



**Rana Florida**

*CEO, Creative Class Group*

## Creative Spaces: Baby You Can Park My Car

Posted: 02/28/2012 8:43 am

For the first time in human history, more than [50 per cent](#) of the world's population is living in cities. That's around 3.5 billion people. In addition to the basics, such as water and sewage and public safety, cities are continually upping the ante on beautification projects -- parks and green spaces, of course, but also basic infrastructure.

Parking lots and parking garages take up a lot of room in most cities and far too many of them are eyesores. Some cities impose ordinances on parking lot developers, mandating green spaces as visual buffers to break up their acres of asphalt. But most garages tend to be unattractive and unsafe; the only thing their designers seemed to have thought of was how to pack in as many cars as possible.

Parking garages should blend seamlessly into the fabric of their neighborhoods; they can even add distinctive touches of their own. Sometimes, in fact, they do just that.

With the help of [Steven Pedigo](#), my colleague at the [Creative Class Group](#), I selected these memorable parking garages from all over the world. Their visionary architects and developers clearly think of parking facilities as something more than dreary necessities or financial investments. They see them as opportunities to create something truly memorable -- and as an overall design element and reflection of their cities.

My next [Creative Spaces](#) will feature graffiti. Please send your favorite spots to [steven@creativeclass.com](mailto:steven@creativeclass.com).

## Mountain Dwellings by BIG Architects, Orestaden, Denmark



Built alongside a metro track, the architects' challenge was to combine a parking garage that was big enough to hold 480 cars with a residential building containing 80 apartments—and at the same time, to give each apartment not just private parking, but a little green space of its own. Their solution was to build a mountain. The parking garage is the base; the apartments are built upon it in terraces. The result, say the architects, is “a suburban neighborhood of garden homes flowing over a 10-storey building – suburban living with urban density.”

Photo credit: Flickr user: seier + seier

## 18 Kowloon East, Hong Kong, China



Designed by Aedas Architecture, this sleek glass skyscraper sits atop a hanging garden in a crowded Hong Kong business district. “With green as the theme,” the architects explain, the plantings not only lend a greening effect to the surrounding neighborhood, but improve the air quality within the garage.

Photo credit: Flickr user: kwylee

## 1111 Lincoln Road by Herzog de Meuron, Miami Beach, Florida



We featured this in our Art Basel column too. A collaboration between the developer and art collector Robert Wennett and the world renowned architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron, this is not just a garage but a whole development, including residences, restaurants, and retail stores. “The team,” wrote the Architectural Record, “made a contribution to Miami Beach by providing a valuable amenity and creating a landmark and a vibrant public space....But most of all, they are helping break the mold for the lowly parking garage, lifting it up out of its gloomy limbo into the light and air.”

Photo credit: Flickr user: h ssan

## Michigan State University, Grand River Parking Ramp, East Lansing, Michigan



Seamlessly blending into Michigan State University's campus, the façade of this 730 car parking facility is made of brick and limestone. Many mistake it for an academic building, which is precisely the designer's intent.

Photo credit: Flickr user: Facility Records | MSU Physical Plant – MSU

## The Parkhaus Engelenschanze, Munster, Germany



Designed by Petry - Wittfoht Freier Architekten, this 485-car garage is enveloped by glass walls. With a central courtyard that features moving water, a pond and wetland grasses, it combines ingenious traffic management techniques with bold design. The result, wrote Architecture Week, is both a “man-made ‘natural’ wonder” and a “mini-Zen experience.”

Photo credit: Flickr user: richard\_k

## Santa Monica Civic Center Parking Garage, Santa Monica, California



Visually stunning, Moore Ruble Yudell Architects also built this 900-car garage to the strictest green standards. There is a solar photovoltaic array on the roof and the construction materials were all recycled and finished with low-VOC paints and finishes. If the vehicle you're driving is an energy hog, you might as well park it in a sustainable garage.

Photo credit: Flickr user: abosco

## Car Park One by Elliott + Associates Architects, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



You might almost not notice Oklahoma City's Car Park One, except for the beautiful way that the translucent mesh skin that covers its openings takes the light, changing its colors with the time of day and the season. Elliott and Associates Architects sought to construct a garage that did not appear to be a parking structure; their award-winning design succeeds magnificently.

Photo credit: Scott McDonald © Hedrich Blessing, [www.hedrichblessing.com](http://www.hedrichblessing.com)