

# UC Berkeley

## Places

### Title

Edge City Streetscape [Streets: Old Paradigm, New Investment]

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Houston's Galleria district is an edge city without compare. As Joel Garreau described it in *Edge City*, "these hotels and pools and skyscrapers and courts and shopping areas and promenades and multilevel parking and helicopter pads connect intricately, in dense combinations never before achieved in America outside a downtown."

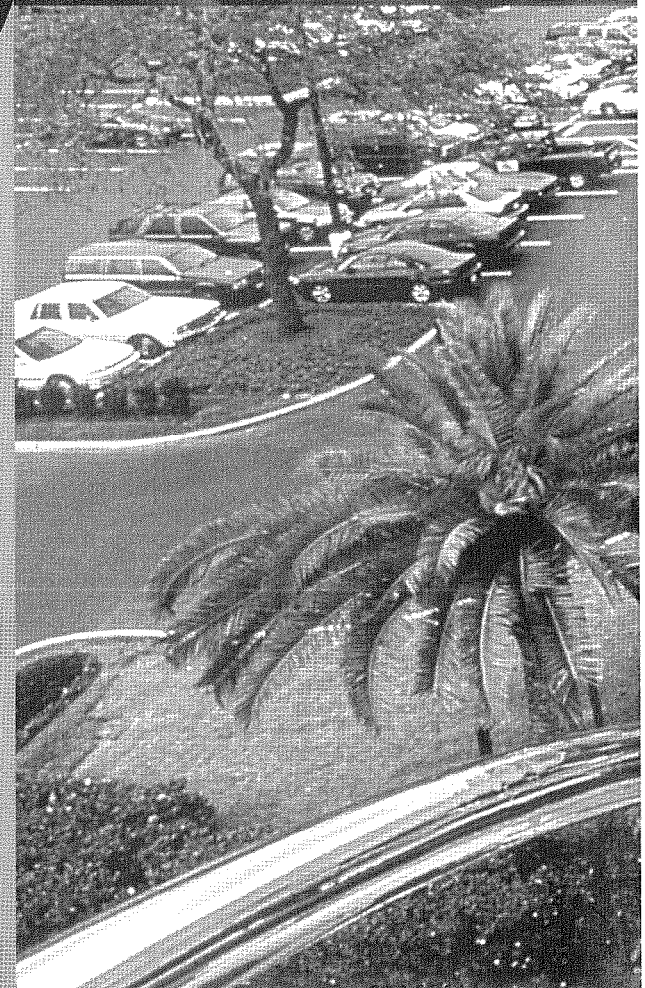
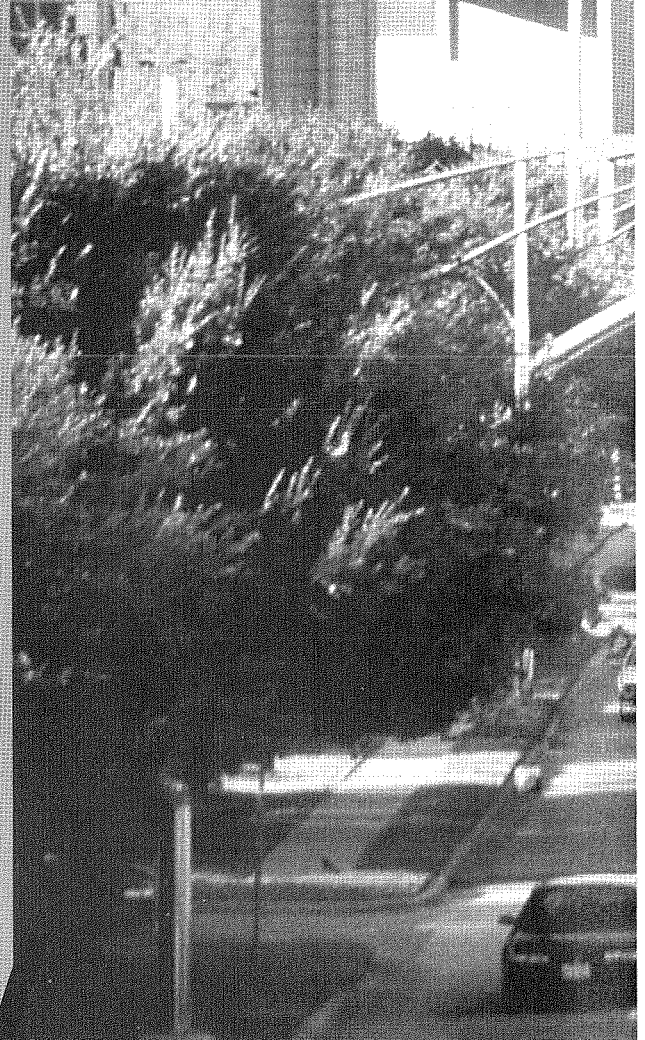
What Garreau didn't mention, of course, was streets. That's where the design team of Communication Arts and Slaney Santana Group turned when a local business group asked for ideas about creating a visual identity for the district.

