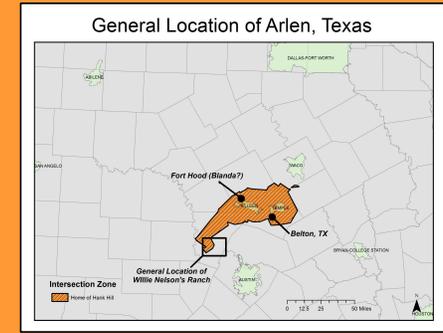
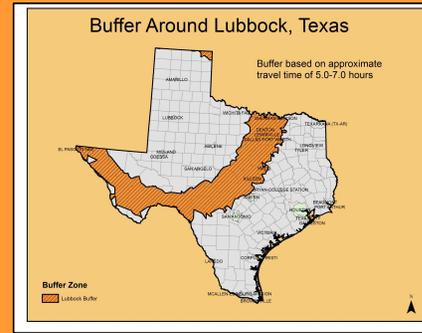
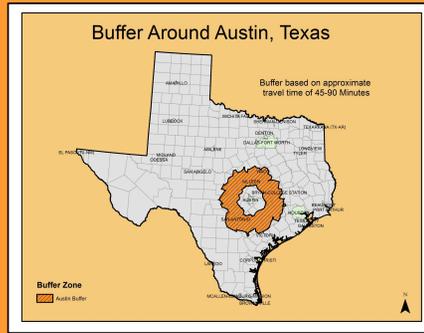


# KING OF THE GEOGRAPHIC HILL: WHERE IS ARLEN, TEXAS?

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## Background

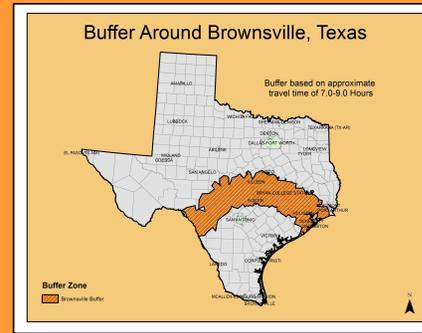
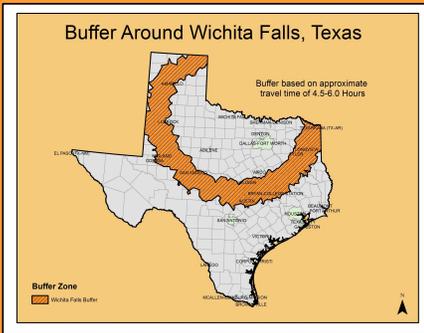
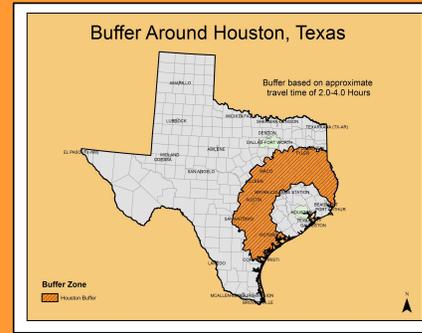
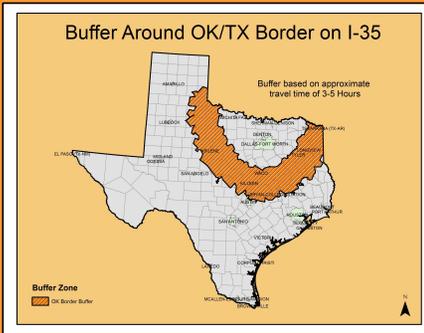
This project is an outgrowth of a class exercise built around the TV program "King of the Hill". The show was aired on the FOX network between 1997 and 2010, and is centered on the day to day life of Hank Hill and his friends and neighbors. The setting for the program was the fictional city of Arlen, Texas, and Arlen and its location often play a central role in the plot of any given episode. The ultimate intent of the project was to develop an assignment that would require students to use some good old fashioned logic as well as skills in ArcMap (i.e. Overlay Analysis) and Network Analyst.

