



9 / THE JULIAN STREET INN

To contrast with the weakness of the centers in the example of the Berlin library, I now show an example of a complete building which is somewhat similar in size, function, and character — but in which the centers have more substantial life. This is the Julian Street Inn in San Jose, California, a shelter for homeless people, which my colleagues and I built in 1987–88. It is at the intersection of Julian and Montgomery Streets and provides shelter and beds for about one hundred people.

The theoretical example of pages 279–82, made up for illustrative purposes, contained perhaps half-a-dozen main centers; even if we count all the centers, a few dozen centers at most. Let us now look at the design and formation of a real building, where there are several hundred major centers, and all in all (including all the smallest ones) hundreds of thousands of centers in the building. In the following example, efforts were made to make all these centers living.

The building process started, of course, with a list of generic centers (patterns), which we worked out with some of the homeless people in San Jose. People were living — at that time — under bridges in the bitter cold. In my discussion with them, I found that the most vital thing, from their point of view, was territory, the desire that this building be their territory. I formulated the idea of large gardens for summer; of individual private small rooms like those on a sleeping-car train, as private space for beds; of a comfort-

able gathering place where people could wait — sometimes for hours, before the place opened.

When they and I together began to apply these patterns to the site, we quickly took a few steps in establishing major centers, as centers unfolded from the site, and from the cultural patterns.

At the outset, the issue was simple: to find a way of making this building a place where people, frightened, lonely, often dirty, from the life on the street, could find a safe haven, a home for a few days. My aim was to make the building, as far as possible, a place where they could feel safe, and feel normal. I wanted it, also, to be a place where I myself would like to stay, giving each person their own dignity, as much as I would want it myself if I stayed there.

I had several meetings with homeless people in the area, told them that I wanted them to design it with me, and that we should try to make it as friendly as possible. They told me then, from the very beginning: the main issue is “who has the key?” It was clear that establishing private domains, places which people could see as theirs, was the most vital feeling. Beyond that, we were looking for a system of large centers which could provide a haven for the sanctity of private territory.

The very first thing was to fit the building to the long curve of the road, at the Julian Montgomery intersection, keeping intact the centers which existed in that curve (illustration 1).

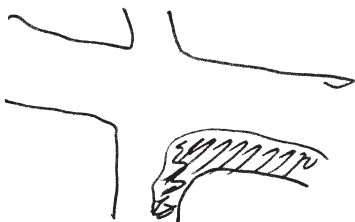


Illustration 1: Getting the position of the building in relation to the site

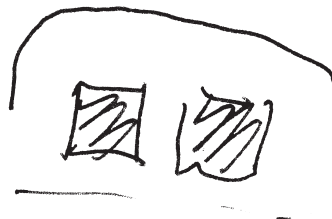


Illustration 2: Conceiving two courtyards, in relation to the curved site boundary, and the existing shed.

The next thing, provision of comfortable and quiet gardens, was difficult on the small site, and I suggested that we build two courtyards, internally to the building, and placed everything around them (illustration 2).

Placing the building mass around these two, on the curvilinear site, was hard. The next thing to emerge were the centers on the building mass, forming uniform segments along the curved boundary, and forming, in effect, a boundary to the courtyards (illustration 3).

Next, the most important interior center of the building, the dining hall, came between the two courtyards, thus, by its placing, and shape, emphasizing and giving life to the two courtyards (illustration 4).

Then, a colonnade running the length of the building, connected the two courtyards, and thus animated them (illustration 5).

Each of these centers, when formed, took the shape that was “left over” within the field of the whole, and made something of it, within that field. The centers created in this way do not have striking individualistic shapes like the centers in the Berlin library, but they have shapes which are softer, arising from the fabric of the space and its wholeness as they present themselves, yet as far as possible reasonably coherent as centers, with the potential to become beautiful if detailed well, while fitting in comfortably to the whole and leaving the structure of the whole intact. That is what makes them living. The main courtyard is off-rectangular, a trapezium. The second courtyard has a fillet in the corner to make the awkward acute angle go away. The entrance lobby, consists of two spaces, each coherent in itself, but necessarily placed at a slight angle to each other, so as to allow each (within the curved building envelope) to maintain a coherent relation with the spaces next to it.

