

*Kimmel Center Public Space Project
Moderator Notes
January 31, 2008: Kimmel Center Staff Forum
Submitted by Ellen Petersen*

What Are Your Hopes and Fears?

Hope: We maintain income to maintain spaces
Fear: We won't

Hope: More seating and comfortable
Fear: Get in the way of the flow

Hope: All spaces warmer
Fear: There won't be follow-through

Hope: Technology will be integrated with the building
Fear: The cost will scare people from making the necessary changes

Hope: A lot of people will visit from 10 am to midnight
Fear: They will get there and forget it's a performing arts center

Hope: We bring in as many kids as possible
Fear: Won't happen

Hope: We will have diversity in groups and space use
Fear: Our mission gets lost

Hope: The space plan supports what we do
Fear: It impacts our primary mission on programming and customers

Who Are Current Users/Stakeholders?

Box office
Resident companies
Restaurant Associates
PECO bar
Gift shop
Volunteers
Ticket buying public
Artists
Support staff

Institutional Event attendees
 Corporate event users
 People who attend events e.g. weddings
 Students
 School groups
 Neighboring businesses-e.g. restaurants and garages

Who Are Potential Users/Stakeholders?

Non concert going public at both concert and non concert times
 Book shop customers at non event times
 PECO bar patrons at non concert times
 Tourists
 Free concert attendees
 Late diners, diners at non concert times
 Bar patrons

What Do They Value?

Cache of being at the Kimmel, arts center
 Accessibility both in terms of access to the building and transportation to the building
 Cleanliness
 Location
 Music
 Programming
 Pricing
 Web ticketing
 Restaurants
 Acoustics
 Comfortable seating
 The organ (if they can find it!)
 Difference at Kimmel versus competitor venues
 Having 4 places to be entertained at the Kimmel (including Innovation in the basement)
 Attractiveness
 Warmth
 Consistency in warmth in both performing and public spaces

What Will They Do?

18 hours of art, visual, something going on
 Special event every day, on tiers, before and after performances
 Exhibition space for Orchestra and other exhibits
 WiFi hot zone

Enjoy a focal point like a fountain, Japanese garden, or aquarium
 View greenery which breaks up the space
 Have free public performances by students or others
 Citywide events (L.A. center models this well)
 Corporate meetings in Verizon hall
 Late night crowd interactions
 Lunchtime crowd activity
 Performing arts library
 Students enjoy the space as part of the University Arts campus
 Movies
 Plaza for sketching

What Enables These Activities in the Current Space?

Big space
 Fabulous glass ceiling and Tier One
 People can be sheltered from elements
 Balcony in Cadence
 Climate control
 Garage downstairs
 Built in bars
 Lobby works for big crowds in its roominess and airiness
 Rooftop garden
 Free coat check
 Ease of box office
 Volunteers who answer questions
 Restaurants, when open
 Good access to Verizon hall for disabled
 Ushers
 Security team keeps things safe and can answer questions

What Are the Obstacles To These Activities in the Current Space?

Lack of signage
 Security can be off putting
 Confusing to get to Cadence
 Can't tell what is going on inside building even when it's full
 Façade makes it appear nothing interesting is going on
 Exterior signage
 No flag out front to symbolize it is a performance night
 Not enough lighting
 Can't tell there is a restaurant inside
 People don't know the building is open
 Can't go past the lobby

Not welcoming
 Can't see the art
 Front doors don't all work
 When concerts are over, the lights go off and the doors are locked
 No sign outside to tell people when the performance will end
 No digital signs to attract exterior attention
 Plaza acoustics
 Hard to see over the people in a crowd
 No sound system in the public seat
 Few seating areas which are uncomfortable
 Plaza is rental space and everything gets moved around for ad hoc events

What Principles Should be Used in the Design?

