

ARCHITECTURAL TRENDLETTER

A PUBLICATION OF GENFLEX ROOFING SYSTEMS

PARKING IN THE FUTURE

Americans may have a hard time imagining an automated parking garage—one that uses robots to park and retrieve cars—but Europeans and Asians have been using such a system since the late 1950s. Now, an Ohio-based company, Robotic Parking, Inc., is poised to introduce its next-generation robotics-based parking system to the United States. The company's modular automated parking system (MAPS) combines technology from the auto industry (the assembly line's automated transfer system) with warehousing and computer technologies. The result is a fully automated parking system that can fit twice as many cars as a conventional garage.

At ground level, drivers park their cars on a platform (a light indicates when the car is positioned correctly) and then activate the system with a ticket or personal code. Robots move the car and platform into an available stall. Drivers can later retrieve their cars with their tickets or codes; their cars are brought to ground level in a forward-drive position. The system can park and retrieve multiple cars at once. Benefits include no chance of denting or scratching vehicles, better security for vehicles and drivers, competitive construction costs, and lower maintenance costs since fewer employees are needed to operate the garage and since lighting and ventilation requirements within the garage are reduced.

MAPS facilities can be built above ground, below ground, or both. Once installed, the system can be modified, expanded, or even disassembled and relocated. The country's first MAPS system will be located in Hoboken, New Jersey. Robotic Parking's president and CEO predicts MAPS will revolutionize the parking industry.