



San Marco, Florence, Italy
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San Marco

San Marco in Florence, Italy fronts on the square with the same name. This church used to serve a convent of Benedictine friars, that is a present day museum. There is a long history of convents occupying this site. There was a Vallombrosan monastery in the 12th century, which later passed to the Sylvestrine monks. Both groups were branches of the Order of St. Benedict. During the time of the Sylvestrines, the church served as a parish as well as a monastic church. Because of the laxity of observance of the Sylvestrines, complaints were made to the Papacy, and Pope Eugene IV forced them to vacate the buildings, and pass them on to a Domenican group from Fiesole. This was facilitated by the intervention of Cosimo de' Medici the Elder, who lived nearby in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, by funding major renovations of the buildings.

The church was designed by the architect Giambologna as a single nave with side chapels in the late 16th Century. The Neo-Classical facade, shown in the sketch by Ladd P. Ehlinger, was not built until 1777-1778. Giambologna also completed the famous Salviati Chapel in May 1589.

The chapel was decorated in fresco by Domenico Passignano with the *Translation and Funeral of San Antonio Perozzi*. The chapel dome was by Bernardino Pocetti who also authored frescoes in the *Sacrament Chapel*. The church contains numerous artworks, the most famous of which is the crucifix on the high altar by Fra Angelico. Other artists works are by Santi de Tito of *St. Thomas Praying*, and *Madonna with Saints* by Fra Bartolomeo.

San Marco was the home also of the fiery Friar and Prior Girolamo Savonarola from 1489 until his death almost ten years later. He came to martyr's death because of his scolding of the Florentines morals, or rather lack of, and ostentatious behavior as a result. His preaching and behavior offended Pope Alexander VI Borgia, which resulted in him being burned at the stake in front of the Palazzo della Signoria.

The convent boasts of a library designed by the architect Michelozzo, who worked on the San Marco complex from 1439-1444. The rest of the convent is of simple Renaissance design, elegant, and very spare at that, with hardly any frills. The internal walls are whitewashed plaster in the two

cloisters, with a Chapter House, two refectories and guest quarters on the ground level; All work on the convent was finished by 1442.

The Convent is now the home to the *Museo Nazionale di San Marco*. The entrance is decorated with frescoes by Bernadino Pocetti. It was only recently converted to a museum, as the Friars only moved out in 2014 to the monastery nearby at Santa Maria Novella.

Grampaw Died

There is a situation affecting Owners of buildings wherein the relevant safety standard of a building component changes over time, such that what was once considered "safe" and code compliant, no longer is. Safety standards evolve over time usually to a more stringent standard, and are reflected in the codes by changes in requirements. In the past, before the year 2000, an Owner of a aged building was considered to be "Grandfathered in" with respect to mandated changes to comply with a current code in which a more stringent standard had been adopted, so long as the Owner kept the building / component in good repair. The Owner did not have to make changes to comply with the current "safer" standard.

This all changed in the year 2000 with the advent of the International Building Code (IBC), the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC), and the International Existing Building Code (IEBC). The IBC incorporates by reference the IPMC and the IEBC, both of which place a burden on the Owner to keep his building in good repair and in a safe condition, even to the point of retrofitting the particular component. Now, the Owner has a duty to find out what is safe (what is in the most recent code edition and they update every three years?), and then to incorporate that change. This is very relevant in trip & fall claims related to stairs, handrails, & guardrails. In short: Grampaw died!

Ladd P. Ehlinger, AIA

The Changing Urban Landscape

by R. Perrin Ehlinger

There's a fight in the urban planning world - a battle between traffic and pedestrians. It's a multi-tiered Mexican standoff between use and functionality, density and convenience... car vs. pedestrian.

For about 100 years now, the car has been winning the battle, with cities yielding their planning and design to traffic flow and parking, with entire neighborhoods removed and replaced with highways and freeways, and widened avenues, and parking towers. Whole sections of cities, once thriving, struggle to remain relevant or connected as connections from one side to the other are interrupted by high traffic crossings, too inconvenient, and dangerous to use.

The very creation of suburbs, along with their ubiquitous strip malls, center around the creation and convenience of travelling by automobile. While living 15-30 minutes away from work isn't so bad by car, it would be a nightmare, or impossible, if they had to bicycle or walk.

The daily dependence on automobiles is so ingrained that some cities don't even bother with sidewalks or pedestrian crossings, let alone bicycle lanes. Even when they are implemented, they're still dangerous to use because drivers simply aren't used to seeing cyclists or pedestrians walking around anymore, and by the nature of driving, they are more concerned about getting hit by and avoiding other vehicles. Pedestrian and cyclists are no more than cross-fire obstacles, if they're even noticed.

