its first stores opened in November 1937, the River Oaks Shopping Center was an anomaly in Houston and of a type extremely rare in the United States. One of the most ambitious of its kind, the project became a veritable icon among real estate developers, architects, and planners who championed the shopping center as the optimal means of guiding business growth in outlying sections of the city. The scheme was a hybrid of projects in Kansas City, Washington, D.C., and, perhaps, Los Angeles, synthesizing what were considered the strengths of each. At a pivotal point in the evolution of the shopping center, after the path-breaking experiments had been made and not long before the type became a standard form of retail development, River Oaks was the nation's most publicized example of the genre, a potent symbol of the promise this kind of business development held for the future.

The River Oaks Center was the brainchild of Hugh Potter, a key figure in the organization of the River Oaks Corporation by Potter and Will and Mike Hogg in 1924.[1] That enterprise introduced to Houston the concept of a large-scale, comprehensively planned residential community that created a matrix for growth not only through unified physical arrangement, but also through covenants, guidelines, and review — all effected through the River Oaks Corporation. The developers sought to create high land values by controlling a sizable tract on which a number of amenities were provided and at the same time to prevent the kinds of development that were considered undesirable by the prosperous target clientele. Having a business center — called a community center in 1930s Houston — was an important part of the strategy and represented both sides of the planning equation. Such a complex was an amenity that gave residents the convenience of having basic goods and services nearby. To further its appeal, the center should harmonize with the residential character of the area. At the same time, it should stand apart from the dwellings it served. Business was to be contained and clearly never be able to encroach upon the domestic environs — a fear harbored by many affluent householders of the period.[2]

In determining the scope of the River Oaks project, Potter and the Hogg brothers examined a number of residential developments across the country. Probably the most influential source was the enormous Country Club District in Kansas City, Missouri, under development by J. C. Nichols since 1908. By the early 1920s, Nichols had risen to national prominence among residential real estate entrepreneurs, and the Country Club District was widely considered the preeminent example of its kind. Nichols, the foremost advocate of the shopping center as a component of planned communities, did more to advance the concept of the complex as an integrated business development than anyone else of his generation. Believing that it was essential for a single party to own, build, and manage the center, he carefully selected tenants so that each would reinforce the business presence of the others and so that the assemblage would provide the optimal scope of goods and services for the target audience. He also insisted that the developer should undertake an aggressive merchandising policy for the complex to attract consumers from beyond his tract as well as from within it. Nichols's ideas began to take concrete form after World War I with several neighborhood centers and, most importantly, with the Country Club Plaza, a 250-store complex whose plans were unveiled in 1922 and on which construction commenced the following year.[3] The Plaza served as a wellspring in the evolution of the shopping-center concept over the next quarter century and as a physical model for a number of centers for at least half that period.

Land was set aside for a business center during the early stages of the River Oaks planning. Much like the Plaza, the new center lay at a major entrance to the tract, the intersection of Westheimer Road and River Oaks Boulevard (now the site of St. John the Divine church). Construction was delayed, however, until such time as the local population was sufficient to sustain the ensemble. When Potter assumed complete control of the River Oaks Corporation in 1930, he abandoned the project, perhaps because he thought the site was too small and too close to residential lots.[4] A new location was selected at a strategic point on the eastern edge of the tract. The retail center would not only be separated from River Oaks by a north-south arterial, Shepherd Drive, but would also straddle

River Oaks Shopping Center, aerial view, ca. 1939.



courtesy Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

Top: River Oaks Shopping Center, plan, ca. 1939.
Center: Park and Shop, Washington, D.C., Arthur Heaton, architect, 1930.
Above: Drive-in Market project, Richard Neutra, architect, ca. 1928.

West Gray, a primary route to and from downtown.

The first phase of the complex was to provide some specialty as well as everyday goods and services. Buildings were to be added along West Gray as demand grew, eventually to result in an important nucleus of commercial activity for the metropolitan area, echoing the role of Kansas City's Plaza. Preliminary studies for the shopping center began around 1932, but the scheme was not finalized until five years later, when Potter judged that the economic climate had sufficiently improved.[5]

The delay proved crucial to the shopping center's design and, ultimately, to its national recognition. Two young Houston architects, Oliver C. Winston and Edward Arrantz, were commissioned to prepare plans and spent several months developing studies. Arrantz died soon thereafter, and his place in the firm was taken by Stayton Nunn. In 1934, Winston became project planner for the Public Works Administration's housing division in Washington, D.C. Winston's "unusual interest" in the River Oaks project and what must have been a good working relationship with his client led Potter to invite him to complete the process once an investor, H. G. Frost, committed to financing the enterprise in the early fall of 1936. Winston was able to take only a month's leave of absence from his federal post, so while he concentrated on the design, responsibility for the working drawings and supervision went to Nunn and his associate, Milton McGinty.[6] Whatever its characteristics at the outset, the scheme probably changed to a marked degree after it was reactivated, with results that were quite unlike any retail complex undertaken by Nichols and that were a conspicuous departure from the norm in Houston.

The federal city provided an important basis for the change. In 1930, Washington became home to the first successful adaptation of the shopping center as an integrated business development to the drive-in concept, in which off-street accommodation of customer

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Shopping Center, Bethesda, Maryland, Porter & Locke, architects, 1936-37. Right wing now demolished. Photo early 1940s.

automobiles is the primary determinant of site size and location as well as the arrangement of buildings. The Washington complex, called the Park and Shop, consisted of ten stores serving routine consumer needs and organized around a forecourt with parking space for 44 cars.[7] The scheme was quickly embraced by architects, planners, and others concerned with reform in housing and community design, for the same basic reason that Nichols championed the shopping-center concept: it was an ideal antidote to strip development, capable of containing commerce and making it a compatible neighbor in residential surroundings. The editors of *Architectural Record* cited the Park and Shop as a model for retail design in their May 1932 issue, as did Clarence Stein and Catherine Bauer in a February 1934 *Record* article that was among the most widely read on the subject for the period.[8]

Through his work at the PWA, Winston undoubtedly understood the esteem accorded to the Park and Shop in housing circles. He also probably knew that the concept was gaining rapid acceptance in the marketplace. Because of the Depression the Park and Shop had no immediate successors, but seven similar complexes were begun in the Washington area in 1935 and 1936. Given his federal responsibilities and his renewed charge at River Oaks, Winston is likely to have inspected at least some of these projects firsthand and perhaps talked to the architects and real estate brokers involved with them.

In its final form, the River Oaks center was bifurcated, with buildings on either side of West Gray Avenue. The arrangement was probably stipulated at the outset by Potter and reflected the planning approach taken at the Country Club Plaza and a number of its offspring that rendered the complex a visual portal to the community. But Winston's design broke from this pattern in all other aspects. The pair of main buildings were mirror images, each framing a forecourt, as if two of the Washington centers were set face to face. True to the drive-in concept, facilitating onsite automobile circulation and parking generated the specifics of the layout. However, the architect avoided simply reiterating the Park and Shop model. Two of the most distinctive features of Winston's scheme, its abstract, minimalist vocabulary and its semicircular form, which gave motorists entering the forecourt a clear view of all the stores, imparted a sense of fluidity that stood in distinct contrast to even the least historicizing Washington centers then realized, where form and composition engendered a feeling of static reserve.

The River Oaks storefronts were indeed a departure from retail design generally. The conventions of streamlining were rejected for the kind of dynamic interplay between nonreferential elements, volume, and light championed by the avant-garde.

Among the likely sources of inspiration for the salient expressive qualities of River Oaks was the work of Richard Neutra, then the most well-known, forceful, and accomplished advocate of avant-garde modernism in the United States. Neutra's oeuvre provided a specific precedent for the Houston center with several unrealized designs for drive-in markets, the southern California forebears of the Park and Shop. The semicircular form that was the leitmotif of River Oaks is an enlarged version of that found in one of Neutra's most distinctive and publicized market projects of the late 1920s.[9] As Neutra recommended for his markets, Winston treated the front as a transparent surface, using signs and roof canopy above to particularly dramatic effect at night through coved lighting. The corner filling station, seldom incorporated in Washington centers but common to drive-in markets, including Neutra's design, further suggests that California examples provided a point of departure. Winston may well have known Neutra's market schemes when the initial studies for River Oaks were done, but it is doubtful whether Potter would have accepted so unorthodox a solution at the time. Modernism in the commercial realm had become much more widely accepted by the public in 1937. Most important, however, the Washington centers validated the economic soundness of applying the drive-in concept to the shopping center. The appeal of offstreet parking to consumers more than compensated for the cost. Thus through the combined efforts of an enlightened developer and a talented architect, the ideas of J. C. Nichols and housing reformers, as well as examples in Washington centers and California, were fused in an arresting design that was at once heralded as a Houston showpiece.

The River Oaks Center was indeed a departure from local patterns of outlying retail development, even though the city could boast of several innovations in that sphere over the previous decade and a half. Houston played a pioneering role in the invention of the supermarket, which, like the shopping center, was an integrated business operation of substantial size and oriented to residential areas rather than the urban core. As early as 1923, one of the city's major food retailers, Henke & Pillot, built such a market on an unprecedented scale (over 30,000 square feet) in the South End at 2800 Travis Street. Two subsequent emporia built it 1926 and 1931 (3000 Washington Avenue, 4008 Polk Avenue) were bolstered by enormous parking lots, one with space for 450 cars. A major competitor, J. Weingarten, built more units, each somewhat smaller, but likewise generously endowed with offstreet parking.[10] Only Los Angeles could boast so many advanced examples of the type. By the time construction began on River Oaks, work also was under way as well on the Tower Theater and its adjoining community center, the first of several complexes developed by the Interstate Circuit of Dallas.[11] Yet none of these endeavors possessed the River Oaks Center's dynamic spatial qualities or its sophisticated abstract expression. Nor did they offer the same scope of goods and services.

Appreciation for the novelty of the River Oaks Shopping Center was bolstered by an unceasing barrage of newspaper accounts published between 1937 and 1940, most of them undoubtedly the work of the River Oaks Corporation. Collectively this coverage formed one of the most extensive compendia of arguments for shopping-center development to be found during the decades between the wars.[12] Potter stressed the need to relate the complex to residential districts, the importance of physically containing commercial activities the convenience afforded by offstreet parking, the value of harmonious design, and the benefits of putting quality products and services in a single location — as if the shopping center were a new household product. In fact he hoped it would become a magnet, not just for residents of River Oaks but for prosperous citizens throughout the city. Not the least of the project's contributions to the development of the type was in demonstrating how the drive-in arrangement of a neighborhood center such as the Park and Shop could be adapted to serve a more extensive retail program.

As Potter targeted a large audience for River Oaks, so he structured the tenancy to address more than daily shopping needs. The published accounts stressed that years of research and thought lay behind the "scientific" planning of the complex to give "community service comparable with the large shopping centers [i.e., shopping districts] and with more ease and greater convenience than the neighborhood store of a few years ago." Depictions implied that the center could offer an alternative to shopping downtown. The complex was heralded as providing "a complete community service of the highest caliber" at no greater expense than other areas with lower rents. It also had the added advantage of the one-stop shopping. The claim that River Oaks offered "every article needed in the household or for the family" was at least in part borne out by its tenant mix:[13] besides stores purveying basic goods and services, there were a number specializing in clothes, gifts, and antiques, as well as the quarters of a dance studio, an interior decorator, a builder, and the architecture firm of Nunn & McGinty. Potter minced no words in stating his belief that River Oaks combined the best aspects of central and outlying retail districts and was superior to them both in having a unified merchandising structure and harmonious ambiance. The center's physical appearance, he suggested, was emblematic of the quality of services it rendered.

In 1940, Potter joined J. C. Nichols and other colleagues in forming the Urban Land Institute, a Washington-based organization devoted to improving the standards of new development. He served as the group's third president (1943–44) and in 1950 succeeded Nichols as chairman of the institute's Community Builders' Council, which had become the principal proponent of, and source of information about, shopping centers. In large part because of his efforts, the River Oaks complex continued to be touted as a model design for nearly a decade; even after shopping-center design began to undergo dramatic,

Rooflines, River Oaks Shopping Center.

fast-paced change following World War II, the scheme was lauded as a pioneer in the field.[14]

The River Oaks storefronts provided a popular model for retail buildings locally over the next decade, but the complex had little direct impact on postwar shopping-center design.[15] Bifurcated plans were rejected by most developers because the intervening street complicated vehicular and pedestrian circulation. Nor was the semicircular form often repeated; the curvature necessitated costly details and reduced usable space in the forecourt and selling areas alike. Most important, while River Oaks seemed an ambitious project for a city escaping the throes of the Depression, it fell far short of the demands of postwar expansion. To meet that challenge, the shopping center had to be conceived anew.

River Oaks nevertheless was significant in providing a basis for that transformation. In the late 1930s, when the shopping center was still considered an unusual venture, perhaps one of limited application, and when the drive-in concept was likewise seen as experimental for most buildings other than automobile-service facilities, River Oaks offered convincing evidence that such ventures had a sound practical basis. Here was a concrete example of the purportedly better suburban world of the future, created by a nationally distinguished real estate developer. In the difficult process of redefining the shopping center after the war, River Oaks was among the most advanced points of departure. No other example so successfully presented the shopping-center concept, crafted in a vocabulary that exuded promise, as a solution that appeared not only realistic but inevitable. ■

1 For the development of River Oaks, see Don Raddle, "'Homes to Last for All Time': The Story of Houston's River Oaks," *National Real Estate Journal*, March 4, 1929, p. 28, and Charles Orson Cook and Barry J. Kaplan, "Civic Elites and Urban Planning: Houston's River Oaks," *East Texas Historical Journal* 25:2 (1977), pp. 29–37.

2 For background on the origins of the shopping center as a concept, see Richard Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center in Washington, D.C., 1930–1941," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, March 1992, pp. 5–11; and Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920–1950* (Cambridge: MIT Press, forthcoming), chap. 6.

3 Richard Longstreth, "J. C. Nichols, the Country Club Plaza, and Notions of Modernity," *Harvard Architecture Review* 5 (1986), pp. 120–35; William S. Worley, *J. C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press), 1990.

4 Until construction of the Lamar–River Oaks shopping center across River Oaks Boulevard in 1948, the only building on the site was a 1927 structure that contained the River Oaks Corporation offices and several shops.

5 See "City Planning Needed, Potter Tells Rotarians," *Houston*, October 1936, pp. 14–15. Final plans for the shopping center were made between November 1936 and January 1937. Only one of the two units was to be constructed at first, but Potter decided that existing conditions warranted erection of both simultaneously. See "River Oaks Community Center Rushes Plans on Two Units," *Houston Post*, January 10, 1937, sec. 1, p. 6, and *Houston Post*, February 7, 1937, sec. 3, p. 7. Work was completed by the year's end. A theater was added to the complex in 1939.

6 Letter from Hugh Potter to Oliver Winston, October 4, 1936. This and other correspondence between the two parties over the next three months helps indicate the complicated sequence of the River Oaks Center's design. I am grateful to Mrs. Oliver Winston of Hanover, New Hampshire, for sharing this material with me. Much additional information was supplied by Milton and Burke McGinty (interview, May 8, 1989). The shopping center was among the few buildings Winston realized. Most of his career was spent in the public sector in planning and administration. In 1939 he became a regional director of the U.S. Housing Authority, and later he was executive director of the Housing Authority of Baltimore.

7 Longstreth, "Neighborhood Shopping Center," pp. 11–17. At more or less the same time, plans were unveiled in Dallas for a much larger complex, Highland Park Village, which had its buildings organized around a parking plaza. See "Construction Under Way on Store Village," *Dallas Morning News*, April 6, 1930, society section, p. 8. This arrangement, however, was traditionally inspired — by courthouse squares in the region — and was quite unlike that of the Park and Shop. Beyond helping to validate the shopping-center concept, it is doubtful whether Highland Park Village had a direct influence on River Oaks.

8 "Drafting and Design Problems: Neighborhood Shopping Centers," *Architectural Record*, May 1932, pp. 325–32; Clarence Stein and Catherine Bauer, "Store Buildings and Neighborhood Shopping Centers," *Architectural Record*, February 1934, pp. 175–87.

9 Neutra's designs for and ideas about the drive-in market were featured prominently in a series of trade articles by Willard Morgan published in *American Builder*, *Chain Store Review*, and *Nation's Business*. Winston may not have known of these pieces, but he probably would have seen the scheme published in the June 1929 issue of *Architectural Record* (p. 606). Milton McGinty's brother and associate, Burke, recalled that this scheme was well known among the students at the Rice Institute's Department of Architecture, where Winston taught prior to his move east, during the 1930s (interview with Milton and Burke McGinty). For background on the drive-in market, see Richard Longstreth, "The Perils of a Parkless Town," in Martin Wachs and Margaret Crawford, eds., *The Car and the City: The Automobile, the Built Environment, and Daily Urban Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 141–53, 310–13, and Longstreth, "Innovation Without Paradigm: The Many Creators of the Drive-in Market" in Thomas Carter, ed., *Images of an American Land: Vernacular Architecture Studies in the Western United States* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), pp. 231–64.

10 *Houston Post*, November 30, 1923, pp. 6–7, December 7, 1926, pp. 7–9, and December 12, 1931, Henke & Pillot section; Charles N. Tunnell, "Henke & Pillot Supermarket Grew From Houston Public's Demand," *Super Market Merchandising*, February 1937, pp. 3–5; Abe Weingarten, "Designing Stores for Maximum Display," *Chain Store Age*, administrative edition, June 1933, pp. 41–43, 49; "Meats and Groceries United in New Weingarten's Market," *Chain Store Age*, grocery edition, February 1936, p. 20; *Houston*, November 1938, p. 49.

11 See "The Store-Theater Idea," *Freehold* 8 (April 1941), pp. 32–38.

12 National coverage of the center before World War II includes "Suburban Shopping Centers," *National Real Estate Journal*, December 1938, p. 29; "Forum: Shopping for the Upper Classes," *Freehold*, January 15, 1939, pp. 54–57; and "Community Shopping Centers," *Architectural Record*, June 1940, pp. 102, 114–18, reprinted as "Community Shopping Center," *Super Market Merchandising*, January 1941, pp. 18–20. Many valuable details, as well as insights on Potter's intentions, are provided in accounts featured in the *Houston Post*, among them "River Oaks Business Houses Follow Curve of Crescent Moons," August 15, 1937, sec. 2, p. 3; "River Oaks Shopping Center Hides Wiring in Buried Conduits," August 22, 1937, sec. 2, p. 7; "River Oaks Shopping is Designed to be Air Cooled," August 26, 1937, p. 22; "River Oaks Business Center in Easy Reach of City's Shoppers," August 29, 1937, sec. 4, p. 7; "Engineer Behind Shopping Center Looks to Future," September 2, 1937, sec. 2, p. 8; "River Oaks Shopping Center Last Word in Construction Style," September 9, 1937, p. 24; "River Oaks Shopping Center Triumph of Long Range Community Plan," January 14, 1940, sec. 2, p. 9; "Personal Service, Neighborly Atmosphere, Greatest Assets of River Oaks Shopping Center," January 26, 1940, sec. 2, p. 15; "River Oaks Community Center Gains Wide Recognition as Model for Shopping Areas," February 4, 1940, sec. 2, p. 9. Stories supplied by merchants in the center appeared in the Sunday real estate section

River Oaks Shopping Center, east block, 1996.

each week from July 10 to December 4, 1938.

During the inter-war decades comparable newspaper coverage was seldom given to buildings of any sort, save major civic undertakings. Searches through papers for Dallas, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Washington indicate that the publicity given to shopping centers there never approached the same level.

13 "Personal Service," advertisement, *Houston Post*, August 15, 1937, sec. 2, p. 3; "Decentralize for Profit," brochure, ca. 1939, River Oaks scrapbook 15, p. 259, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

14 Hugh Potter "Concepts of Postwar Planning," *Urban Land Institute Bulletin*, February 1943, pp. 7-9; "River Oaks Shopping Center Sets the Pace for Better Stores," *American Builder*, July 1943, pp. 40–41; Robert W. Dowling, "Neighborhood Shopping Centers," *Architectural Forum*, October 1943, p. 77; *Urban Land*, October-November 1944, p. 1; J. Ross McKeever, "Shopping Centers: An Analysis," *Urban Land Institute Technical Bulletin* 11 (July 1949), pp. 36–37; *The Community Builders Handbook* (Washington: Urban Land Institute, 1950), p. 104. The center was expanded in a less physically integrated fashion after the war, see J. Ross McKeever, "Shopping Centers: Principles and Policies," *Urban Land Institute Technical Bulletin*, 20 (July 1953), 36-37.

15 River Oaks probably influenced a wartime project near Oklahoma City and a hypothetical scheme for the postwar era. See *Urban Land*, August 1944, pp. 1–2; "House-builder Bill Atkinson," *Architectural Forum*, January 1951, p. 129; and Kenneth C. Welch, "More Cars, Superhighways Will Set Post-War Pattern for Commercial Building," *American Builder*, July 1943, p. 39.

River Oaks Theater, 2009 West Gray, Pettigrew & Worley, architects, 1940.

River Oaks Shopping Center, second phase, north side. 1964 West Gray, William G. Farrington, architect, Ray Bragniez, designer, 1948.

Shipley's Donut Shop at West Gray and Dunlavy, ca. 1979; demolished.

Santa Claus display, 1941, in front of Mrs. Baird's Bakery, 1700 block West Gray, Alfred C. Finn, 1938; demolished.

D R E X E L

Gray Avenue is not a particularly lustrous street, even by Houston standards. It is named for an eminent Houston jurist, Peter Gray (1819–1874), but no one really knows that anymore. It shows up in maps as early as 1866 running perpendicular to Main Street for a dozen or so blocks, but it was not until the mid-1930s that West Gray arrived at the gates of River Oaks, a ten-minute drive from downtown, as the Hogg brothers' promotional brochure had promised. Despite its impeccable namesake, chromonic connotations die hard. So when Gray slipped across Shepherd Drive into the cabin class section of River Oaks, en route to the eponymous country club, it exchanged its name for the tonier, verdant Inwood and never looked back.

Well, almost never. For either side of the two blocks just east of the *cote bosque* of River Oaks, West Gray — with a little help from the River Oaks Corporation — managed a most un-Houston transformation, in the form of a smart, well-ordered strip shopping center that remains a citywide anomaly to this day. The center's first increment, begun in 1937, welcomed pioneer consumers of the nascent 77019 zip code with a semicircular band of shops facing west onto Shepherd, defining an exedra-shaped parking area ornamented by a pair of streamlined service stations. (According to the River Oaks prospectus,

GRAY LINE

TURNER

Stephen F. Austin passed through the neighborhood a century before but was unable to procure drinking water for horses or riders.) Beyond the Piazza di Petroleo, the architects, Oliver Winston with Stayton Nunn and Milton McGinty, brought shop rows close to Gray, leaving a slender paved margin for head-on street parking. A second phase, built in 1948 on either side of the next block east (William G. Farrington Co., architects; Ray Brogniez, designer), placed continuous one- and two-story frontages just far enough back to admit a double loaded aisle of off-street parking.

