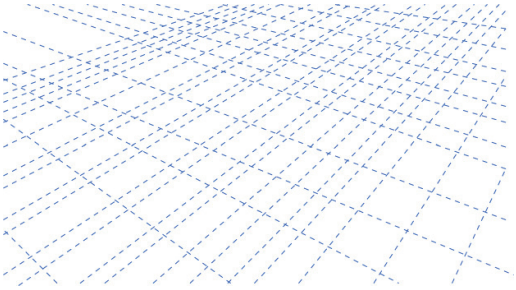
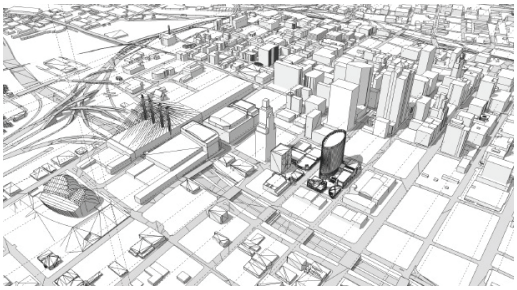
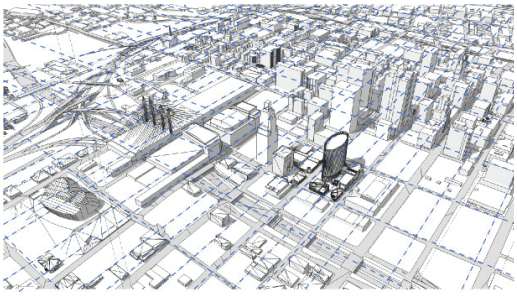
An Automated Future

Dillon Park

What are the physical implications of an automated future?





