

THE PARKING LOT BECOMES A SPECTACLE

by Ernesto Alfaro

Houston Coffee & Cars. This monthly event changes the program of the parking lot at Memorial City Mall into a performance not just for cars, but people, too. It started 13 years ago with no more than 15 cars and quickly grew, now drawing 3,000 cars and 8,000 attendees month after month. Organizer Jorge Verdejo says, "We are able to feature some of the most sought after and exclusive machines in the world. We have some people that travel from all over the country monthly and we have some that arrive as early as 4 am just to get a great spot." While the vehicles are certainly the draw, the placemaking takeaway lesson here is that this event is about the people. The success of the event has been so steady, that Memorial City Mall organizers have changed the section of the parking lot in which it takes place, from the less visible south side, to the parking area fronting Gessner Road. The program transformation is impressive, and the visitors gets the sense that while people are there to see the vehicles, they are also drawn to the human spectacle, to see the toddlers in remote control toy cars, to pet the cute Corgis out for a stroll with their humans, to see each other. Photos by Tom Flaherty.

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