

Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza Working Group – Notes

Wednesday, November 8, 2017, 6:30 – 9:00 P.M.

- Attendees:
 - Working Group: Frank Kramer, Bertil Jean-Chronberg, Janet Si-Ming Lee, John DiGiovanni, Peter Kroon, Robyn Culbertson, Daniel Andrew Schofield-Bodt, Tom Lucey, Mary Flynn, Ankita Deshpande, Tim Hyde, Abra Berkowitz
 - Staff: Stuart Dash, Daniel Wolf, Iram Farooq, Meg Walker (consultant), Charlie Sullivan, Lisa Peterson, Melissa Miguel
- Meg Walker (Project for Public Spaces): Presentation summarizing findings
 - Discussion:
 - Future of taxi area?
 - Potential to expand plaza?
 - Consider pursuing additional street closures?
 - Some areas in the Plaza see high pedestrian volume while others act as eddies
 - What share of visitors are first time visitors vs. second time, etc.? Average time lingering for visitors vs. non-visitors?
- Break out discussion:
 - Working Group members were divided into small groups and were asked to review a subset of the 33 submitted proposals to the Call for Ideas with an eye toward points of resonance or constraint.
 - Framing questions:
 - Who does a given proposal primarily serve?
 - During what time of day, week, or year does a given proposal generate activity in the Kiosk and Plaza?
 - What is the character of the experience for users of the Kiosk and Plaza for a given proposal?
- Discussion (full group)
 - Working Group members shared personal takeaways from breakout discussion, including:
 - There's a distinction between catering to existing users (people already in Harvard Square or Kiosk/Plaza) vs. drawing new users – both are possible
 - Area is full of 'knowledge based people' – Harvard students, tourists there because drawn to knowledge
 - Male vs female; children; various transit users – particular considerations for these groups?
 - Two large groups to think about: tourists (concentrated during daytime) vs "everyone" (all / typical / recurring / regional visitors)
 - Tourists and everyday people could be interested in some of the same things
 - Concept: crowdsourced events listing
 - Stuart: we'll try to structure some concepts and assess across multiple dimensions
- Public comment:

- We should think again about redesigning the headhouse – issues in the plaza are, to a great extent, due to the deficiencies in the headhouse design
- Trees – fill in the pit, gain 4 feet of cover for trees
- Public forum for airing these ideas, such as public library exhibition
- Presenting our best face to the world
- Express our community in this space
- It's a small space – only so much it could take
- There are other spaces in the square – could look at usage in there
- Too much lighting looks Disney-esque
- Sculpture provides whimsy to children
- Elevator – could be used for signage and maps
- Space is already activated
- Tour availability – entrepreneurial docents
- We could connect with state legislators to lobby for money for extra work
- Many small constituencies in the square
- Don't try to manage the activity too much
- Restore kiosk as close to original presentation as possible
- MBTA could let City use lower level as historical function
- Share all goings on with the full email list (even if not directly applicable to them)
- Need to do another round of surveys – use the City Manager's newsletter
- No need to draw *more* people to the Plaza/Kiosk – maybe *different* people
- Working Group members could take a more active role in directing the process
- Headhouse shouldn't be an advertising monstrosity
- Public space as important to civic expression, protest