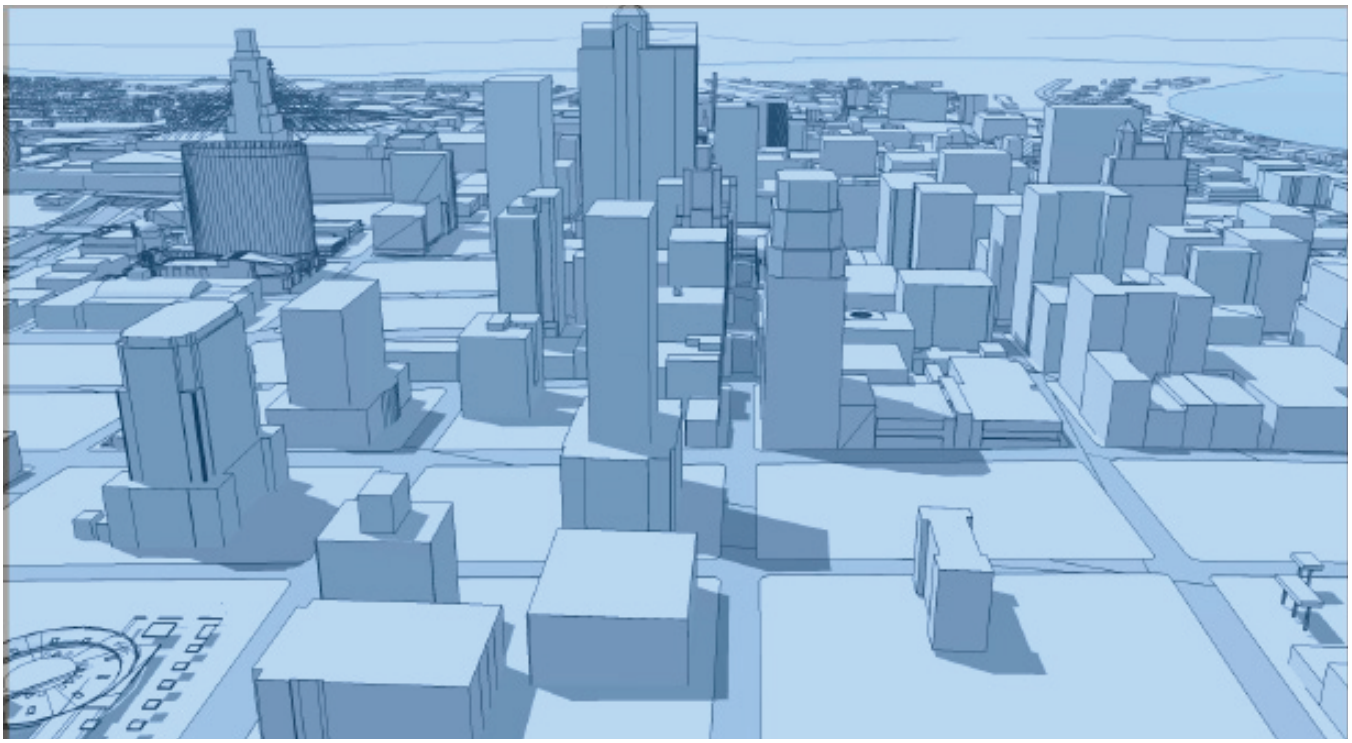


Technology is always progressing towards something better

As time progresses, so does technology, ideas, and even people. Everyday, new technologies are being explored; new ideas are being expanded upon from other projects, and the cycle of growth continues to steadily make change in the real world.

The idea of an automated city is no longer a foreign concept in today's society. Creators, Inventors, Engineers, you name it, are working everyday to make ideas of the past a reality.

One idea that is being birthed as more technological advancements are made is the idea of an automated city. In recent years, self-driving cars have become a reality and are out and about on the streets. People can simply just put in the address of their destination and cruise in comfort (with certain limitations of course). But what kind of possibilities does that open up for the future?

