

Young Designers Program Visioning Session Recap
April 8th, 2014
Manny Cantor Center, 197 Jefferson Street

Attendees: Dan Barasch, Michael Boulis, Ja'Dell Davis, Sarah Evers, Anna Harrah, Tim Hayduk, Ed Litvak, Michael Manger, Noor Ul Ain Ksjwyewe, Austin Sandhaus, Caroline Saudek, Robyn Shapiro, Marquise Stillwell, Matt Viggiano

CC: Julio Badel, Scott Conti, Yefrey Espinal, Allison Fleminger, Monique Flores, Jan Hanvik, Carl Johnson, Sheena Jones, Matt Mandery, Shantelena Mouzon, Howard Stern, Shaheeda Smith, Carolyn Sickles, Doneshia Williams

Meeting Objective:

The Lowline team invited key community stakeholders and educators to gather to discuss the future of the Young Designers Program. Additionally, larger ideas surrounding the best ways to gain community input were discussed.

Previous Outreach Summary:

- Since 2012, the Lowline has worked with students ages 8 – 18 from 12 schools or organizations through the form of talks and short and long dedicated program sessions.
- In April 2013, the Lowline led a three-day “inter-session” workshop at the New Design High School with 20 high school students
- In July 2013, the Lowline led a four-week summer arts workshop at the Henry Street Settlement’s Abrons Art Center with 30 middle school students
- From September 2013 to January 2014, the Lowline led a semester-long workshop with three groups of 20 middle school students, at Henry Street Settlement, Educational Alliance, and University Settlement
- Output from the semester-long workshop culminated in a month-long public exhibition in February/March 2014, and community workshop at the Mark Miller gallery in the Lower East Side, including an opening day certificate ceremony
- Hundreds of opinions and ideas have been gathered at in-school sessions and community events, including the workshop at the Mark Miller gallery
- Groups engaged have included: Seward Park High School, Essex Street Academy, Teak Foundation, LES Girls Club, Battery Park City School, New Design High School, Brooklyn Tech, Abrons Art Center, Henry Street Settlement, University Settlement, Educational Alliance, Grand Street Settlement.

Visioning Session Summary:

- Key insights regarding how to involve the larger community in building the Lowline were:
 - Ideas / opinions should be gathered from a large and diverse group of residents
 - It is important for the community to feel ownership in the process
 - Authentic and genuine community-driven design is often claimed but not truly done
 - Gathering community input will be an on-going process that is never finished

- Key recommendations based on these insights are:
 - Empower students and other ambassadors to serve as a helpful link to speak to hard to reach members of the community via face to face meetings, social media, surveys, partnerships with community centers/places of worship, etc.
 - Incentives should be instilled to reach people i.e. free snacks at a sessions, etc.
 - It should be easy and even fun to provide input i.e. limited and straightforward questions
- Key insights regarding how to expand the Young Designers Program were:
 - The program inspires students to take an active role in their neighborhood as well as introduces them to different career paths
 - It is important to keep the young designers and parents involved even after the program has ended
 - Students are more engaged when there are varying forms of curriculum (i.e. talks from various experts, field trips, etc.) and they get to see their ideas in action
 - The quality of the final models should be improved to more accurately reflect ideas, either through increased scale and/or improved materials
 - Students should not just develop ideas but they should test them too
- Key recommendations based on these insights are:
 - Given the varying aspects of the Lowline, have students focus on “major” in a specific area, and all come together at the end
 - Increase the amount of aspects of the Lowline that are discussed (i.e. above ground dynamics, how subways commuters are affected, etc.)
 - Consider a competition to further engage and motivate students
 - Have a program where former students come back to mentor newer students
 - Have an intergenerational program to get varying perspectives
 - Have students’ ideas installed around the Lower East Side and the rest of the City as a public art program
 - Connect with other partners and organizations to add importance and provide additional opportunities within the program (i.e. Emerging New York Architects Committee, AIA, etc.)

Next Steps:

- First Community Engagement Committee meeting, June 19, 2014 at the Manny Cantor Center
- Hold Young Designer Programs with Center for Architecture and Abrons Art Center, Summer 2014
- Optimize program curriculum and add partners for on-going sessions, Fall 2014