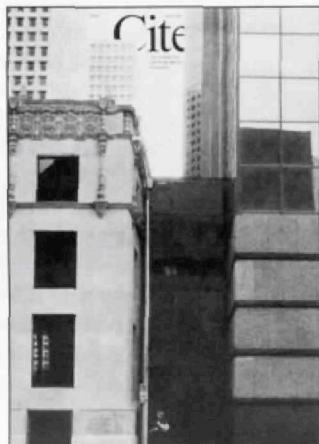


Big Cité Beat

Asphalt jungle: The Texas Department of Highways and Transportation working with the College of Architecture at Texas A&M will sponsor a national design competition for the beautification of the 60-acre intersection of Interstate Highway 45 and Loop 610 in Houston. \$500,000 has been set aside for the first phase of construction in 1990. The competition, funded in part by a \$45,000 National Endowment for the Arts grant, will commence in October, according to advisor Harlow Landphair, professor of landscape architecture at A&M. Entry forms and information are available from the College of Architecture, College Station, TX 77843.

Job specs: Linda Sylvan has been named acting executive director of the Rice Design Alliance, effective August 1988. She also will continue as managing editor of *Cite*, a post she has held since 1983. Sylvan replaces Barbara Cochran, executive director from 1986-1988, who is returning to the practice of architecture.

Cover story: The outer wrapping, as it were, of the Winter 1987 issue of *Cite* (photograph by Paul Hester, design by Alisa Bales) received a certificate of design excellence from *Print* magazine.



Rockettes: The city's lowest profile example of appropriated art in semi-public places can be found at 5503 Ashby in a threesome of granite bricks collaged just fractions of an inch above the rough-cut St. Augustine grass to approximate Michael Heizer's mammoth 45°, 90°, 180° in the engineering quadrangle at Rice (see *Cite*, Spring 1985).

Fridge of sighs: As a means of at last developing bayou-front housing downtown, the Harris County Commissioners Court has resolved to convert the 62-year-old Houston Terminal and Cold Storage Warehouse, at the confluence of White Oak and Buffalo bayous, to a 4,200-bed detention center, despite the protests of preservationists and bayou-philes.

The soft thud of tent folding: The Houston office of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill will close effective September 1988. Graybooks has closed its University Village shop and headed for the hills of Boulder, Colorado.

Eminence grise: The gray cedar-sided, glass-roofed Menil Collection, designed by Renzo Piano in joint venture with Richard Fitzgerald and Associates, received a national Honor Award for Design Excellence from the American Institute of Architects for 1988.

Knot in my backyard: Kathy Campbell of the University of Houston Creative Writing Program and Brazos Bookstore magnate Karl Kilian, board member and former president of RDA, committed merger in May amidst the picturesque, lot-lined verdure of Southampton Extension.

Montrose shuffle: Suzanne Delehanty will become director of the Contemporary Arts Museum in January 1989. She is presently director of the Neuberger Museum at SUNY Purchase.

Taste of Texas: The Texas Society of Architects has recognized the Libbie Rice Farish Gallery of the Rice School

of Architecture with a special achievement award. The gallery, which opened in 1981 in the James Stirling, Michael Wilford-designed addition to Anderson Hall, was cited for the contributions made by its program of "exhibitions and lectures on architecture, urbanism, and related subjects" for the "quality of life for the entire community."

Sign of the times. ■



Peter Yenne

Gala Celebrates RDA's 15th Anniversary

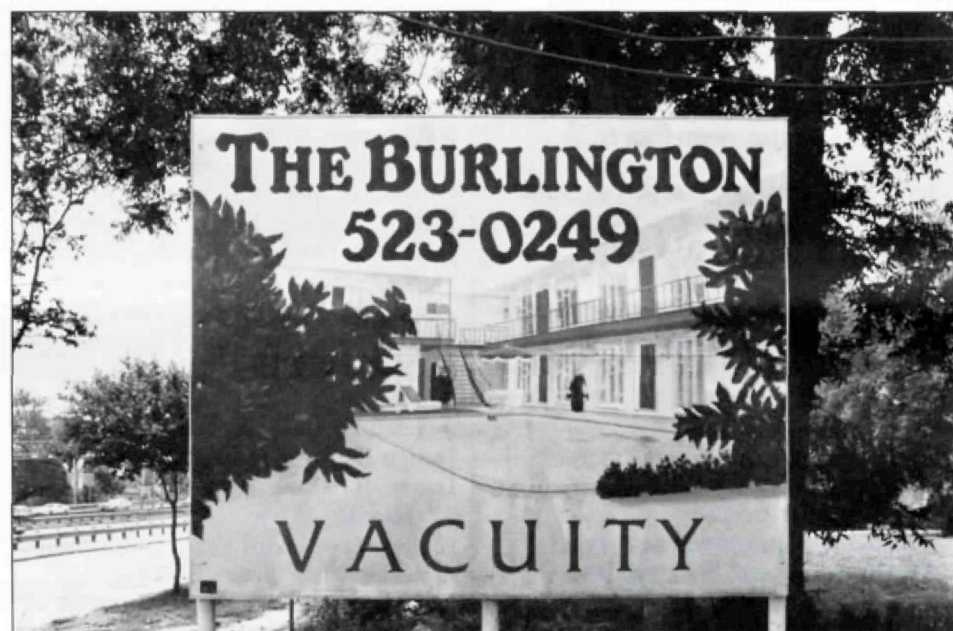
The Rice Design Alliance's 15th Anniversary Gala, "A Step Back in Time," was held Saturday evening, 21 May, and honored O. Jack Mitchell who is completing his tenth and final year as dean of Rice University's School of Architecture. Chairman Carolyn Farb planned the event which was held in the academic court of the Rice University campus. Over 400 guests, many in turn-of-the-century attire, were welcomed to