The effect was something like a prophylactic transition to the disarray that lay even farther east of Eden. It hardly mattered that the center's shops and eateries were mostly ordinary, or that the movie house that arrived in 1940 (Perrigrew and Wooley, architects) showed only second-run features. It was enough that the center looked and acted the part of a mercantile Via della Conciliazione, catering to the needs of a genteel clientele in search of an occasional carton of moo goo gai pan or a package of Alka Seltzer. But as shopping became more plentiful up and down Shepherd and along Westheimer Road and Kirby Drive in the post–World War II years, the center's prospects dimmed, its offerings declined, and it even began to look a little forlorn. Where once trade dress had been *de rigueur*, aberrant awnings, come-hither neon, and overreaching parapets sprouted.

In 1971 the Weingarten Market Realty Company acquired the center in partnership with the American National Insurance Corporation of Galveston. The new owners first proceeded to extend the center a block farther east on the north side of Gray by constructing a drab tilt-wall Weingarten's grocery store and an ancillary block of shops including a Walgreen's drugstore and a Goodyear tire store — all placed as far back from the street as possible behind a virtual sea of parking. In 1975, as if to make amends, the management set about a tactful revival of the older parts of the center. As leasing agent for the center, Mike Woods canvassed several up-and-coming art galleries — Cronin, Moody, and Texas — to relocate to affordable spaces on the back, south side of the center along Peden Street. On the front he lined up a singles bar and pizzeria to replace a paint store; a ready-to-wear boutique that made fitting room for adherents of Gloria Steinhem as well as Diana Vreeland; a French bakery with a green-card-certified baguetteer; and a fire-breathing Hunan restaurant. To further exorcise the demons of stodginess, Woods tucked in an after-hours club and leased studio space up above shops and restaurants to the Houston Ballet and Theatre Under the Stars.

In concert with Woods's program to reconstitute the tenant mix, Eugene Aubry of S. I. Morris Architects was given brush blanche to improve the center's curb appeal. A coat of white paint was applied to the stucco and brick expanses of the upper walls to set them off from the black Vitrolite and tile cladding below; a canvas frieze of graphically muted white-on-black silk-screened signs was installed as a 15-mile-an-hour gazetteer; and dozens of full-grown Washingtonia palm trees were trucked in from Florida and planted single file up against the curb. Aubry's Gulf Coast tuxedo chic has endured several minor makeovers since — including the addition of a pair of incongruous clocks over the entrances to the courtyards of 1964 and 1973 West Gray in 1988. But most improvements have been low key, including a recent series of peripheral adjustments by architects Suzanne LaBarthe and John Rodgers that focus on making the center pedestrian-friendlier, particularly in and around eating establishments.

This last concern mirrors the predicament of the center's success: its emergence as a multiplex of more or less affordable, market-trended (and parking-intensive) cuisineries supplemented by whatever else can pay the freight. All but one of the art galleries has moved on to other track-lit venues. A few small specialty retailers remain — cameras, records, dancewear — those such standbys as a hardware store, an old prints shop, the pâtisserie, and a foreign-language bookstore have departed. Meanwhile, the arrival of such lucrative franchises as Starbucks, Chili's, and Talbot's confirms the essential logic of the new order. The one notable holdout is the the River Oaks Theater, which in a reversal of the fortune of every other vintage movie house in Houston has survived in a mainstream "art" film format with its balcony converted into two mini-screens but its 600 orchestra seats anachronistically intact.

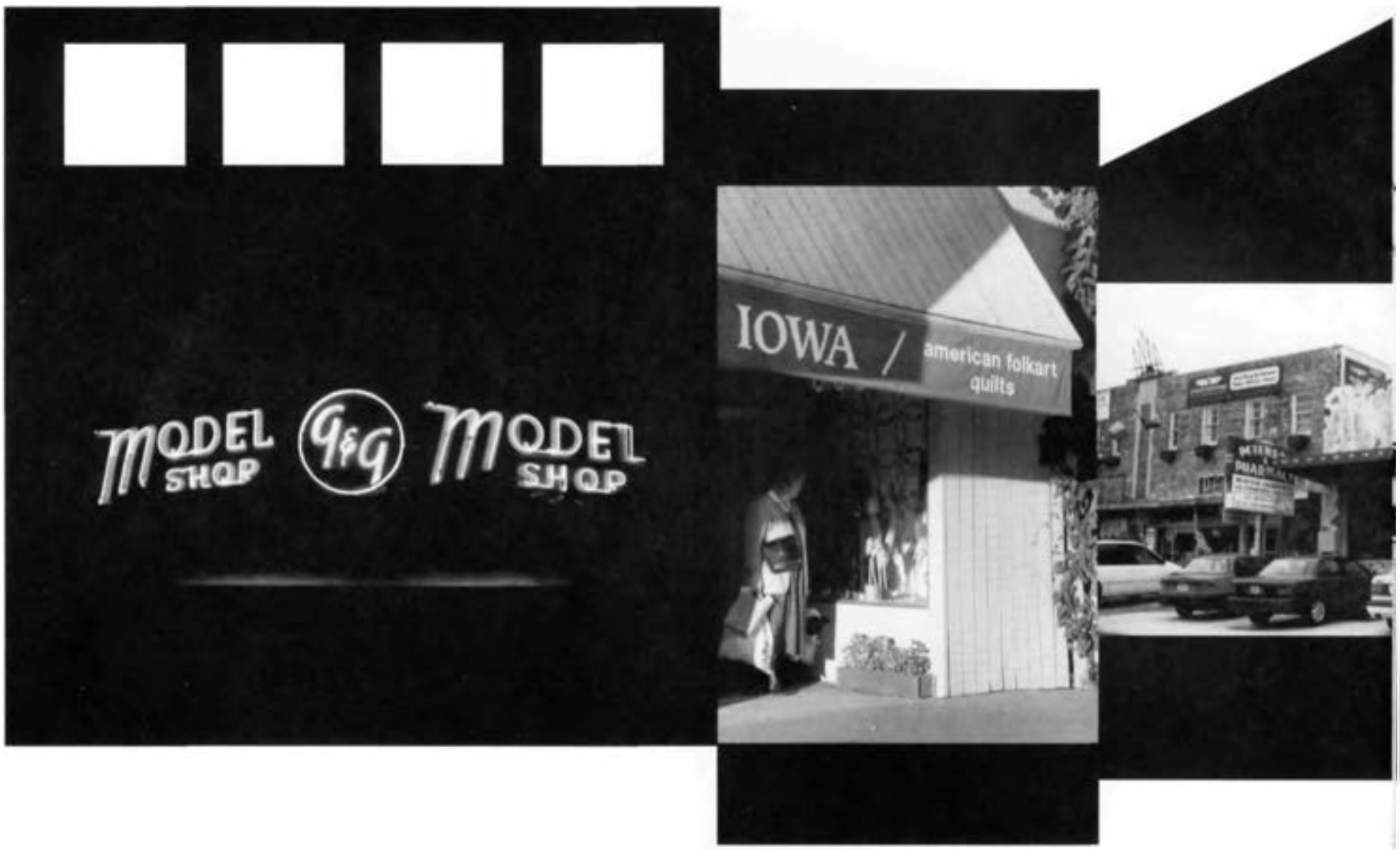
Outside the short but charmed corridor of the River Oaks Shopping Center, the rest of West Gray was left to catch as catch could. The few landmarks it offered have since succumbed to market forces: the pylon-prowed Golden Girl (later Captain John's) Restaurant (Stayton Nunn-Milton McGinty, architects, 1940), replaced by a Pier 1; the precariously cantilevered, Wright-angled Rettig's Ice Cream Parlor (MacKie & Kamrath, architects, 1948) ploughed under for parking; and Donald Barthelme's mildly Jetsonian Humble (later Exxon) service station, replaced first by a more conventional station that in turn gave way to a value-added olive oil dispensary, Lo Griglio (Kirksey-Meyers Architects, 1992), substituting table for pump service. The enormous Moderne concrete Mrs. Baird's Bakery (Alfred C. Finn,1938), which once provided a wonder-bread-white backdrop for annual Santa Claus visits and conspicuous offstreet parking for sleigh and reindeer, was recently leveled to make way for Blockbuster Video, a branch bank, and a bigger Walgreen's, the last two incorporating drive-in windows. A four-story loft apartment building is about to go up across the street. Even the Shipley's Donut Shop that once warmed the northeast of Dunlavy and West Gray with its steam-curling, pre-latte-era cup-of-coffee sign, has been dispatched, along with several acres of mostly empty real estate, to make room for River Oaks Plaza — a reservoir of parking anchored by a 12-screen Odeon Cineplex, Luby's Cafeteria, and Office Max.

"Form follows parking," as Michael Eisner explained in the October 1996 issue of *Harper's*, apropos the wonders of the pedestrian-friendly Disney new town, Celebration, which eschews chain stores in its meticulously scripted town center for home-grown shops like those that made do for the River Oaks Shopping Center in its first incarnation. An early advertisement for the center noted that its developers had provided parking for 1,000 automobiles on 150,000 square feet of asphalt: "No disturbing thoughts of parking tickets, of swiftly ticking meters, will plague the patrons of River Oaks Shopping Center," the anxiety-prone were reassured. Yet the relative grace with which this not-inconsiderable inventory of spaces could be accommodated 50 years ago is evidently a lost art, judging from the rest of West Gray today. Even the new, woefully misdelivered U.S. Post Office adopts the full-frontal parking format of its non-competitors.

Although the River Oaks Shopping Center currently exceeds, by almost 25 per cent, the four parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail area required by the City of Houston's off-street parking ordinance for multi-use shopping centers, parking is nevertheless in short supply. Where the center's initial promoters once saw nothing but wide open parking spaces ahead, the restaurants that account for much of the leasing frenzy of late are parking-intensive, as reflected in the city's standard of eight parking spaces per 1,000 square feet for freestanding restaurants. In an effort to stave off parking deficit syndrome while saving the face that attracts well-wheeled cardthrifts to begin with, the center is presently contemplating bi-level structured parking for the surface lot behind 1964 West Gray among other measures.

Perhaps nowhere but Houston would the provision of a double aisle of parking between sidewalk and shop window be considered a gift to the street. But on West Gray, where even the second increment of the River Oaks Shopping Center will soon become eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, it accounts for much of the civility and competitive advantage of this reburnished remnant of an all-but-vanished middle retail landscape ■

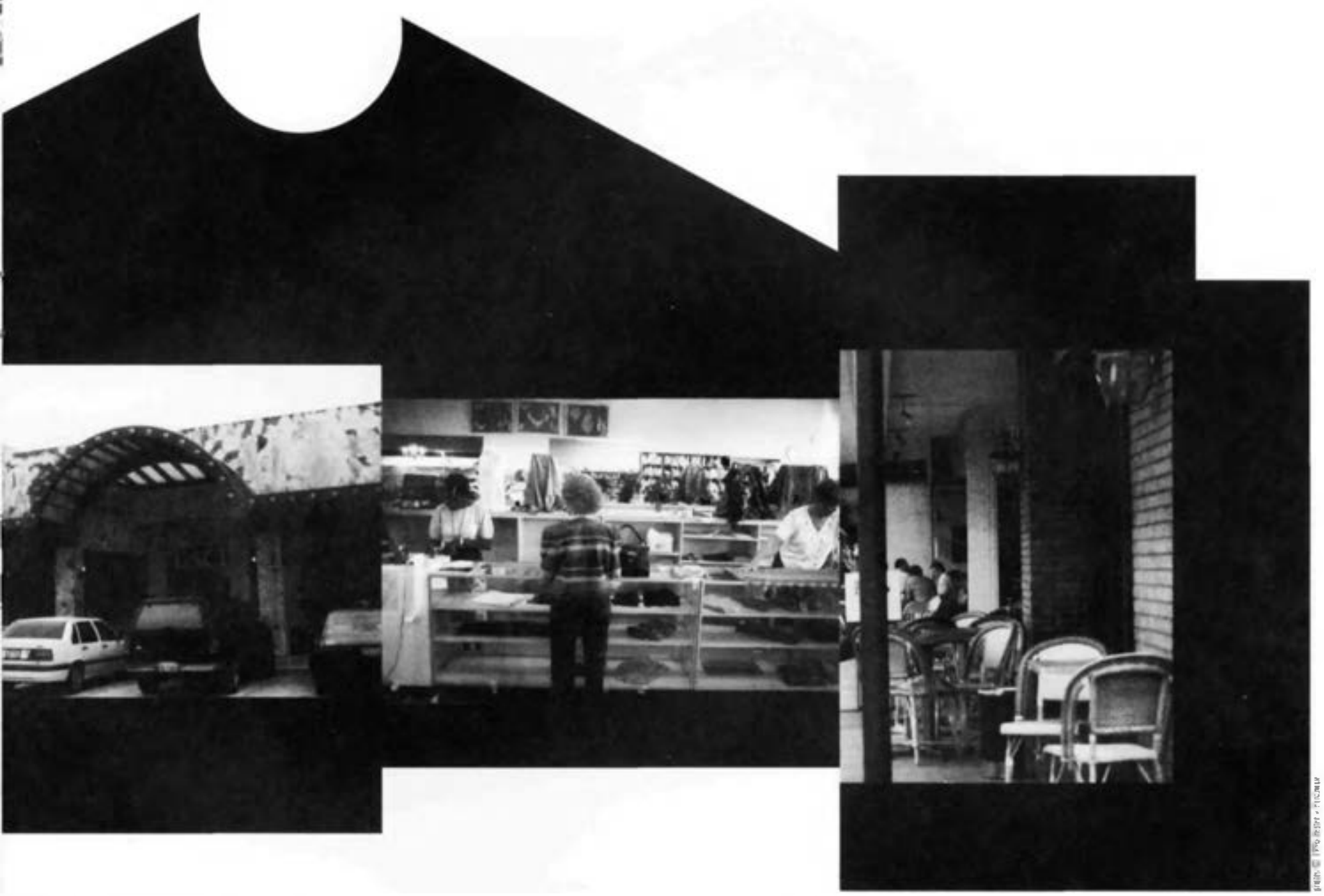
West Gray and River Oaks Shopping Center, through the gates to River Oaks.



THE VI

If we don't have it, you don't need it.

DAVID KAPLAN



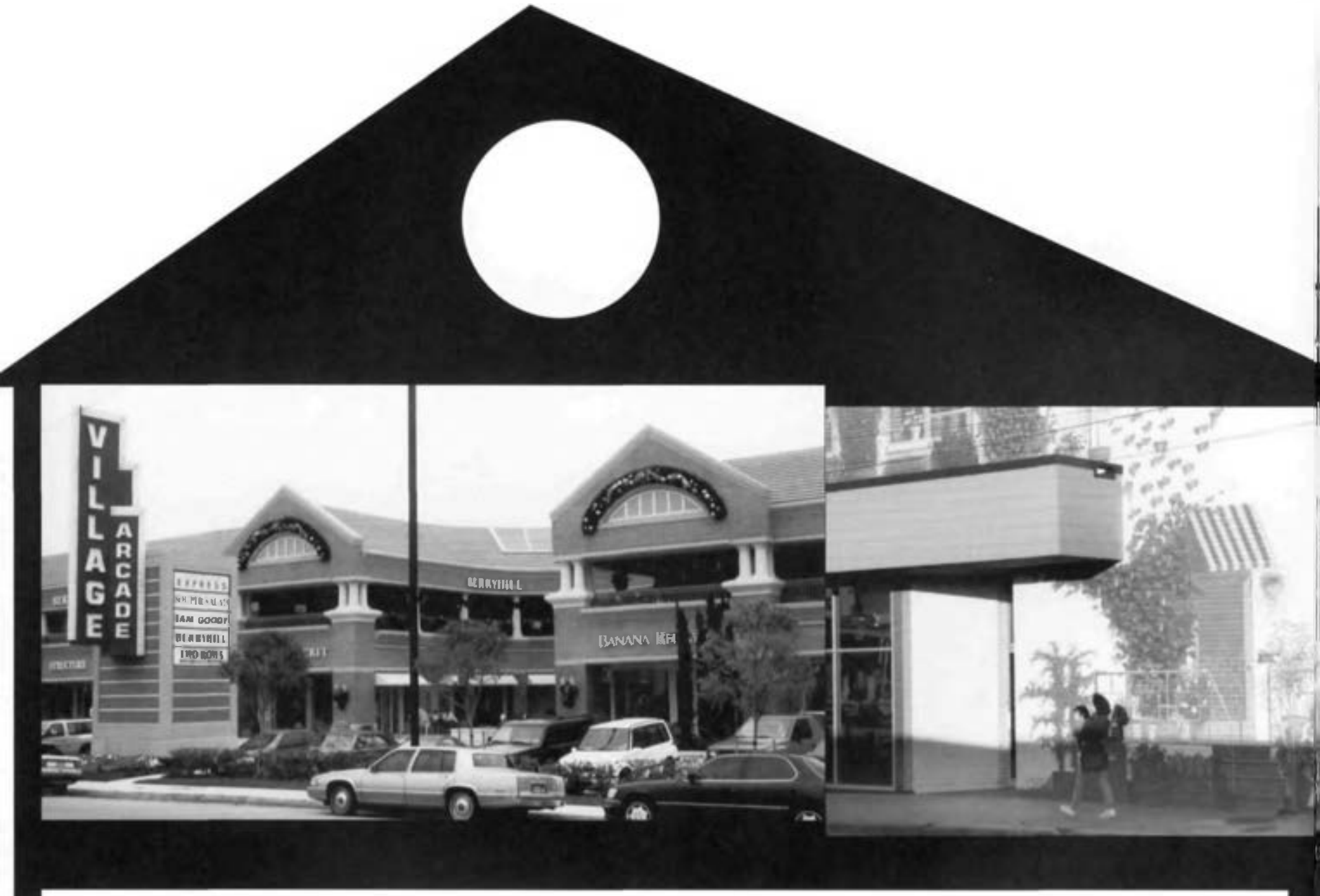
L L A G E

In a busy block on University Boulevard between Kirby Drive and Morningside, the L.A.-trendy restaurant Baci, with its faux Rome-in-ruins façade, nestles beside sleepy Peterson's Pharmacy, built in — and still feeling like — 1940. Such juxtapositions define the Village (also referred to as Rice Village or University Village; insiders and old-timers just call it the Village). The Village shatters almost every Houston shopping-center stereotype. It has stores with names such as, on the one hand, Atelier and Ar-té-fact and, on the other hand, Dromgoole's Typewriter Shop. There are no anchor stores. It is not a mall. Instead of facing a freeway, it lies in the midst of tree-lined neighborhoods. And somewhere in it you can find almost anything. Unplanned and the better for it, the Village manages to remain unpolished, relaxed, and open to small-scale entrepreneurial vision. Take Iowa, at 2422 Rice Boulevard, for example. It features American folk art, mostly from Iowa, tracked down by owner Jacqueline Schmeal. Not even Iowa has such a place.

The quirky history of the Village is a study in local culture. About 30 years ago, 2446 Times (now Tony's Alterations) was a hole-in-the-wall cafe called Blanche's Diner. According to a nephew of the late John and Albert Olson, who developed the Village, "Blanche looked like Mae West in her younger days, and her mother, who also worked there, looked like Mae West at the end of her career. They'd both sling hash and tell bawdy jokes. It had a vaudeville atmosphere." Cathy Klinger Irby remembers that on Thursday nights during the 1950s, a dress shop called the Mirror staged fashion shows inside Foote's Cafeteria next door on Rice Boulevard. In 1968, Bay Surf Shop at 2445 Times sold 7,000 surfboards, more than any other store in the United States, according to its former owner, Eric Rinkoff. For a short time in the seventies there was a boxing gym next to G&G Model Shop on Times. Writer and Rice English professor Max Apple recalls: "It was a wonderful place, . . . a great big place. They had a regulation ring and a video library where you could watch the greatest fights of all time. You could put on trunks and get in the ring and fight." In the early 1980s on Rice Boulevard, across from The Baby's Room, Caribana, a spirited nightclub frequented by an international crowd, was one of the few clubs in America featuring live reggae music nightly. The Village has been, at one time or another, home to just about every kind of small business. It has never had a huge department store or car dealership, but it was the birthplace of the Rice food store chain and Otto's Office Supply; Tootsies first opened in the Village, as did Moeller's Bakery; the British Market (now British Isles Inc.) continues to be one of a kind, as is the card shop Iconography; while some old favorites such as Sheer Insanity have closed their Village location or, like Gramophonics, a late-sixties hippie-intelligentsia record-and-bookstore on Rice, gone out of existence.

Local architectural historian Stephen Fox says that the Village, with its free-standing buildings under separate ownership, "resembles a little downtown." Fox describes Village buildings as "funky fifties commercial-modern architecture" and notes how strikingly different the Village is from contemporary linear centers such as the River Oaks Shopping Center and Highland Village that were developed as a whole piece. The Village, in contrast, was developed slowly, over time, by various interests.

George E. Olson, Jr., remembers the early forties, when the Village was a "ne'er-do-well frog pond," a flood-prone area with vacant lots, homes, and a few businesses. During the Depression, Olson's uncles, John and Albert Olson,



bought 60 vacant lots on Rice, Times, Bolsover, Kirby, Dunstan, and Amherst from a loan company. There were already some businesses on University and Rice boulevards, including Levy's Rice Boulevard Food Market at 2501 Rice Boulevard, opened in 1938; Peterson's Pharmacy; a Henke & Pillot grocery store; Campus Cleaners; and University State Bank. But the Olsons were the first to build on the scale of a shopping center.

The Olsons, who were in the home-building business, prepared for their venture into retail construction by going on a fact-finding mission. John Olson visited some of America's pioneer shopping centers in Dallas, Chicago, and St. Louis. In Kansas City he looked at the Country Club Plaza (1923), "the granddaddy of all shopping centers," says George Olson, who accompanied John on that trip and worked for his uncles in construction. John Olson brought back a Country Club Plaza lease agreement, on which he modeled leases for his Village tenants.

As Village developers, John and Albert took on separate roles, George recalls. Albert was Mr. Downtown, the urbane, well-dressed partner who could schmooze with the bankers. The less dapper John was the thinker of the team, the man most involved in construction.