Such “fitting in” is a necessary feature of a successful adaptive process, and it is this, of course, which is responsible for the complex geometry of nature. Thus the pattern of the building as a whole, was formed by a fairly short sequence of steps, each forming some aspect of the

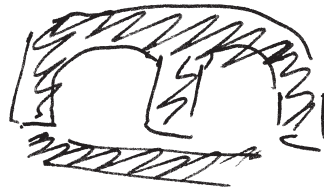


Illustration 3: Getting the shape of the building from the curve of the street, with the dining hall (marked dark) then formed as the major center, which strengthens the rest.

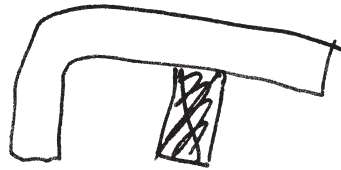


Illustration 4: Emphasizing the main dining hall through shape and position, as a strong center.

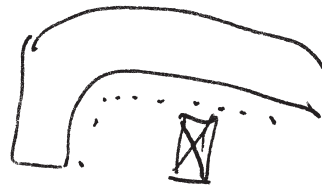
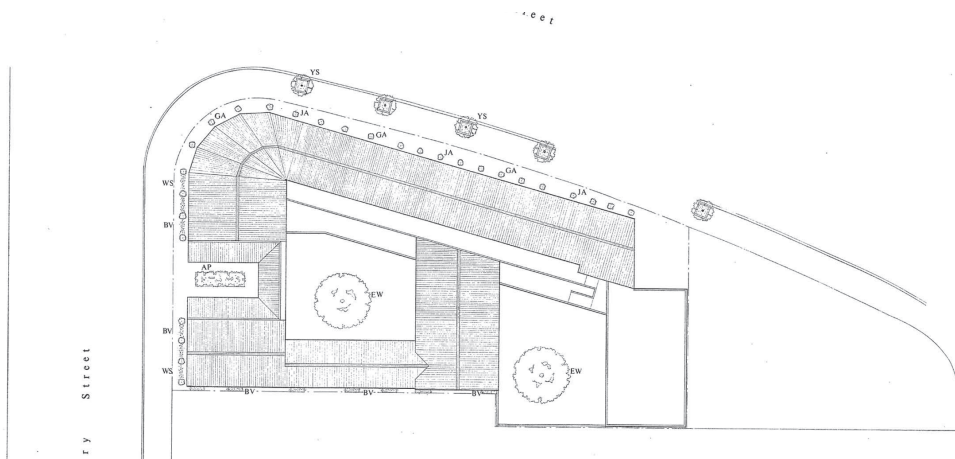


Illustration 5: forming the interior arcade as a strong center

building, and each forming one or more centers; the form of the whole is the result of this very short sequence.

Next came some lesser centers. One was an entrance courtyard where people could wait, sheltered, before the building opened up at night. Once the entrance courtyard had been placed, a sequence of two lobbies had to be placed, one closer to the outside, one close to the interior of the building. Once this sequence had been placed, step after step was taken like this.

At each step the intent was to make the space as good as possible, while not juggling spaces, rather doing each one correctly—and then taking the consequences morphologically and allowing the next one to be formed in relation to the first.



Site plan of the finished building

At the next level of structure, further centers emanate from the bigger ones. A curved wall follows the curve of the road, making a center in the street.

Internally, two gardens, enclosed within the site in donut form, formed major centers. Benches along the outside curve of the building, make the building welcome. The entrance is another courtyard, enclosing space where people can shelter. The main arcade ties the gardens together with the buildings. The dining hall develops at a key spot in the middle, strengthening the two major courtyards.

Each of these centers is supported by still smaller elements — details — as far as possible also made as living centers to make the larger centers stronger, and make them come to life. The column bases and capital. The fountain, and its tiles. The base of the building. The arches of the dining hall. The beautiful curved windows in the dining hall.

Finally, as I shall explain in the following section, the ornaments themselves were conceived and worked through, in such a way that they were also made, as far as I could manage it, from living centers.

In this building, the fundamental process draws everything from the existing wholeness and from the process of preserving structure. This does not only govern plan and overall vol-

ume design; it governs even very small building details.

How is this all different from Stirling's Berlin library. Is it honestly true to say that one has more living centers than the other. Could one not make up a story, similar to the one I have just told, about the design elements in the Stirling library? What is it then, about the Julian Street Inn, and its centers, and the way its centers are made, which gives them a special life, which makes them more authentic, or more deeply adapted, more truly derived from the wholeness which is there?

