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When was the last time you visited a parking garage? What drew you to use that one? Was it merely based on how close it was to your destination? How much it cost to use that particular garage? How intuitive it was to get around inside of that parking garage? For many, these questions don't even occur to them on a conscious level and is meant for the firms that design and build parking garages; these are the big questions that will govern how they will proceed with a project and dictate what the end result will look like.

It's the responsibility of the builders to come up with a pleasing aesthetic for the building that will encourage people to want to use that particular parking garage over others while not interfering with its functionality. If it's difficult to get around inside of the structure due to poor planning or because the layout requires drivers to take a roundabout route just to enter or leave, then that means that people will be less likely to use that structure in the future which can hurt the businesses that lay around the parking garage when former customers take their business elsewhere. Even if it doesn't affect the businesses around it, a poorly designed parking garage is as big a black mark on a firm's reputation as any other building and can lose those firms projects in the future.

There is no easy solution to this problem either. Sometimes the needs of a customer are just too difficult to accomplish within the constraints of the surrounding area where other buildings can get in the way of construction or the given layout means there is no easy access into the garage itself, which can deter and frustrate those who would otherwise use that facility. People tend to avoid garages where navigation is difficult and where space is so confined that even small vehicles need to be careful parking, entering and exiting.

A quality firm works around these limitations though to build a garage that is durable, intuitive, and pleasing to the eye. The most common method of meeting those standards is the design/build (DB) system in which a single firm is given responsibility for the entire project and is put in charge of finding an engineer or architect to design the building, contracting a builder to perform the construction, and integrates the two jobs together from the very beginning to ensure there is little to no conflict between the architect or builder.

This business model allows the owner of the garage-to-be to avoid being pulled into the middle of disputes and gives them a clear idea of the estimated cost of the project since a single firm is utilized for the entire process, where as the design/bid/build model can have fluctuating costs due to different architects or firms trying to out-bid one another which can make it difficult for the prospective owner to pin down how much the project will cost them. The DB method also allows for a faster construction of the building itself with the improved lines of communication between designer and builder, as well as efficient management of costs.

With the DB method aiding the owner of the project in costs, they can afford to take risks on design features for the garage itself which improves the garage's functionality for those who choose to use it. All these considerations are just the beginning of a process that can take several years before producing a finished parking garage and the method used to decide whom is designing and who is building the building can make all the difference in the world in people using that facility. Knowing all this, it's become difficult to look at a parking garage the same way that I used to before pulling into one.

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