

HOUSTON POWER

# PLAY ON TWO LEVELS

Urban Architecture, Inc. turns a high tech lobby between two office towers into an inviting dining establishment for Mama's restaurant.

**H**ow can down home Southwestern cooking jive with steely office towers? Mama's restaurant manages. Sandwiched between two sixteen-story buildings, in an existing skylit lobby, the restaurant is on the edge of a busy circulation path between the two. So Hossein Oskouie, architect at Urban Design Architecture in Houston, designed the restaurant as a series of curvilinear open spaces around a transverse axis that resembles a pedestrian street. Some tables, on the edge of the street create the atmosphere of an outdoor cafe, while others are on two raised platforms. Existing tile was replaced in part by black concrete resembling road tar, and olive trees were planted directly into the ground, their trunks surrounded by set-in brick.

Each of the three dining levels has a different color scheme, while unity is achieved through the use of common furniture. The warmth of natural surfaces, including weathered wood planks on the walls, contrast with the high tech lobby, while enameled metal guard rails and glass block relate to the space frame above. Structural columns are mirrored to blend into the background.

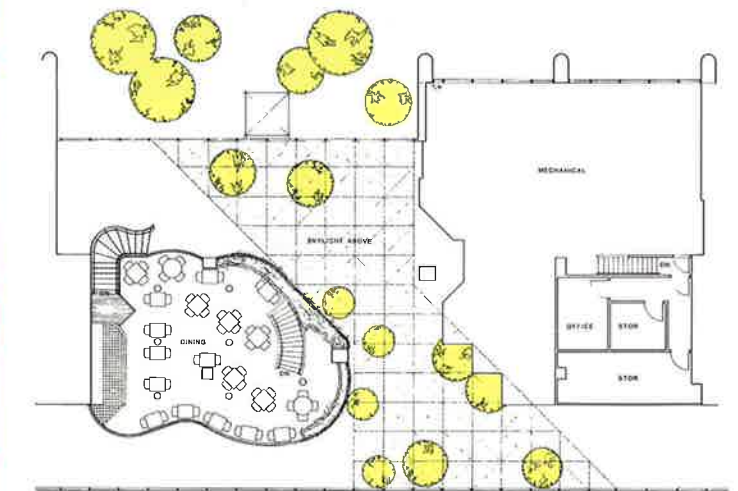
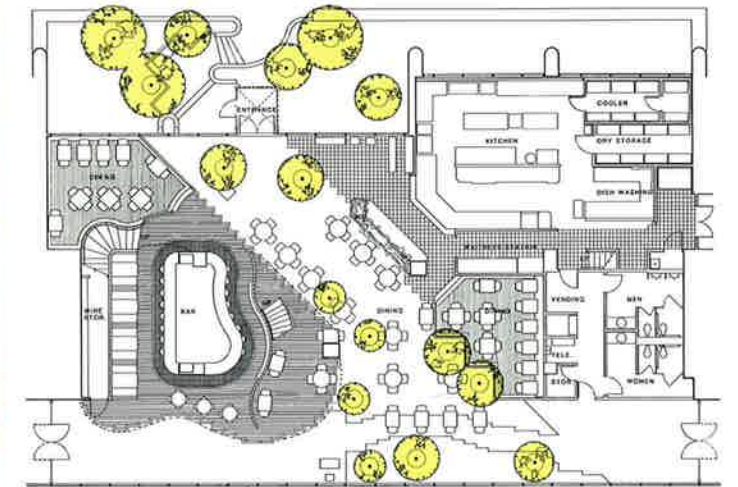
The restaurant, filled with workers from the adjoining offices during the day, attracts diners at night as well, when colored lights below the skylight give a festive glow. ■

*Andrea Truppin*

**Right: Tables and trees lining circulation path between buildings create look of open air cafe.**



**Below: Ground floor (top) has diagonal axis joining circulation path between office buildings, situated left and right of plan. Seating is on three levels.**



**Project:** Mama's Restaurant  
**Architect:** Urban Architecture, Inc.

**Partner-in-charge:** Hossein Oskouie  
**General contractor:** J-Four Construction  
**Floor/floorcovering:** Winburn Tile Mfg. Co., Milliken

**Lighting/lamps:** Lightolier, Inc.  
**Signage:** Texas Neon, Houser Sign Co.  
**Bathroom fixtures:** Eljer Plumbingware  
**Kitchen equipment:** G.R. Speer Company

**Furniture:** Atelier International  
**Special consultants:** Spencer Engineers, Inc. (M.E.P.), Interfield Engineering (structural), Mulhauser, McCleary Assoc., Inc. (food service)