

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.