In my discussion about the Berlin library, I said that there are four main weaknesses: (a) Lack of smaller centers; (b) Centers being image-like copies of other centers; (c) Centers do not emerge from the surrounding wholeness; (d) Centers do not help form any larger centers

In this building, as a result of the repeated use of the fundamental process, I believe it can be seen that the centers *do* meet the four conditions which are lacking in the Berlin Library example:

1. *In most cases, each center does have strong smaller centers.* Look, for example, at the column capital. The capital is a strong center. It has a shaped top which is a strong center. That top has bands which are strong centers; etched relief shaped in



The main courtyard

the ornament and forming strong centers in the zig-zags; tiled inserts which form strong centers; diamonds painted on the tiled inserts, even these are strong centers.

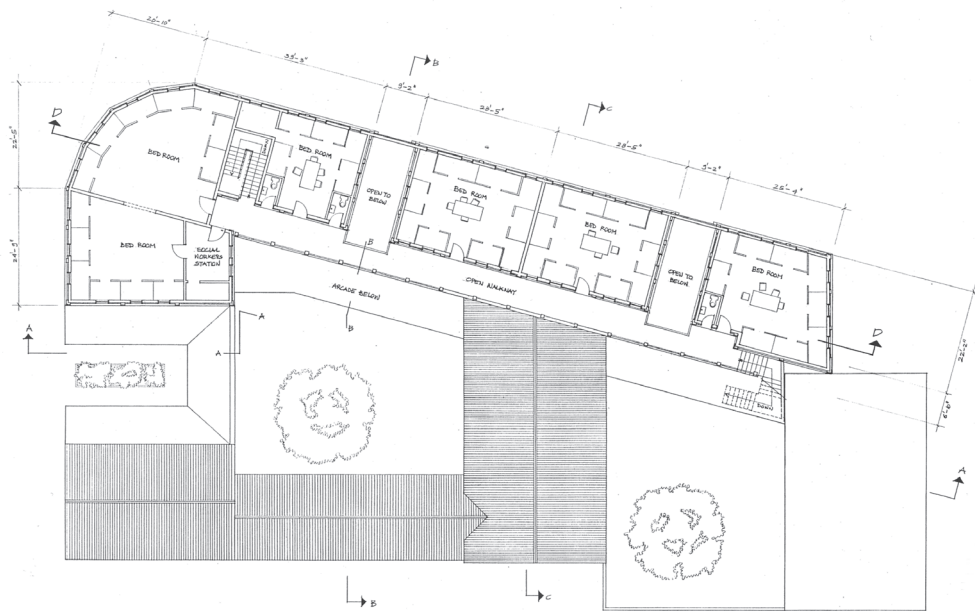
2. Centers do originate in the essence of the building: they are not image-like copies of other centers. The

fountain is not copied from any fountain. It arises from the corner position and its strength as a center comes, in part, from this position. The main courtyard feels old; but it is not an image copied from any actual place, it has strength as a center which arises from the nature of the courtyard, the arcade, shade, walking, grass, light.

