Café Yesterday

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In this project, we were assigned to pick a building or landscape and redesign it by collecting research through observation, published articles, and interviews. My building was Café Yesterday at 1122 University Avenue Berkeley, CA 94702. And after sitting in that café for more times than I can count, I observed the space, documenting people's behavior and the atmosphere of the café. After that, I redesigned the space based on my observations. Not that much later, that redesign became useless and incomplete after I obtained more information from my interview with my informant. So as I collected more and more research, my design kept changing. It was only after I stopped collecting research that I was able to create one final design.

Above Café Yesterday is a large apartment complex. About a year ago, a friend of mine lived in one of those apartments and, like most of the people who lived above, she frequented the café below often. So whenever there was a chance to recommend a café to someone, she would jump at the chance and point towards Café Yesterday. After a full year of this, I actually never went to the café, mainly because it was too far from campus for me to simply pop in to get a cup of coffee or study for an hour. Even though it was a bit out of my way, I still wanted to see what made this café so special, so when this assignment gave me a chance to study any site I wanted, Café Yesterday wasn't far out of sight.
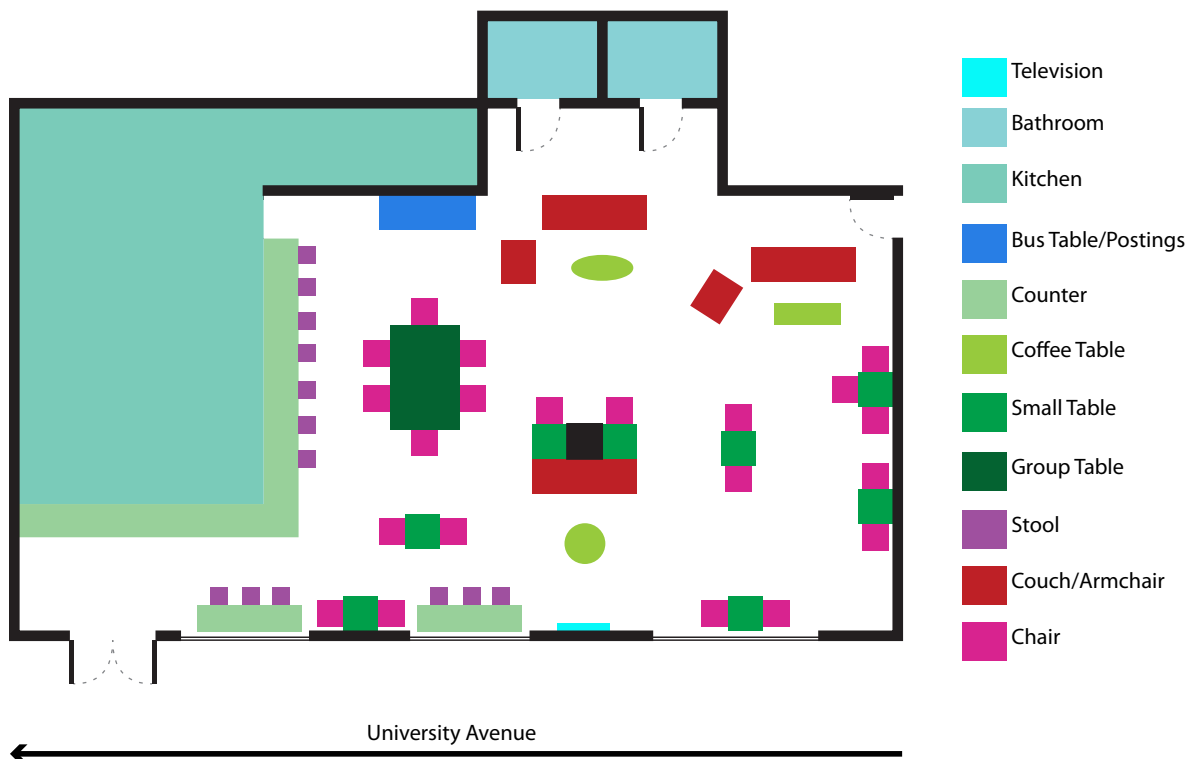
When I first started this project, I originally chose a café that was just a block over from Café Yesterday that I had also heard of as being a great place to get a good cup of coffee. But when I tried to get in contact with someone to become my informant, it felt like I was talking to a wall. Not one person was willing to talk to me, so I quickly decided to choose Café Yesterday instead after I got a positive response from its owner.

When I stepped into Café Yesterday I was enveloped by a warm and funky atmosphere, that seemed to flow and bend itself around everything in the cafe. After setting up camp at one the cafe's tables, I noticed the many different languages being spoken around me. There was German, Swedish, Arabic, Spanish, and some other unrecognizable languages. As diverse as the ethnicities were of the customers, the range of ages was not quite as varied. Among them were mainly college students and a handful of teenagers and middle aged men and women.

