

Kimmel Center Public Space Project

Moderator Notes

January 30, 2008

Submitted by Eddie Battle

- **Users of public spaces in KC, currently and in the future**
 - Current night time users
 - But others could be interested in day time use.
 - Existing stakeholders are, Merck Education Program and Youth Jazz Orchestra (not now on Wednesdays).
 - Resident companies bring in bus loads of kids (elementary and high school students) to KC. But, there are no food/beverages for them within KC; food and beverage facilities are closed. Students bring their lunch and sit.
 - TAFY (American Theater Arts for Youth), these are Youth concerts goers.
 - Tourists
 - Retirement groups have needs and can be a future user of the KC.

- **Uses of public spaces in KC, currently and in the future**
 - Music lessons for teenagers.
 - Actors and orchestra members interact, meet and talk, with their audiences.
 - There should be several levels of restaurants open for lunch and dinner to draw different publics and increased revenue.
 - Jazz enthusiasts would enjoy “outdoor” concerts.
 - Jerry Blavat crowd, (this audience enjoys contemporary music from the 50’s 60’s and 70’s.)
 - Different generations and groups could have talks about books and movies.
 - Advertise to neighboring crowds to have lunch in the PECO lounge, music should be part of the advertisement.
 - Decorative art, fashion shows and performance artists used to give breaks in public spaces.
 - Place chess sets on tables around the Plaza, large human size chessboards should be used.
 - The Gift shop should have an entrance on Spruce Street.
 - KC should serve as an indoor alternative when bad weather prevents outside meeting activities. The space should be donated free.
 - “Meetup.com” could be used to let the public know that the KC is a place to bring folks together.
 - The public uses KC as a pedestrian thoroughfare, a “cut through”. As they walk, they look up at the soaring glass roof and see friends at the information desk.
 - Small art exhibits, satellite exhibits, and displays (as seen at the Atwater Kent Museum) would breakup the public space and serve as a guide through.
 - Mummers outfits are on display during the parade.
 - Image projections are used on the walls.
 - There are open jam sessions, like “Free in the Plaza” on the black stage.
 - KC rent public space at times.

➤ **Barriers at KC**

- There's limited physical space available for the Gift shop and other retail areas.
- Lack of doors when big crowds are at KC
- Because of bare walls and poor outside lighting, the public can't tell if KC is open.

➤ **Challenges**

- Can public uses support themselves financially, and where will the money come from?
- There needs to be a "pedestrian "scale within the mammoth space of KC, a sense of comfort, comfortable chairs (seating) and colorful table clothes on tables.
- KC website doesn't draw. There needs to be a common website for the arts.
- There are architectural restrictions on decorating and wall uses.
- There are budgetary or dollar constraints.
- Redesign the information desk, including its draws and shape of cubbies.
- Cadence Restaurant, on the 2nd floor, will not draw street traffic. A restaurant on street level will draw the lunch and dinner users even if there are no events.
- Have the Gift shop enter into the restaurant.
- KC isn't in the restaurant business. It should partner with a star or (?) to bring in younger crowds.
- One should be able to in the elevator from Broad Street, (users would take the elevator to Cadence.)
- Cadence could be a destination place if there's a reason to go there.
- KC needs a marquee on Broad and Spruce streets.
- Getting the "word out" to diverse audiences

➤ **What group members like about public spaces in KC**

- The Hamilton Rooftop Garden is liked. The area needs seating and temperature control during the summer, it can feel like a sonna.
- Glass roof
- The Plaza, it represents an Italian piazza. It is envision with plants and trees to make it feel warmer.
- Beauty in natural materials
- Use of public art in nooks and crannies of KC
- Terrace outside of Cadence.
- The "wow!!!" effect when one walks into the Plaza. Also the websites that lead tours here.
- One group member liked all of KC.

➤ **How to improve public spaces**

- Make it feel warmer:
- Use of art displays that are easy to put up and tear down.
- Public space should be human scale.
- Breakup the space
- Use plants:
- add "green" to greenhouse effect
- put plants in the center of the "round seats"

- plant displays should be mobile and easily moved out of the way to accommodate large crowds
- Be flexible in uses and materials.
- Space should convey spontaneity at times and planned events at other times.
- It should be low cost with high impact, more bang for the buck.
- Retail shop open during regular hours.