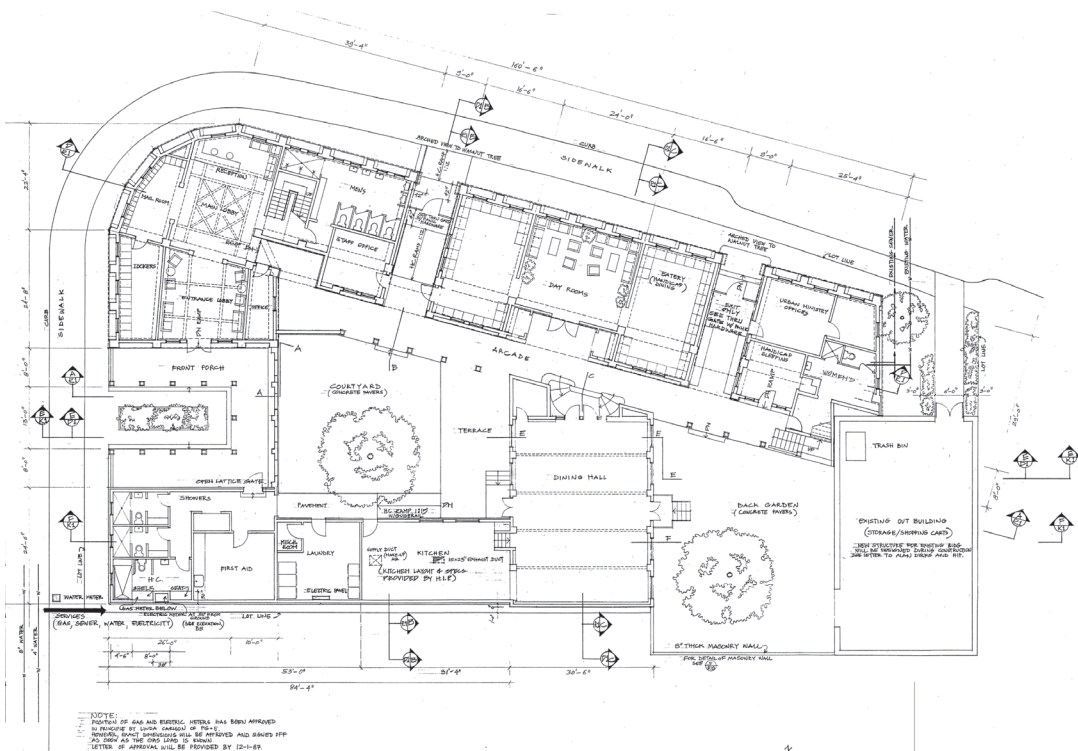


One of the main entrances

THE PROCESS OF CREATING LIFE

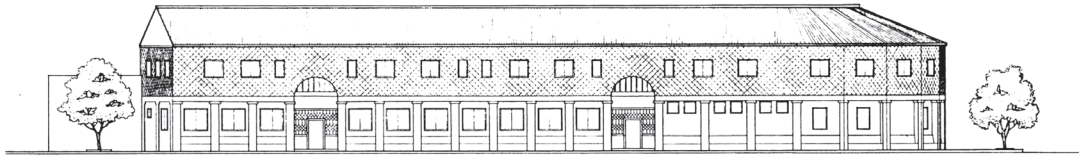


Upstairs plan showing sleeping areas around the courtyards

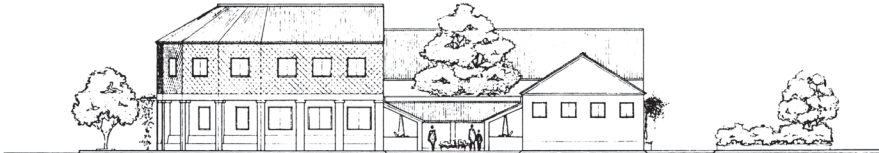


Downstairs plan showing communal rooms, arcade, and courtyards

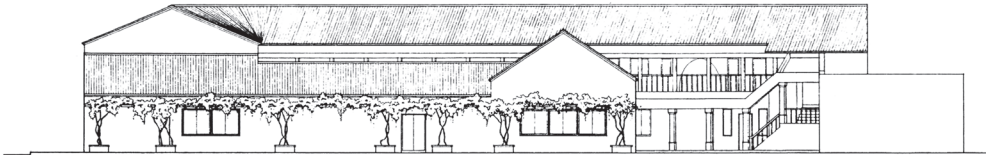
ALWAYS MAKING CENTERS



North Elevation



West Elevation



South Elevation

Elevations and sections of the finished building



Stair to the sleeping rooms



Fountain and roses



Benches in the sun, along the Julian Street side of the building. Most of the fifteen properties — ALTERNATING REPETITION, BOUNDARIES, STRONG CENTERS, THE VOID, GRADIENTS, NOT-SEPARATENESS, GOOD SHAPE, LEVELS OF SCALE, LOCAL SYMMETRIES, and others — are visible, all of them generated by the living process

3. *Centers do emerge from the surrounding wholeness.* The ornament of the capital arises from its position on the square column. The tiles on the wall originate from the wall-surface itself. The roses grow near the fountain, from shade, sun, water, grass.

4. *Centers do form larger centers.* The entrance archway is formed and shaped to intensify the wall. The fountain really does intensify the corner of the garden. The arches in the dining hall, are placed and shaped, even in their smallest details, to make the space radiant as a whole.

Thus the presence of living process — a careful adherence to the principle that all centers which are created should as far as possible be made living through the fifteen transformations — does help to make a larger living structure in the building and its surroundings.



Details on the capital of an arcade column. These details form smaller centers (the band, the boundary, the diamond, the zigzag lines) — and within these smaller centers yet smaller centers have been formed. That is how the capital gets its life.



The dining hall