The layout of the café is a simple open plan. Café yesterday has many different seating options, bar, group, single, or couch seating. I really liked the variety of seating that the cafe provided because it allowed people choose the right seating situation for their needs.

The couches, however, were one of the seating arrangements that had some flaws. When I visited on a weekday, the café had a large group of teenagers that mingled around one of the couches. This made for a very awkward set up because it was hard for the teens to have a

Original Plan

Television
Bathroom
Kitchen
Bus Table/Postings
Counter
Coffee Table
Small Table
Group Table
Stool
Couch/Armchair
Chair

University Avenue

conversation with each other when the couch and single arm chair stopped them from being able to really sit and face each other when talking. Even though the placement of the couches was awkward, they do make the café feel like a living room, which gives it a very homey feeling. One very successful arrangement of couches is the one that faces the TV, which really makes the cafe take on a living room feel.

One of the other reasons why I think that there's such a homey feeling in the café is because the students that just live above are mainly wearing pajamas or other comfy, at-home clothing because they don't need to go outside their building to reach the café, as there is a door in the back that connects the café to the apartments. Another home characteristic is the wide range of designs among the café's mugs. Some of them being Star Wars or Beatles themed. This wide range of cups makes it feel more homelike because very rarely will you find a house that has all the same mugs.

When it comes to the entrance of the cafe, it feels a bit crammed because, when you come in, you run into the counter where a person would order their drinks or food. This tiny space makes the café feel very cramped, when in reality the rest of the café is very open.

Another thing that I noticed are the spotlights that are strung on the edges of the café inside. They are much brighter than the normal overhead lighting, which is quite perfect for a café, and can be irritating if they are faced towards you because they are so harsh.

Something non design related that I found distracting was the volume of the music played in the restaurant, especially when the place was filled with talkative people. It can get very loud with the chatter and the music, to the point where it no longer is an ideal place to hold a conversation or study as there is too much people trying to talk over the music and each other.

But since I like the music so much, they sometimes play old records there, I cannot bring myself to say that it should be taken away.

METHODS

I collected most of my data from observation and interviews with my informant. For the observation process, I simply staked out a table in the cafe and observed the people in it as well as do work on my laptop and in my sketchbook. On the first visit, I mainly studied the customers and not so much the staff. I simply wrote down what the people did and where they did it and if they ran into any awkward spacial issues. On the next few visits, I focused on the customers and the staff, documenting them in the same way. When it came time for the interviews, I mainly stuck to the set of questions I wrote up before hand, only going off script for clarification or when I found a certain topic to be more fruitful than I anticipated.

My informant, Ryan Brinson, is the owner of Café Yesterday and former pastor. He left his church job to start up a café, a place where he could interact with more people then he could at his church. So when I came up to him and asked if I could interview him, I could only guess that it seemed like another opportunity to talk to someone. His willingness to be interviewed was one of the reasons why I switched cafés in the beginning of this project. I also was pleased to have the owner of the café as my informant, since he could provide me with kitchen and cleaning duties and routines, like the other workers, but unlike the other workers, he could tell me about the reasons why the café was established or what the original design and layout of the café looked like when it first started. He also could detail me with the ideology and intended

purpose of the café that maybe a customer or worker could not pick up on. This way I can see if what the owner wants the café to be is what it actually is.

The interview started out with both of us joking about how this interview was finally happening. We had been trying to make our schedules work for the past week. So after the joking and pleasantries were over, I started the recording and the questions.

My first question for my informant, Ryan, was about his routine; what he did in the morning and night hours of the café. He began to dish out a list of duties. He then mentions how he uses a checklist, which he then offered to give me for reference before realizing he had recently switched over to an electronic version of it. Ryan then began to explain how the night duties were more extensive and since they were staffed thin, it took longer. He separated the day up into time zones. From 7am to 10:30pm, it's just about the costumers. After 10:30, it was cleaning time.

Not much farther into the interview, I asked him to detail the process of taking an order and then making it. Ryan answered by explaining how there are three positions: the host, the barista, and the kitchen commando. Host takes the orders, barista makes the drinks, and the kitchen commando makes the food. However, most of the time the host is the barista.

When I asked him questions on the change in vibe of the café and costumers over the course of the day, his method of explaining was filled with sound effects and hand gestures in describing how busy it is from the morning until 3pm, demonstrating that they were even too busy to talk during that time. When Ryan started to describe the calmer vibe that the café had after 3pm, he began to look around and laugh, saying how he was just now beginning to see how