➤ **Ideas/Thoughts**

- Outside of KC need plants and foliage, retail on Spruce Street to attract activity.
- Address the next generation needs, teens and young adults. What do they want?
- Art community access to the building, i.e. Fringe Festival, University of the Arts and CAPA.
- Street theater (outside KC) should be on the Vienna/Paris models, open house people work for tips.
- The name “Commonwealth” (referring to Commonwealth Plaza) conveys an image of politics; it’s not an attractive name.
- The building is so large that people can disappear.
- The Gift shop is not open most of the time, not during performances and rehearsals.

➤ **Principles**

- Public space should be for all different groups, ages and ethnicities; even if not for all uses.
- Public space should be welcoming.
- It should foster a sense of community.
- Public space should recognize or incorporate the street.
- Imaginative use of marquees
- Have more partnerships that result in “cheerleading” for KC.
- KC should be affordable, i.e. pay \$1.00 for coffee not \$3.00.
- There should be music inside public spaces.

➤ **Final Thoughts**

- Have exhibits explaining, with sound, art.
- Marquees at KC should be like those at the Academy of Music.
- Not enough elevators at KC.
- There are acoustic problems in Verizon Hall.
- “Why do this”, have a discussion about public space and its uses?
 - If to make money, then which makes the most money?
 - If it is to draw resident companies, which ones?
 - If it is to fill community/public needs, the Plaza’s mission, then which will do that and bring its own support?

➤ **Summary**

- Group members felt the work of the evening was a success. It was an opportunity to voice their concerns and give suggestions on improvements to KC. They are looking forward to the next steps.

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January 30, 2008
Submitted by Fatima Hafiz

Group Members

Art Museum Worker and member
City Planning Students
Kimmel Center Volunteer
Marketing Strategist
Director for public arts
Resident Company performer
Architects and neighborhood residents
Educator
Community base planner
Graphic Designer
Residents
AmeriCorps student/worker

Small Group Discussion

USERS

- children
- concert goers
- teens
- young adults
- students
- schools
- international visitors
- ethnic groups (latino)
- up and coming performers

OUTREACH/MARKETING

- make gift shop accessible to street as a bridge to the inside of the center
- restaurant open at other times
- grand piano in the plaza
- multi-media screens inside and outside-digital displays
- marquee
- more three sheet enclosures
- summer time and weekend activities outside and inside
- sidewalk activities
- greenery
- affordable food

- kiosks
- exhibits to attract more diverse audiences
- partnering with groups outside of center city- community arts centers
- resident companies to partner with schools
- make more inviting (fabrics, paintings, banners, plants , benches)
- seating areas appealing to different audiences
- contrast of choices and variety
- color lights, open doors, hours of operation friendly to different groups, website

USES

- free concerts
- concerts for kids
- coffee bar
- food court/ breakfast and lunch
- broadcast television and radio shows
- meeting space
- internet cafe
- conference space – non-profits – affordable rates
- summer block parties (events outside)
- art work display
- retail space
- eatery
- classrooms
- free meeting space for student group
- film festivals
- hands on workshops with artist and performers (take-away art)
- crafts market place

SUPPORTS

- using space outside
- marquee – make black box exciting
- greater promotions
- partnering (Philadelphia Fringe, University of Arts, Settlement Music School, corporate)
- trees, greenery (outside and inside)
- eatery, coffee/tea stop
- maps (handheld, center board, kiosk)
- doors opened with more consistency
- re-doing box office (develop streetscape, open to be seen inside from street level)
- opening gift shop to street (increase hours of operations)
- wide screen TV showing events schedule- ongoing and future
- interactive devices for passersby - “Art meet Imagination”

- Technology in the public spaces (internet café, gift shop , hot spots, wireless, wifi)