Warm up space
 Break up space
 Less imposing space so an art student doesn't worry about being escorted out
 Signage including availability in Tier 1 and Tier 2
 Seating that can be used for a happy hour setting
 Do we need movable space? Don't other venues make rental clients work around space and sell the space as unique because of its design?
 Better strategic lighting
 Balance operational cost with design
 More energy efficient lighting, no incandescent
 Be mindful of who "Owners of space" are and what they want
 Have a design plan that can be communicated and marketed to all stakeholders
 Respect public art
 Maintain uniqueness of space
 Need ease of emergency exiting
 Need "drive by vision" of what is going on inside
 Signage that is easy to see and react to
 Space conducive to after hours access and enjoyment-bar menu, post concert crowd
 A way to integrate the gift shop
 Exploit the balcony
 A more comfortable floor that functions in the space (yellow brick road?)
 A space that allows perception of the space to match the reality of what is there
 Ease of navigation in the space

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Icebreaker: Hopes and Fears

Began this session with a question about what staff members hopes or fears are about the future of their center.

Hopes

Bring more young people. Bring back some of Bill Rouse's vision a civic square. Make it a signature meeting place. Make it the most relevant space in Philly to citizens. We get better ideas for accessibility. That these forums are the first steps toward a dynamic space that includes more people while still embracing quality. That we'll bring more green. That we'll bring a warmer persona to the public. That I'll hear music, rather than the air conditioning, when I walk in the place. That we'll warm up the place, make it more welcoming.

Fears

That we don't realize our hopes. Kimmel becomes a behemoth symbol of irrelevance. That people will continue to miss many facets of this gem. That we'll sink under idea overload. That a fear of risk will prevent us from doing things. That we'll add too many permanent fixtures that will damage flexibility. Ideas that seem great to some will seem bad to others, and when we don't execute these controversial ideas, there will be backlash. My biggest fear is time is ticking. It's not the field of dreams: We built it, but they didn't come.

Users

Current: Artists, patrons, resident companies, students (could do more), corporations, community groups (could do more), private groups, visual artists, staff

Potential: Passers-by, repeat patrons, neighbors, nearby office workers, college students, shoppers, diners, ancillary vendors, suburbanites, more visual artists.

Uses

(Expressed in verbs)

Current: Attend, buy, tour, photograph, meet, eat, express artistry, gather, relax, do business, support, enjoy, learn, convene, celebrate, graduate

Potential: Hang out, people watch, exercise (yoga, tai chi) read, sketch, make music, see movies, eat well but cheaply, go online, have a drink, meditate, be part of U of Arts campus.

Values

Current: Exclusivity, ego, affluence, excellence, art, music, awe, modernist, uniqueness, symbolic, world-class, a good home for artists, a shared social experience.

Desired: World-class but accessible; warm, reasonable, easier to use, inviting, comfortable, iconic, engages the curious, endearing, diverse, adaptive, exciting, busy, more apple pie.

What works

Plenty of space (in one sense); wide sidewalk; long frontage; location (in some senses, CC and A of A); flexible (qualified); beautiful; acoustics in venues; lots of windows (but ...); succeeds at being a “quiet neighbor”

What doesn't work

Exterior lighting; parking (not as bad as perception, but perception hurts); can't get to elevators; location (south end of A of A is dead); furnishings; its beauty is of an intimidating type; space not as flexible as seems, because of restrictions, lack of support space, lack of funds; location of box office; closing off half of plaza; not enough back-of-house, storage space to back up the supposed flexibility of the public spaces; lack of office space; acoustics in public spaces; windows are plentiful but not used well to create transparency and create mood.