Students are required to use "clues" from the television series and combine them with analytical tools in GIS. Travel distances were "calculated" and Network Analyst was used to build buffers around each travel destination from/to Arlen, Texas. The students were then required to use overlay analysis to determine the most reasonable area in which Arlen would be located.

There are numerous clues as to where Arlen is located in relation to other places in Texas given throughout the thirteen year run of the series, but no clues are given that would provide an ability to pinpoint the location of the fictional city. However, throughout the show various well-known Texas landmarks and sites are mentioned and shown, and the time necessary to travel to other cities is mentioned on several occasions. In addition, the town of Belton, Texas is the home of a rival school for the "Tom Landry Middle School Longhorns" – the fictional school where Bobby Hill is a student – and there is an actual town of Belton in central Texas.

In addition, several fan sites and discussion blogs have attempted to surmise that the location of Arlen is in either the Killeen/Temple area or in suburban Dallas (such as Richardson), but none of these discussions has attempted to logically calculate the location of Arlen. One reason that Killeen/Temple are often thought to be the general location of Arlen is the location of Fort Hood just outside Killeen combined with the proximity of Belton. Arlen has a nearby, fictional Army base (Ft Blanda).

For this project distance ranges based on the times mentioned in the series to reach certain destinations were developed, and then buffers were built using the NHPN Highway Network Dataset and the Service Area function of Network Analyst, and then selected the intersection of these buffers to represent the location of Arlen.



## Location Clues

The following clues as to the possible location of Arlen were derived from the individual episodes:

- 1) In several episodes Austin is portrayed as a modest distance from Arlen. In Season 5 (Hank and the Glass Elevator), Hank and his friends leave Arlen at 5 PM and arrive in Austin in time for dinner – based on this the buffer is built on 45-90 minutes at 55-60 MPH.
- 2) Peggy Hill visits Lubbock (or mentions the trip) in several episodes to buy shoes (she wears size 16.5). In Season 1 (Order of the Straight Arrow) Peggy rushes Hank and Bobby away on a camping trip so that she can spend the day driving to Lubbock, then stay in a motel, purchase her shoes the next morning at 9 AM and return to Arlen before dinner – given this chain of events we chose to build a buffer around Lubbock of 5-7 hours at 55-65 MPH.
- 3) In Season 7 (Queasy Rider) Hank and Peggy Hill travel to South Dakota – Peggy states at the Oklahoma State Line on I-35 that "Hank has been driving all morning". They were previously shown waving goodbye to their friends in the morning (approx 8AM), so we can assume that 3-5 Hours at 55-65 MPH is a reasonable buffer.
- 4) Hank's father lives "3 hours away" in Houston – Season 3 (As Old as the Hills). We used a buffer of 2-4 hours at 55-65 MPH to allow for driving variations.
- 5) Hank states that Wichita Falls, Texas is "about 6 hours away" in Season 3 (Hank's Cowboy Movie) – given the term "about", we built a buffer based on 4.5-6 hours at 55-65 MPH. In other episodes, Hank is portrayed as a very slow and careful driver who follows speed limits, so making out the buffer at 6 hours is reasonable.
- 6) In Season 2 (Three Days of the Kahndo), The Hill's and their neighbors The Souphanousinphone's travel all day to a coastal Mexican resort. Assuming that they must travel through Brownsville to get to the Mexican coast, we estimated a buffer around Brownsville of 7-9 hours at 55-65 MPH.

Other clues include mentioning the nearby town of Belton on several occasions, and Bobby riding his bicycle to Willie Nelson's Ranch, which is northwest of Austin. We did not deem this as fully plausible since Nelson's ranch is not in or close to a really sizable city. However, it certainly lends credence to the idea that Arlen is in Central Texas. Also, two landmarks in Amarillo are brought up (The Big Texan and the Cadillac Graveyard), but these clues do not fit with any of the other clues provided throughout the series.

"I sell propane and propane accessories in Arlen, Texas" --- Hank Hill, 1997

