

Project 2 – Redesign of Jones Plaza

Final Review: Week of April 27 – TBA

Part I – Due Friday, March 13, 2009 at 10am.

Read the Program Develop a Mind Map and Site Analysis.

Mind Map – After reading the information and based on the site observations you made during your site visit, develop a Mind Map and a Basic Site Analysis.

Tom Kelly of IDEO utilizes the Mind Map as a way of generating and synthesizing creative endeavors.

This utilizes the right side of your brain – it doesn't include a list – it includes a map composed of a large piece of paper and a circle – the problem goes in the circle- the potential solutions are branches outward of the circle. It allows you to go from A to B, but also from A to J, or A to Z. A much more creatively invigorating way to 'list'. This can include words, sentences, and diagrams within individual circles as you work through the 'visioning' of this project.

Improvement Program for Jones Plaza

March 6, 2009

Client: Central Houston, Inc. / City of Houston

Vision for Jones Plaza:

Jones Plaza will be an active public square uniquely situated in the heart of downtown Houston's corporate office core and nationally renowned Theater District, a place of sophisticated artistic and design excellence.

It is a space where one can:

- Go to both day and evening to see and be seen
- Enjoy a glamorous, beautiful meal, have a business lunch or have just a snack to extend the Theater District experience
- Be comfortable in a place with a green garden feel, enjoy the seasons
- Go to an iconic destination defined by sophistication, sense of whimsy, creativity and artistic excellence
- Easily access from sidewalks, streets, parking, tunnel and train

Desired Program Elements:

Excellent public plaza space where one is comfortable:

- Seasonal shade and breezes
- Sight lines from within, adjacent sidewalks and buildings

- Space that accommodates natural pedestrian flows across plaza and from tunnel/ garage below
- Space with activity where one feels comfortable congregating with others: a social space
- Green oasis with seasonal flowers and plantings---respite in a dense, busy, paved environment
- Space that feels like an extension of Jones Hall and Alley Theater experience: forecourt, audio/video projection, etc.
- Space that is special in the evening because of its lighting
- Space that feels exceedingly well managed, safe (space manager on site day and evenings)

Food service day and evenings:

- Trendy, upscale restaurant of 12,000 square feet oriented to 250 destination and business patrons
- A hip place for drinks, quick before performance: snacks, great meal and after performance desserts: surrounding employees, Theater District regulars/ patrons and residents
- Meal prices range from \$12 to \$40 per person---menu places accent on health, featuring fresh preparation of selected products using a variety of local/regional purveyors; adjusted seasonally, menu would include broiled, grilled and baked American specialties; in-house bakery and reasonably priced wine selection
- Of a conservatory type design that incorporates feeling of performance, entertainment in a green setting: welcoming bar and piano, private dining area, visual kitchen, outdoor patio and ability to cater events on the plaza

Accommodate programming---events and activities:

- Special functions of performing arts organizations
- Small (200-300 attendance) concerts/ performances
- Catered special events: receptions, parties, etc.
- Temporary art exhibits
- Potentially other: checked out books, games, etc.

Accommodate the obvious:

- Buy a newspaper
- Have a WiFi connection
- Find out what's going on in the halls around
- Find a restroom

Iconic artistic elements ranging from freestanding art installation to environmental art using landscaping, fixtures, water, lighting, air shafts, etc.

Parking valet function in addition to major parking garage entrances for performance halls and business

Easily recognized comfortable connection to tunnel system and light rail transit station

Design considerations:

Public areas must be flexible and adaptable

Use of existing structure, utilities preferred as design/cost consideration

Two major underground garage entrances (Texas & Capitol) must remain

Four stair connections to garage must remain (although could be enhanced)

Ventilation of garage must be accommodated

Roof of garage approximately at street level must remain waterproof

Minimize barriers due to elevation change from sidewalks

Site assets:

Great location for public square in heart of one of country's largest performing arts/ business districts

Activity in neighborhood day and night 7 days per week

Very large daytime population within two blocks: 25,000 to 30,000; large evening population within two blocks: 5,000 to 15,000 (max.)

Site connects to Theater District and downtown office building tunnel systems

Surrounding architecture is magnificent collection of late 20th century works: Alley (Franzen), Jones Hall (CRS), Pennzoil (Johnson), Bank of America (Johnson)

Site has legacy of large events open to the public

Current issues with current design/ programming:

Plaza sparsely populated except infrequent occasion when there is a programmed event

Smith and Texas face of plaza is a large uninviting wall of structures

Space is designed for performances on stage, not really flexible

Large amount of site dedicated to rarely used restroom facilities intended for large events

Space does not accommodate day to day public social life

Too much hard surface; not enough green

While there is tunnel access to the plaza, using the narrow stairs is not a comfortable experience

Plaza Bistro restaurant is poorly utilized---location could be a major factor (buried at back of plaza in a building that looks like the restroom buildings)