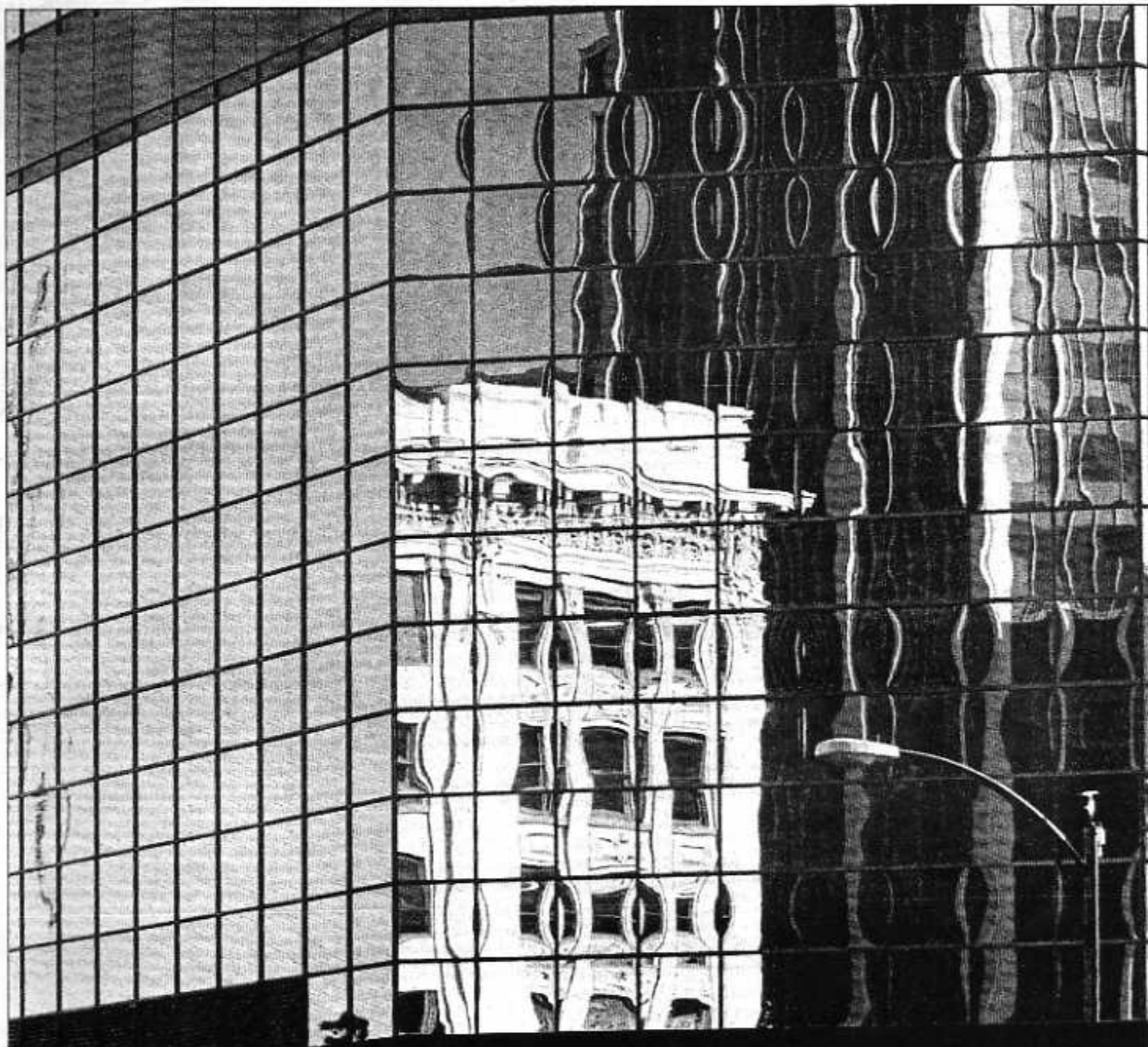


Open Letter

HIDDEN LEAVES

A Publication of the Ilan-Lael Foundation



San Diego In Search of Its Center

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"As the years go by and all the investments are made, and the bright new buildings rise shouldering each other in the sky, how will we all feel about Centre City? Or perhaps it is too much to ask that anybody have any feelings about anything as practical as their city. But a really important question is whether a city exists at all without its most important treasures being at its center. And to be treasures they must do a lot more than merely be practical. They must be surprisingly good and easily lovable. One should feel thankful for being a citizen of such a city." Lloyd Ruocco, FAIA



In the sixties and seventies, people rejected cities in regimental numbers and "returned to the land." Or suburbia. Their objective was to find elemental truth and harmony in what nature could provide. The extremists grew their own food, built a cabin in the wildwood, and reduced their needs. "The Whole Earth Catalogue" and "Foxfire" became a combination Bible and survival guide for these urban expatriots. Canning vegetables and reading the classics by oil lamp replaced a performance by the Bolshoi Ballet as a life-event.