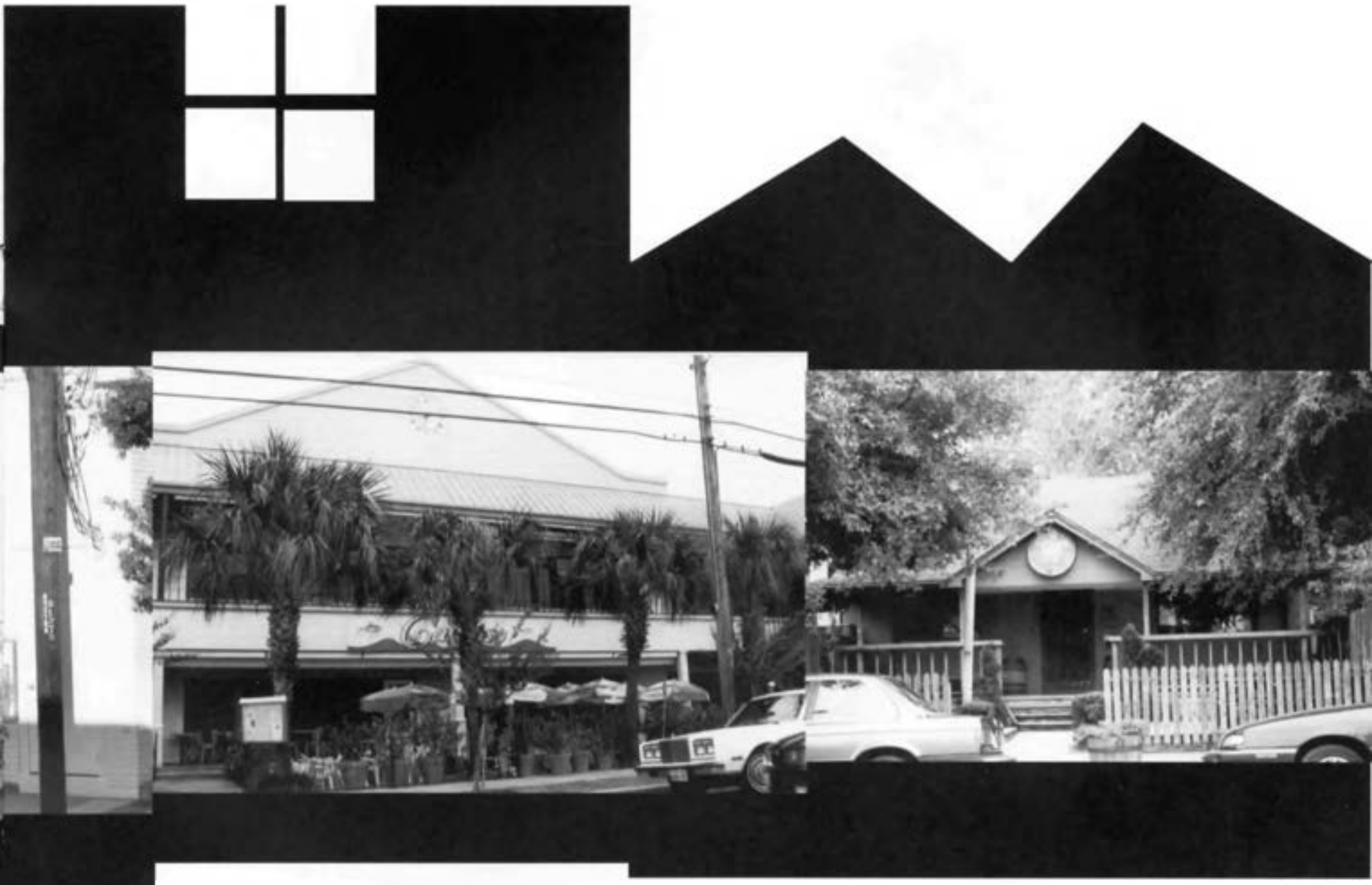
It was John's decision to make his Village buildings out of reinforced concrete. "It cost more to build, but we could get better rent for them," George Olson says. "It would hold up in an atom bomb blast. That was a big deal back then." His cousin, Albert Olson, Jr., who was also involved in the development of the Village, says the greater consideration was that reinforced concrete was sturdy and less expensive to maintain.

The Olsons opened their shopping center in phases, beginning in 1948. They started with the block bounded by Kirby, Times, Amherst, and Village Parkway. Among the first Olson stores were Wagner Hardware; Schepp's, a women's boutique; Rodney's, a men's store; a laundromat; Kegg's Candies; and a One's A Meal diner. Key to the character of the Village today was the fact that the Olsons' land holdings were spotty — a block here, a block there. Buildings by other developers sprouted up in between the Olson properties, creating architectural diversity. Franklin Olson, a partner with the real estate developers Olson & Associates and the son of the late John Olson, explains: "The Village had already been laid out in lots and tracts. What my father and Uncle Albert did was synthesize the concept of the small town and the shopping center. They didn't do it on purpose, necessarily. In their minds, it was a shopping center, but it turned out to be a little town."

Much of the original Olson property was sold in 1976 to Lamesa Properties, but it is not hard to identify the Olson-developed buildings. They are the ones with parking on the roof. John and Albert's brother, George, Sr., came up with that idea. "My father and uncle were particularly proud of the roof parking," says Franklin Olson. "They thought it was ahead of its time, and it was. But it took us years to get people to start parking there."

The Village filled up and prospered during the 1950s and early 1960s. But economic decline by the early 1970s brought vacant offices and storefronts. The boom that Houston enjoyed in the seventies had a negative affect on older areas such as the Village. Property values in surrounding neighborhoods were stagnant for a decade or more. Since the 1980s, though, West University Place, Southgate, and Southampton have flourished as young families have moved in and speculators have replaced "tear-downs" with new, more expensive houses. With greater purchasing power, nearby residents once again are spending their money in the Village. Franklin Olson offers another theory: "People are tired of malls, which are impersonal and not as safe. In the Village, you can drive right up to the door, and there's still the atmosphere of the individual entrepreneur tenant." Olson speculates that the Memorial area's Town and Country Mall attempted to emulate the Village concept with drive-up-to-the-door parking and freestanding buildings, but he suggests that it wasn't as successful because "it was too uniform, too planned, and lacks the Village's funky, hodgepodge appeal."

But a new, upscale pink-brick shopping center along the north side of University Boulevard has begun to change things. The Village Arcade boasts national chain stores that, unlike Iowa, are traded on the New York Stock Exchange: the Gap, Structure, Express, Eddie Bauer, Starbucks, Victoria's Secret. The Arcade has become a lightning rod of controversy, representing either the glories or the



perils of progress. Stretching from Kirby all the way to Morningside between University and Amherst, and taking up most of the Times-Morningside-Amherst-Kelvin block as well, by Village standards it is a monolith. Its emergence mirrors the teardown phenomenon in nearby neighborhoods, where little bungalows give way to new, larger houses. In both cases, the retail Village Arcade and the new home construction, scale and neighborhood history are all but ignored in the quest for more bang per square foot.

The Village Arcade does not completely disregard tradition, however. Stephen Fox is among those who maintain that the Arcade is deferential to existing patterns of development in its relationship to the sidewalks and streets, its drive-up-to-the-door parking, and its low-rise, open-air configuration. Compared to other new Houston developments such as Shepherd Square, which has an immense parking lot in front with stores pushed far back from the street, the Arcade does blend with the old-time Village. Closing off Amherst to make way for the Arcade parking garage is a troubling precedent, but parking has always been the Achilles' heel of the Village, Fox observes.

Some longtime Village tenants, including the owner of Variety Fair 5&10, Ben Klinger, are grateful to the Arcade for pumping new life into the area and ensuring the Village's future prosperity. Others have complaints. Eric Rinkoff, who owns the defiant strip of property at Times and Kelvin on which the B. F. Goodrich Tire Center stands — the only non-Arcade part of that block — says of the Arcade: "It sticks out like a sore thumb. It's nice for what it is, but it doesn't blend in with the other stores. There are centers that look just like it from here to Dallas."

Patty Bender, associate director of leasing for Weingarten Realty, the developer of the Arcade, says Weingarten originally considered breaking up the Arcade as a series of freestanding buildings but determined that it would be too expensive. "We went through a hundred designs," Bender notes. She says that the Arcade's architect, Jack O'Brien of O'Brien-Dietz & Associates of Dallas, integrated architectural elements from neighborhood houses — she cites the brick chimneys at Arcade Phase II as an example — as well as from Rice University. Bender says the Arcade deserves some major credit for revitalizing the Village. Before the Arcade opened, much of the University Boulevard strip of the Village was in a state of decline, but now everything is bustling from University all the way to Bolsover.

While the buildings on the Arcade property are owned by Weingarten, the land itself belongs to a wholly owned subsidiary of Rice University. Rice owns several other pieces of Village property as well: on University Boulevard, the site of the West University Bank and the Train Store; the Beautique mini-block between Times and Amherst along Kelvin; several houses on Chaucer; and two office buildings on Greenbriar. Rice treasurer and vice-president for investments Scott Wise says Rice decided to purchase Village property beginning in the mid-1980s. "The land is strategically located just west of the university. For long-term purposes, it makes sense for Rice to own that land. It's the only direction the university could grow. It allows flexibility for our successors, in fifty years or more, if the need should arise. In the short term, we think it's a good investment."

The Village has lately begun to cultivate night life. Along Morningside, for example, there's everything from the popular casual Italian diner Collina's to an always-packed pub, the Gingerman. Further north, at Dunstan, the former University State Bank building houses multiple eateries: the trendy benjy's Restaurant as well as the Bank Draft, Antone's, and Thai Spice. Ovations, a multilevel music bar featuring live performances, is located on Times in a windowless vault that for years kept Houston matrons' mink coats in cold storage during the summer. Next to Ovations, Main Street Theater offers high-quality live theater in a cozy recycled store space. Restaurants in the Village span the gamut — Indian, Chinese, Italian, deli-American, Thai, Mexican, and French. Coffee houses, taco bars, ice cream parlors and the like attract customers into the late night. Serious nightclubs range from the Arcade's urbane jazz bar, Cody's, to the more basic and bluesy Big Easy at Kirby and Robinhood.

Walking along the Arcade sidewalk with a cup of Starbucks coffee in hand, I pass the site of the Art Deco Village Theater and the legendary World Toy & Gift. A nostalgic Village Hall of Fame begins to form in my mind: Burgerville

#2, one of the few black-owned businesses in the Village, made the perfect hamburger (Village trivia: there was never a Burgerville #1). The Village Cheese Shop, which my friend Mary Ellen Allen opened on Bolsover in 1976, was among the pioneer unique-niche stores at the forefront of the Village renaissance. A Baltimore native, Mary Ellen chose the Village for her shop because it reminded her of charming neighborhoods with mom-and-pop stores on the East Coast. The Poor Man's Country Club, a barbecue-and-beer joint frequented by neighborhood regulars and businessmen, is still mourned. So is Rodney's.

Hire's Fabrics at 2408 Bolsover is among the recently departed legends. It opened on Rice Boulevard in 1950, moved to Bolsover in 1961, and closed in July 1996. Just days before its end, a longtime customer rummaged through the silk remains, remembering Hire's in its prime. "They had just about anything in the line of sewing and fabrics," she said, "and people from all over Houston and out of town came here for special buttons, unusual notions, the finest trimmings, and imported fabrics from places like Liberty of London. Miss Ima Hogg stopped in for millinery supplies. They sold French and Italian silk and the finest lace," she mourned. "They had gorgeous ribbons and velvet. Mr. Hire knew fabrics from A to Z. He was almost like a father to you, he was so nice. We could all just sit down and cry because there won't be another place like this."

It is sad to see a place like Hire's just pack up and go. But it is also nice to see Kahn's Deli at 2429 Rice Boulevard, which pays tribute to a former Village legend, Alfred's delicatessen. Owner Mike Kahn is the son of the late Alfred Kahn, who opened the popular Alfred's in the Village in 1948. The walls of the 13-year-old Kahn's, catty-cornered from the former Alfred's site, are hung with black-and-white photos of Alfred's in its heyday. As a boy, Mike Kahn was part of a gang of Village merchant kids who roamed the shopping center, leaping from rooftop to rooftop; they hung out in World Toy and watched cartoons in the Village Theater on Saturdays. In the fifties, Alfred's was somewhat exotic, one of the few places in town where you could find dark mustard. Mike could boast that his father sold chocolate-covered ants and chocolate-covered grasshoppers. Before Rice football games, Alfred's sold corned-beef sandwiches in box lunches from a stand in Rice Stadium. Alfred's original Village location, with its cozy Manhattan ambiance, closed in 1982.

Many still miss World Toy & Gift — a toy store with age and character whose spirit, like Alfred's, is not completely gone. Owner Rose Behar died in 1992. But her longtime store sidekick, Adelaide Friedman, now 87, still comes to the Village. Mrs. Friedman misses the old place on University — especially all the kids who came in and years later came back with kids of their own. But she doesn't spend all her time looking back, she says. On Saturday afternoons she works at Gepetto's Treasures, a doll store on Robinhood. The diminutive Mrs. Friedman still waits on customers and repairs dolls, restringing their limbs and touching up their faces the way she learned from Mrs. Behar.

While many Village legends have faded, a few survive, such as G&G Model Shop, Wagner Hardware, and the Bead Shop. And, of course, there is Variety Fair 5&10. It's a sweet place. Ben Klinger has me convinced that he is living in the best of all worlds: owning a family store, his wife and daughter and grandkids by his side. Sharing his sense of the absurd with whoever happens in. And selling almost everything — from nuts and bolts to giant lips, and thousands of other items that, in Ben's words, are "hardly stocked in today's world." He rings it all up on his ancient National cash register. On a scorching July afternoon, Klinger greets a customer walking in: "Is it still snowing out there?" "I wish there were snow," the customer replies. Says Ben, "We've got some in a spray can." ■

Hip Village Strip

Arguably the most cosmopolitan spot in all of Houston, this strip in the heart of the Village — on Times between Kelvin and Morningside — houses a number of unusual spots.

Mientje's (2470 Times) is a New Orleans–style coffeehouse where customers linger to enjoy the music of artists such as Ella Fitzgerald and Astor Piazzolla. The founders of Mientje's also owned the legendary New Orleans nightclub Tipitina's.

Atelier (2445 Times), a hair salon with a piano in one corner, is owned by stylists who hail from Munich. Co-owner Peter Spann says he picked the Times location over others he investigated in a wide variety of Houston neighborhoods, not only because he liked the space, particularly the oversized windows, but also because of the cozy street, "where you can stroll and stop for coffee." Spann calls this block "the place in Houston with the most European flavor."

The Bead Shop (2476 Times) is a wonderful and imaginative homage to the bead. With its glass-encased displays, the 27-year-old store feels more like a museum. The flamboyant decor includes bead-adorned chandeliers and a stuffed South American peacock.

Planet Anime (2439 Times) is one of the largest Japanese animation video stores in the United States. A current fad among the intelligentsia in Japan, Japanese animation also has an underground following among American adults. In business on Times since 1993, Planet Anime attracts college students and an international crowd.

Japon (2444 Times), an intimate sushi bar, has a romance and appeal all its own among the sushi restaurants of Houston. Japon's glass-fronted Village location overlooks all the action in this block of Times, where the street seems almost hidden from the rest of the Village hubbub.

Point Five (2444 Times) is a studio that sells midcentury modern furniture inside a glass cube that looks into Japon next door, an intriguing scene that owner Joseph Gregg likens to watching French cinema in Todd-A-O Cinemascope. The furniture at Point Five is low-key and unpretentious, but extremely stylish. *D.K.*

Main Street, 1996.

DOWNTOWN HOUSTON:

HOUSTON IS EMBARKING ON THE LARGEST PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT IN THE CITY'S HISTORY, ALL OF IT CONCENTRATED DOWNTOWN. THE VISIBLE RESULTS OF THE METRO DOWNTOWN AND MIDTOWN TRANSIT STREETS PROJECT SHOULD BE DRAMATIC, BUT THE URBAN DESIGN PHILOSOPHY, MECHANISM, AND DELIVERY SYSTEM ARE AS BOLD, UNIQUE — AND RISKY — AS THE DREDGING OF THE SHIP CHANNEL EIGHT DECADES AGO.

JEFFREY OCHSNER

Main Street, looking north from Dallas Avenue, ca. 1930.

Texas Avenue, laying streetcar tracks, ca. 1925. courtesy Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library

REMAKING THE PUBLIC REALM

A focus on the design of the public sector — the space between buildings — is new for this city. The great fortune of a booming oil and gas economy created an encouraging atmosphere for flamboyant high-rise developers and their creative architects; rights-of-way between the property lines was the sole province of traffic engineers, water and sewer maintenance people, and the utility companies.

The end of the oil boom in the mid-1980s changed all that, of course. The city experienced a growing recognition that the downtown environment could not be complete or grow economically without more sensitivity to public spaces. Out of this awareness grew a private organization focused on planning, at about the same time that the transit authority, spurred by public opinion, began to redirect its spending priorities from fixed-rail mass transit to street improvements for its regional bus system.

In 1990 the Houston Downtown Management Corporation was created to tax downtown property owners in order to fund shared public improvements, giving greater attention to the whole environment — public and private. Restructured as the Houston Downtown Management District (HDMD) in 1995, this entity imposes an annual assessment of 6 cents per $100 land value on all 705 acres of downtown property included in the district. The HDMD program has two major components: first, a downtown operations and maintenance effort that addresses the day-to-day quality of the downtown environment at the small scale; and second, a broad planning effort that tries to offer a long-range perspective on the future of downtown Houston.

The HDMD initiative has been joined by the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County's Downtown and Midtown Transit Streets Project, a large-scale redesigning of public rather than private space. It is the Metro project that could have the greatest impact on the character of downtown Houston. Refocusing on downtown's public spaces is one key to fostering mixed-use development by the private sector, which would help transform the area from a nine-to-five commercial center into a round-the-clock residential, commercial, and institutional environment.

With improved regional and local bus service, transit ridership to downtown Houston has grown significantly over the last decade. Metro is now concerned that the poor condition of the downtown environment might limit future ridership growth. The combination of queuing transit passengers, pedestrians, streetscape amenities, and furniture narrows sidewalk space, and the relative neglect of infrastructure maintenance has allowed some sidewalks and streets to deteriorate to a condition requiring major repair or reconstruction. As a result, Metro has taken the initiative for major improvements that will encourage continued growth and clarify its system of stops and routes.

Transit street improvements for downtown Houston were first proposed in the 1980s with a Downtown Development Plan finally to be published in late 1996 or early 1997. Once routing is reconfigured, Main Street will no longer serve as a linear transfer center, and bus service will be integrated on all downtown streets. HDMD pushed for preservation of curb parking and loading zones wherever possible, especially in historic areas, where buildings lack loading docks and garages.

As it is now planned, the scope of Metro's Downtown and Midtown Transit Streets Project is immense. Streets bordering more than 450 city blocks will be affected; approximately 34 linear miles of street will be altered in some fashion. The character of north-south "linear streets" will be consistent along their length. The east-west "district streets" will have variable elements as they pass through different districts. In Midtown, planned improvements are more limited.

In terms of overall area, the Metro initiative is the largest public works project of its kind in Houston's history. Under Metro's supervision, PGAL will serve as coordinating architects and will develop project wide guidelines for the final design work, which will be contracted to 18 engineering firms. In addition, five architectural and landscape firms or teams will be chosen for streetscape design services.

Metro's goal is not to create absolute consistency throughout downtown but to respect the character of each property and district. Special pavements installed by building owners will be retained. Lighting, seating, newspaper vending machines, kiosks, trash receptacles, sidewalk patterns and colors, and public art will vary by district. Traditional furnishings, such as acorn light standards, will be installed along Main Street and around Market and Courthouse squares. Contemporary furnishings will be installed elsewhere.

Sequence planning will be coordinated with property owners and managers to minimize disruption during what will be, at least, a four-year construction period, during which time the City of Houston will upgrade antiquated public utilities, replacing water mains and storm and sanitary sewers. Similarly, the Texas Department of Transportation and the city will undertake a concurrent series of bridge and freeway reconstruction projects around the perimeter of downtown during the transit streets construction, and project phasing will also be coordinated with this work.

During each of the 12- to 15-month phases, a single construction management company will provide inspection and contractor coordination on the entire project. HDMD is funding improvements that are not being provided by Metro — landscaping on nontransit block frontage, street furniture at locations other than transit stops and shelters, and wayfinding graphics. Metro and HDMD have also had to resolve long-term maintenance and operations cost-sharing. In general, Metro will maintain those items associated with transit operations. HDMD will handle day-to-day downtown operations and maintenance: emptying trash receptacles, watering trees, and maintaining seasonal plantings. Metro will replace damaged items in the transit shelter areas, and HDMD will handle replacements elsewhere.

The Transit Streets Project as Urban Design

Houston's Downtown and Midtown Transit Streets Project is an outgrowth of the American pragmatic tradition in urban design. As noted by George Baird, Americans have typically approached the design of cities from a pragmatic or empirical point of view.[1] In contrast to European urban designers such as Aldo

Proposed Main Street improvements, Downtown and Midtown Transit Street Improvement Project, Tom Gullette, illustrator.

Proposed bus shelter and amenities, PGAL, architects.

Rossi, Matthias Ungers, or Rob and Leon Krier, who have critiqued the city primarily from an ideological or theoretical viewpoint, such American writers as Jane Jacobs, Kevin Lynch, William H. Whyte, and Jonathan Barnett have described particular urban problems and then addressed them with specific design responses.

This problem-solving approach clearly forms the basis for Houston's transit streets project. From Metro's point of view, the problem is the efficient movement of buses to and through downtown Houston. Metro also wants to improve the experience of transit patrons by improving the pedestrian environment. The HDMD seeks a catalyst for its downtown development plans. Its own funding limited, HDMD is working with Metro to transform the downtown streetscape in an effort to demonstrate public commitment to the revitalization of downtown Houston, thereby luring private investors to help fulfill its vision.