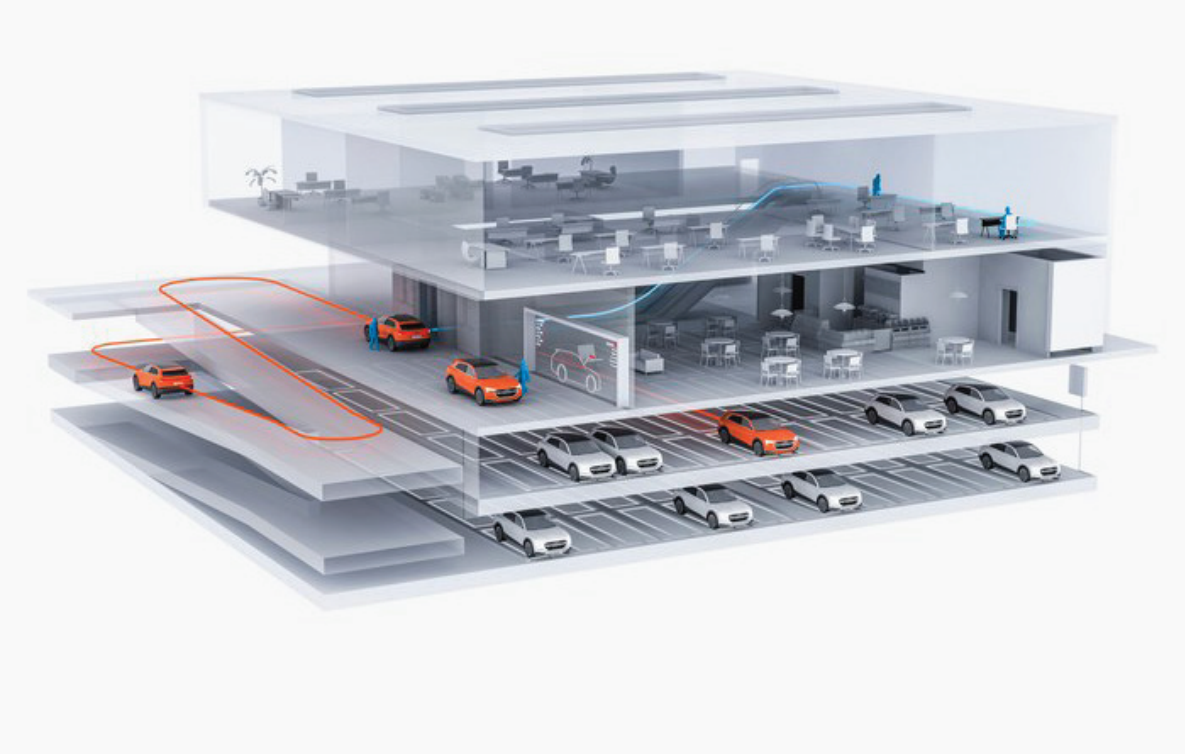


Elon Musk, the creator of Tesla and its first self-driving car, understands what sort of implications his products hold and how they could possibly shape the future. Musk makes the statement that, "Probably in 10 years, more than half of new vehicle production is electric in the United States," said Musk, adding "half of all production will be EV… almost all cars produced will be autonomous." Just recently, Tesla revealed information that the first electric semi-truck would be released this coming November 2017. Musk acknowledges that this will not happen for decades to come, but what happens in a world where all of the vehicles no longer need people to operate them?

The introduction of automated vehicles has further sparked conversation on how cities can develop in the future. Specifically the development of an automated semi truck leads great discussion in thinking of how technology will impact cities and the people who inhabit them. Anthony Townsend, author of Smart Cities: Big Data, Civic Hackers, and the Quest for a New Utopia, makes the comment that rather than a focus on automated passenger vehicles, "it's actually trash trucks, trailers, delivery vans, taxis and other vehicles that take up much of the space in cities. They will be completely transformed by automated technologies." He goes on to mention that this change, including the potential of automated mass transit, will make dense cities more "efficient and livable." Similarly, Carlo Ratti, the director of MIT's Senseable City Lab, believes that technology will transform the built environment, and that vehicle automation will require 80 percent fewer cars on any given highway. This in turn could lead shorter travel times, far less congestion, and even environmental impact.

How does the notion of automated vehicles transform the built environment?

In considering today's cities, a vast amount of urban land is occupied by parking lots, garages, and roads that could be reinvented. The idea of automated cars has the potential to completely change from the way parking infrastructure is today; outdoor lots and other existing spaces could be freed up and be developed into parks, public spaces, and other types of interventions.



As technology continues to advance, so do ideas and discussion for how people and cities will function. The impact of an automated future is nothing foreign, and the potential change that can occur is fearful to some, but the desire to make something better will continue to advance technology and society.

How do we meet people?

While the market for travel applications is a highly commercialized space that oftentimes provides a mixture of content from both peers and marketers, communities have begun to recognize similar, albeit more localized, applications as a valuable tool for fostering connectivity and camaraderie among residents. The Nextdoor app, which originated in San Francisco, offers a way to connect with fellow permanent residents in your immediate area, sharing information about upcoming events or even asking for help finding a lost dog. Much of what we consume in terms of digital content deals with macrocommunities, providing us with information that loosely pertains to our everyday lives. The Nextdoor app, however, is quietly building a network of microcommunities across the country, giving people the chance to connect with those in their community while simultaneously bridging the social gap forged by our attachment to other applications.

Nextdoor has further secured its role as a community building service by aligning itself with local agencies such as police and fire departments, providing a useful outlet to quickly spread information to residents. Aside from its success in facilitating communication among community members, Nextdoor has also taken a genuine approach to providing reviews for local businesses and destinations. The company's stance that a review from your neighbor carries more significance than that of a stranger via Yelp or TripAdvisor that forms the premise of Nextdoor's business model, gradually building a base of users to provide authentic information as opposed to playing the short game and relying on what may be more superficial content.

Works Cited

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