it was for a costumer in his café. "I don't sit down here very much," he told me, craning his neck
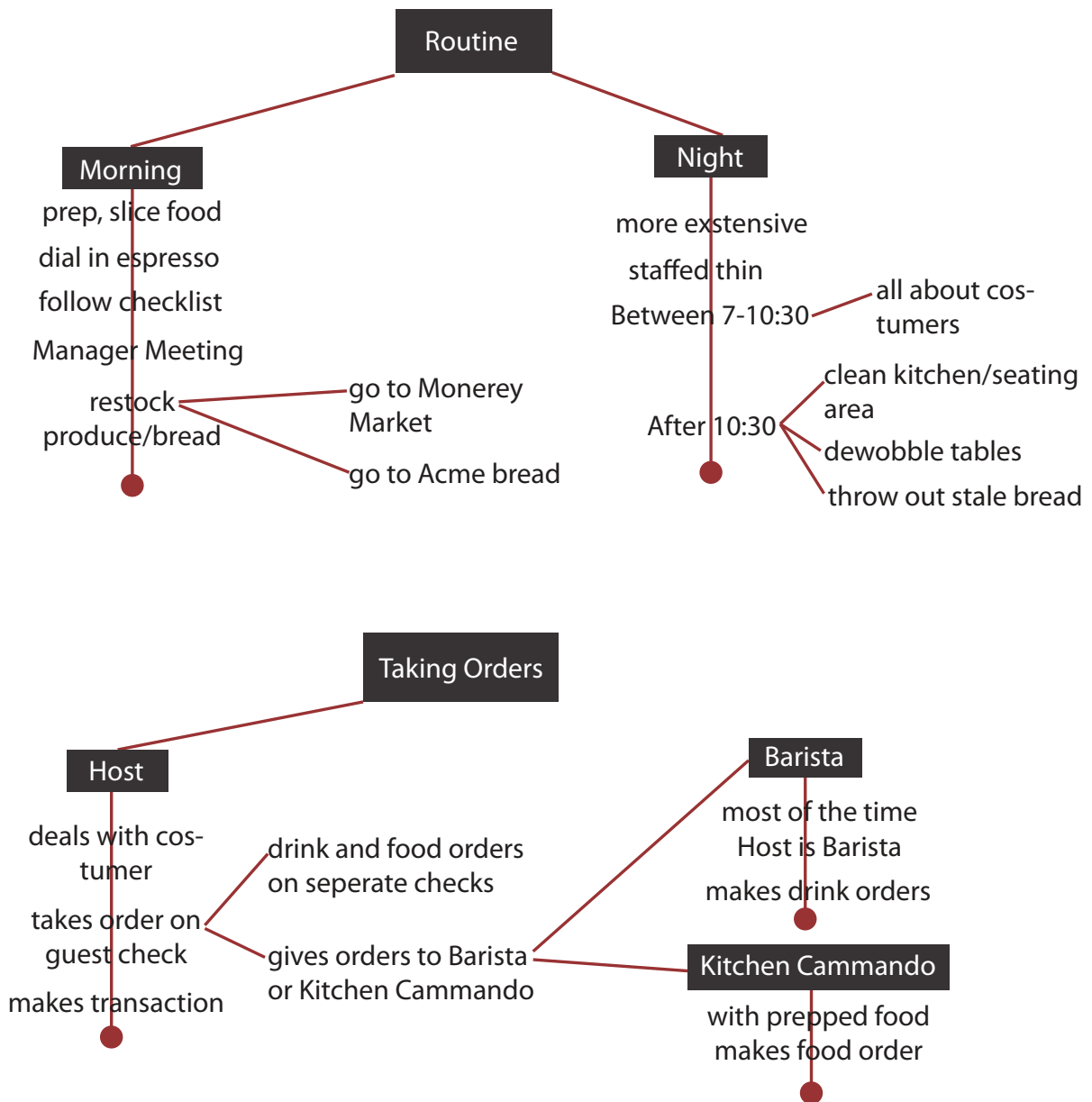
around and taking in the view.

Activities	
Open Mic Night	Comedians Musicians Spoken word/poetry Art shows Nighttime activity Room is rearranged to fit a stage
Study	Happens usually after 3pm Couches and chairs are all movable Lots of outlets
Bar	Alcohol sales go up after 3pm Serve beer or wine
Dine	Sandwiches Salads Lots of cereal combinations pastries
Drink (café)	All types of coffee Organic, fair trade coffee Tea and hot chocolate

Vocabulary	Definition
Host	Cashier
Kitchen Commando	Cook
Organically grown (referring to café)	Advertised through word of mouth only
Local artists	Berkeley art/architecture students
Funky	Hipster, hippie
Peace	Acceptance

When we got down to talking about the people at his cafe, Ryan was very passionate and

ended up talking quite a bit about them. "People is why I started this place, more than coffee or

food, so I'm a people person." He raved about meeting long term locals. The people he's not

too fond of are vandals or people who feel a sense of entitlement. He then mentions how he

wants to help out people with psychological disorders but usually having those type of people is his café isn't very good for business.

His main focus of his café was to create a loving, accepting, and peaceful place for people. He wanted it to grow organically, so he's not fond of advertising. Word of mouth and good service is how he wants to go about growing his business.