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HOPES

- become destination for other than performances – become alive other times
- return to level of use (great use) when first opened
- broadest possible regional people have place in Kimmel Center (all kinds of diversity)
- life up to hype and physical stature
- want people on the street to know KC as vibrant, fun, world class
- bring out beauty in building
- KC contribute to its external environment/affect walkers
- Know what we are when the walk in
- Address on front
- Busy all day
- Update “founders” wall
- Year round performances
- Hope we will become the New York Yankees, not the Philadelphia Phillies (Kimmel is to Lincoln Center as Philadelphia Orchestra is to New York Orchestra)

FEARS

- cynicism of Philadelphia will put us into too big a hole do dig out of
- we don’t “see” everybody (full diversity) as audience

USERS

- tourists – visitors to Philadelphia and KC
- concert goers
- students K-college
- local employees for lunch
- power walkers/mall walkers
- 30+ group / under 30 group
- diners
- resident companies/artists
- young artists
 - venue to show work of students from U Arts, CAPA, etc.
- architects
- people who want to read
- young professional groups
- photographers/sketchers
- clubs
- school groups

- people who come to sit and meet others
 - virtual office space
- chess players/game players – game corner
- shoppers – retail
- VIPs/local celebrities
- Club scene (Club Kimmel)
- Donors – special events
- Local government – civic events
- Schools – graduation events
- Production companies

USES

- Movie screenings
- Restaurant
- Social events (weddings...)
- Shopping
- Chess clubs
- Lectures
- Learning opportunities
- Meeting/virtual office space
- Temp gallery – art exhibitions
- Testing
- Conference space
- Listen to different music
- See different kinds of art
- Classes
- Building as classroom – object/subject of study
- Hot yoga in the garden
- Religious services/and meetings
- Indoor community festivals – flea markets
- Show student films
- Grand scale installations and performance art
- Dancing in the plaza
- Entertainment – buskers
 - Inside
 - On sidewalk
- Local artists
 - Spoken word
 - Monologue slams
- Super bowl party
- Oscar party
- Launch pad for up-coming artists

- Voting
- Fashion shows
- Pride fest activities
- Internet café

IDEAS

- Large signs of what's happening inside and out
- Sidewalk cafe
- Box office face street and put roof over it
- Musical kiosks
- Free "anything" – internet access, movies
- Decorate for seasons/holidays
- Panel pictures of local people
- Enlist celebrities to support
- Cover/enclose roof garden
 - Sound
 - Coolness
- Banners that extol the arts/out program
- Need to move from talk to action
 - Staff have had these conversations before, but nothing happens
- Plaza is energized/energetic often – when there are shows, weekends, etc.

VALUES

- Inclusiveness
- Building audiences
- Civic pride
- Solid reputation
- Enlightenment
- Education
- Sense of ownership
- Value for money
- Reflection of the city and region
- Accessibility – for all --- physical, financial, interest

SUPPORT

- Staff
 - Cares
 - Competent
- Size of building
- In part of center city that is growing
- Near University of the Arts
- Modular construction

- Vertical space that could be used
- Only place like it in the region
- Building is an inside public square – weather doesn't matter

INHIBIT

- Building is
 - Cold
 - Not inviting
 - Uncomfortable furniture in public spaces
- Building has physical barriers – ropes to keep people out
- Lac of signage inside and outside
- Stairs lack center rail/support for directionality
- Not enough programs
- Lack of PR about what's happening
- Lack of southern foot traffic
- Regular or common person doesn't see self when come in or feel comfy – for “elite”
- Nothing “says” community
- Wind in building
- Outside vendor agreements – food, gift shop – exclusivity
- Beauty of building conveys “elitism”
 - Need to soften, humanize
- Art can't be easily seen
- Sound from one public space bleeds elsewhere
- Crowd movement difficult when all spaces are in use

Principles

- Building should celebrate the arts, not just contain them.
- The center should project itself out outside of itself, onto the street and sidewalk (sidewalk cafes; Cadence terrace, music outside, dynamic signage)
- We want everybody; celebrate the breadth of the regional demographics
- Appeal to people, not an audience; treat visitors as guests, not as money sources.
- Make it warmer, more welcoming
- Anticipate guest needs (signs, greeters, accommodations, comprehensive services)
- Make it affordable and accessible
- Commitment to fun