

Public Workshop

Vision	Uses	Design	Management	Appendices
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Executive summary

On March 6, 2008, students in the Advanced Planning Studio course at the University of Colorado Denver, College of Architecture and Planning, conducted a public workshop to gather public comment and opinion regarding the development of the Denver Union Station (DUS) public plaza.

The workshop, held at the Oxford Hotel, attracted more than 120 participants. Upon arriving, participants identified themselves as a downtown resident, downtown employee, professional involved in the DUS redevelopment project, or other attendee. Each participant category corresponded to a color: yellow for residents, red for employees, blue for project professionals, and green for others. The categorization served to help differentiate the opinions and concerns of different groups in the analysis of the workshop notes.

The workshop consisted of four stations. Each station focused on a specific issue regarding the development of the plaza: vision, uses, design or management. Participants started in one of the four groups and rotated to the next station every 25 minutes.

The **vision** group used a SWOT analysis to generate ideas and concerns regarding the “Strengths” and “Weaknesses” of the existing public space and the “Opportunities” and “Threats” of the future public plaza. The SWOT analysis revealed participants’ top selections for each category:

- Strengths: proximity to transit hub
- Weaknesses: lack of green space
- Opportunities: large public space
- Threats: lack of funding for the project

The **uses** group aimed to gather ideas about what the completed plaza should offer users at different times. The main findings from the workshop were:

- participants would like a flexible space accommodating a wide variety of uses year round
- most popular options were a performance stage, cafes, restaurants, and a post office
- least popular options were an interior quiet area, a kids’ play area, a community garden, and an open lawn.

The **urban design** group focused on gauging people’s perceptions of different places to inform plans for the DUS plaza. The group showed arrangements of four photographs to participants, who were then asked to pick their favorite images and write why they liked or disliked landscapes in that grouping. Participants revealed strong preferences for public spaces that are:

- intimate
- flexible
- green

The **management** group aimed to generate conversation about stakeholders’ interests in how DUS public spaces should be governed. In the session, the management group contrasted four strategies for public space management: public-private partnership, for-profit corporation, private non-profit organization, and public non-profit corporation. Citing the need for both private investment and public oversight, most participants preferred either:

- a public-private partnership, or
- a public non-profit corporation.

The data collected during the workshop will inform the students’ alternative plans for the DUS public plaza.