Routine

Morning
prep, slice food
dial in espresso
follow checklist
Manager Meeting
restock — go to Monerey Market
produce/bread — go to Acme bread

Night
more exstensive
staffed thin
Between 7-10:30 — all about cos-tumers
After 10:30 — clean kitchen/seating area
dewobble tables
throw out stale bread

Taking Orders

Host
deals with cos-tumer
takes order on guest check
makes transaction
drink and food orders on seperate checks
gives orders to Barista or Kitchen Cammando

Barista
most of the time Host is Barista
makes drink orders

Kitchen Cammando
with prepped food
makes food order

All in all, Ryan was a very relaxed guy, who wore rose tinted sunglasses (even though we were in side) and a newsboy hat. He even pulled out a pipe out during the interview. He had a definite "come as you are" type of mentality and was wrapped up in the idea of locality and pretty much everything Berkeley stood for.

FINDINGS

Insider's Point of View

The storeowner, Ryan, sees his coffee shop as a place to build relationships, relax, study, and get a good cup of coffee. He wants his shop to have a carefree vibe that invites all people and allows everyone to connect with each other and the local community. He has raved about people who have been in the area for their whole lives and who are involved with the community and see the importance of supporting local shops. He sees his place as a little funky and out of order; a little bit of hippy mixed in with a little bit of hipster.

Outsider's Point of View

Most of the authors of my resources talk about how people find identity in places and materials along with how coffee, as a beverage, can influence how people interact in a shop or how a shop interacts with it's costumers. They see coffee as a drink that is used in many social occasions. It brings people together and is the beverage of choice when meeting with a person or when you find yourself in a new place. You always find the coffee place first. They see coffee shops as a great ground to facilitate conversation and bring a community together. It is a drink that binds people together, but at the same time makes them rush through events as well.

Personal Point of View

Café Yesterday definitely has a relaxed and welcoming vibe. It brings in people of different race and age together in one room. Even the music, which sometimes can be loud, plays in the background and prompts conversation when a person recognizes a song. Many of the customers us the cafe for studying, reading for pleasure, or hanging out with friends. The café has a studious air to it despite the other activities, the couches, calm color schemes of mustard, green, and brown, and warm smell of coffee, that seem to drag you into a relaxed and domesticated realm. The people that come alone to the café tend to sit everywhere except the group table. The groups of people at the café will occupy all types of seating in the café but will only choose the bar seating if there is no other choice. Also, most people do not mingle with people they did not come with or know, unless they are sitting at the group table.
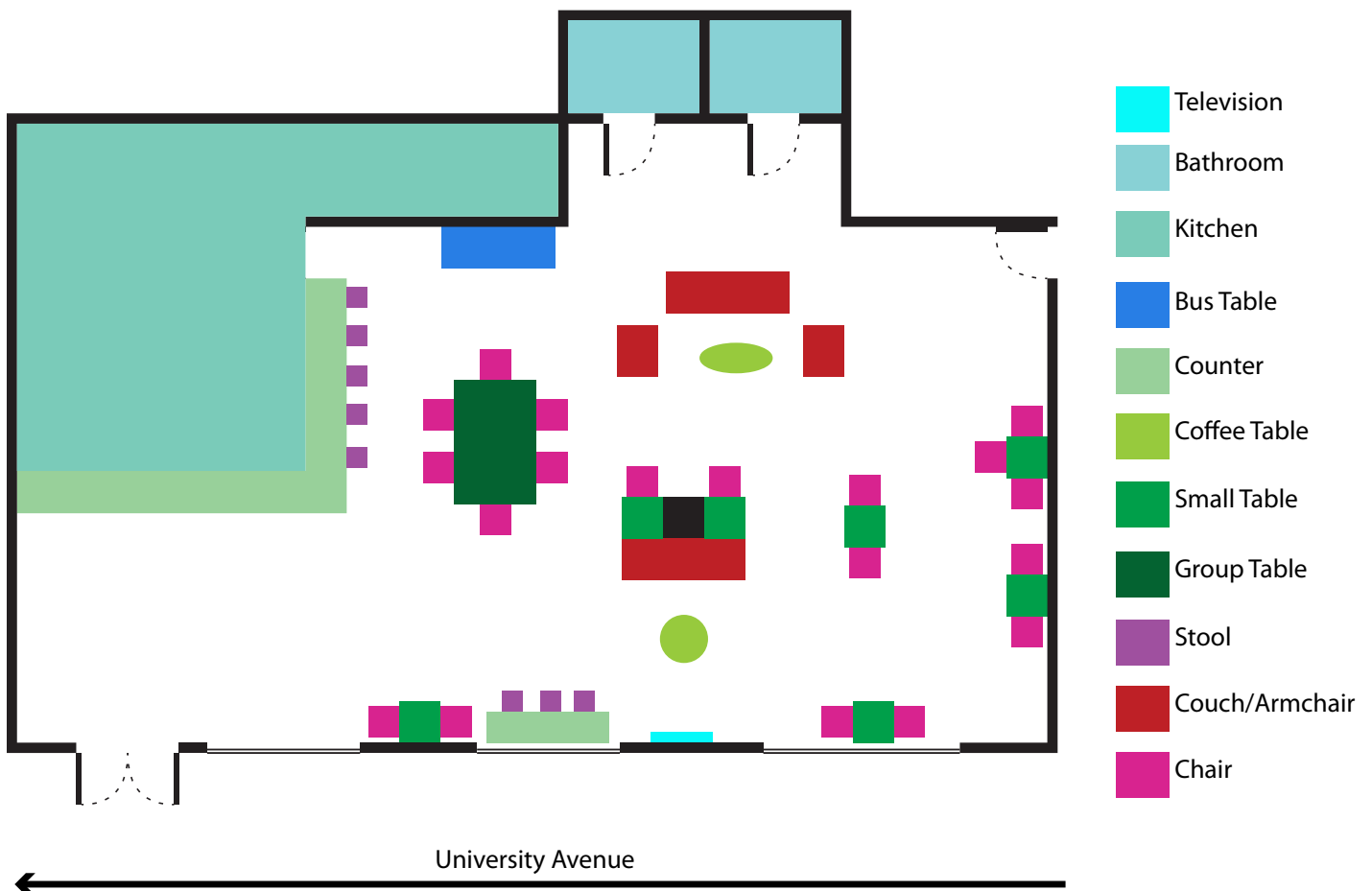
Comparison