The designers attempted to define the place at two scales, automotive and pedestrian, using a family of streetscape elements straight out of a 1950s futuristic fantasy. Space-age arches vault across the arterials, breaking down the scale of the street space; metal rings float like coronas over the intersections, with street names glowing from holes punched in their surfaces. The street light fixtures and traffic signals are all off-the-shelf hardware so that they can be maintained easily, but they are enclosed in custom-designed housings.

The arches land in "oases," some of which connect directly to adjacent development. They are "rewards for people who have the courage to be pedestrians in Houston," explains Henry Beer, of Communication Arts. "At the base of each [there] is a poem or narrative about Texas and culture and life of place" along with amenities like seating and drinking fountains. In the evening, the oases are washed in pools of light so they become destinations.

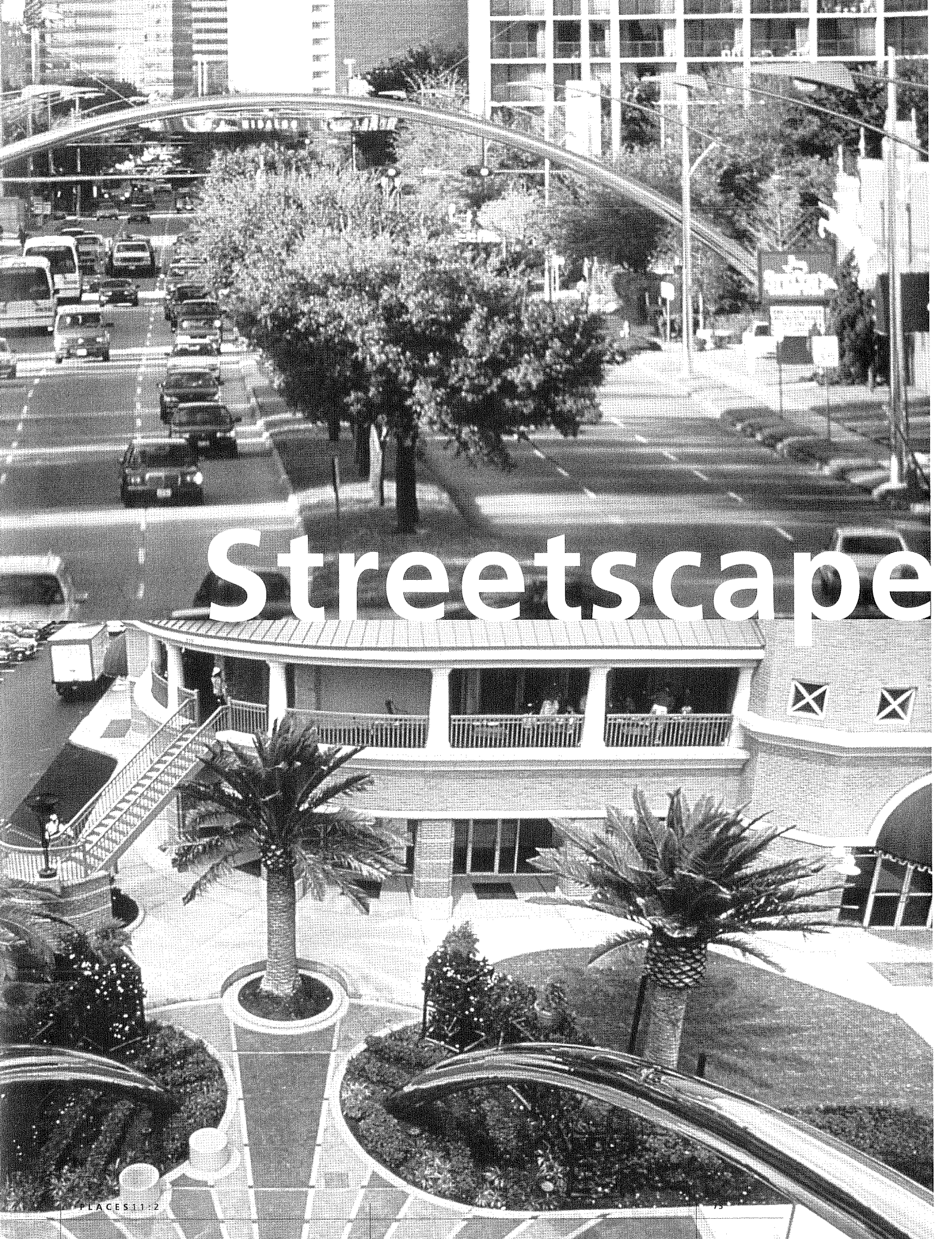
The project also involved a minor reconfiguration of the streets, primarily to add medians, and landscaping along the sides. It was sponsored by the Harris County Improvement District #1.

# Edge City



Photos courtesy  
Communication Arts.





# Streetscape