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Team 5 Summary: Land Use in Austin

From 1885 to the present, land uses on block group 5 have drastically changed. In 1885, this
group of blocks largely consisted of single family residences and both non-specialized retail and services.
By 1935, the block group had been transformed by the growth of office space, services, and some
parking. The area now predominantly offers more specialized retail, offices, multifamily residences, and
large parking garages. The overall presence of vacant lots also decreased over time. Due to these
changes, this part of downtown Austin has transitioned from a primarily single-family residential and
small retail neighborhood to one of white collar commerce, organization, and parking, demonstrating a
shift toward public space that people commute to for work and shopping.

A large proportion of land use in 1885 was residential. Most of these residences were small
single family dwellings. This can be seen blocks 70, 83, and 84, where single family dwellings constituted
the entire residential area. On block 82, there is only one tenement building, the rest of the residential
area is single family. Block 71 is the only one with an equal mix of single and multi-family housing, and
the only block without any residential land use is block 69.

In addition to having a large percentage of residential blocks of land in 1885, another fairly big
chunk of land use was for mostly non-specialized and some specialized services. For example, on block
84, we see that there is the Avenue Hotel which takes up a lot of space on the block. There are also
some non-specialized services on the block, such as a saloon and a livery. Similarly on block 69, there is a
restaurant, several saloons, and other non-specialized services. However, we do see more specialized services on block 82 which houses two hotels.

Non-specialized retail stores were also very common to find in Austin in 1885. In fact, all of the block in this group besides block 82 have retail stores on their land. Block 83 included non-specialized retail stores such as a confectionary, boots & shoes store, a drug store, etc. Block 84 is another good example of a block of land that had several non-specialized goods which included a book store, shoe & hat store, dry good & millinery, and a drug store. There weren’t as many specialized retail stores as there were non-specialized, but they weren’t hard to find. For example, block 70 had several non-specified specialized retail stores.

In 1935 we come to see that retail played one of the dominant factors in the 5th block of the map. We see that a strong 22 stores were located along 69th, 82nd, 83rd, and 84th blocks. This was a significant change since 1885 which had little to no retail stores. However, we also see that today there are very few that are located in this part of Austin. There are only four retail stores, three of which are along the 83rd block and one on the 69th block.

Several blocks in this grouping experienced a change in the type of residential land uses. There was a wave of change moving from single family dwellings to multi family buildings. Block 71 went from having one multi family building and several single family buildings in 1885 to only having multi family in 1935. Another block that shares this situation is block 82. This block went from having one multi family and six single family buildings in 1885 to in 1995 having five multi family and three single family dwellings.

Along with the change in dwellings there was also a switch in the types of services being offered. In both 1885 and 1935 there were a lot of specialized and non-specialized services, however, it moved from the majority being non-specialized in 1885 to heavily specialized in 1935. Block 69 went from having a lot of saloons and other non-specialized services in 1885 to having a hotel a theater and several
other specialized services in 1935. There were still many non-specialized services, but there was a
definitive increase in in the amount of specialized services. Similarly, block 84 has mostly non specialized
services in 1885, but gains a hotel and a theater in 1935 as well as a specialized clinic. Block 83 started in
1885 with having only one service. In 1935 it gained mostly non-specialized services, but also gained a
theater and another specialized service. Even though block 83 did not gain a majority of specialized
services, it still showed an increase in services themselves.

Over the course of the 20th century, this block group became increasingly concentrated with
offices and parking, and the retailers became more specialized. The growth of large office buildings is
notable in 2017, as they now comprise the majority of several blocks. For example, multi story office
buildings that have retailers and restaurants on street-level are common, seen on block 83, block 84,
and block 70. Nearly the entirety of these blocks has office space above the ground floor stores. Block 71
is where the University of Texas System’s health services and managing offices are located. Block 82 is
largely offices, housing the headquarters of University Federal Credit Union. Block 69 is mostly
specialized and non-specialized businesses with some office space. It is difficult to tell what specific
businesses utilize the upper levels, but because they are not readily accessed by customers, they are
most likely white collar, specialized businesses.

By 2017, the retailers and services available in this region of downtown Austin changed. Some
non-specialized services remain, such as restaurants, but many businesses are now specialized. Block 69
offers more specialized goods such as a theatre and business center in addition to a bar and coffee shop.
Specialized goods are sold on Block 83, like jewelry and furniture. There is also an art gallery, a museum,
and nicer steak house on this block, in addition to a non specialized bar and banks. Block 84 consists of
two theatres and a high-end restaurant, as well as a non specialized tailor, bar, and hair salon.
Specialized businesses have not replaced businesses in this block group entirely, but they have become
much more prevalent in the present. Also reflecting this shift to more specialized goods is the change in
amount and type of residences. The only housing remaining in this block group is multifamily high-rise apartments, such as on block 82, and hotels, like on blocks 69 and 84. This shows that downtown has transitioned away from being a place of permanent residence where families need to access non-specialized goods often, but rather a place of commerce, work, and leisure.

By 2017 parking had increased drastically from 1885 on due to the increase in cars per family household. We see a large increase of parking in 2017 that reflects the transition from residential to commercial because people use their cars to commute from their home to either work, shopping, or specialized goods and services. Parking garages and parking lots have taken the place of residential areas or shops. In particular, Block 71 built a parking garage in a space that was previously occupied by residential apartments and stores that were specialized and non-specialized. Today, the garage is used for employees of The University of Texas offices. Also, on Block 83 and Block 84, Perry Brooks had built an extending parking garage over their stores that allows for customers to conveniently park near the stores that they are shopping at. This trend has been consistent throughout the evolution of urban cities in order to accommodate the mass transit and make it convenient for people to park nearby offices, stores, etc.

This region of downtown Austin has seen a dramatic change in land usage over the past 150 years. By the present day, there is a wider variety of land uses seen in this block area, showing Austin’s diversification in industry and service. Decreased residential space and the growth of specialized services and offices has also reflected Austin’s transition to a hub for economic growth, national and international business, and entertainment for its residents in both downtown and suburban sectors.