The owner tends to see or want his café to be about building relationships with people and he thinks that starting a coffee shop is one of the best places to do that in. The outsiders tend to think that coffee is a great foundation when making friends as well. However, Café Yesterday has a few issues in that it separates people by the formation of furniture, like its couches, which face away from each other, forcing a group of people to stand awkwardly or face away from the people they are talking to. It is well understood between all of points of view that the coffee and welcoming atmosphere that coffee shops tend to have draws people in. People also tend to adopt that relaxed vibe that coffee brings when they enter the shop. The literature sources also mention the effect that coffee has on people in that it makes them more energized and that it is used to keep a person wound up. The store owner tends to view coffee as a something that can make a

person relax and he wants to make his café a place that will make people unwind, rather than wind up.
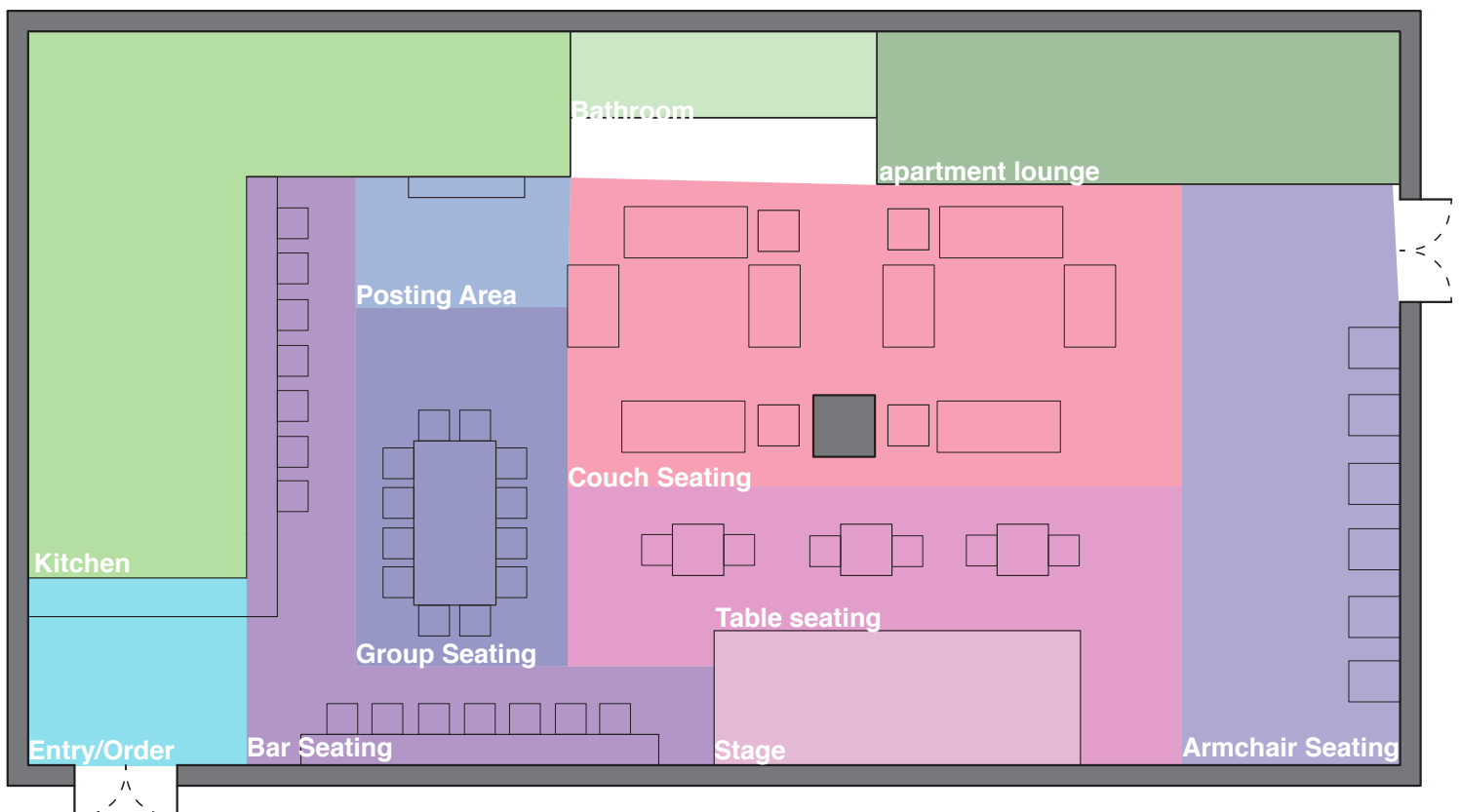
REDESIGN