The idea that public-sector improvements and private-sector development can work in a synergistic relationship is a basic concept of urban design. At least since 1960, when Jane Jacobs published *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, urban designers have come to understand the critical interaction of public and private space.[3] Jacobs, in addressing how people actually use the city, identified key spatial relationships such as that between the public sidewalk and an adjacent private use. She described the need for mixed-use areas and 24-hour urban districts and urged an appreciation of the extraordinary complexity of our cities. Much of what Jacobs wrote was immediately challenged because it was based on personal observation and related anecdotally. However, later urban observers applying more rigorous methods provided a stronger factual base for their analysis and proposals. William H. Whyte's two books, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980) and *City: Discovering the Center* (1988), were based on extensive time-lapse filming of people in urban settings. *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* in particular confirmed many of Jacobs's earlier observations, offering significant data that were used in the revision of New York City's zoning ordinances, and were the basis for zoning revisions in other cities such as Seattle.[4] Whyte convincingly demonstrated that to support an active pedestrian environment a city needed seating in public areas, accessible ground-level attractions such as retail shops and restaurants, and well-designed features that would support public-private interaction. At roughly the same time, Jonathan Barnett, a veteran of more than a decade of developing urban strategies for different districts in New York City, in his *Introduction to Urban Design* (1982) defined a general approach to the task as "designing cities without designing buildings" and described how urban design emerged in policy decisions in New York and elsewhere. He enumerated practices that have become standard in American urban design: land-use and building-form regulations, special provisions in historic and/or pedestrian districts, ordinances to reinforce public-private interaction, public investment policies, and comprehensive urban design strategies.[5]

These texts, and others like them, strangely devote little space to the design of the streetscape. Whyte does discuss issues such as the width of sidewalks and the character of the public realm as a place of interaction, but he pays no attention to street furniture other than seating. Barnett devoted one chapter to street furniture, lighting, and signage.[6] In general, HDMD's strategy of using the Metro project to catalyze urban revitalization and new downtown investment has limited precedent in practice.

The common element in American approaches to urban design is that they typically address *the boundary of the public realm* — that is, the edges of the city's public spaces. If the public realm of the city is conceptualized as a continuous exterior room, it has only two types of edges. The street and sidewalk constitute its "floor;" property lines, often defined by building faces, are its "walls." Barnett's definition of urban design as "designing cities without designing buildings" can only mean exercising control over the boundaries of the public realm, the "floor" and "walls" of the public space. In almost all American cities, such control involves regulation of uses and form. The experience of the last three decades shows that decisions by the private sector fundamentally influence the character of the public realm. Private development, both buildings and uses within them, determines the boundaries of public space — the streets and squares — of the city. From this understanding cities such as New York, Portland, and Seattle have developed ordinances requiring ground-level transparency with retail or restaurant uses in downtown buildings and defining "build-to" lines to protect street-wall continuity. Other cities, such as Boston and Minneapolis, rather than writing prescriptive ordinances, have begun requiring that every downtown building be subject to administrative review for its conformance to a general urban design plan and to specific urban design goals for its location. Furthermore, Portland has specifically linked downtown transit improvements and land-use regulation, so that tall office buildings with large numbers of commuting employees are allowed only where sufficient transit service is available and transit-related improvements have already been built.

But Houston — the only major American city without the legal authority to regulate building form and land use — lacks these traditional urban design tools. Without them, the walls of the public spaces remain under the control of the private sector. Although it is clear that what the private sector does — what it brings to the edge of the public space — will directly affect the safety, security, use, and character of that public space, Houston still has no legal power to control this effect. In turn, in the absence of any such controls the public sector can only control the "floor" of the public realm. Thus, given the constraints that exist in Houston, the only urban design strategy available is the one that has been selected — a strategy based on remaking the "floor" of the public realm. By making a major public investment, which will both signal a commitment to the public space of downtown and dramatically alter its visual character, Metro, HDMD, and the others involved hope to prompt both a corresponding private-sector endorsement of the general downtown plan and a willingness to invest in new private development that will foster the goals of this plan.

This strategy depends, above all, on the quality of the urban public space that will be created and the apparent degree of change that people perceive to be taking place. But this approach involves an unusual reversal of public perceptions of the streetscape. Typically, the average person barely pays any attention to the streetscape unless a problem arises. People notice street lights only when they fail to operate properly and ignore most street signs, focusing only on the ones that provide specific information. Metro appropriately characterizes its new bus shelters as "unobtrusive," as all streetscapes should be.

In American cities, the streetscape serves as background. Individual buildings, special restaurants, unique stores are the things people notice and remember about a city. Those who have visited New York may recall the F. A. O. Schwartz toy store with its giant bear and other toys. Does anyone remember the light poles, traffic signals, or sidewalk pavements? Designers, of course, see these elements,

Louisiana Avenue, 1996.

but for most people, who are less aware of the physical environment, activities make the city, and surfaces are only background.

Police departments have learned to repaint police cars periodically in a new color and pattern, so more people will notice them. Although the number of cars patrolling the streets does not change, the awareness of the police presence is heightened. The Houston Downtown and Midtown Transit Streets Project can be expected to follow a similar pattern to influence perception. Initially, the new streetscape will be noticed. Over time, however, it will fade into the background as it becomes part of the daily routine of downtown users. The long-term effects of increased transit efficiency, lower maintenance and operations costs, and a better overall downtown environment will continue to be evident to Metro and to HDMD, but not to the public.

The exception to this generalization may be the effect of the more than 900 street trees to be planted as part of the project, which should have a much more significant impact. With a continuing program of watering and maintenance, downtown Houston could come to be thought of as shaded and green rather than hot and bare.

The Downtown and Midtown Transit Streets Project will be most effective as a catalyst at its completion, when public awareness will be greatest. If the project signals a new direction for downtown, as HDMD intends, new private-sector investment ideally should take place at the same time, to create tangible evidence of public-private partnership. Further, because the private sector is generally risk-averse, a commitment by some private developers will encourage others. Still, the effect of the project as a catalyst will be muted because construction will take place over a five-year period. The "newness" effect may be lost before the project is finished.

One aspect of the project critical to its success is the commitment to continued maintenance. If trash is not collected, if trees are allowed to die, or if damage to any streetscape element is not immediately repaired, deterioration of the streetscape will soon follow. Evidence of vandalism has been shown to encourage more vandalism. Evidence of care will lead others to care as well. One reason suburban malls have been so successful in supplanting downtown retailers has been the control their management has over every aspect of the mall spaces. An impetus for the creation of HDMD was to create a downtown organization similar to a mall management company. Once the new streetscape improvements are in place, HDMD and Metro will need to adopt routines of monitoring, maintenance, and repair. Otherwise the project cannot succeed as a catalyst for other downtown investment.

One goal of the Downtown Development Plan — changing downtown from an employment center to a mixed-use district — has already begun to be addressed. The most promising evidence of this is the investment in new downtown loft housing. The conversion of the historic Hogg Building at 401 Louisiana (Charles E. Barglebaugh and Lloyd R. Whitson, architects, 1920–21) and the W. L. Foley Building at 214–218 Travis (John Kennedy, builder, ca. 1860) to residential units may reflect current market conditions, but the ready acceptance of this housing suggests that there is a significant potential demand for downtown and close-in residential development. HDMD's initial research demonstrating a market for downtown housing led it to provide a grant to the Hogg Building project (now called Hogg Palace) on the condition that retail uses at ground level be included. If this kind of development can continue, and particularly if the Rice Hotel's planned conversion into condominium units occurs, a critical mass of downtown residents will form, sufficient to support a range of amenities including service, retail, and evening activities.

Recent tendencies in national politics have suggested the ascendancy of a conservative agenda that places its primary faith in the mechanisms of the market and distrusts public regulation of private initiative. HDMD's urban planning might be considered a test of this philosophy — one that relies on the public sector to invest in public space and looks to the private sector to follow voluntarily in accordance with a shared set of proposals.

Since its origin as a commercial real estate venture in 1836 Houston has followed a singular path towards creation of an urban environment, eschewing land-use regulation in favor of an individualistic evolution. Successive periods of prosperity have allowed this policy (or non-policy) to remain in force, from cotton and timber production in the 19th century, through the oil boom in the early part of this century, to thriving real estate speculation after World War II. Since 1985, however, this unregulated and seemingly unstoppable success has been tempered. The creation of HDMD and the determination by Metro to invest in a public-works project of this scope reflect this change in the city's fortunes and the rethinking it has occasioned among policy makers. Still, Houston is constrained by its lack of regulatory power; no other American city has mounted a significant urban design initiative solely with public-sector investment and without accompanying private-sector regulation. But then, no other American city has built a major port 50 miles inland. While philosophical and financial approaches may have changed since the ship channel was dug, the same kind of foresight prompted Metro and HDMD to launch this vast streetscape project — something no other American city has done. Whether Houston can transform its downtown to the extent promised, or whether the new initiative will merely improve pavements and landscaping, remains to be seen. ■

1 George Baird, "The Present Status of the Theory of Urban Design: A Sketch of an Argument," lecture presented at the University of Washington, College of Architecture & Urban Planning, Seattle, November 13, 1990.

2 Jane Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), pp. 29–88.

3 William H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (Washington DC: Conservation Foundation, 1980), pp. 112-119.

4 Jonathan Barnett, "Designing Cities Without Designing Buildings," *An Introduction to Urban Design* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982).

5 Ibid. "Standards for Street Furniture, Lighting and Signs," pp. 187-198.

UPDATE: METRO

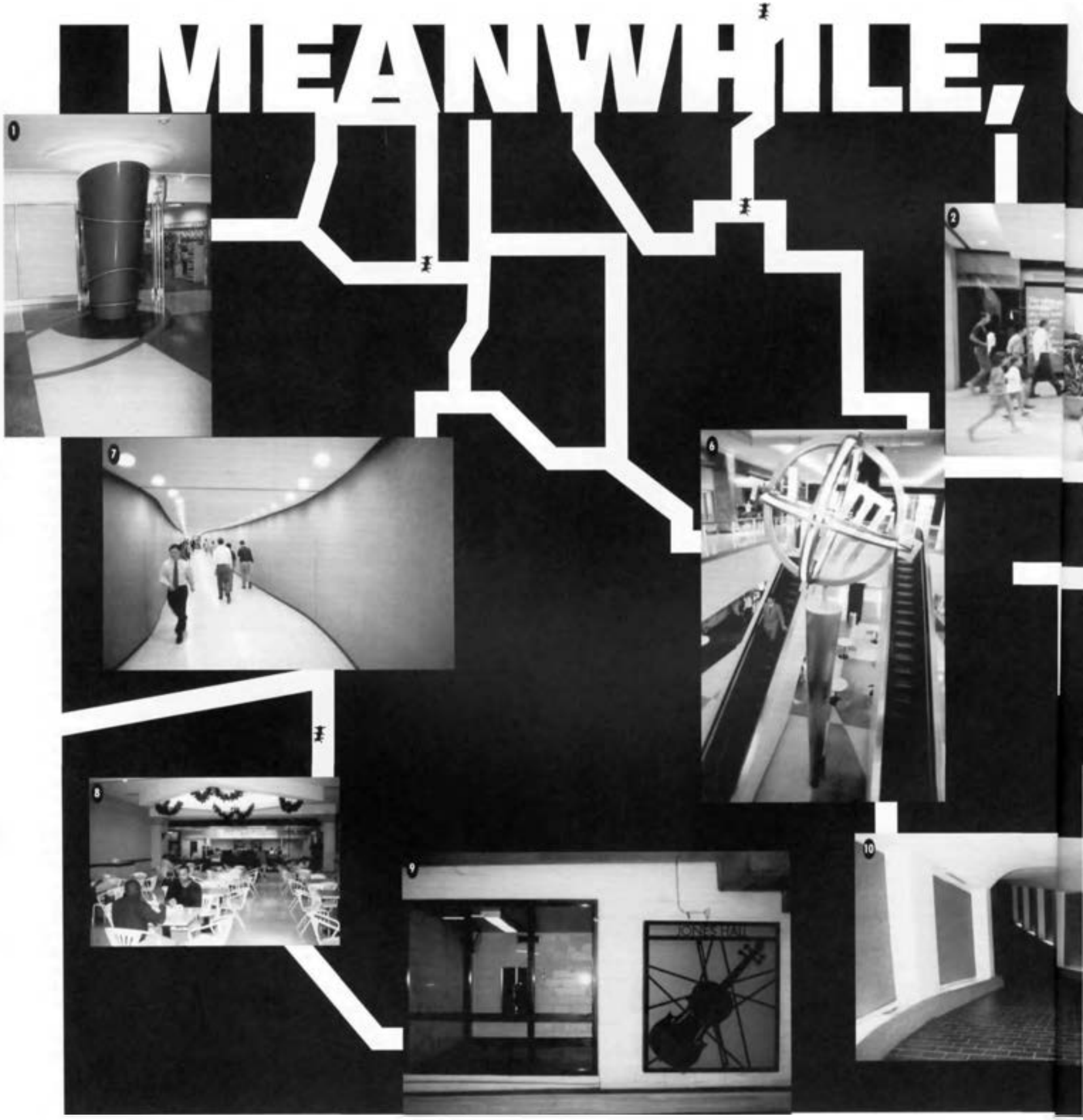
For budgetary purposes the $177.6 million Metro Downtown and Midtown Streets Transit Project is scheduled to begin construction in fiscal year 1997. However, it is not clear when Metro legally will be able to move forward with the project because of pending lawsuits and cost over-run estimates.

In a 1988 referendum, voters approved light rail for the City of Houston. This referendum also provided that Metro would spend 25 percent of its sales tax revenue on general (not specifically transportation-related) mobility improvements — a figure Mayor Bob Lanier has since interpreted as a floor, not a ceiling. However, light rail had many political enemies and, subsequent to the referendum, commissioned studies that indicated rail was not economically viable. In 1992, Metro adopted its $1 billion dollar Regional Bus Plan, which was designed to make Metro's transit system preferable to light rail. Half of the funding for the Regional Bus Plan comes from Metro funds, and half from the Federal Transit Administration — pulling into action the federal requirement that an affirmative action policy be included on all federally funded projects.

In 1993, the Houston Contractors Association filed a lawsuit against Metro, claiming that the transit authority's Disadvantage Business Enterprise program, which required that contractors subcontract 21 percent of each project budget from minority- or women-owned businesses, was unconstitutional. In April 1996, a judge ordered Metro not to solicit or receive data concerning any contractor's race or sex before hiring them. Metro halted all new construction and engineering projects, but soon resumed those which used only local funding. In September, Metro adopted a revised, race- and sex-neutral DBE, known as the Business Development Program, which now awaits federal approval.

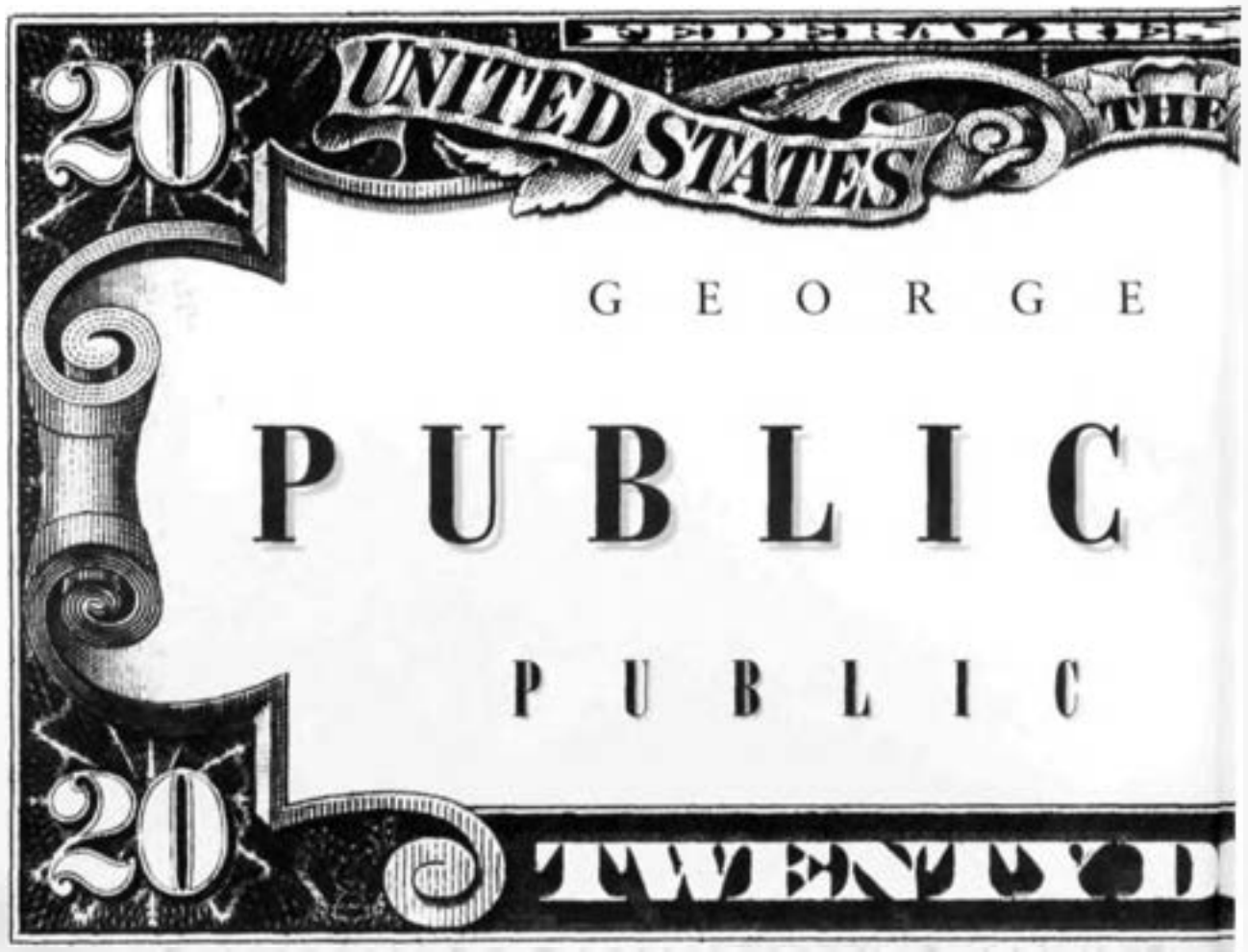
The money slated for the Downtown and Midtown Transit Streets Project is over and above the $50 million Metro has voluntarily contracted to transfer to the city each year through 1998. Most of this money is used by the Public Works Department for streets, thus freeing up city money for police salaries and other non-transit related objectives. Meanwhile, the $700 million surplus Metro had five years ago will dwindle to $100 million by the end of this year, and, according to Metro's own predictions, will be totally gone by 1998. In addition, Metro's budgeters are now banking on victory in another lawsuit-in-progress, this one involving a rebate from Southern Pacific Railroad. And though ridership is up slightly this year, new projects and improvements to the transit system after 1998 have yet to be included in the budget forecast. *Shaila Dewan*

Any attempt to recreate Houston's downtown as a more convivial and active public setting will need to be addressed literally on two levels. Twelve feet below the sparsely used sidewalks, an extensive tunnel system cuts through the city's substratum, defying the democratic matrix of the street grid by creating a proxy city. This underground labyrinth teems with downtown's shadow population of commuter office workers who have opted for air-conditioned comfort and convenience in pedestrian conduits in preference to the comparative messiness of the streets above. The tunnel system's success has impeded the rejuvenation of Houston's downtown street life. The historical pattern of shops lining the streets, busy sidewalks, and public spaces in the central business district has steadily lost ground, first to suburban development and more recently to challenges from the new underground city. Even weekend theater crowds eschew the pleasures of the formal, street-level entrances to performance halls by parking underground and slipping into the lobbies from underneath. In most cases the underground approaches and entrances are bleak and poorly integrated with the overall building concept. In December 1996, Houston City Council approved funding to renovate the tunnels between the Theater District parking garages and performance halls, which might bring these dreary conduits up to the private-sector standard. *Bruce C. Webb*



(1) Bank One, 910 Travis, Gensler, renovation architects, 1995. The Bank One tunnel is the most architecturally interesting and lively section of the private tunnel system. (2) Pennzoil Place, 711 Louisiana, Johnson/Burgee Architects and S. I. Morris Associates, 1976. Pennzoil's tunnel, centrally located and pleasantly light, is consistently full of activity. (3) Two Shell Plaza, 777 Walker, SOM with Wilson, Morris, Crain & Anderson, 1972. (4) Looking from the tunnel into the Pennzoil Place basement hub. (5) First Interstate Bank Plaza, 1000 Louisiana, SOM with Lloyd Jones Brewer & Associates, 1983. With Jones Hall, this is the only public access from the street into the tunnel system. (6) Bank One escalators, like those of most buildings connected to the tunnel system, provide quasi-private access from building lobbies. (7) This linkage from basement to basement would be bleak without the curves. (8) Bank One, food court. (9) Graphics at the tunnel entrances to the performing arts halls from Theater District parking area. Icons designed by Gensler, 1994. (10) Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Avenue, Ulrich Franzen & Associates with MacKie & Kamrath, 1969. The parking connection to the Alley is particularly well designed, with floor-level changes and lighted side panels of varying depths. (11) Esperson buildings, 808 Travis, renovated in the 1980s. Lunchtime "walkers" are a common sight throughout the system. (12) Houston Industries Plaza, 1111 Louisiana, BAMM Keating, renovation architects, 1996. Security guards, a common sight in the tunnel system, ensure that the tunnels, unlike the streets above, are safe and clean and free from permanent residents. Photomurals expand and dissolve what could be claustrophobic space. *Photographs © 1996 Hester + Hardaway*

UNDERGROUND



in•fra•struc•ture (in´frə-strŭk´chər) *n*. **1.** the basic facilities, equipment, and installations needed for the functioning of a system or organization. *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 1985

Public investment in infrastructure is a huge force that shapes the way we perceive our community, and it should be an integral part of planning for the future. But we've always had a problem embracing this concept. In Houston, government has taken a back seat to business and the private sector has overshadowed the public, reflecting the political traditions of Texas and the West, where there is a persistent sense that even if we gave government a bigger role, it probably couldn't get it right.

To be great, a city must have a strong and diverse economy that produces substantial public wealth. Without such wealth there can be no great art, no superior universities, no sound public education system, no magnificent public spaces, not even sports teams. Great cities today and throughout history have in common at least two things: vigorous commerce with high job inventories and a prominent position in the economy of their national state. Therefore any public investment, especially in infrastructure, should first be a business decision based on potential for economic enhancement; however, it is equally important to acknowledge that infrastructure is a powerful tool for defining the character and ethic of a community.

