

Kimmel Center Civic Feedback Session
April 14, 2008
Group Five Participants' Comments
Compiled by Bruria Tal

- A better balance is needed between the inside and outside of the Kimmel Center building. For example, a dance studio on the ground floor that is observable from the outside would provide a connection between what is on the inside and the outside of the building.
- A better mix of activities than presently offered in the building is needed to diversify its mix of users.
- A better outside signage is needed informing passers-by as to the nature of the building and the activities offered.
- The state of the present building indicates that there were many opportunities missed concerning aesthetics, acoustics and the use of space. The lighting and acoustics are dysfunctional. The lighting arrangements mainly serve to accent the architecture, but are irritating to the eyes of visitors. The initial lighting design was much darker. Lights were added later, where possible, after people complained. The present lighting arrangements create a double problem: the lights on the inside are glaring and irritating; the lights on the outside are too dark and uninviting.
- The Kimmel Center building as it now exists 'is a monumental eyesore'. It would have been beneficial if consumers of arts and culture activities had been allowed to join the original design process. The ego of the original designer has been a hindrance to redesign efforts, as evidenced by trying to accommodate the business requirements of the gift shop.
- Consumers should be allowed to join the redesign process by the University of Pennsylvania students.
- The aesthetics of the building are important, but program activities are the ones that generate interest that motivate people to attend.
- It's a 'chicken and Egg' thing: more people will want to attend activities at the Kimmel if they see many other people attending.
- The Kimmel Center building and the activities it houses should serve as a magnet for Center City residents and visitors.
- Provide more activities before and after concerts: art exhibits, food venues, discussions with authors, composers, musicians, book club discussion groups, community performance art, venues for the 'Fringe', Film, and music festivals
- Center City is home to many retirees, and the Kimmel Center could serve as a resource for activities that generate interests (also with the general public). Baby-Boomers look for accessible and engaging activities.
- Get rid of the old people to attract a younger crowd, and to accustom younger people to participate in activities at the Kimmel Center (suggested by a high school student).
- Provide more age-appropriate activities to attract younger people to the Kimmel Center, including venues for those interested in being artistic performers.
- A 'Rock-Climbing' wall with 'Musical Notes' to hold on to would look very much 'Kimmel Centery' (suggested by a high school student).
- Provide a reasonable priced 'Lunch Place' in the building, and places to sit and eat 'brownbag' or 'own food' lunches. A modestly priced 'cafe' would be preferable over a more expensive 'restaurant' on the ground or tier levels.
- Provide something similar to the 'Friday Night' programs at the Philadelphia Arts Museum that are always 'packed with people' (well-attended).
- The present overhangs over the Spruce street side are useless. They need to be redesigned in combination with a new Spruce street entrance to 'open up' and increase the attractiveness of the space.

- The 15th street entrance (south of Spruce street?) needs to be artistically enhanced. Block off loading docks on 15th street.
- Overall, the corners at Broad and Spruce and 15th and Spruce need to be improved/enhanced.
- Improve the accessibility to the 15th street 1st level: the space needs to be opened up.
- The 'Gift Shop' on the Spruce street side is 'a real failure', as it gets business only for short times (approximately 20 minutes) before and after performances. To turn a profit the shop needs more people traffic throughout the day. Put the ticket office towards the back of the building so more people will pass by the shop. The gift shop situation is part of the 'chicken and egg' issue: this place has to draw people all the time to draw in even more people.
- Architectural redesign could include features that can be moved around, such as kiosks that are performance related, or listening stations, or modular stages and benches that can be arranged in different ways dependent on their usage, or competing carts offering the products of culinary schools.
- The inside signage needs to be improved so the building becomes less confusing to visitors.
- Create an interactive wall of light and music to open up the building to the outside. As it stands now the building looks always dark and uninviting from the outside.
- Provide a continuous stream of activities, such as short music and other performances.
- The design proposal of multiple staircases wrapping around elevators is a good idea as it enhances accessibility for regular and handicapped people to get to the various tiers, including the roof garden top. The tiers could provide room for more activities and space for arts exhibitions, or a 'music museum' on the 3rd tier.
- The proposed 'Waterfall' wall would create engineering problems related to gravity and noise pollution.
- The 'Garden Wall' proposes to use materials in an innovative way and conceptually helps with the 'inside/outside integration'. However, it is impractical as far as maintenance and 'harmonizing with the building' are concerned. Also creates a 'kudzu' effect.
- The 'Rock Climbing' Wall would be a major liability for the Kimmel Center.
- Do not put a staircase inside the 'Black Cube'.
- **The University of Pennsylvania students did a great job and extended remarkable efforts in redesigning the Kimmel Center. Lucky for them they did not have to figure out how to pay for their 'dream' proposals.**

Suggestion by a woman attendant of another group (leaving early with her pre-teen daughter):

Use the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington D.C. as a utilization model for the Kimmel Center with a continuous stream of activities, "there is something going on there every day and all day long."