When I first visited Café Yesterday, I noticed that when you walked in you would bump into counter. So in my first redesign, I moved the counter back. As mentioned in the beginning of the paper, the couches had an awkward arrangement, so I moved them around to accommodate the customers better. After that, I simply just made the entry much more open by not putting very many tables or chairs near it.

First Redesigned Plan

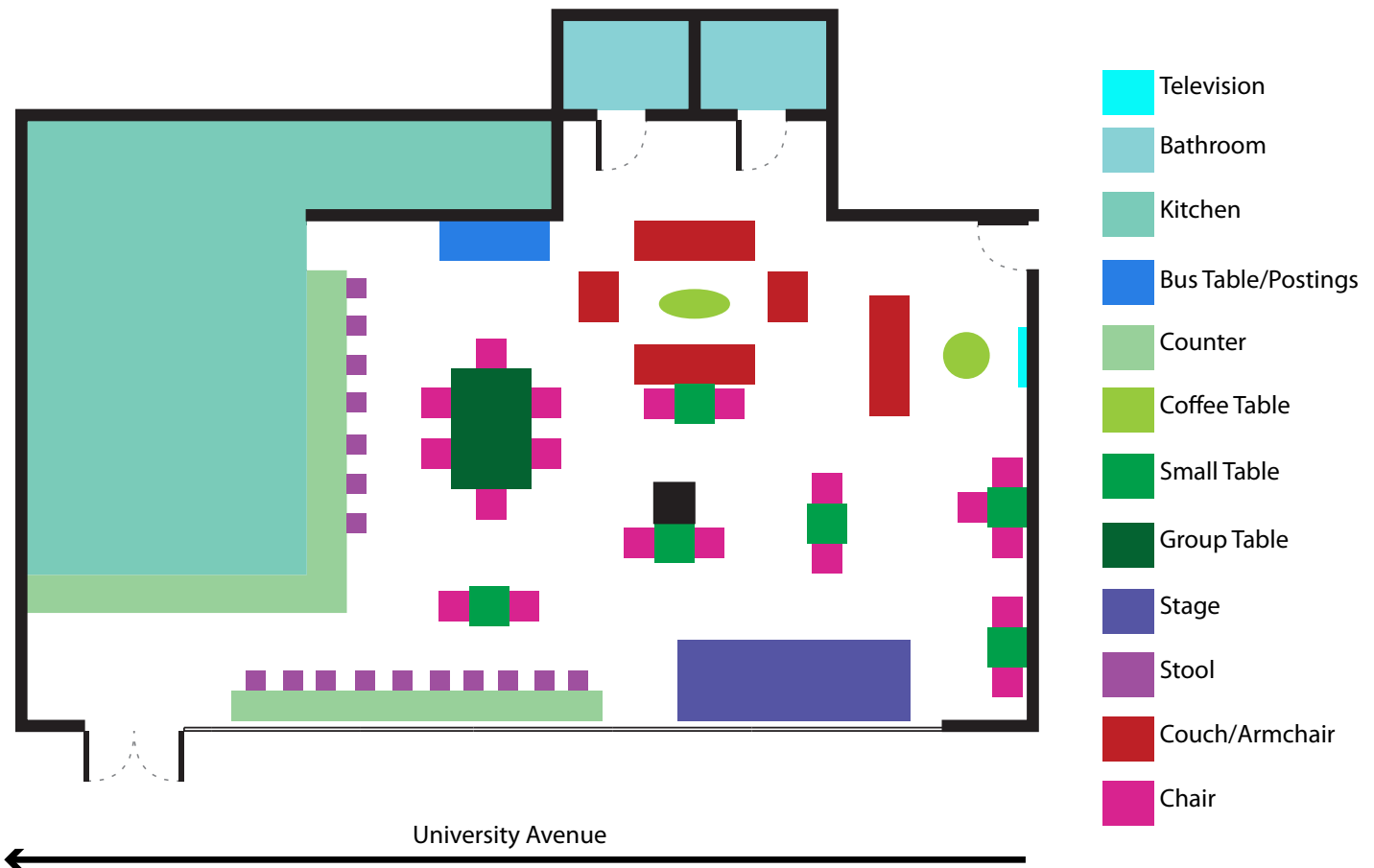|	
	Television
	Bathroom
	Kitchen
	Bus Table
	Counter
	Coffee Table
	Small Table
	Group Table
	Stool
	Couch/Armchair
	Chair

