

Design Team Breakout Meetings

Meeting Summaries - 8/10/2011 and 8/11/2011

A number of breakout meetings were held during this site visit with stakeholder groups identifying certain needs and desires for their spaces in The New UC, as well as observations about the project as a whole.

Barnes and Noble / UH Bookstore

- During peak periods, all returns and book order pickups are done from their space in the UC Underground to avoid congesting primary retail area of bookstore
- During peak periods, number of registers expands from six to twenty-two.
- An ideal situation would be to have a stock room behind the retail floor to allow for direct movement of merchandise onto the floor from storage
- Better visibility from the street / front of the UC is also desired; having more of a glass exterior on the southern side of the bookstore would be nice.
- If the bookstore has to be moved during renovation, summer is the best time.

Food Service

- Dining in the UC is currently projected to grow from 23,000 square feet to 26,000 square feet, and will include the retail dining food court, catering, support space, and some offices.
- The C-Store will be grab-and-go and should be in a location on the main level with easy access for deliveries. The cooler does not need to be “walk in”. It will need its own water supply.
- A coffee area (like Starbucks or Java City) could be enhanced through a sound system / speakers to help set the “coffeehouse” ambiance.
- The food options available in the transformed UC will probably include a grill/hamburger/deli and a chicken component. There may also be ethnic food options to tap into the diversity at the UC.
- Each retail venue will have its own register, with obvious menus of everything that is available.
- Care needs to be taken with regard to queuing—the goal is to minimize the appearance of a “sea of bodies” when students try to buy lunch.
- Seating should be more dispersed with a “community association space” like at the Fresh Food Company.
- A common kitchen area can service all of the retail dining options. These individual options will need separate production and storage spaces.
- Segregating the dining back-of-house space from the rest of the UC and making it easy to secure is important to reduced theft.
- The catering space needs to be separate from the rest of the common kitchen area.
- Given how much catering occurs outside of the UC, having more dock space is important. 4 available bays (6 total, counting room for compactor and trash area) is an ideal number.
- Not much office space is requested—three desks and computer stations will suffice. A separate cash room with a vault located in a lower traffic area is needed.

Student Publications

- Though currently located in the UC Satellite, until December 2009 Student Publications was located in the Jack J. Valenti School of Communication with a larger footprint. In the move, things like dark rooms were removed as photography moves digital.
- In their new space, they need less production space and more collaborative space. Currently, they cannot fit their entire team into one space in their suite for a meeting or group event.
- There need to be team work areas, including a small photo studio space with lights and interchangeable backgrounds, a wall for collecting and posting newspapers, and a kitchen to accommodate the space's 24-hours-a-day usage.
- Advertising needs more storage; they currently need to keep at least five years of archives for advertisers who want proof of how their ad looked in the print edition.
- Current staffing includes 10 people on editorial board; 35-40 reporters at peak (15 on a "normal" day); 5 photographers; and 2-3 copy editors. They will need 10 dedicated workstations for editors, a conference table for 12-15 people, and additional computer workstations / laptop areas as able.
- Wi-fi and cell signal are important for their new space.
- The business office space needs a dedicated office for the business manager and a cubicle for the administrative assistant. It also needs additional space for student workers, a copier, a break room, reception space, and storage.

Student Leader General Roundtable

- There are a few top reasons why students come to the University Center:
 - Food service. Often, students choose whatever has the shortest line. The two most popular concepts are Wendy's and Subway
 - Retail spaces like Jonorr's Hair Salon, Woodforest Bank, and the bookstore
 - The Games Room.
 - Large event spaces like the Houston Room and Cougar Den
 - Smaller meeting rooms for student organization meetings
- When asked if they could add one new feature to the building, students had several ideas:
 - Better seating, both for lounge and dining spaces. Private areas like the dining room in the Fresh Food Company are desirable.
 - Better meeting space options, especially larger space between the size of the World Affairs Lounge or the Cougar Den and the Houston Room
 - Better tie-in to school mascot, spirit, and traditions. Adding art that epitomizes and symbolizes the University of Houston is very important to make sure our building looks like a Tier 1 University Center
 - A theatre that can be used as a venue for everything from movie screenings to Student Government debates
- According to students, if the architects had to get a few things exactly right on this project, it would be the design of the lounge space, trendier dining options, an enclosed and vibrant arbor space, and finishes that subtly evoke the UH experience.

Student Organization Space

- The highest priority need is 24-hour card access for student leader spaces.
- Cubicle / Carrel spaces need good wi-fi access
- There should be a common work space for organizations to make banners and other advertisements, with shared materials located in a controlled area.
- Care will need to be taken to ensure all organizations receive a high-profile location. Access to natural light and student foot traffic are both major priorities for the schematic design phase
- The plaza on the north side of the UC could become an excellent programming place for concerts, speakers, pep rallies, outdoor movie festivals, step shows, and more.
- If a sunken plaza design is chosen, that could become an excellent space for hanging banners and other advertisements.
- If the Student Organization space is divided between the UC North Addition and the UC Underground, there needs to be easy access between the two places.