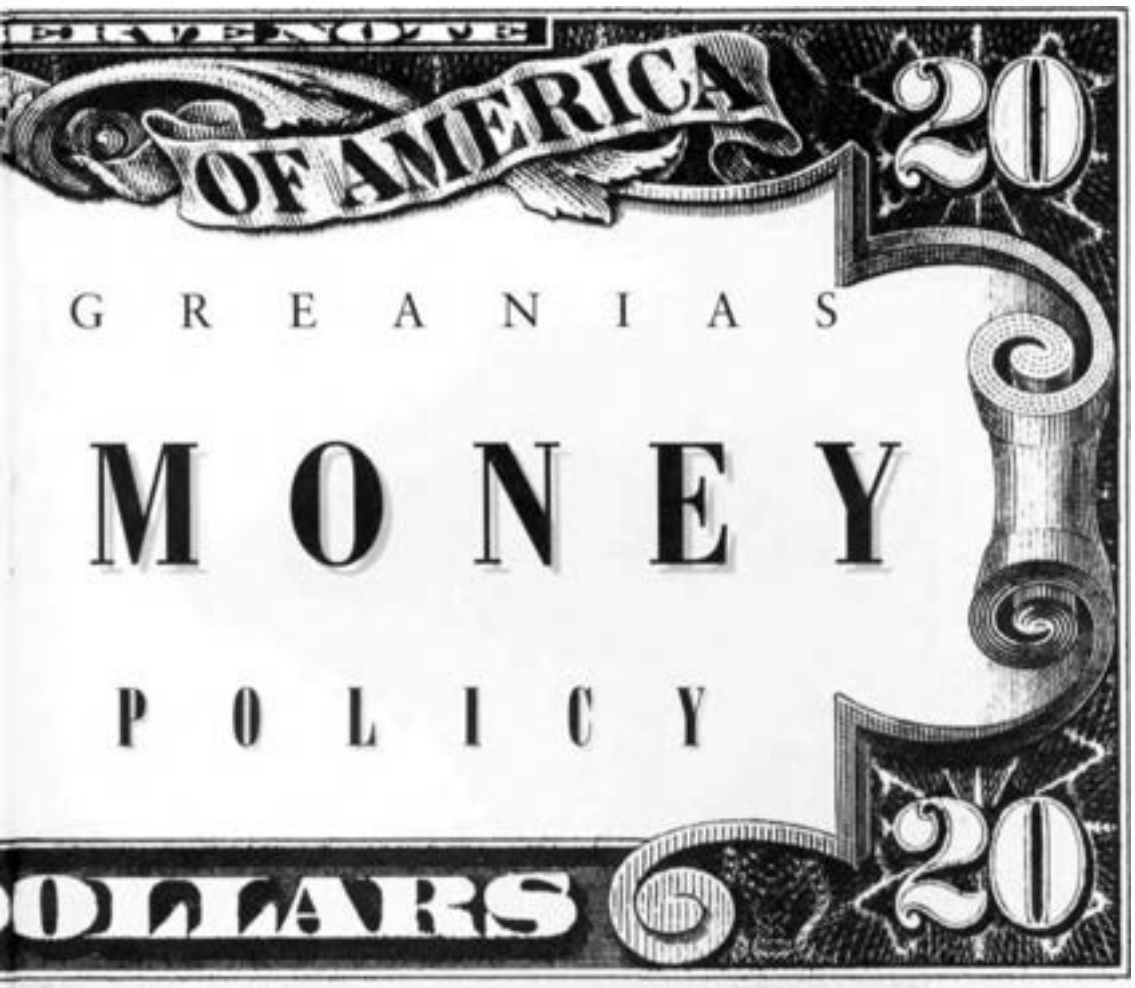
The City of Houston spends enormous sums every year on new infrastructure and maintenance of systems already in place. But it is not alone. Separate municipalities such as West University Place or Bellaire along with other governments such as Harris County and the Houston Independent School District also spend millions each year on building and maintaining everything from schools and roads to libraries, sewer systems, and parks. Within greater Houston still more overlapping public agencies have budgets that include infrastructure — Port of Houston; Flood Control District; Houston Community College District; Harris County Hospital District; new tax increment zones downtown and in the Galleria; and even quasi-private "districts" such as the medical center, where the Texas Medical Center, Inc., acts as a governmental body of sorts, regulating such things as parking, traffic patterns, signage, and new construction.

Each of these separate public and quasi-public agencies spends tremendous sums on infrastructure every year, for a total that often far exceeds what the private sector spends on all types of construction. It is obvious that, for better or worse, such combined, large-scale spending will affect the way our neighborhoods look and function.

Infrastructure and Planning

Houston has long been allergic to planning. The notion that government can bring any intelligence, foresight, thought, or wisdom to the planning process is foreign to the political thinking of many Houstonians. Indeed, government involvement in planning has been pretty much regarded here by many as socialism — of the most pernicious sort.

The problem with this political philosophy is that it does not square with history. Three of the biggest components of Houston's economic well-being — Texas Medical Center, Houston Ship Channel, and Johnson Space Center — were not the product of fortuitous



immaculate conceptions or, to mix the metaphor further, of lightning hitting the same place thrice. They were the result of public intervention to create something where nothing had existed before.

The Texas Medical Center began when voters approved a proposal to take the southern part of Hermann Park and give portions of it to any medical research, medical education, or health care institution that would locate there. In its early years, the Medical Center owed much to the presence of a government-funded facility — the Veterans Administration Hospital. The Ship Channel got its start when Houston, aided by a well-timed gullywasher that transformed the trickle of Buffalo Bayou into a coursing river, persuaded a dubious federal government that the bayou could be converted into a commercial waterway. The Johnson Space Center is ours because, with the help of Albert Thomas and Lyndon Johnson, we stole it, fair and square. Not one of these acquisitions was derailed by protests against inappropriate government intervention or pointless public spending. Each became a major engine for the creation of jobs. Each affected Houston's built environment. Each developed Houston's economic base and helped define the community.

Since the belief that government ought not to be involved in planning runs counter to actual practice, political and business leaders must tack like sailors heading into the wind. Swearing fealty to the wonders of the market and the private sector, they undertake construction of a convention center hotel that the private sector shuns. Protesting their undying allegiance to free enterprise, they approve public-supported funding to renovate the Rice Hotel. Whether this is good or bad is not the point. The point is that because we have not had a defining debate about these issues, we lunge here and there to meet specific needs and deal with particular opportunities without the benefit of community consensus on just exactly what it is we want to accomplish.

Do such debates take place in real life? According to one school of thought, the effective politician eschews philosophy and focuses on results. Progress is measured not by consensus achieved but by buildings built, sidewalks laid, freeway miles constructed. Such quantitative assessment of accomplishment is clear and precise. The difficult consensus-building required to set priorities and chart a course in advance is avoided in a barrage of impressive-sounding numbers.

There are three types of public infrastructure: maintenance, developmental, and definitional. Maintenance infrastructure supports existing development. Examples are a new sewer line for an existing neighborhood, repairs to a pothole-ridden street, supplemental street lighting, replacement or addition of sidewalks — projects whose main benefit is to maintain, restore, or enhance an area. By and large, public investment in maintenance infrastructure yields no commensurate benefit to the public treasury other than to prevent losses triggered by physical decay. The amount of money spent is likely to be greater than the benefit received. But it keeps us even — rather than falling behind.

Investment in developmental infrastructure spurs new economic activity. Examples include new streets to inaccessible areas, improvements to existing roadways that enhance their capacity to transport goods and people, extension of water or sewer lines to unserved areas, expansion of existing utilities to facilitate denser development, and new public buildings that generate development around them or encourage private-sector investment.

Definitional infrastructure, while not necessarily needed for maintenance or to enhance the likelihood of private investment, helps stamp the community with a unique character, a signature different from that of other urban areas. It can also have significant economic impact. The Gateway Arch in St. Louis has come to symbolize that city, tying the community to its history as the door to the West, and it anchors major redevelopment projects. Paris's Eiffel Tower is definitional, as is its extensive park system. In Houston, the Astrodome has been both developmental and definitional; to the extent that we have developed bayous as greenbelt parks, they, too, are examples of definitional infrastructure.

In a more abstract way, infrastructure improvements can be physical or philosophical. Physical infrastructure is construction paid for with public-sector dollars. Philosophical infrastructure is a system of ideas, sanctioned by government through laws, that gives direction to private-sector investment. Issues of philosophical infrastructure have been hotly debated in Houston: zoning (since the 1920s) and land-use ordinances (since the 1980s). The question of zoning has engaged the community on a broad philosophical level; zoning opponents have consistently had the better of the argument because it was easier to conjure a parade of horrors than a train of benefits. With more success, the passage of land-use ordinances in response to particular problems has been made possible by an activist constituency bent on finding a solution and willing to support legislation to achieve that goal.

Public Transportation

Houston's greatest infrastructure failure has been its inability to develop a high-quality public transportation system. Houston still relies on buses, and buses only. This has been a failure on two counts. First, the lack of better public transportation creates mobility problems and lays the groundwork for future congestion. Consider the near-nightmare conditions at the intersection of Kirby and the Southwest Freeway, along Shepherd Drive between Allen Parkway and the Southwest Freeway, or at the intersection of Westheimer and Post Oak. With nothing more than steady, unspectacular growth in traffic, these areas and others like them will become virtual parking lots.

Second, the lack of effective public transportation retards revitalization and new growth in the community. For years, the primary arguments against development of a more extensive system have been that Houston is not dense enough to support anything more than skeletal bus service, and that rail or other fixed-guideway transportation is not flexible enough to adjust to unanticipated growth patterns in the community. What fascinates about the first argument is that it is so completely out of sync with the current emphasis on reinvigorating neighborhoods inside the Loop. Considerable private money, not to mention a good deal of public investment, is being directed toward the goal of getting Houstonians to live in more densely populated neighborhoods (including downtown) at the same time that public transportation is being neglected on the basis of the "not-dense-enough" argument. A great deal of public money has been spent on the Grand Parkway. If density must precede transportation infrastructure, how did government commit more than a billion dollars to a project in the middle of nowhere? As for citing the immobility of fixed guideways to justify vetoing their use, what about the fixed guideways for autos that we call freeways?

The obvious point is that development follows infrastructure, not the other way around. It has ever been thus. The American interior — lands beyond the original 13 colonies — did not experience rapid growth until a system of roads, rails, and canals began to knit the new territories to the old. These transportation systems were built with a combination of public and private monies.

Public Spaces and the Public Ethic

Plato wrote, "That which is honored in a city is practiced there." A home is the expression of a family's personality and character, a measure of what is important in life, an indicator of prosperity; is it any different for a community? What we build — or choose not to build — gives

eloquent testimony to who we are, who we think ourselves to be, and what we aspire to be. Our public buildings and our public spaces provide the clearest statement of a community's values.

Since the 1950s, Houstonians have worked steadfastly to refute the notion that they live in a subtropical climate. It is possible to acknowledge and embrace our sweltering summer heat, and to enjoy our mild falls, winters, and springs. Instead of throwing more airconditioning at the problem, perhaps we could improve things with a definitional infrastructure that included more shade and water. Publically accessible fountains are an obvious amenity that should dwell on public and private open space. Water is a cool, kinetic invitation to relax. It quenches not only a thirsty throat, but a parched disposition.

The idea of shade-giving arcades has all but been abandoned in Houston. We need to relearn the lesson of Boston architect Ralph Adams Cram, who, when faced with the planning of the Rice University campus, devised an architectural style uniquely suited to our climate — a style that included colonnaded arcades. There are echoes of that lesson elsewhere in the city — the arcade of the old Texas Company Building at San Jacinto and Rusk, for example, or the walkways that join the buildings of Philip Johnson's academic court at the University of St. Thomas. By and large, in Houston we move straight from our car to the front door of a building. Between buildings, the walk — if we walk — is under open sky or, if we are downtown, underground.

The downtown tunnel system is both developmental and definitional infrastructure. Unfortunately, the definition it provides does not enhance a sense of community. The idea of underground passages giving shelter from the sun and rain is not a bad one. But why should we construct them in such a — pardon the expression — pedestrian fashion? Why have we missed the opportunity to make the tunnel system more than a place suitable for moles scurrying about their appointed rounds? Why can't we open the tunnel system up to the sky?

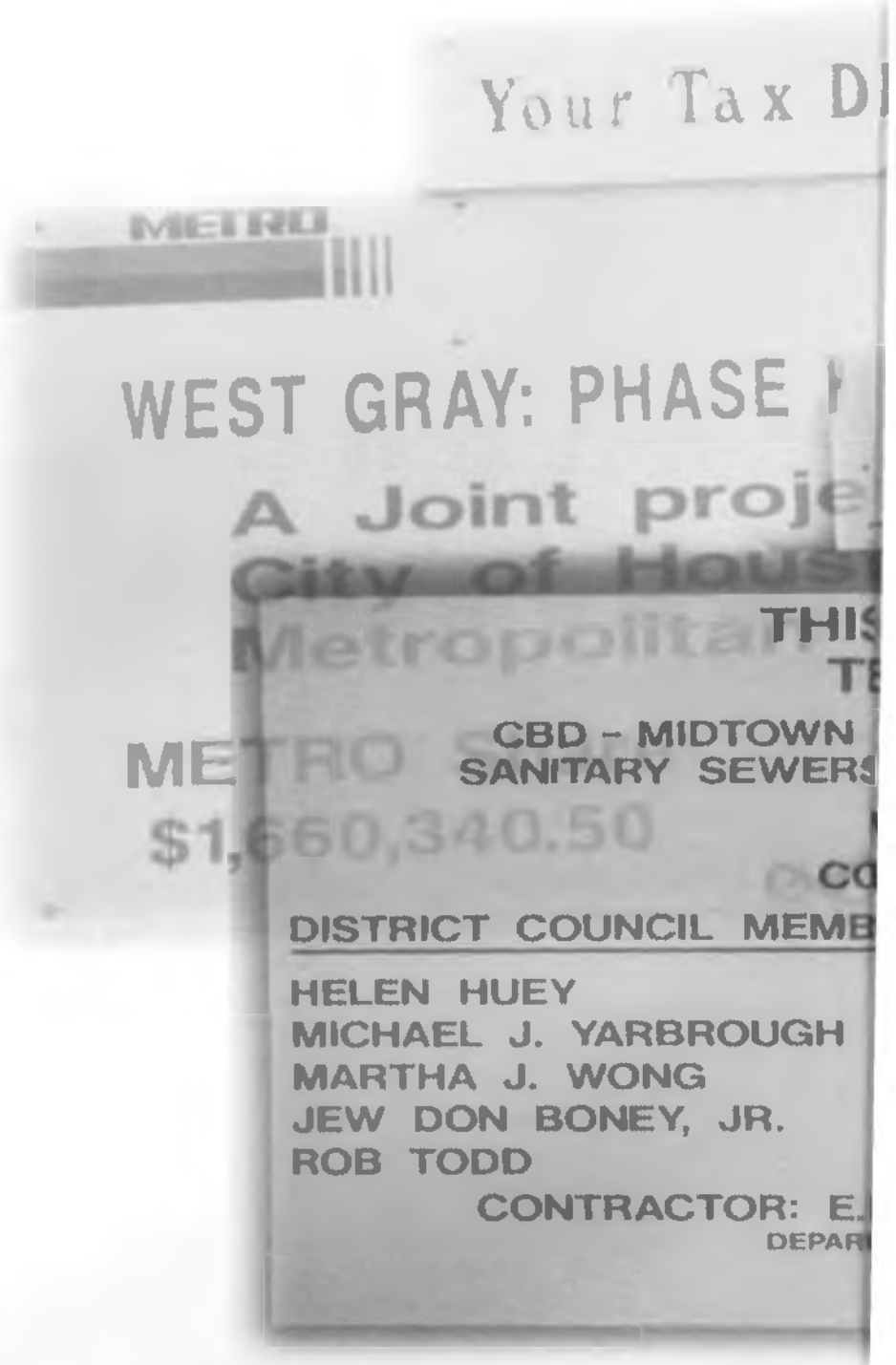
Trees are Houston's natural arcades. There is no single natural feature over which we have control that can have a greater impact. We cannot build hills like San Francisco's, or add lakes like Wisconsin's, but we can plant trees. And here, trees grow fast. Despite the good example set by Trees for Houston and the Park People, we have not mustered the single-minded, fanatical (in a positive sense) commitment to urban forestation that a city of this scale requires. With about four million people spread out over more than 1,000 square miles, it will take a lot of trees to redefine the character of the place.

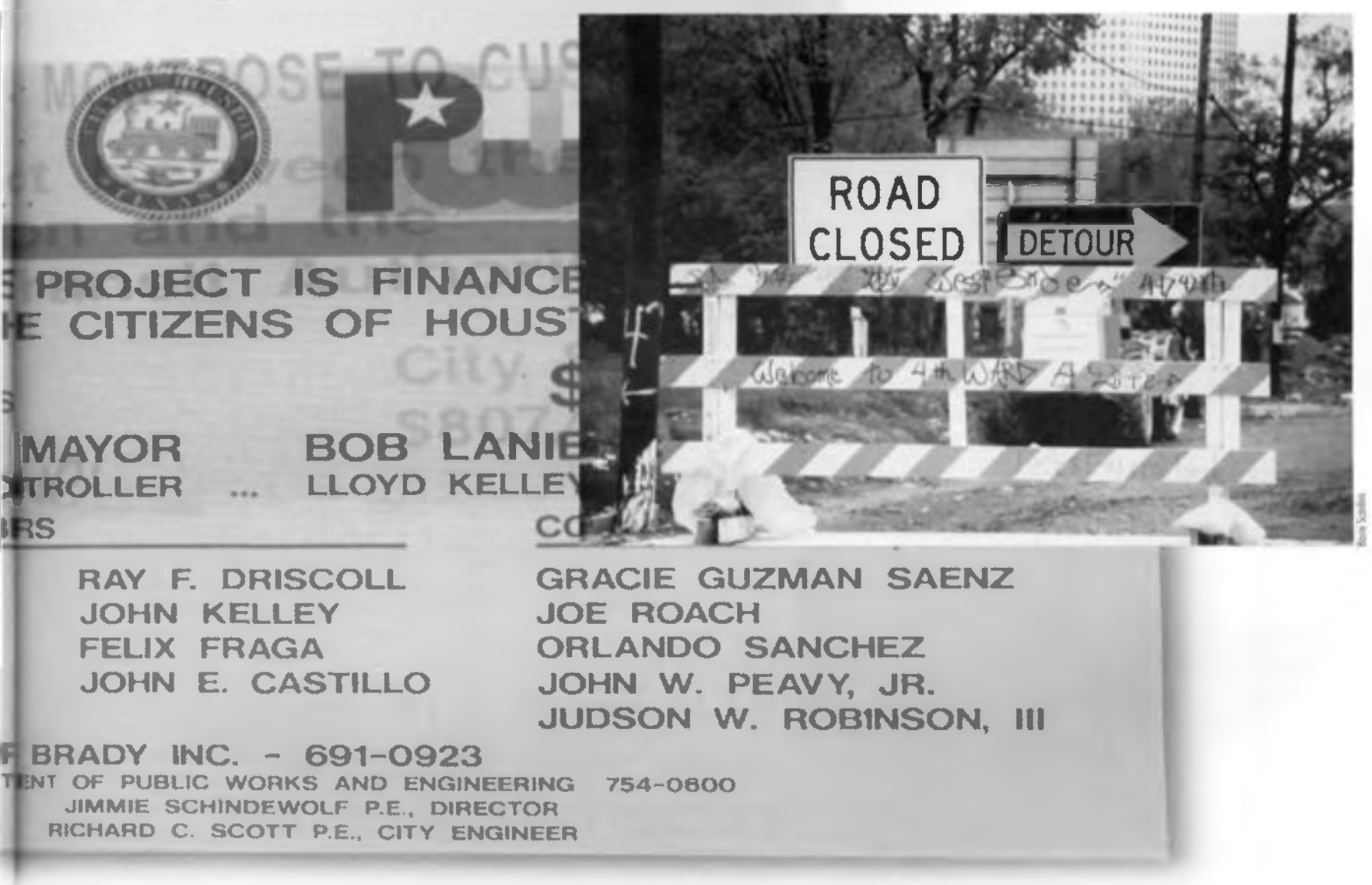
Politics and Policy

What are the important public spaces in our community? Where do we take visitors? My own list includes, among others, the Rice University campus, the environs of the University of St. Thomas, Hermann Park, Memorial Drive, Post Oak Boulevard as it works its way through the Galleria area, Kirby Drive through River Oaks, North and South MacGregor along Brays Bayou, the medical center, the space center, and the port. These places are the result of a building up, a layering of horizontal space, to make an identifiable place. It is this collective action that makes a significant impact, which is otherwise difficult to achieve one building, one site, one project at a time, where the scale is too small, the likelihood of consistency among projects too slim, and the prospects for sustained investment too unlikely.

Large-scale private development controlled by the developer, such as the Hogg brothers in River Oaks, Gerald Hines in the Galleria, or George Mitchell at The Woodlands, does, of course, have an enormous effect in the community. During years of rapid expansion, the major engines for development of Houston's built environment have been in the private sector. Glenwood Cemetery, a private development, not a public park, was the first large landscaped space in Houston (and Houstonians used it as a park for family outings and picnics). The Houston Heights, now treasured as a unique community worthy of preservation, was developed by private investors who not only sold lots and houses but also installed the infrastructure, including a streetcar line. River Oaks was born not on the desks of city planners but in the mind of Will Hogg. Over and over again, Houston's municipal boundaries have been expanded because of private-sector activity. Even today, with the anticipated annexation of Kingwood and other northwesterly areas, that pattern persists, proving again that infrastructure must precede development, whether privately or publically provided.

For the first time in Houston's history, the focus of the city's growth and development is shifting away from outward expansion toward a balance between expansion and redevelopment of existing neighborhoods. With this change, the public sector will be forced to become more concerned with infrastructure in all its manifestations. While expansion and new private-sector development at the outer edges will continue, the future of the city inside the city limits and especially inside the Loop will depend on public investment. Change has already begun without much public discussion of the implications of such redevelopment. The justification of necessity has been used to avoid difficult questions on what the proper role of government ought to be in rebuilding older infrastructure in the city. When it comes to changing the face of the inner city today, one would be hard pressed to accomplish anything without government participation; few if any private-sector interests could acquire control over enough property to have a transforming impact. Likewise, while several individual private interests might take steps to collectively alter an area, they could not coordinate infrastructure improvements without public participation.





We may cling, if we wish, to the notion that the private sector is wiser, more efficient, and more effective than government. But private resources alone cannot tackle municipal redevelopment on the scale needed to transform our community's built environment. Nor can the limited and overburdened public coffers be expected to underwrite this kind of change without financial backing and know-how from private investors.

Houstonians need to support a broader role for the public sector but at the same time demand that the best practices of the private sector be included in whatever arrangements are made, including fiscal responsibility and planning. Infrastructure, new or improved, must be a reflection of the civic will to build an economically vital community that reflects our character and ethic. ■

GHETTO UTOPIA

Shrine of the Black Madonna, side altar.

"I believe that Jesus, the Black Messiah, was a revolutionary leader, sent by God to rebuild the Black Nation Israel and to liberate Black people from powerlessness and from the oppression, brutality, and exploitation of the white gentile world."