University Avenue

Once I talked to my informant, I realized that moving the counter back was not a good decision for the café, since the owner emphasized that he wanted to interact with people. By pushing that counter back, I would be allowing for more people to walk into the café without bumping into the staff. So I moved the counter back where it was so the staff would be the first thing that the customers would run into when entering the café. After the interview, I found out that the café held open mic nights, which was another way the owner interacted with the locals and the people of his café. Since they didn't have a stage, I decided putting one in would make the performances fell more upscale and it would advertise the open mic nights during the day when people would ask about the stage. In this second redesign, I did not pay attention to the facade of the café, which plays a large role in the café's business because it resides in a building that is similar to a strip mall, where the outer shell of the building is all the same, despite the different stores that occupy it.

Second Redesigned Plan

Bathroom

apartment lounge

Posting Area

Couch Seating

Kitchen

Table seating

Group Seating

Entry/Order

Bar Seating

Stage

Armchair Seating

So, in my final redesign, I opened up the facade, making it almost all glass, that way, when they do have open mic nights, the people walking by on the street will see the performances and be more inclined to step in. I also moved the stage over to the right

Final Redesigned Plan

	Television
	Bathroom
	Kitchen
	Bus Table/Postings
	Counter
	Coffee Table
	Small Table
	Group Table
	Stage
	Stool
	Couch/Armchair
	Chair

University Avenue

more so the structural column in the middle of the café won't be blocking as many views. In this redesign, I brought back the couch and TV combination that was in the original design, because I thought it was such an essential part of making that café feel homey. I also made the two couches face each other, which would spark even more conversations between people than if they were both facing towards the front. I made sure the couches

were in the back, because they are mainly used by people who are relaxing more than the other people who site on the chairs or the stools. Since they are the more slow moving of the bunch and use the space more like their home, I moved them away from the traffic of the entrance, food pick up, and the just arrived people who want to find a seat.   I also kept the long bar that was made in the two previous designs because in the original they only would have the bar seating by the windows or on the counter near the kitchen. So now that the whole wall is windows, the bar doesn't need to be broken up by a chair and table.

Throughout these three designs, I changed things based off of the owner's desire to meet and interact with the people of his café. The first design, I didn't really know what the café stood for so I just moved around stuff until in looked nice and got ride of the things I didn't enjoy. In the second design, I finally started to make the café into a place that followed the owner's ideology. In the third design, I focused on the facade, arranged the couches even better, and brought back some of the café's original seating arrangements because when I took them out it took away the cozy feel that the café had as well.

CONCLUSION

Case Study

When it comes to café's, I feel it is very important to make a comfortable and relaxed environment, because most of the time people come get coffee either to wind down or keep themselves wound up and by having a calm surrounding may help people focus and relax easier. When a person is at home, there is usually all different types of seating styles a person can choose from, so at a café, they should have that option as well. They should not be confined to only sit in normal chairs, but they should have the option to sit, perch, or

even lay down on a chair, stool, or sofa. These options also make a person feel more welcome and relaxed because they get to choose their preference rather than be forced to choose an option that they may not enjoy. Creating a living room set up also can make the atmosphere warmer, because it will a set up that a person recognizes and associates with their home. If a café wants to spark conversation between people or the staff, they should bring the people closer to the staff and make the customer's chairs face each other. Café Yesterday brings the people to the staff very well. They have a bar seating along the counter that is connected to the kitchen.   So very often, you will see one of the staff stop and talk to the person at the bar. Another set up that brings the people into interaction with the staff is by bringing the register closer to the entrance. By making it the first thing they see, it's hard to escape a smile or a hello from the staff.

These little changes in a café can make it a much more pleasant experience. When they staff recognize you, it makes you feel welcome, and when you get find the perfect chair to sit in, it makes the rest of your work much more enjoyable. At Café Yesterday, there was no rush like there normal is at some café's where you feel pressured to get your coffee and leave. While at Café Yesterday, the building seems to suck you in and want to keep you there, which is how a place should make you feel.