the dinner dance by a string quartet from the Shepherd School of Music.

Fifty-five birthday toys, created by artists and architects in recognition of RDA's 15th Anniversary, were displayed under Lovett Hall's arcade by art consultant Rocio Oden and auctioned during the evening to the highest bidder. Dinner was served by caterer Don Strange with spirits donated by the Quality Beverage Company, Hillman Distributing Company, and the Atlantic Ice Company. Guests danced under the stars to the sounds of Ezra Charles and the Works. The table centerpieces were antique toys on loan from local antique dealers and assembled by Penny Millican. Neiman-Marcus provided the "Step Back in Time" party favors - antique lace handkerchiefs and silk bow ties.

Gala honoree O. Jack Mitchell was presented with an "O-Jack-in-the-Box," a basswood model of the Rice University School of Architecture building created by Jay Baker, Rob Civitello, and Phil Schawe of the Office for Architecture + Design.

Gala benefactors included Mrs. Diane S. Baker and Mr. Edward C. Stanton, III, Brochsteins Inc., Gensler and Associates Architects, Taft Architects, and Vinson & Elkins.



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Citelines

Paradise Paved

Public transportation agencies are spending approximately \$1 billion each year on roadway improvements designed to keep Houston moving. Meanwhile, the City Planning Commission has begun to wonder where we're all going to park. A committee, chaired by Planning Commissioner Kay Crooker, and composed of development, professional, and civic association interests is proposing standards for the number of parking spaces needed for commercial and residential development. The committee's proposal is an Off-Street Parking and Loading Ordinance.

The ordinance is a straightforward proposal. It requires that new development, or redevelopment, provide for the increased parking demand generated and prohibits truck-loading docks which open directly onto thoroughfares. Parking space requirements are ratios based upon the type of proposed use. If the site being developed cannot accommodate the needed spaces, up to 25 percent of required parking may be located off-site, but not more than 500 feet distant. Provisions are made for shared parking in planned, mixed-use developments.

Differences in peak-demand periods of land uses in the development allow for a reduction of 15 to 20 percent in the total amount of parking spaces needed.

Also created to address densely developed areas are special districts called Parking Management Areas (PMAs). Those named in the ordinance are Downtown Houston, Uptown Houston, Summit Area, and South Main/Medical Center. Comprehensive parking plans, developed by entities representing these areas, can substitute for the parking standards prescribed in the ordinance. With credit for the presence of transit facilities as well as shared parking, PMAs have the lowest per-unit parking requirements.

Because Houston is late in setting up this type of control it is possible to learn from other cities. Standard-parking demand ratios have been used or adjusted to local conditions, compact-car spaces are allowed, and the maintenance of parking lots is mandated in the proposed ordinance. Little thought is given to aesthetics, however. Shared parking and PMA planners are neither required nor offered incentive trade-offs to screen

parking lots (low fencing or landscaping greatly enhances the appearance of surface parking) or to consider ways to lessen the visual impact of parking structures.

"Backdoor zoning," the battle cry raised each time development-related legislation is proposed, will likely be heard. But it is not valid in this case. In fact, an inefficiency of this ordinance is the fact that it is not coupled with zoning regulations. Inner-city areas and neighborhoods adjacent to commercial development are to be relieved of more on-street parking only to become vulnerable to the intrusion of parking lots into their less-expensive real estate. In areas where the value of land exceeds the value of improvements, off-street parking requirements could hasten the loss of significant buildings. The trade-off here is the fact that neighborhoods plagued by on-street parking congestion caused by nearby development may now have a more effective tool than "No Parking" signs to address this problem. But because existing uses are not required to conform to ordinance provisions, desired changes will not be immediately evident.

This piece of legislation is by no means radical or heavy-handed. In its concept, the ordinance reflects a trend in local planning theory to equitably assess the impact of development wherever it occurs and to require builders to contain the added impacts. Examples of this approach are the Harris County Flood Control District's floodwater retention program, the city's Capital Recovery Charge for wastewater capacity, and Rights-of-Way dedication requirements for land subdivisions in the path of proposed thoroughfares.

If adopted by city council, the Off-Street Parking Ordinance will be another step in public safeguarding of the quality of private development in Houston. Although it will not further the cause of controlling the location of the land uses that generate traffic, it will impose much needed controls upon the quality of those land uses - wherever they occur.

Mike Davis