

All services off Arena

If services are located all over the building, one or two will inevitably dominate, clients will not realize that the others exist, and the referral process will break down.

There are five points to note.

1. For the community the services are the most important part of the building; they don't want them to fade into the background, behind a "culture" center, or the like. (This sentiment was clearly expressed by members of the Hunts Point Community in meetings during 1967-68.)

2. The services must operate in parallel; no one should be allowed to dominate the others. If, for example, one service takes over the ground floor, and pushes the others upstairs, people will tend to associate the entire building with this dominant service, and forget that

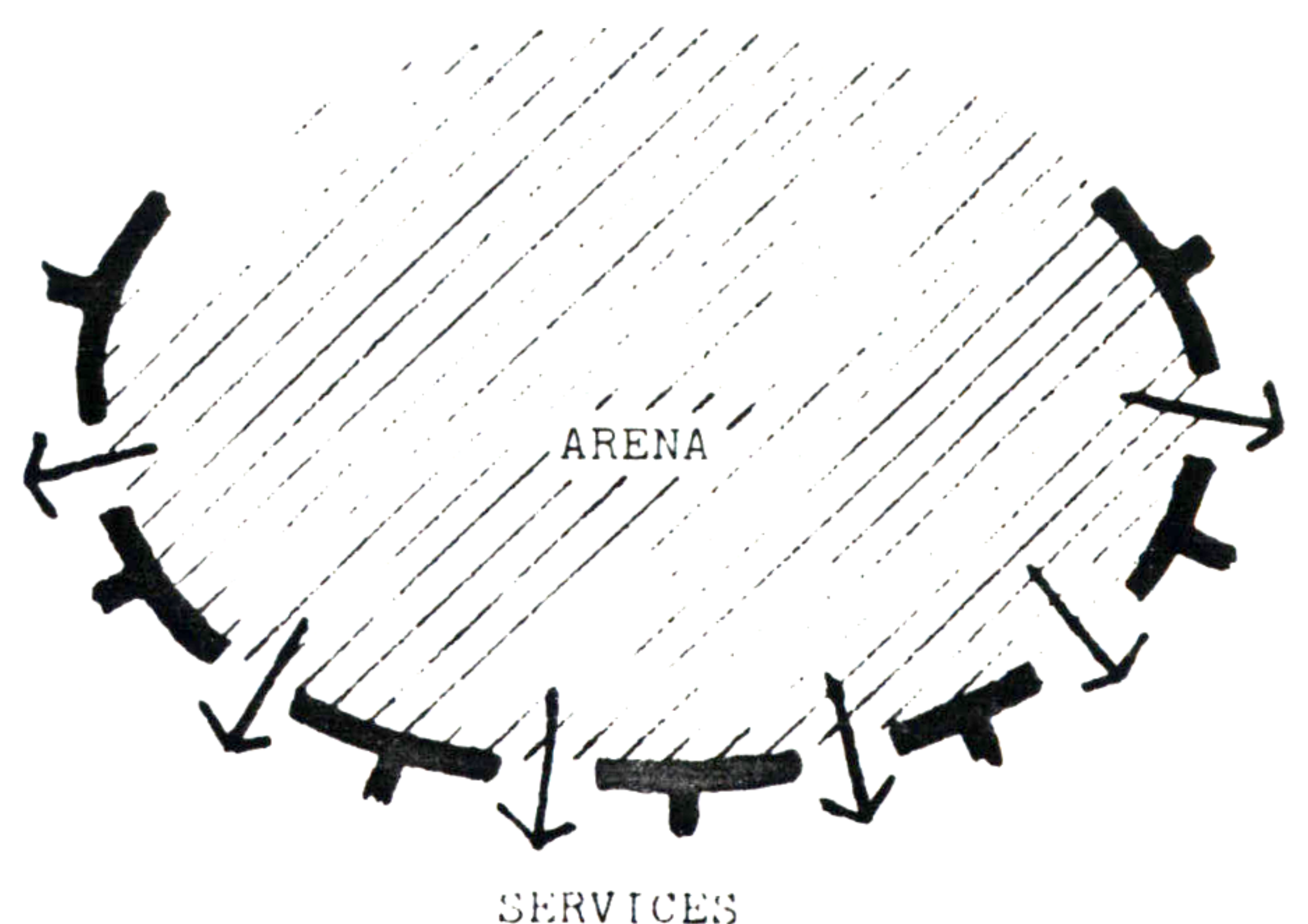
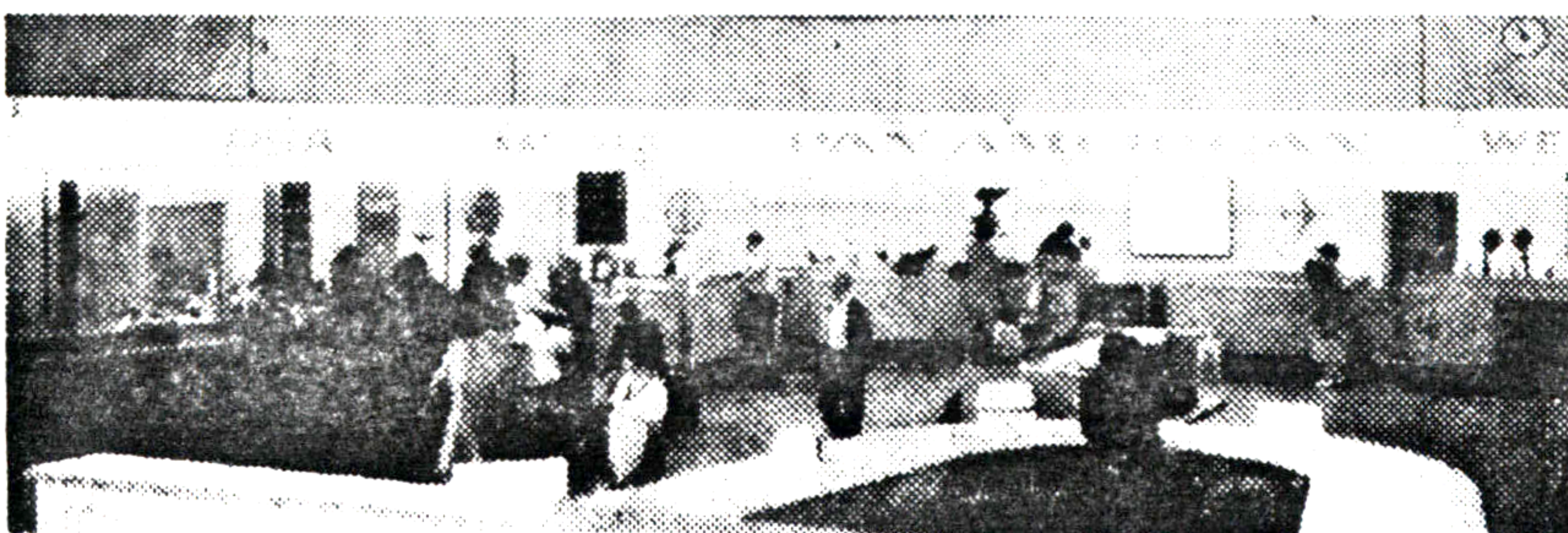
the others exist.