Comments and Reflections

I really enjoyed this project. I wish I could have spent more time on it than I did. I feel like I got to know Berkeley a little better through this project as well as the workings of a café. When designing, I do not think much about the interactions people have with other people. I am mainly focused on the how people will interact with my building, so this really opened my eyes to a whole other way of designing. Also, when designing, I focus on what

will look the best and not so much on what will make the building work better. I do not research or observe a building that is similar to the one I am designing, which, after doing this project, I might try, because it gives me so much information on how a building works and what it needs to work efficiently. By simply sitting in that café, I got see and understand so much about it and when I interviewed the owner, I felt like I got a whole new layer of understanding. I see the importance of observation and interviewing now. The one thing that I had a hard time with was the outside research. There was not many books or articles on cafés, especially ones in Berkeley. It was difficult for me and I found it to be a little useless, since I did not use any of the information I found in redesigning the café. Other than that, this project really opened my eyes to different and better ways to design.

Annotated Bibliography

Giroire, F., Chandrashekar, J., Iannaccone, G., Papagiannaki, K., Schooler, E. M., & Taft, N.

   (2008). The cubicle vs. the coffee shop: behavioral modes in enterprise end-users.

   Passive and active network measurement (pp. 202-211). Berlin: Springer.

   This article introduces the idea of not just cataloging a persons behavior or movement

   in the coffee shop, but also outside, to see if it is the space or the person that makes

   them behave a certain way. This is an idea that I haven't even thought of doing.

Grafe, C., & Bollerey, F. (2007). *Cafes and bars: living in the public*. New York: Taylor &

   Francis.

   This book balances discussion of both the material aspect of coffee shops and bars and

   the cultural and social aspects of them. Most of the books I read have addressed either

   one or the other and never have really put both of them together.

Jolliffe, L. (2010). *Coffee culture, destinations and tourism*. Bristol, UK: Channel View

   Publications.

   Jolliffe focuses on how coffee, the drink, is viewed and understood by the public

   rather than the places that sell it. However, when she talks about the essence of coffee

   it really helps to see why my informant started up a coffee shop and not another type

   of food service and it helps to understand why coffee shops give off a certain vibe and

   attract certain people as well.

Mariani, J. F. (1991). *America eats out: an illustrated history of restaurants, taverns, coffee

   shops, speakeasies, and other establishments that have fed us for 350 years*. New York:

   Morrow.

I haven't researched much in the history of coffee shops, so this book really helps in understanding how and why certain restaurants and cafes look and act a certain way.

Oldenburg, Ray. *The great good place: cafés, coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons, and other hangouts at the heart of a community*. New York: Marlowe, 1999.

Oldenburg makes interesting and helpful points about how people use coffee shops and other types of "third places" as a place away from home and work, making it an in between place. He does a good job in connecting how people use the coffee shop's space, which helps me understand how to design Cafe Yesterday better and why some parts of the coffee shop are an instant hit.

Piotrowski, C. M., & Rogers, E. A. (2007). *Designing commercial interiors, volume 1*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Piotrowski and Rogers both write points about how to better design a space for a business, which don't stray to far from what is being taught in class. They don't mention coffee shops too often, but their list of methods and steps to design are extremely helpful.

Sandner, Jennifer. *Café!: best of coffee shop design*. Salenstein: Braun, 2010.

This book simply shows examples of well or interesting designed cafes and doesn't really talk about their interaction with people, which doesn't help with understanding good design in the sense that it helps the public, but it does shed light on how architects deem a cafe to be well designed, which helps in seeing the importance of understanding the users of a building.

Thompson, C. J., & Arsel, Z. (2004). The Starbucks brandscape and consumers'

(anticorporate) experiences of glocalization. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *31*(3),

631-642. Retrieved October 22, 2012, from the Jstor database.

This article really hones in on the economic side of Starbucks and how costumers

experience that consumeristic approach the cafe has. Reading this really helps see

how different Cafe Yesterday is from some of these larger cafes, especially in the

money area.

Tucker, C. M. (2011). *Coffee culture: local experiences, global connections*. New York: Taylor &

Francis.

Tucker pinpoints how not only a space that sells coffee can create a sense of culture

and identity, but the materials, such as coffee, that are being sold there can be

something a person puts their identity into as well. I haven't put much thought into the

fact that people might be developing their identity and cafe culture on the coffee itself,

so this was an interesting and thought provoking read.

Waxman, L. (2006). The coffee shop: social and physical factors influencing place attachment.

Journal of Interior Design, *31*(3), 35-53. Retrieved October 22, 2012, from the Jstor

database.

Waxman connects social gathering places to a growing attachment to a person's

community and even pin points some key characteristics of a cafe that make a person

feel more connected, which helps me understand more how design aspects like

adequate lighting can affect a person's attitude and connection to a space.

Ryan Brinson (personal communication, October 8, 2012).