But things, they are a'changin'. Ride hailing innovations like Uber and Lyft, and bicycle renting outfits have begun to take hold in many areas. This has created a couple of conflicting results - more cars and bicycles on the road, resulting in higher but slower traffic, yet far fewer parking spots are needed to accommodate them all.

Already, some city areas are seeing high vacancies in their parking garages, resulting in a lower income, and thus spurring the idea of changing the land usage - there's more money to be made with other uses now.

Unfortunately, adaptive reuse is difficult for most parking garage designs, given sloped floors and the size of the ramps themselves, requiring a full demolition of the structure for a rebuild for something new.

Zoning laws for parking lots are also becoming quickly outdated and superfluous - not nearly as much parking will be required for most future uses given the rapidly chang-

ing car use conditions. And the change will accelerate as self-driving shuttles and cars become more widely adapted. Cars that park themselves, and shuttles that can double or triple the number of times they service a route will allow parking to be moved outside of pedestrian and cyclist congested areas.

The change to the urban and suburban landscape will be massive. It is estimated there are currently 8 parking spaces built for every single car. That's about 1600 S.F. of pavement, per car, for the convenience of being able to park at every destination. That's an enormous amount of real-estate; even if parking requirements are only reduced by 1/2, we're talking about 160 million S.F. of reusable space in a metro area with 100,000 cars. That's about 5.7 square miles of real estate.

It's a slow process (think decades), but it's already under way. The biggest resistance is the independence that the automobile allows us all. Uber and Lyft are just a click away, but there's a wait, and someone else is in control - are we willing to sacrifice the ability to hop in our car and just go? Even if, financially, the Uber and Lyft and far less expensive for most people than owning, maintaining, insuring and paying taxes on a car? So far, the answer is mixed, still weighing in favor of the freedom and control of car ownership.

When the car can drive itself, and an average household will need but 0.5 cars to ferry everyone around and come back home, instead of the current 1.79 cars? When it's less expensive to hire an automated service car to get to work or go shopping, without having to rely on a stranger driving? What will the answer be then?

That's when the push for rezoning of parking requirements begins, and cities begin allowing transformation back to the more dense and pedestrian/cyclist friendly development that will occur naturally, instead of the forced, politically correct development of 'walking corridors' and cycling lanes. And it is coming.

We're still left with one problem, however:

TRAFFIC

Even with a reduced need for parking, ride hailing and future self-driving vehicles might increase the actual amount of traffic on the roads, simply as a byproduct of having the vehicles in a greater usage frequency, rather than parked most of the day.

This can be largely mitigated by newer

ride-sharing components that these companies are offering; essentially a car-pooling of paying customers. Need a ride downtown at 8 AM and back at 5 PM every week day for work? Share the ride with a neighbor or two from nearby, and cut your travel costs. Expand this program to even a lowly 5% of a working population and you've cut the traffic congestion, and parking requirements by 10-15%.

While these sort of carpool programs have been attempted in the past with very poor success, the new convenience of well designed smart-phone applications makes this possible without having to arrange anything - no asking around, no trying to find people willing, let alone reliable enough to carpool with - you just click some buttons, and you're paired with people with the same destination at the same time.

Amplify this effect when cars are driving themselves, as many who still feel the need to own their own car would still likely 'rent' out when they aren't needed, to help recover the costs of owning.

The Future Results:

Cities and suburbs will become denser and safer. With a reduced need for parking, land can be reused for other purposes, building fronts can be closer to the street and more inviting, and wide avenues can be reduced, and elevated highways brought back to ground. With reduced traffic, pedestrian sidewalk use will become more inviting, cycling won't be a deadly risk, and the convenience of the automobile will be increased, instead of creating as many problems as it has solved.

The time frame, though, is still... a long time. Even if self-driving cars arrive within the next 5 years, significant adoption won't occur for another 5 years, and given the hurdles of bureaucracy in reconfiguring roads and highways, and the costs involved in new construction on private land, the full impact on cities won't be seen for yet another decade to twenty five years.

But the process is already underway. Over 20% of the population in major metropolitan areas use ride hailing apps already, and of those, a quarter use them on a daily basis instead of driving. As that use increases, coupled with newer carpooling ride-hailing apps, we're likely to see the transformation first on the roads, with less traffic, followed by the slow, inevitable changes from massive parking lots and garages to a pedestrian centered planning and architecture.