Shrine of the Black Madonna, 5317 Martin Luther King Boulevard.

ANN WALTON SIEBER

"We're building a nation. And when you come forward here to join this church, you're coming into a nation," preaches the Reverend Albert B. Cleage, better known as Jaramogi Abebe Agyeman, founder and holy patriarch of the Shrine of the Black Madonna. "We have to train our own young men. We have to take some young black nationalists and militants and send them to school to learn how to pastor this church when I get too old to stand up here. We have to train people. That's a part of being a nation — thinking about tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. We must plan for a thousand years. . . . We start out buying property right here in this neighborhood where we are. . . . We'll buy and we'll never sell."[1]

The shrine has been doing just that along a half-mile stretch of Martin Luther King Boulevard between Griggs Road and Old Spanish Trail. Since the first properties were purchased in 1977, the scattered parcels of the Shrine's campus now encompass ten buildings, including three refurbished apartment complexes (another complex awaits renovation); several colonial revival houses being used as meditation and retreat centers; and an extensive bookstore with the best collection of black authors in Houston and room after huge room (its building was once a bowling alley) of African imports for sale. The same building functions as a cultural center, offering programs for both church members and the general public. The Shrine also operates a medical clinic, day-care center, job training center, and recreation center on its growing campus.

At the center of all this real estate is the sanctuary itself. A former United Church of Christ, the very conventional red brick building with a tall, thin white steeple and a columned, pedimented entrance has an aura of southern conservative pretension that clashes, in splendid irony, with the institution it houses: the Shrine of the Black Madonna No. 10 of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church.

Many churches are extensive landowners. What the Shrine is doing with its property is what sets it apart from its neighborhood and, indeed, the whole city. In these buildings, the Shrine of the Black Madonna has created a communal village of about 200 people — with shared meals, communal child-rearing, a largely barter-based economic structure, and a prescribed system of spiritual and educational development — a ghetto utopian experiment that is going into its 20th year.

In Detroit, where the Shrine was founded by Cleage/Jaramogi in 1953, the church's beneficial social effects are widely recognized. As former Detroit mayor Coleman Young said, addressing the Houston Shrine in 1987 on its tenth anniversary: "The Shrine has been essential to the ability of the city of Detroit to survive in some stormy times."[2]

The Shrine's Pan African philosophy, called Black Christian Nationalism, is based on a revisionist belief that Jesus was black. Its creed states, *I believe that Jesus, the Black Messiah, was a revolutionary leader, sent by God to rebuild the Black Nation Israel and to liberate Black people from powerlessness and from the oppression, brutality, and exploitation of the white gentile world.* The Black Madonna, a focal point in the Pan African church, is a symbol of the honor that should be given to all black women, especially mothers.[3]

In this mostly African American area of Houston, where the per capita income is about half that of Harris County and unemployment is more than twice as high,[4] the Shrine has set itself the urgent mission of liberating black people, both from the oppressive racial status quo of America and from the psychological trap of their own world view. "Jaramogi tied himself to [Marcus] Garvey's vision of a new world, the necessity for black people to define and control our own human destiny," says Shrine spokesman Bishop Olu Ufum.[5]

"Years ago we did what most churches do — soup kitchens, co-ops," explains the Houston Shrine's Cardinal Mbiyu Kamau Ifoma Chui, "and then we came to the realization that we'd be doing this forever unless we came up with our own system. . . . Part of our ministry and our mission is to create a Christian community in the ghetto in which we live. . . . We've created an urban enclave as a model that we can live together, that we can create community. You can go all over Houston and not find a community like this one."

Utopian communities have a ragged history. Once the ideals they are founded upon are no longer the vogue, many atrophy and wither — the fate of most of the sixties communes, as well as their 19th-century predecessors. Others scarcely get off the ground because their founders are visionary but impractical — such as Bronson Alcott's Fruitlands, too loopy even for the dreamer Thoreau. And other utopian blueprints remain pregnant and hopeful on the drawing board: B. F. Skinner's behaviorist Walden Two (realized, at least in theory, in the Virginia intentional community Twin Oaks), Aldous Huxley's *Island*, or the original, Sir Thomas More's Utopia. More coined the word *utopia* for his imaginary place from the Greek *ou*, 'not,' and *topos*, 'a place' — nowhere. It is a lively diversion to dream up utopias, quite another matter to make them fly; and a feat indeed to create a community that endures. The Shrine of the Black Madonna has survived and thrived in Houston for 20 years with a naturalness and easy order that seems born of grace.

The Shrine is located in one of the many vast undefined areas of Houston, those "no there there" zones whose low-density amalgamations of light industrial, residential, and commercial use don't quite coalesce. Although Griggs Road was one of the principal arterial routes to downtown Houston before Interstate 45 opened, and nearby Palm Center was a thriving shopping center in the fifties, the area has deteriorated. The 1995 Palm Center Master Plan noted that the absence of land-use controls permitted property in the area to be "converted to any use regardless of the long-term impact on the neighborhoods. Stone crushing plants, open storage areas of road and bridge beams and every other imaginable use occurred, all to the detriment of the residential homesteads."[6]

A mile south down Martin Luther King Boulevard from the University of Houston's southeastern edge, the Shrine backs up to the modest residential area of MacGregor Park Estates; upscale Riverside Terrace is just west and across Old Spanish Trail. The pleasantly wooded MacGregor Park and the Brays Bayou are nearby. But just as close are the warehouses and loading docks of Produce Row, the center of much of the city's wholesale produce activity. Although community developers point with pride to the tentative entrance of chains such as the Kelsey-Seybold Clinic and AutoParts USA, much more prominent are the more congenial, if less glossy, neighborhood-based businesses — fish markets, driving schools, nail parlors, psychic readers — scattered along Griggs, M.L.K., and the picturesque O.S.T. in aged shopping strips with fading signs.

Churches abound, some in improvised quarters such as former gas stations and drugstores, others in quite well-to-do accommodations. Also in abundance is a friendly mixture of evocatively named bars (Club Happy, with zydeco dancing; Mocombo Lounge; Evening Shadows; Club Decoco; Brown Sugar) and beauty parlors (Nation's Creative Cuts, with a large streetside mural of Dr. Martin Luther King; the Nail Trap; Alma Jo's Beauty Spa; and Anointed Hair).

After weeks of leaving unanswered messages at the Shrine, I finally got a call from Cardinal Mbiyu, who left his name as the Reverend Moore, which I later learned was his "slave name." The tall and lanky Mbiyu's many responsibilities include handling Shrine publications and running the activities program for 30 or so teens who live at the Shrine. He is one of the five-person Assembly of Cardinals (two of whom are women) that manages the Houston Shrine. As a full-time church staffer, he is not paid, but his housing, food, and other needs are provided by the church. Mbiyu's confident affability makes him a natural leader. He teaches a class on "black reality in America" intelligently and without pedantry, only occasionally rising to fiery rhetoric to emphasize a point: "White America wishes that blacks would just go away and stop taking up so much air and food and we can get back to our Norman Rockwell America and be happy." He answered all questions about the Shrine and its philosophy thoughtfully and without reserve.

Originally a United Church of Christ minister, Jaramogi split with his home denomination in 1953 to found his own church, based on Black Christian Nationalism. He dreamed of making the church not just a house of worship, but a vehicle for social change. By the early 1970s, he was ready to push his vision further and expanded the Shrine to other cities; it was during this expansion that the Shrine began seriously exploring communalism, in emulation of the early Christian church. Groups of 40 to 60 members moved to Atlanta and later Houston to serve as the nucleus of new centers. The Shrine also formed college cadres on campuses across Michigan and elsewhere, which drew members to the larger Shrine communities.

Led by Jaramogi, Shrine leaders studied every communal structure they could find, from early Biblical communities to the Israeli kibbutzes. Mbiyu recalls his

Cardinal Mbiyu with children from the congregation.

student days in Atlanta: "We went through a lot of experimental stages, lots of time talking and discussing what could go right and what could go wrong, looking into every possible situation. How do we make the whole urban cadre work? How to financially maintain the whole thing, how many cooks, how much food, how many people does it take to work full time for the church, and how many people need to live in the world?"

The system they developed seems to be working well. Of the Houston Shrine's 500 to 600 active members, about 200 live on the Shrine campus. Residents are not charged rent but pay a moderate maintenance fee. About 40 members constitute the full-time staff. No one is paid — work at the Shrine is voluntary, a system called "service economics" — but, like Mbiyu, staff members have their needs met and do not pay for housing or meals. The medical clinic is even staffed by volunteer doctors and nurses from the church community.

A macrobiotic dinner is served in one of the two communal dining halls every night, prepared by the volunteer cooking staff of five. In the early 1980s the Shrine began to explore diet as part of the spiritual discipline, serving no red meat and few dairy products. A typical dinner might consist of two kinds of soup, beans cooked with or without meat, eggplant casserole, rice, spinach, fresh salad, and cinnamon rolls, for which members pay $3.50. A convivial family atmosphere prevails, with children running about and adults catching up on each other's days.

Raising the money to keep the whole community running extends beyond the typical church collection. Members are "voluntarily taxed" at either $20 or $40 a month, depending on their income from "out in the world." In addition, missionaries spend weekends soliciting funds. The Shrine manages its resources wisely and, amazingly, has been able to meet the needs of its community and continue an aggressive property acquisition program. For the past 15 years the church has also been investing in a rural community project called Beulah Land — 5,000 acres in South Carolina, not far from the Atlanta Shrine, on which they hope to grow their own food and move closer to becoming a self-reliant system. Several young missionaries are in agriculture school to serve this end. A full medical facility and an elderly-care facility are planned for Beulah Land. The majority of the members of the nationwide community are still in their twenties, thirties, and early forties, but such long-range planning is part of Jaramogi's directive to "plan for a thousand years."

Although the financial commitment may not be great, the time commitment required from Shrine members is hearty. Monday night is "orientation," when the whole church organization comes together as a body politic; in Tuesday night "devotionals" members study the spiritual disciplines in small groups; on Wednesday night (the only evening open to the public) a study class focuses on black history and education; Saturday is a communal workday for tending the church property. Attendance at all of these activities is expected, and members sign in at the door. In addition, most members take on volunteer assignments such as cooking, security (a 24-hour watch is kept at the Shrine), staging an educational event (the Shrine is a major participant in both Kwaanza and Black History Month), maintenance, community outreach, office work, or youth activities. As Bishop Olu says of Black Christian Nationalism, "It's not simply a social program. It's not just a community development issue — it's a way of life."[7] Indeed.

Raising children has probably bollixed intentional communities more than any other issue. At the Shrine, the children are central; rather than an energy drain or constant source of educational perplexity, they seem to be the germ out of which the rest of the structure evolves. "In the beginning, we spent a lot of time talking about the youth," says Cardinal Mbiyu. The Shrine's child-rearing system is roughly based on that of the Israeli kibbutz: after age two, children live together during the week with others their age in groups of six or seven, supervised by a rotating squad of adult caretakers, and spend weekends with their parents. About 20 Shrine staff members are responsible for the children's program, which cares for 50 to 60 resident kids. Neighborhood children also participate in the Shrine's after-school and summer-school programs. "I can see that's it's very beneficial," Aminata Ojore, a longtime shrine member, says, "even for children who have problems, or where parents are having problems. They're very well loved, and they know they can go to anyone. They go skating, swimming, they play volleyball, they do things that most adults couldn't keep up with. We've got some big, strong, spirited kids. Their whole demeanor is different. They're outspoken. It's very encouraging." Aminata's only child, now 15, has been raised his whole life within the shrine's system — a particular boon when Aminata divorced several years ago and became a single parent.

As part of their effort to promote unity, all Shrine communities adhere to certain rules and principles. Members wear red and black at Shrine functions, red to symbolize the blood and sacrifice of black people, black to symbolize the oneness of black people everywhere. There is a decorative sameness to the interiors of each Shrine: red carpet, high ceilings, lots of wood. There's also a Black Christian Nationalist code that promotes cleanliness and honesty and has restrictions against such things as drug use and promiscuity.

Some of the Shrine codes and beliefs are questionable and even disturbing: the rejection of nonviolence, for example, or the strictures against speaking or publishing anything contrary to Black Christian Nationalism. It is difficult for the outsider to penetrate very deeply into the Shrine of the Black Madonna. The church has codes against talking too freely with outsiders, and is separatist by its very founding philosophy. Visitors are not permitted at any of the community's group gatherings or devotionals, other than the class that is open to the public, and must by approved by a security guard before entering the church residential areas or offices. I had to get permission through an executive committee just to eat dinner in the community dining hall, and then an official spokesman was required to be present.

Black Christian Nationalist dicta such as "All members of BCN are required to be constantly on the alert to prevent infiltration by the enemy" sound paranoid until one remembers that black nationalists have indeed been subjected to fairly regular and systematic infiltration by government intelligence agents. Despite some potentially alarming philosophies and a fairly guarded system, at the end of the day the Shrine's thoughtful, socially redemptive vision and its lucid spirit are inspiring.

On a recent Sunday, the service at the Shrine began with a mesmerizing and hopeful chant of "yes, yes, yes" that gained momentum and intensity while in the pulpit a woman minister sought the presence of the spirit in swelling invocation. A man's deep voice sounded out behind me, rich in sensuous abandon. Many cried, including the stout, reserved woman at my side.

The worship was filled with song, performed by the choir without sheet music, even though the harmonies are complex and the verses extensive. The rituals are a mixture of African, charismatic Baptist, and Catholic traditions. Instead of the Latin cross, the Coptic cross (ankh) is used. The church trappings are also part traditional Christian, part African. A huge African Christ and an African Madonna and Child are painted at the front of the church, their torsos spanning the wall of the sanctuary from floor to ceiling, looking down on the congregation. On a side wall is a heroically scaled mural of Jaramogi, his gaze over the church he founded lofty and somewhat wry. The man himself sits quietly to the side of the dais.

One might suspect Jaramogi of being a cult hero, but there is evidence that he has worked to prevent this by emphasizing the acquisition of education and analytical skills and by pushing his flock to share the leadership. "Most people, out of ignorance, relate communalism with cults," Cardinal Mbiyu observes. "Cults have hero worship — which is totally the opposite of communalism. In communal structure there is no God-person; it's a group-centered leadership." Aminata concurs: "Jaramogi doesn't want us to make any fuss over him. . . . He is able to inspire people to want to awaken the divinity within. He teaches us that we're capable of doing whatever we conceive of."

Jaramogi moved to Houston in 1984. Now in his eighties, he teaches only occasionally but continues to work with instructors and ministers. He coordinates the Assembly of Cardinals, the local

Shrine of the Black Madonna, interior.

governing body, as well as the College of Cardinals, which consists of all the Cardinals nationwide. Jaramogi keeps in close touch with the large congregations in Detroit and Atlanta. But more and more, his emphasis is on training the leadership that will succeed him. "He taught many of our classes," Mbiyu says, "and then after a while he started saying, 'You guys have to do this teaching.' The test of leadership is in creating new leaders. No matter how great a job you do as a leader, if you can't create leaders to take over after you're gone, it won't work." With this intelligent regard for the future and the remarkable commitment on the part of the members of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, the nation Jaramogi dreams of is on its way. ■

1 Albert B. Cleage, *The Black Messiah*, "A Sense of Urgency," (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1989), pp. 29–30.

2 "Detroit Mayor Praises Houston Church," *Houston Chronicle*, June 15, 1987, p. 2.

3 Norma Martin, "A Woman of Substance: Black Madonna, Centuries-old Heritage," and Cecile S. Holmes, "The Black Madonna Transcends the Past to the Present," *Houston Chronicle*, April 29, 1995, pp. 1E, 3E.

4 Centurion Consulting Group, Roberta F. Burroughs and Associates, and CDS Research, Inc., *Master Plan, Palm Center, Houston, Texas* (Business and Technology Center, Houston Small Business Development Corporation, July 1995), pp. 13–16. The master plan's study area, a tract of approximately 10.2 square miles that contains the Shrine of the Black Madonna complex, is 65.9 percent African American, as opposed to 17.2 percent in Harris County; has a per capita income of $9,281, versus $17,714 for the county; and has a 10.8 percent unemployment rate, versus the county's 4.9 percent.

5 "Black Christian Nationalism: Cardinal Olu Onaduko Ufum Speaks on the Gospel of Liberation," *Gather Reporter*, June 30, 1994, Houston Public Library database.

6 Centurion Consulting Group *et al.*, p. 11

7 "Black Christian Nationalism."

Mural of Jaramogi Abebe Agyeman, founder of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, inside the church.

Shrine of the Black Madonna, bookstore and cultural center, 5309 Martin Luther King Boulevard.

VINCENT P. HAUSER

LEARNING FROM HILLSBORO

Hill County Courthouse, Hillsboro. Wesley Clark Dodson, architect, 1890.

On New Year's Day 1993, the Hill County Courthouse in Hillsboro, Texas, was destroyed by a fire that began in the third-floor ceiling, probably in some electrical wiring. The blaze quickly consumed the structure supporting the clock tower, which collapsed into the lower floors; by morning all that remained of the building was the limestone exterior walls. A structure that had stood since 1890 was gone in 12 hours. That this courthouse is being rebuilt at a cost of nearly $10 million prompts a serious look at the response of the Hillsboro community and others to this event.

Remodeling Woes

The fire in Hillsboro, a community of 25,000 people 35 miles south of Dallas, could have happened anywhere. A century of deferred maintenance, changing programmatic demands, and shifting demographics has exacted a heavy toll on old Texas public buildings. The preservation community was alerted to such problems in 1983, when a dramatic fire broke out in the Texas State Capitol Building in Austin. Fortunately the fire was contained, but it exposed the vulnerability of the heavily modified and unsprinklered building. Some of the Capitol's grand spaces had been filled with a warren of offices, complicating already questionable emergency exit schemes. Ceilings had been dropped to conceal water-damaged plaster caused by leaky roofs and to accommodate new air-conditioning equipment. In other areas, literally layers of dropped ceilings had been filled with wiring, and vertical shafts had been crammed with ductwork, wiring, and piping, much of it abandoned during successive remodelings. The Texas State Capitol, like the aging courthouses throughout the state, had been transformed into something resembling a Dagwood sandwich left in the refrigerator a bit too long.

Hill County Courthouse, ca. 1972.

Until the 1980s, the dangers lurking beneath "modernization" simply had not been noticed, and since then dwindling budgets have strained the creativity of even the most resourceful county judges, commissioners, and maintenance staffs. The expensive restoration of the Capitol, completed in 1995, indicated all too clearly the scale of resources needed to address similar problems around the state. In late 1991, a new opportunity presented itself in the form of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, known by the acronym ISTEA (pronounced "ice tea").

Setting the regulatory language aside, the act was intended to support a broad range of initiatives originating in the community and to broaden the definition of transportation beyond highways — a hopeful and significant prospect. During the course of Texas's ISTEA projects, the Texas Highway Department's name was changed to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), symbolizing cultural changes within the agency itself. Community initiatives replaced TxDOT mandates, a priority unheard of a decade before.

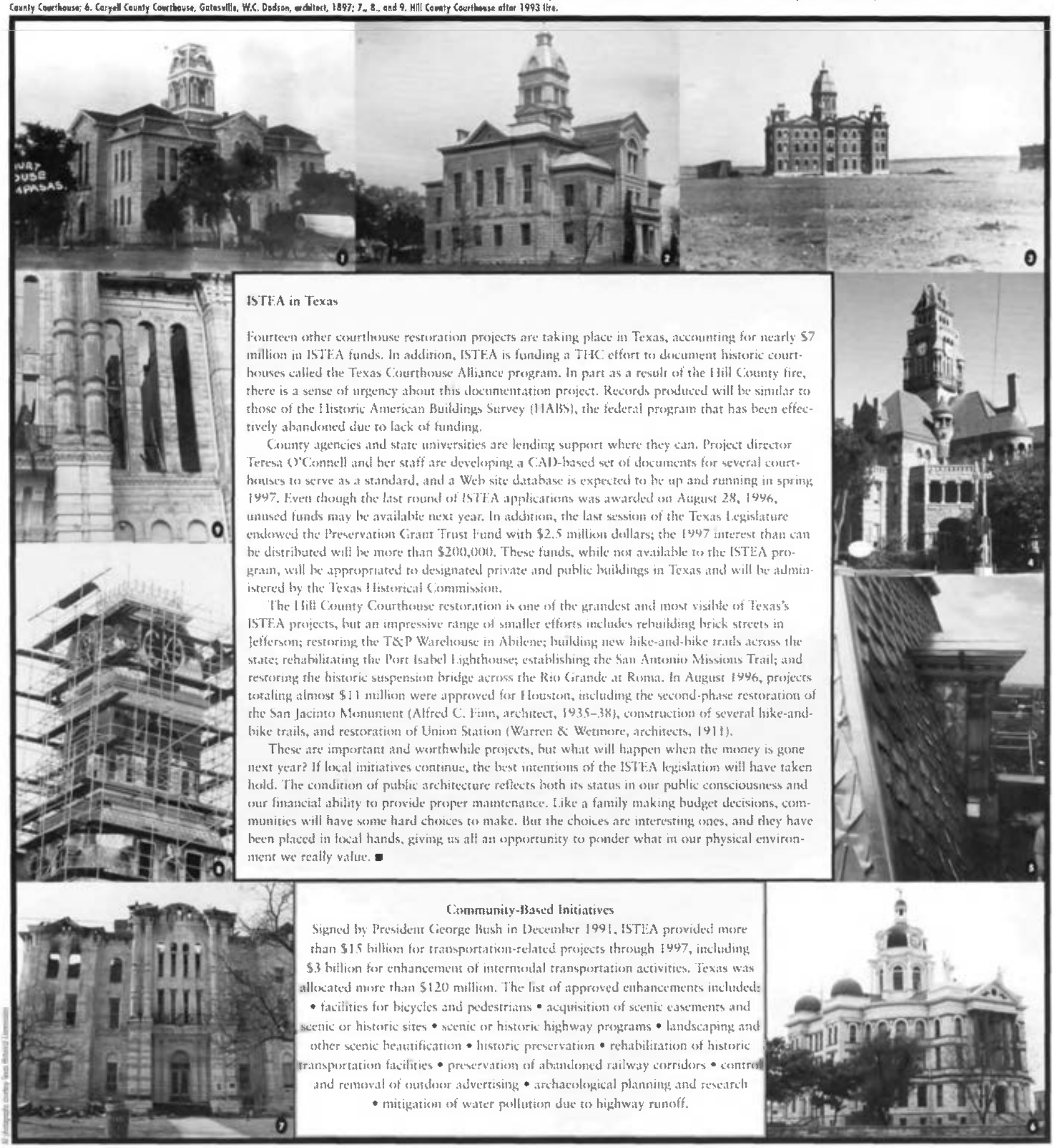
The ISTEA legislation was seen as a potential windfall by preservation groups, including the Texas Historical Commission (THC). While administrative changes after the 1992 elections and slow development of regulations delayed implementation for nearly two years, departments of transportation in Texas and throughout the country have since been working through this shift in focus to community-based initiatives. From a financial and cash-flow perspective, ISTEA contains a few twists as well. Just as the initiatives are community based, so is the fundraising obligation. ISTEA provides no grant funds in the traditional sense, only reimbursements for funds already spent. Communities must raise the cash first, then request commitment of ISTEA funds for reimbursement after a project is completed. Only 80 percent of expenditures are reimbursable.