BARRIERS

- fortress quality
- must be an intentional act to come to the Kimmel
- lighting dark at doors (inside and outside)
- lack of bathrooms on roof top garden
- poor signage (difficult to reach bathrooms)
- unclear information booth vs. box office
- poor public visibility (black granite wall needs softening)
- poor acoustic quality outside of theaters
- gift shop not inviting (no awareness of space and lack of consistency in operation hours)
- Philadelphia is not a planned stop of choice for cultural programming (Kennedy Center, Montreal Canada)
- Seating not appealing or comfortable –(flying saucer seats, low seating, not enough seating)

VALUES

- quality of life
- understanding
- young adults
- creative expression
- communications
- diversity (socio-economic, creative-music, visual arts, fringe fest, sense driven,)
- mobility

PRINCIPLES

- Human scale design
- Lively spaces
- Welcoming atmosphere
- Cultural Inclusion
- Music (all other art forms should relate to the music art form in some way)
- Accessibility and Affordability
- Partnerships
- Free programs

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Moderator Notes
January 30, 2008
Submitted by Chris Satullo
Group "Green"

Users:

Current: Subscribers, event-goers, students (as individuals and groups), parents, corporations, staff, volunteers, artists and musicians, those who rent, teachers, tourists

Potential: WiFi users, lunch-time visitors, neighborhood groups, people looking for shelter in the rain, nearby residents, nearby office workers, uskers, tourists (get more), pedestrians; vendors; nearby attractions; coffee drinkers; more people from outside of Center City.

Uses (having listed nouns under users, I asked them to list verbs for uses):

Current: Attend, work, meet, park, listen, buy tickets, find relief (bathrooms), look at views, mingle, drink, be seen, learn

Potential: Eat, view fashions (at a show), network for business, go to movies, linger and loiter, exhibit art or view art exhibits, attend performances by local arts groups, walk-in, watch my child perform with school choir, attend professional association meetings, partner your group with the Kimmel ("Now, the Kimmel stands alone."), social dancing, teas, church meetings, holiday events, tai-chi, yoga, flower shows.

Values

Current: Elite (inaccessible); a sense of special event; grandeur; high quality; empty; intimidating; not human scale; makes you feel like a visitor; no paths

Potential: Accessible; a place for crowds; a place with flow where you know where to go; consistency of programming; three-dimensional usage, from top to bottom; economic diversity.

What works:

Gorgeous interior; quality of performances; sunlight; Center City location (with flip side below); diversity of offerings; volunteers; causes civic pride; Perelman stage is a marvel; the venues feel democratic, even though ironically the public spaces don't e.g. there are no bad seats in Verizon Hall; the pipe organ; the downstairs bar looks classy; it has lots of empty space, so there's potential.

What doesn't work:

Uninviting exterior ("It starts being beautiful just above what you can see from the street."); lack of trees, no human scale in plaza; location (flip side is that it's at far end of A of A, not close enough to Market St. office towers for lunch trade); no sense of welcome; nowhere to sit and wait comfortably; lack of visual information (posters, screens, kiosks); "It a monument, not a party of the city's daily fabric." "It's dull on the outside, and only grand on the inside." The doors are daunting. It looks institutional. The Spruce St. awning doesn't protect from the rain. The pedestrian approaches are poorly lit.

Potential fixes:

Get a celebrity chef for Cadence and promote it as a destination in itself

Move the rental rooms to the second tier, do retail on the first tier

Move the plaza stage to a more visible spot

Put up kiosks all around plaza with info not just on Kimmel, but all Philly culture

Open the gift shop to Spruce Street, and make it more open and inviting to lovvv

Create a more inviting box office

Coffee shop where gift shop is

"It's a greenhouse! Treat it like one. More green. Do something off of the flower show every year.

Create conversation pits and other more intimate spaces.

Principles:

- 1) Create intimacy within grandeur**
- 2) Make it Philly's sixth public square**
- 3) Let people know! Use the building to communicate more effectively with your constituents (leads to more patrons, more funding)**
- 4) Bring more of Philadelphia in, throughout the day**
- 5) Customize spaces to allow diverse uses**
- 6) More green!!!**
- 7) Don't forget the music!! Don't let the plaza be silent.**