Assignment #2: Summarizing Land Use Change in Austin

Block Group 5, which contains the blocks bound on the north by 8th Street, on the south by 6th Street, on the east by Brazos Street, and on the west by Lavaca Street shows a trend moving from a residential area to a completely urbanized block set from 1885 to 2019. In 1885 blocks 69, 70, 71, 82, 83, and 84 were dominated by residential spaces and spaces for retail and services, but in 1935 it became a block set that is predominantly comprised of land for office space and retail and service spaces because of urbanization. The present-day block set affirms the move towards a completely urbanized space with an office building, parking garage, and a small residential and services space. In 1885 this block group was predominantly dwellings, retail spaces, and services spaces. By 1935, the block group had been transformed into an area with office space, retail space, and spaces for services. In today’s world, the area is now dominated by offices, services, and parking land uses.

In 1885, the block groupings primarily consisted of residential dwellings, retail spaces, and service spaces. Block 82 heavily demonstrated this residential land use, as the entire block is dominated by dwellings except for a Presbyterian Church that the residents most likely used. Most of these dwellings were single-family, except for the Bryant Boarding house and the Colorado Boarding house. Block 83 also demonstrates this residential land use, as nearly half of the block is used for single-family dwellings. Likewise, block 71 and block 84 provided similar amounts of residential, single-family dwellings that covered more than one-quarter of their blocks.

Equally important to residential spaces were the heavy land use of retail spaces and services. For instance, block 69 on its west side was mostly dominated by non-specialized retail spaces and services, whereas its east side was mainly under construction along with the only fire department in our grouping. Similarly, block 70, which is just across Congress avenue, is
where more than half of the block was dominated by the retail and service industry; all services being non-specialized and almost all retail being non-specialized except the specialized jewelry stores. Along with the third most used land space in the block; offices on the north and south sides of the block. Block 83 consisted of a good amount of non-specialized and specialized retail commerce spaces; compared to only one non-specialized service space. On the other hand, in block 84, service spaces were the second most used land while retail spaces were a few.

In 1935, the block group mostly consisted of retail space, office space, services, and some dwellings. Block 69 showed this heavy dominance of retail, office, and service spaces in this block group. Block 69 only contained retail stores, offices, banks, restaurants, and the Driskill Hotel. In the same way, block 70 only held retail stores, government offices, hotels, offices, and the Hancock Theater. Block 70 also makes up the majority of retail, office, and service space in this group. In addition, Block 71 also was composed completely of these same categories of spaces. The only space not used for retail, office, or a service in block 71 was the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and two dwellings. One of these dwellings was an apartment building, while the other was a home. Block 71 also held a large post office, as well as offices, retail stores, and other services such as a bike repair shop. All three of the southern blocks were all similar in that they had many stores, offices, and services.

The northern blocks are similar in some ways, but drastically different in others. Block 83 shows its similarity through its exclusivity to retail stores, minimal service spaces, and only two offices. Some of block 83’s services included banks, a theater, restaurants, auto repair shops, and a few parking lots. In the same way, Block 84 contains some retail stores and offices, however the block is almost completely made up of services. One half of this block is almost entirely auto repair shops and garages. There is also a large hotel, The Stephan F Austin Hotel present in this block. Lastly, the Paramount Theater takes up the majority of this block. Block 84 was different as there was much less retail and office space, and much more service and
entertainment space. The block that differed the most from all is block 82. This block had a few office space, services, and the 1st Presbyterian Church. The rest of the block is occupied by dwellings. These dwellings were apartment buildings, multi-family homes, and a single-family home. Each of these homes had a garage or a parking lot for their automobile. This block also contained a parking garage. This block varied the most as it contained no retail space, and very little service and office space. While block 82 is an exception, this block group in 1935 was dominated by retail, office, and service space.

In 2019, the block group primarily consisted of offices, services, and parking spaces. Blocks 69, 70, 82 and 83 demonstrated this heavy industrial land use. In block 70 we can see a large land use dedicated primarily to offices which includes the One American office building along with the Texas State University System Administration office, and other offices. Also in the north side of block 70 land use is taken by a parking space as well. Block 70 went from being primarily dominated by specialized and non-specialized retail in 1885 to being primarily dominated by offices in 2019. This group of blocks also dedicates a large land use dedicated to services, specialized and non-specialized services. The map of block 69 shows how this services take most of the space including specialized services like; the Hideout coffee house, Wild Out Music Store, and Joe Koen & Son Jewelry Store, along with other specialized services. Some non-specialized include seven eleven, Aloft Austin Downtown Hotel, Element Austin Downtown Hotel along with other non-specialized services. Block 69 was primarily dominated by retail in 1885 but as time passed the block included specialized and non-specialized services making the block primarily dominated by specialized and non-specialized services alongside with office spaces.

Accompanying these commercial land uses in 2019, blocks 82 and 83 provided parking spaces in the area. Aside from the specialized and non-specialized services, block 83 primarily functioned as parking space. Likewise, located on the left of block 83, parking spaces mainly
cover block 82, which also contains a multi-storage garage. As time passed we observed how
the blocks in group 5 went from being primarily residential to being primarily offices and then to
being primarily dominated by specialized and non-specialized services.

Throughout the history of these beautiful blocks, people have come to enjoy and use this
land in various unique ways. While blocks 69,70,71,82,83, and 84 were previously dominated by
residential spaces and spaces for retail and services, it has become a block set that is
predominantly comprised of land for office space and retail and service spaces because of
urbanization. However, there still remains character to this area such as the historic Paramount
Theatre in block 84 that has been a theatre since 1885. Buildings like the Paramount act as
tangible examples of the growth of cities over time. When it came to analyzing the change in
land use in this area, it was unique to observe a building of its age alongside the
commercialization of the buildings that surrounded it. As people progress, change, and evolve,
we have seen that cities follow suit. Through this project we have been able to identify these
changes, explain how they happened, and illustrate the consequences of these changes.