A Tradition of Preservation

There is a great deal of charm in the notion that the Hillsboro community banded together in a fit of goodwill just to rebuild the burned courthouse. However, real commitment to preservation in Hillsboro began in 1981, when the town received funding from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to participate in the Texas Main Street Program. Like all community-initiated efforts, this one was fraught with politics, but it eventually succeeded because of the determination and skill of tenacious volunteers. Hillsboro's Main Street Project allowed for the gradual cleaning, painting, and restoration of historic buildings surrounding the courthouse square. Shoppers have discovered the charm of old Hillsboro, and, even though some people feared "that giant sucking sound" of jobs leaving the community, downtown redevelopment complemented the growth of the community as a whole. In the meantime, a preservation ethic took root in Hill County. Without this decade-long previous interest in their built history, Hillsboro citizens' desire to rebuild the courthouse might never have been realized.

After the fire, while the smoldering remains were still being hosed down, fundraising efforts to restore the courthouse got under way. Donations and commitments of support came in a continuous stream. Singer Willie Nelson, Hill County's most famous native son, headlined a benefit concert within months of the fire. The THC helped fund investigations, coordinated by the Dallas architectural firm ArchiTexas, to determine the structural integrity of the masonry shell. After the surveys and studies were completed and reconstruction of the courthouse was deemed feasible, fundraising efforts began in earnest. In the first funding year of ISTEA, 1993, Hillsboro received a commitment of almost $7 million in ISTEA monies, in addition to insurance proceeds, state grants, and the returns from local fundraising efforts. With construction cost expected to exceed $10 million, the Hill County Courthouse is being rebuilt. *(continued)*

1. Lampasas County Courthouse, W. C. Dodson, architect, 1893; 2. Bandera County Courthouse, B. E. Trester, architect, 1890; 3. Presidio County Courthouse, Marfa, Alfred Giles, architect, 1886; 4. Wise County Courthouse, J. Riely Gordon, architect, 1896; 5.Roof detail, Hill County Courthouse; 6. Coryell County Courthouse, Gatesville, W.C. Dodson, architect, 1897; 7., 8., and 9. Hill County Courthouse after 1993 fire.



ISTEA in Texas

Fourteen other courthouse restoration projects are taking place in Texas, accounting for nearly $7 million in ISTEA funds. In addition, ISTEA is funding a THC effort to document historic courthouses called the Texas Courthouse Alliance program. In part as a result of the Hill County fire, there is a sense of urgency about this documentation project. Records produced will be similar to those of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), the federal program that has been effectively abandoned due to lack of funding.

County agencies and state universities are lending support where they can. Project director Teresa O'Connell and her staff are developing a CAD-based set of documents for several courthouses to serve as a standard, and a Web site database is expected to be up and running in spring 1997. Even though the last round of ISTEA applications was awarded on August 28, 1996, unused funds may be available next year. In addition, the last session of the Texas Legislature endowed the Preservation Grant Trust Fund with $2.5 million dollars; the 1997 interest than can be distributed will be more than $200,000. These funds, while not available to the ISTEA program, will be appropriated to designated private and public buildings in Texas and will be administered by the Texas Historical Commission.

The Hill County Courthouse restoration is one of the grandest and most visible of Texas's ISTEA projects, but an impressive range of smaller efforts includes rebuilding brick streets in Jefferson; restoring the T&P Warehouse in Abilene; building new bike-and-bike trails across the state; rehabilitating the Port Isabel Lighthouse; establishing the San Antonio Missions Trail; and restoring the historic suspension bridge across the Rio Grande at Roma. In August 1996, projects totaling almost $11 million were approved for Houston, including the second-phase restoration of the San Jacinto Monument (Alfred C. Finn, architect, 1935–38), construction of several bike-and-bike trails, and restoration of Union Station (Warren & Wetmore, architects, 1911).

These are important and worthwhile projects, but what will happen when the money is gone next year? If local initiatives continue, the best intentions of the ISTEA legislation will have taken hold. The condition of public architecture reflects both its status in our public consciousness and our financial ability to provide proper maintenance. Like a family making budget decisions, communities will have some hard choices to make. But the choices are interesting ones, and they have been placed in local hands, giving us all an opportunity to ponder what in our physical environment we really value. ■

Community-Based Initiatives

Signed by President George Bush in December 1991, ISTEA provided more than $15 billion for transportation-related projects through 1997, including $3 billion for enhancement of intermodal transportation activities. Texas was allocated more than $120 million. The list of approved enhancements included: • facilities for bicycles and pedestrians • acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites • scenic or historic highway programs • landscaping and other scenic beautification • historic preservation • rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities • preservation of abandoned railway corridors • control and removal of outdoor advertising • archaeological planning and research • mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff.

All photographs courtesy Texas Historical Commission

Networking

Lutyens and the Edwardians: An English Architect and his Clients *by Jane Brown. London: Viking, 1996. 276 pp., illus., $34.95.*

Reviewed by Barrie Scardino

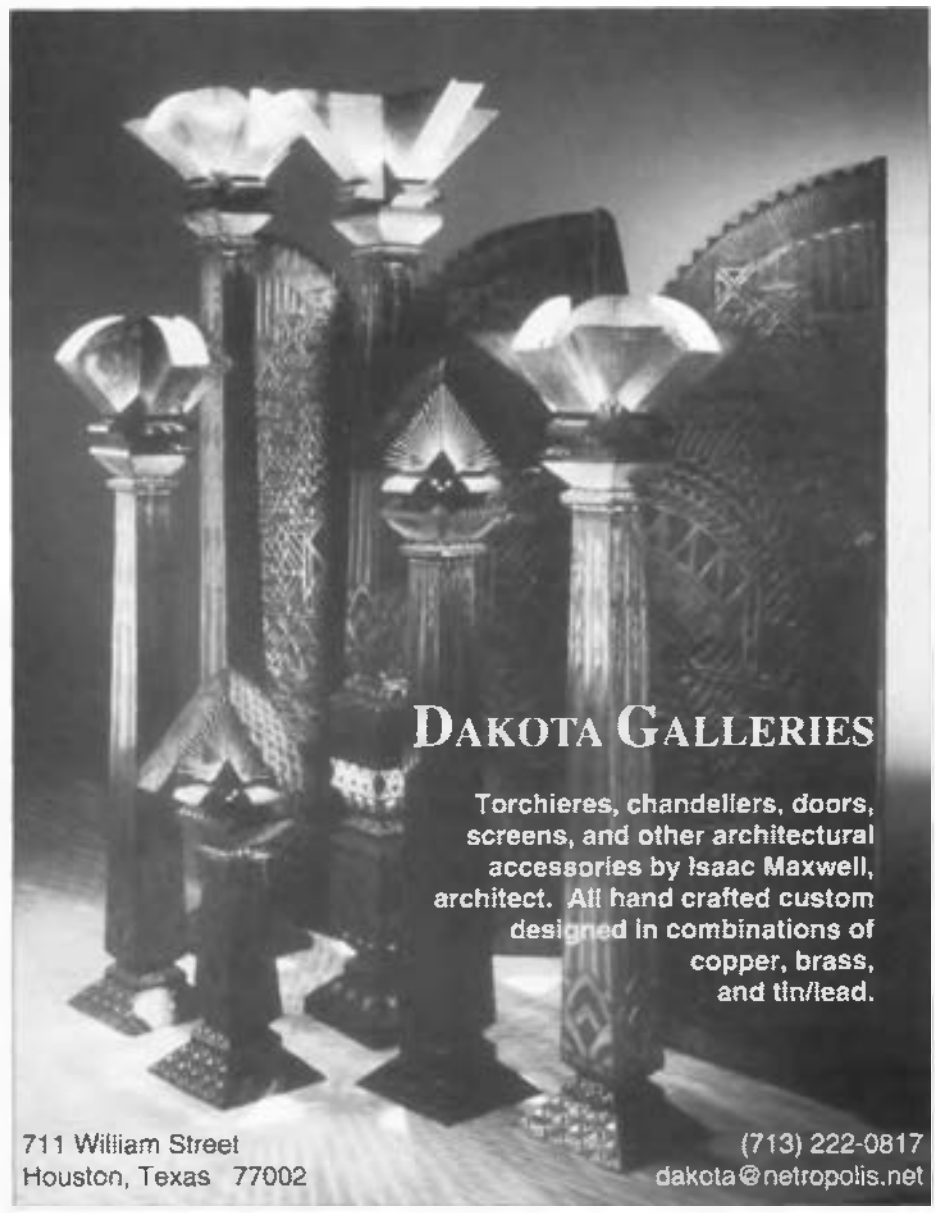
The clear conclusion that can be drawn from Jane Brown's account of Edwin L. Lutyens's career is that success and recognition for an architect is attained not by talent alone, but through an affable and convivial personality along with powerful connections to wealth.

Lutyens was the tenth child and ninth son of the fairly successful portrait painter Charles Lutyens and Mary Gallwey. He was named for Edwin Landseer, the greatest animal artist of his era and a sometime collaborator of Charles Lutyens. The wealthy Landseer agreed to be Ned Lutyens's godfather, and it was a legacy from the Landseer family that allowed Lutyens later to begin his architectural practice. Lutyens was a sickly child and is quoted by Brown as saying: "Any talent I have was due to a long illness as a boy, which afforded me time to think, and to subsequent ill health, because I was not allowed to play games, and had to teach myself, for my enjoyment, to use my eyes instead of my feet." When he was eight, the family moved to the isolated village of Thursley. There, in addition to "playing with" his father's paints, he haunted building sites and carpenters' yards, determined one day to become an architect. Richard Norman Shaw was his hero. At 16, Lutyens had the good fortune to meet Shaw through the Arbuthnots, whose portraits his father was painting. Shortly after the Shaw introduction, Mrs. Arbuthnot persuaded Charles and Mary Lutyens to send their talented and ambitious son to the South Kensington School of Art to study architecture; perhaps the Arbuthnots paid his bills as well. The Arbuthnot connection was the core alliance in the complicated nexus of supporters and patrons that Lutyens developed during his lifetime.

After a short time at South Kensington, Lutyens felt he had learned all that could be taught him there. Because the waiting list for apprenticeships in Shaw's office was so long, Lutyens went to work for Sir Ernest George in 1887. By 1889 Lutyens had his first commission, cashed in his legacy, and went out on his own. His professional career never floundered, thanks to a succession of women who took up his cause. The first was Barbara Webb, who "cajoled and challenged everyone she met to let Ned build for them." Then he married the daughter of the Earl and Countess of Lytton, Lady Emily. The Lytton family first opposed the marriage, but once it took place they developed a great fondness for Lutyens and gave him their patronage. The marriage, however, was not ideal. Emily's adoption of Theosophy and lack of interest in architecture, gardening, or even housekeeping, drew her far from her husband and his client-friends. Brown surmises, "But it is quite possible that if he had been happy and fulfilled in marriage, we would never have heard his name."

The eccentric and celebrated landscape gardener Gertrude Jekyll, old enough to be Lutyens's mother, also took him under her wing. Theirs was to be a lifelong friendship and collaboration. Her influence on Lutyens was not only through the commissions she obtained for him, but in her tutelage. Lutyens became known for the "outside rooms" he created for his wonderful country houses. The most important woman in Lutyens's life, beginning in the early 1920s was Lady Victoria Sackville. She adored him and his work, found commissions for him, and finally became his mistress. Brown explores this relationship to its end when, in the last decade of his life, Ned and Emily were reconciled.

Nested within this account of Lutyens's life and relationships are a myriad of fascinating details concerning the design and construction of his houses — Hazlehatch, Heathcote, Homewood, Pasturewood, Goddards, Orchards, Mells, Munstead House, Little Thackam, Great Maytham, Folly Farm, Fulbrook, Pleasaunce, Lindsfarne Castle, Castle Drogo, and more. The program for High Walls in Scotland, which Lutyens said was his favorite house, called for 15 bedrooms, a fortress construction to keep out the winds, *and* very large windows. Lutyens complied masterfully. Odd facts abound, such as that a water diviner was sent out to a property to place the well and pump house before a house site was considered; and that Lutyens himself went in search of clay to produce a particular brick color, then had a brickworks set up to craft bricks for just one house. Lutyens loved to do little things: he seemingly took on any remodeling or addition, no matter how small; he designed sets, notably for his great friend James M. Barrie, including the nursery for *Peter Pan*, which Lutyens's daughter Mary



BANNERscapes

A full service company dedicated to design, manufacture and installation of fine architectural banners.

7106 Mapleridge
Houston, Texas 77081
713 / 666-2371 • 1-800-344-3524
Fax 713 713 / 666-4702

Sir Edwin Lutyens and his client, Lady Horner, in the garden at Mells Manor, ca. 1939.

remembered as being taken straight from "our own night nursery." Interior decoration interested Lutyens as much as gardening — in his own house he lacquered the dining room ceiling black "to reflect the candlelight." Although best known for his houses, the architect used his creative talents for an amazing range of design projects from book covers to clocks to furniture to the Liverpool Cathedral.

Lutyens's personality, like his creative talent, comes through in Brown's choices of anecdotes, beginning with the hilarity of his impersonations of Queen Victoria (with an antimacassar on his head). He drew plans and elevations on linen tablecloths at fancy dinner parties, played cricket with his clients' children, and drew cartoons of and for his friends. He was constantly described in the diaries and letters of cohorts as "cheerful," "charming," "amusing," "beloved," and the like. Their loyalty and the loyalty of his staff stand as proof of his ability to inspire confidence and sustain affection. Most of the clients, Brown points out, were middle-class, "meaning that they were rich either through earned or inherited wealth, but they were not tied to the land on which they built by ancestral ties." Lucky for Lutyens, who was consistently able to interpret the social aspirations of these men and women through the great houses he designed for them. Today, though, most of their houses have been converted to hotels or schools.

Lutyens and the Edwardians occasionally bogs down with the intricacies of familial ties and interpersonal relationships. Sentences with four or more long and difficult names are not unusual: "The Hutcheson-Poes were also close neighbors of the de Vescis at Abbeyleix, and Constance Portman of Hestercombe was the mother of Ivo Richard Vesey (the son of her first marriage to Captain Eustace Vesey, who died in 1886), the heir to Abbeyleix estate." It might have been helpful to have a glossary of people to which a reader could refer to sort out the enormous cast of characters. But these were the people of Lutyens's life, and he prospered within the social and financial web that bound them.

The great surprise at the end of *Lutyens and the Edwardians* is a guide to Lutyens buildings that can be seen by the public, either from the road or on tours. Turning the last page, unwilling to leave Lutyens, I wanted to book the first flight to London and ring up all my friends to come with me. Any takers?■

Out of Cite

Stud: Architectures of Masculinity *edited by Joel Sanders. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996. 311 pp., illus., $19.95.*

The best thing about this compilation of uneven essays is its cover. About halfway through the book, after Rem Koolhaas's poem and photo essay on his villa in Floriac (1995) for a paraplegic and the engaging essay by Diana Fuss and Joel Sanders on Freud's office, the book begins to fall apart. The men's room photographs will be mostly interesting to women, and the last sections of the book will be mostly interesting to gay men. Joel Sanders does do a good job in his introduction of letting the reader know what might or might not be of interest. There are some serious pieces that explore ideas such as the masculinity of the Modern movement, and then there are some rather bizarre photographs.■

Architectural Biography

Compiled by Karl Kilian

Boston Bohemia, 1881-1900: Ralph Adams Cram, Life and Architecture *by Douglass Shand-Tucci.* This first in a two-volume life shows Cram (1863-1942) — architect of Rice University's master plan and original buildings — as a leader, editor, art critic, poet, and designer in America's earliest avant garde, Boston's little-known *fin-de-siècle* bohemia. (Univ. of Massachusetts Press, black-and-white illus.; $19.95 paper.)

Donald Judd: Spaces *edited by Volker Rattemeyer.* Until there is a full biography of the late conceptual artist Donald Judd, this book tells the story in pictures. And while it is also not altogether a book of architecture, it does illustrate Judd's furniture designs and the beautiful spaces he created for his art work, and that of his friends, in New York's SoHo neighborhood and in his large compound in Marfa, Texas. (Cantz, color illus.; $45.)

Philip Johnson: Life and Work *by Franz Schulze.* From the biographer of Mies van der Rohe, a life of Johnson, warts and all, from his Midwest childhood, through his early years as an architectural historian and curator, to his astounding career as an architect and patron of the arts: a life that offers an insider's look at the ups and downs of architecture during the second half of this century. (Univ. of Chicago Press, black-and-white illus.; $16.95 paper.)

Josef Frank: Architect and Designer *edited by Nina Stritzler-Levine.* In his career as an architect and interior designer, Austrian Josef Frank (1885-1967) charted an original and complex version of modernism that expressed a unique view of the modern home, the single-family house, and its furnishings. This book, the first in English about Frank, was written to accompany an exhibition mounted this summer at The Bard Graduate Center in New York City. (Yale Univ. Press, illus., 150 color; $65.)

Charles Rennie Mackintosh *edited by Wendy Kaplan.* The 13 essays in this book, the catalogue of an international Mackintosh (1868-1928) retrospective organized by the Glasgow Museums, considers his work as architect, interior designer, furniture designer, painter, and graphic artist. (Abbeville, 249 illus., 134 color; $60.)

Under Boxwood

The Architect of Desire: Beauty and Danger in the Stanford White Family *by Suzannah Lessard. New York: The Dial Press, 1996. 334 pp., illus., $24.95.*

Reviewed by Barrie Scardino

Using architecture as a metaphor for the psychosocial history of her family, Stanford White's great-granddaughter has produced an engaging work that reads like a well-written novel, telling a good story with evocative language. Suzannah Lessard interweaves her awakening to the beauties and dangers of her own experiences within the White family, while, in every other chapter, exploring the circumstances of Stanford White's life and murder.

Ms. Lessard grew up at Box Hill, where five generations of her family have lived since Stanford and Bessie White acquired the 60-acre Long Island estate after their marriage in 1884. As the main house and grounds were layered with complex additions and improvements designed by White, the lives of those at Box Hill were wrapped and rewrapped, hiding both essential truths and transcendent love. "The correlation between architecture and interior life allows us to relive past visions by simply entering the architecture those visions produced. In a similar way, there was for me a correlation between the architecture of my family history and my inner life. In both, something was hidden in the beautiful environment of the family past, there was a magnificent figure who had gone out of control in ways destructive to those along his course — including his family — and ultimately to himself."

Stanford White, unquestionably an extraordinary architect, was also a philanderer and *bon vivant* who entertained young virgins in his extravagantly decorated pieds-à-terre. His lust for life and incredible energy allowed him, for a decade or two, to combine, without any apparent neglect, his profession, his family and friends, and a degenerate life that included not only women, lavish antiques, and liquor, but drugs and perhaps male lovers. But by 1906 he had become unable to balance the disparate parts of his life; no one seemed surprised when he was shot during a refrain of "I Could Love a Million Girls" in Madison Square Garden, one of his masterpieces. Insane jealousy led Harry K. Thaw to murder White. Thaw could not bear the thought that White had, years before, ravished his

The White family at Box Hill.

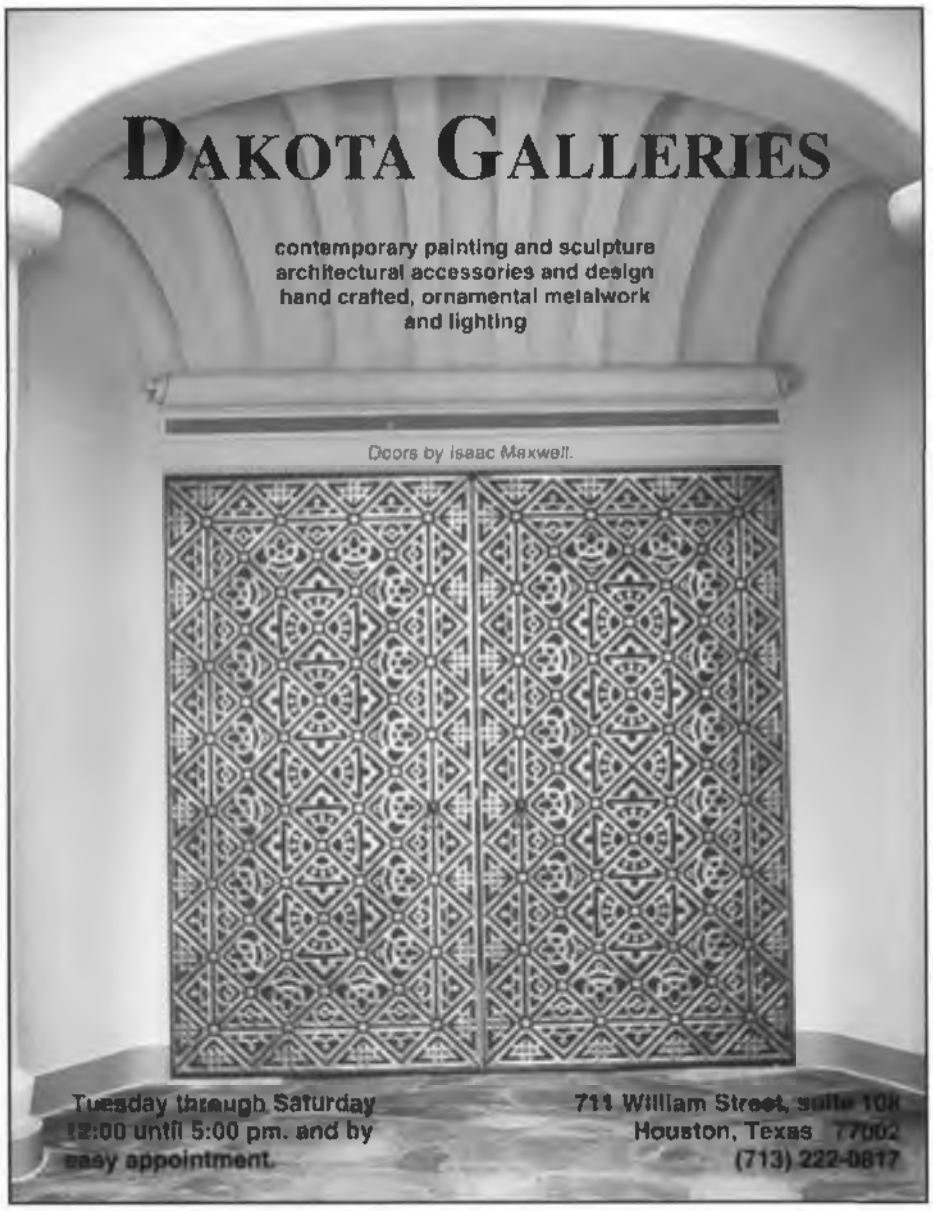
wife, the showgirl Evelyn Nesbit, when she was only 15 or 16 years old. White's questionable character traits and social proclivities were not unknown, even before his death, but they were never discussed at Box Hill. There was an unspoken covenant of secrecy around "The Place," as the family called Box Hill. Thaw was found to be insane after "the trial of the century" during which every school child knew something of the crime and passion surrounding White's murder, but his own family chose to shelter themselves and their children completely, living reclusively at Box Hill as if nothing had happened — not even acknowledging that the head of their family had been a famous and talented architect.