3. Bringing a wide range of services together, heightens the possibility for effective referral. When services are spread out, referral does not work (55.6% don't follow through; *Gene Bernardi, "Preliminary Evaluation of Neighborhood Organization Programs — Individual contact and Referral Activity", Department of Human Resources, Oakland, California, 1967, Table V.*) Referral becomes real when the service in question is right there, across the room, and can be pointed to.

4. From his experience with a center, the client should come to know

that the concept "multi - service" has some significance. There is some evidence to indicate this rarely happens today. Four out of five people interviewed in an East Oakland MSC did not realize that the Center offered anything more than that for which they were waiting. Also: "...Most of the clients know about the centers in a very limited fashion...their acquaintance...is likely to be for the purpose of securing a certain kind of service. Accordingly they associate the center with that function and nothing else." *Kirschner Associates, "A Description and Evaluation of Neighborhood Centers, Albuquerque, New Mexico, December 1966, p. 25.* (continued over)

Therefore: Let every service have space on the main floor. For each service, place at least the entire interview space in this main area. Open all the services to a common space, an arena for public loitering — each service with roughly equal frontage on this arena. If there is a reception station, make it directly visible and accessible from the arena. If a service needs more than its main floor space, put the extra space directly above it, on another floor, with direct vertical circulation.



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Problem (continued)

5. Inter-service communication between staff interviewers must be fluid. Clients get better help with their problems when staff members from various agencies are able to coordinate their efforts, and deal with the problem on a "case" basis. In theory this is obvious, but in practice it has been a very difficult relationship to achieve. Kirschner reports (*op.cit.*, p. 34.):

"At present, with rare exceptions the most that can be said about the coordinating function of neighborhood centers is that they represent a single accessible point for the dissemination of information about services. This is a convenience for clients seeking information and represents a service whose values should not be underestimated. At the same time, however, it is a far cry from the idea that centers should function to coordinate services on 'a case' basis. This is a much more difficult task requiring a high order of professional and technical skills. Where efforts have been made to set up integrated programs the impetus seems to have come from planning at the CAA level."

And on page 44:

"The integrated efforts that appear to have been most successful have focused on 'case' coordination and have involved a very considerable devotion of time and effort to provide across-the-board but intensive help for families. Integrated efforts of large organizations dealing with particular neighborhoods, types of clientele or problems have been rare and not often successful."

We also have evidence from Robert Perlman and David Jones "Neighborhood Service Centers", HEW,

Washington, D.C., 1967, p. 34:

"Despite the strains, more interservice activity occurred than would be indicated by the fact that 70% of the cases in the sample received service from only one unit in the center. Actually, in connection with the 23 multi-service cases in the sample, there were four Review Conferences and 21 inter-service consultations. Informal contacts among workers go on all the time but do not show up in the forms and statistics. The lawyer pointed out, for example, that the usefulness of the other services for her clients is enhanced by the possibilities for communication within the staff and that this contrasted with the more typical legal aid office which must refer to other agencies all non-legal problems."

This last remark makes it clear that inter-service coordination does exist; but also makes it clear how important it is to enhance it wherever possible.

Good integration of services thus seems to depend to some extent on open and informal lines of communication among staff interviewers throughout the center. Intuition tells us that a staff member is most likely to be in touch with other staff members who work near him, and on the same floor.

Thus all interviewers should be located on one floor off a common space. If any service needs more space, than it can have on the main floor, the clerical staff should move onto another floor, with some convenient vertical connection between them and their ground floor counterpart.

This pattern enhances inter-service communication among interview-

ers, at the expense of intra-service communication between interviewers and clerical staff. It is true that this is an unusual step, and that the individual services may try to resist it. In defense, we must point out that the communication *between* services is, *from the point of view of multi-service*, more important functionally than the communication between interviewers and clerical staff within a given service.

Context

A multi-service center, or any public building which contains a number of services, working in parallel.

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This pattern is tentative. If you have any evidence to support or refute its current formulation, please send it to the Center for Environmental Structure, P.O. Box 5156, Berkeley, California 94705; we will add your comments to the next edition.