Real



By the eighties, almost everybody came back. Either the land wasn't as hospitable as they had hoped, or close relationships in relative isolation strained, or maybe they felt something was missing. They came back to the city to find it. Most of us are still looking for "It."

Today, some of these people say they like "real cities." New York, Stockholm, Chicago, or Paris are mentioned because of their rich history, the variety of people to watch, and the things to do. They like traditions—sour-dough bread and wine in San Francisco's North Beach, the well-placed cafes in Paris, and buying chestnuts to warm the fingers in Geneva during the first chill of

City?

This third issue of *Hidden Leaves* is dedicated to the children of San Diego. They will remember the places we showed them and what they did in the city. If what we build gives them a bright memory of childhood—full of events and merry noise, color and intriguing spaces—it won't hurt us big kids, either.

autumn. When we asked them about downtown San Diego, they snickered and repeated that they liked "real cities."

But let's examine what we've got here. We have made a good start. Our site is a most spectacular place for a city—an amphitheater with the sea as a stage. Our history is full of individuals who created a world-famous park and zoo plus the organizations working for the continuance of sensitive planning. The mix of residents is rich enough for any city: university people and transients; businessmen vic for the same chair in the cafe with theatre people, musicians, and artists; Latinos enriched our sense of design as much as settlers from Minnesota. People who take the long view of the future use phrases like "world-class city"

and delight in seeing the sea, the mountains, and dollar signs reflected in mirrored glass. Even the most pragmatic official city planners are aware that human scale and nighttime activity pump life into downtown. We already have pioneers in Gaslamp and the city is trying to draft regulations for the expeditious inclusion of strolling musicians.

All this sounds pretty good. The big question is how to fit the things we want into what is already here. How do we make a bond between people and their city so they demand it to be an exciting, jumping place? What is still left undone?

We can't provide the answers immediately, but we can raise the questions. The answers will come when enough of us ask the right questions.—KK—

HIDDEN LEAVES

San Diego in Search of its Center

Editors
Kay Kaiser/James Hubbell

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The City at the End of the Twentieth Century

I have long held that ignorance is fruitful ground for accomplishment. Certainly to set out in twenty-eight pages of *Hidden Leaves* to describe our city at the end of the twentieth century is enough to make even Don Quixote snigger!

At the beginning of our quest for ideas and answers, we were met with many questions: "San Diego . . . a city?" "Aren't cities a thing of the past?" Luckily, we came upon a beautiful kernel by Lewis Mumford in his *The City In History*. It boosted our spirits and carried us through this issue.

"Before modern man can gain control over the forces that now threaten his very existence, he must resume possession of himself. This sets the chief mission for the city of the future: that of creating a visible regional and civic structure, designed to make man at home with his deeper self and his larger world, attached to images of human nurture and love.

"We must now conceive the city, accordingly, not primarily as a place of business or government, but as an essential organ for expressing and actualizing the new human personality—that of 'One World Man.' The old separation of man and nature, of townsman and countryman, of Greek and barbarian, or citizen and foreigner, can no longer be maintained: for communication, the entire planet is becoming a village; and as a result, the smallest neighborhood or precinct must be planned as a working model of the larger world. Now it is not the will of a single deified ruler, but the individual and corporate will of its citizens, aiming at self-knowledge, self-government, and self-actualization, that must be embodied in the city. Not industry but education will be the center of their activities; and every process and function will be evaluated and approved just to the extent that it furthers human development, whilst the city itself provides a vivid theatre for the spontaneous encounters and challenges and embraces of daily life."

If Ilan-Lael can hasten the vivid merger of art and building, nature and people in San Diego, we have met our goal. If we can remove barriers—physical and psychological—so people can move easily, visit, find bridges, argue with each other, find stimulus, and feel they *belong* in San Diego, we can claim a "world class city."

Please excuse our amateur status as urban designers; our only experience is the knowledge that cities are for people.—JTH—