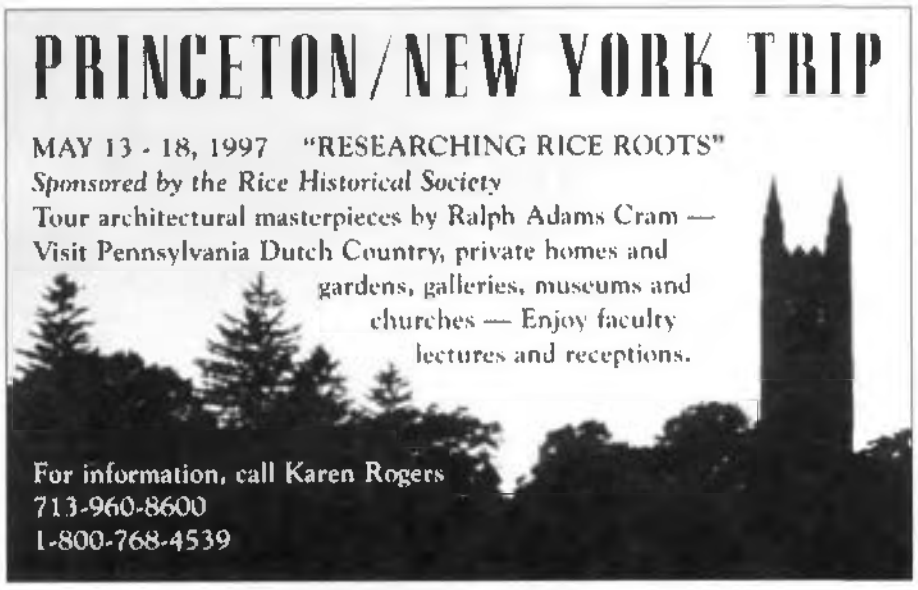
In exploring her childhood, including her own father's sexual dysfunction, Ms. Lessard writes with a more poetic voice, often using architectural language and analogy. Her parents, Mary White and Frank Rousseau, were both accomplished musicians, and the tone of the Lessard chapters is lyrical and emotional. "My father was charged and masterful and magnificent and yet he was also, in my perceptions, blanked out. . . . There was a cloistered part of our experience . . .that didn't show up on the mental blueprint of our lives. . . . There was also a part of our father that was cloistered from himself, a domain that belonged to the jewel-like amber in the bottle of Heaven Hill bourbon on the kitchen sideboard, the gallon jug of purple-black wine on the floor." Passages such as this one illustrate Ms. Lessard's talent and experience; she wrote for the *New Yorker* then the *Washington Monthly* for 26 years. Her carefully crafted phrases take us through the search for meaning in her interior world and, finally, in the architecture of her forebear, effectively carrying both the story and the emotional content of her experiences.

For those more interested in architecture than psychology, Lessard provides plenty of behind-the-scenes glimpses into the professional world of McKim, Mead & White: "In addition to housing our new Medicis, the architects of the time, and perhaps Stanford more than any other, took on the task of teaching them good taste. The mission included helping them buy suitable furnishings and adornments for their palaces. . . . He had an eye. But with this went a shamelessness about looting Europe of its treasures. . . . Once, when he saw a fountain in an Italian village square which he wanted for a client, he simply went to the police and made a deal for them to look the other way while he had the fountain wrenched out and carried off." Also satisfying are Lessard's frequent descriptions of places: "Under high ceilings, the darkness of many portraits stood out from the softness of the old plaster like burned-through places in the ordinary texture of the world."

Each chapter begins with a psychographic, often fuzzy, historic image, the purpose of which was not so much to illustrate the text but to provide an artistic clue to the content of the chapter. I found it seriously frustrating that so many places were described, so much architecture was invoked, without illustration, sending me to other Stanford White biographies and architectural histories, as to a dictionary, to look-up real photographs and be reassured that my mind's eye had understood.

In the last chapters of *The Architect of Desire*, Ms. Lessard is able to integrate the seductive nature of both Stanford White's personality and his architecture. He was not only an architect with compulsive, destructive desires, but also an architect able to translate his Gilded Age patrons' outlandish desires into great works of art. Acknowledging the "changing perspective of time" Lessard concedes that beyond the violent subtext of her family's history and beyond even his own self-destructive behavior, Stanford White's genius has left a substantive architectural legacy. Likewise, Lessard comes to see that we can all, herself included, be architects of our own desires in a constructive, life-giving way.■





The Powell Group

Design

Space Planning

Computer-Aided Design & Drafting

Furniture Specifications

Finish Selections

QUALITY

EXPERIENCE

RELIABILITY

Installation

Inventory Evaluation & Management

Installation Documentation

Installation Coordination

Refurbishment & Repair

Warehousing

THE POWELL GROUP, INC., SPECIALIZING IN SALES AND SERVICE OF OUTSTANDING FURNITURE FOR THE WORKPLACE.

The Powell Group, Inc. • 5599 San Felipe • Suite 555 • Houston, Tx 77056
Telephone: 713. 629. 5599 • Fax: 713. 629. 4600

Advertise in

Cite

Each issue of *Cite* goes to 5,000 readers – to architects, designers, and others interested in the quality of life and the built environment in the Houston area. *Cite* also reaches selected universities, museums, and institutions nationwide.

To reserve your space in the March issue, please call Lynn Kelly, advertising account executive, RDA Office, 713. 524.6297, or write to Rice Design Alliance - MS 51, Rice University, 6100 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77005-1892.

Terra Surveying Company
providing a full range of land surveying services to the Houston development community:

• Development Plats • Topographic Surveys
• Boundary Surveys • Tree Surveys
• Completion Surveys

TERRA
SURVEYING
COMPANY, INC.

4900 Woodway, Tenth Floor, Houston, Texas 77056 (713) 993-0327

RANCHO

RESSING

Arquitectonica Townhouse

Memorial-Westcott Area
AIA Guide Listing M-1
2+/21/2, Fee Simple
3 Terraces
$300,000

713.863.7343

Carolyn Brewer's
SUNSET SETTINGS
1714 Sunset Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77005
713-522-7661

Classic Contemporary
Furniture and Accessories

Willowbend
Completely updated 3 bedroom and 2 bathroom home. Large family room opens to professionally landscaped yard with pool!
$149,000.00

Hyde Park Main
Recent construction 3 bedroom, 3 1/2 bathroom town home. Hardwood floors, granite counter tops in kitchen and numerous other upgrades.
$219,000.00

Montrose
Brick fourplex-Excellent investment opportunity. Monthly income in excess of $2,000. Assumable first with owner second.
$149,900.00

BianchiWendland
PROPERTIES

4617 MONTROSE BOULEVARD SUITE 224 • HOUSTON TEXAS 77006
713 522 4611 • FAX 522 4699 EMAIL biweprop@aol.com

Relocating anywhere in the country? Call for no-obligation information.
1.800.523.2460, ext.t180

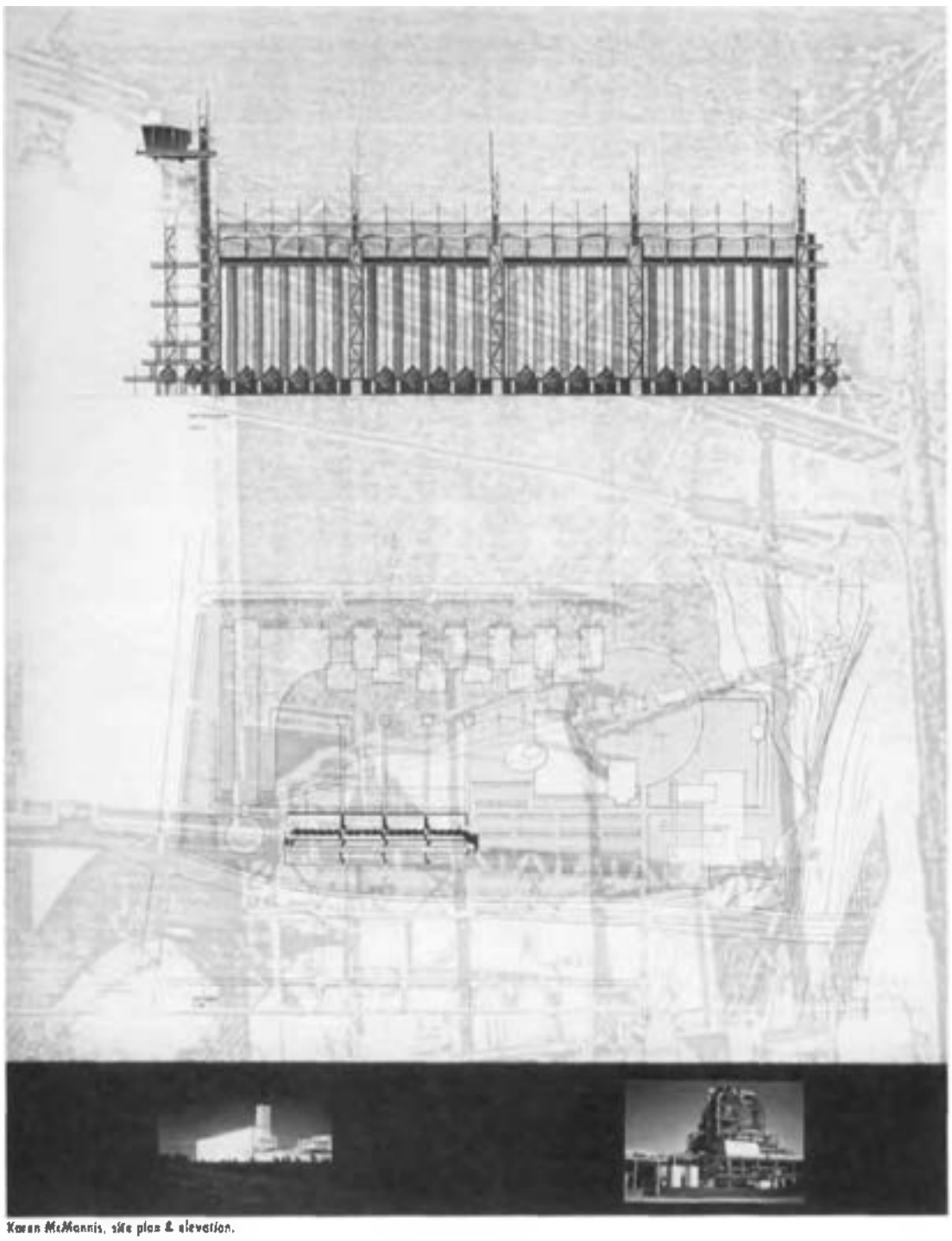
COMING IN CITE 37

Bayou Bend Master Plan
by Jane Curtis

Bayou Bend Gardens
by David Warren

Water by Design
by Richard Rome

Design and the New Webbed Utopia
by Craig Minor



Karen McMannis, site plan & elevation.

R.I.P., A.R.I.

Multiple cylindrical forms

Tall and pale against wide sky

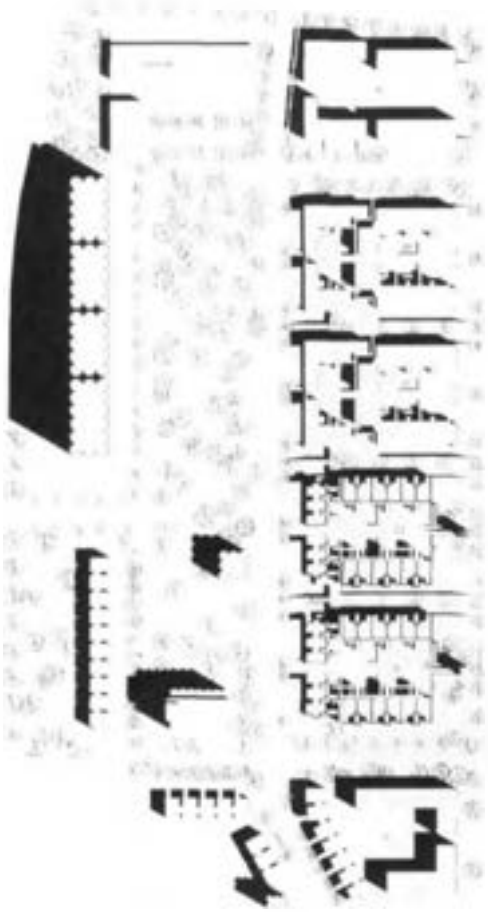
Sensuous shadows

Curving across smooth geometry.

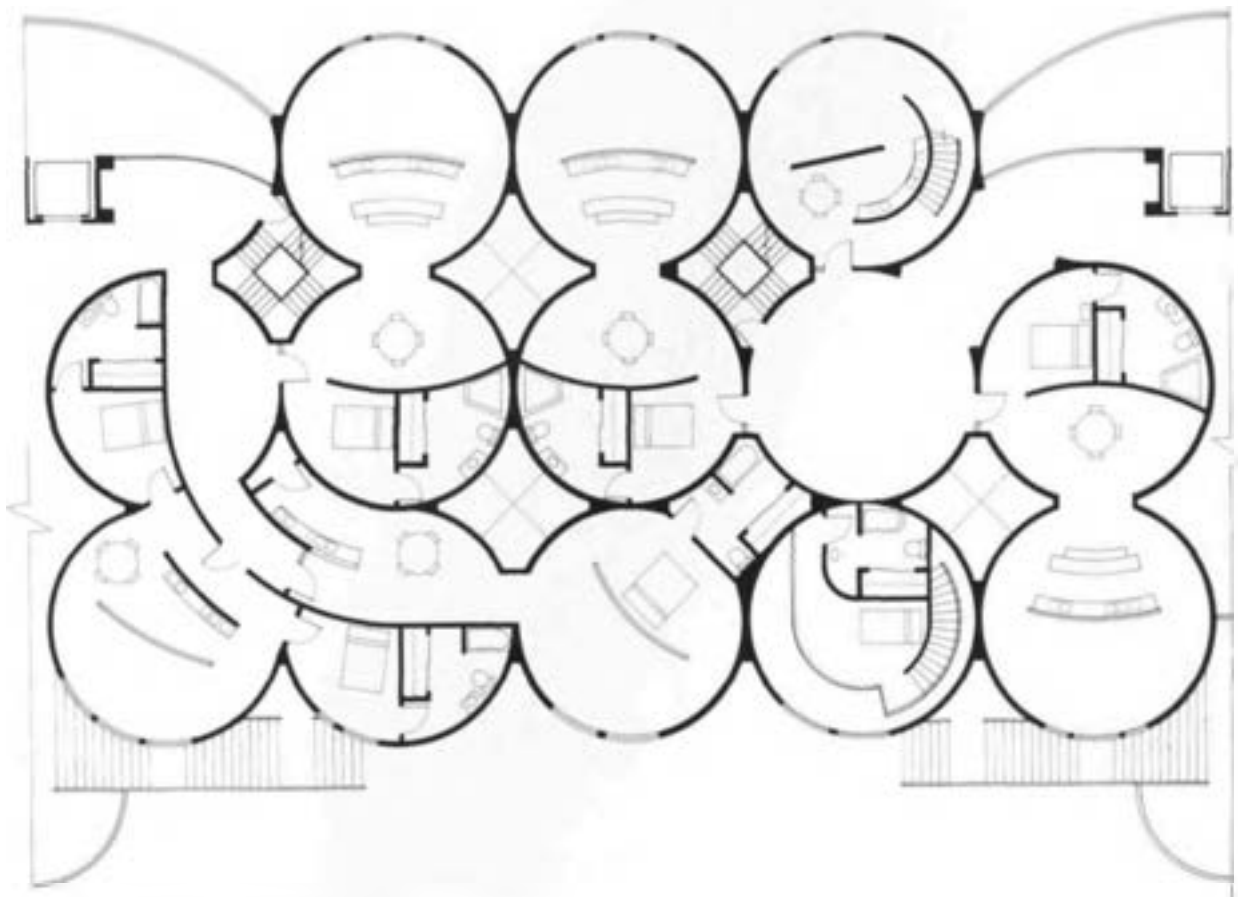
Architects have had a crush on grain elevators ever since Le Corbusier encountered them in the American Midwest of the 1920s. The designer's eye in all of us wept when the American Rice Industries elevators at Memorial Drive and Studemont were demolished last spring. We not only lost a popular icon and landmark, we lost an educational resource as well.

For years architecture professsors and their students have been dreaming up adaptive reuse projects at the ARI site incorporating housing, hotels, corporate lofts, mausoleums, dormitories — you name it. The learning possibilities were great, especially for young designers groping to come to terms with monumental scale and repetitive floorplans. The results were often stunning, surprising juries with the unexpected energy a well-crafted adaptive reuse project can encapsulate.

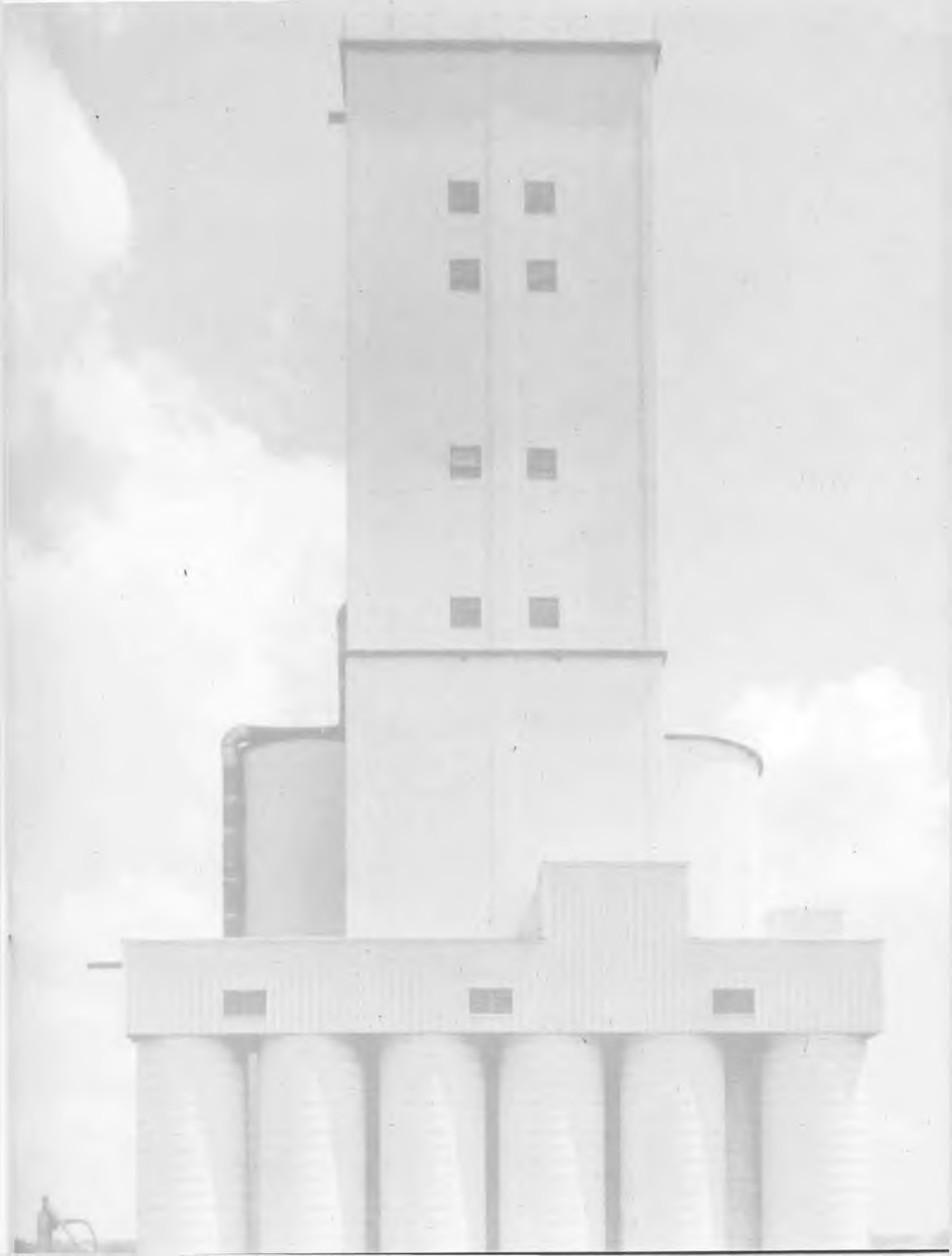
Barry Moore



Geoff Bruns, site plan.



Geoff Bruns, design for apartments in the rice elevators.



A la Carte. **The Whole Enchilada.**

When you're on the move or ready to renovate, look at McCoy's menu of products and services. McCoy is the one source to satisfy all your commercial furnishing needs. Whether it's a side order of chairs. Or the whole enchilada.

We've combined our company's resources with the office furniture division of Wilson Business Products. Now, everything you've come to expect from the city's two premier office furnishing suppliers is available from one place.

We supply the finest in commercial furniture. And our services ensure the perfect recipe for your office environment.

So table your conversation and sit down with us. We're ready to cater to your individual taste.

There's Nothing Like The Real McCoy

McCOY INC

611 West 38th Street, Houston, Texas 77018 / Tel 713.697.2417 / Fax 713.691.2844 / **Chair: HON® SENSIBLE Seating™ / Office: Gunlocke Geva Collection**

Rice University
Rice Design Alliance - MS 51
6100 South Main Street
Houston, Texas 77005-1892

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Houston, Texas
Permit No. 7549