

Feedback on Team Briefings

Case: Public housing redevelopment

Team “Z”

Our evaluation covers your briefing, visual aids, and handout, though the feedback below may offer more on one of those than the other elements.

Briefing (content and delivery)

Student A’s intro was crisp, clear, and engaging. But physical positioning of the team was a problem: She seemed hidden behind other team members who “lurked” near the briefees. You need to minimize distractions and place the focus on the speaker and the visuals.

The logic of the briefing was interesting: Tenant engagement is the foundation (not an after-thought), and it enables physical design tools to make a difference. The team didn’t come back to the core message enough, reliant as most of you were on a “script” (written notes). And the two halves—physical and non-physical—could have been much better integrated (this was true for almost every team).

Student B, your early points were the clearest, but relying as you did on your notes, you missed an opportunity to connect with the audience. Also, watch the wonk-ish¹ jargon: “facilitate accountability and reciprocity.” It was tricky to see the connection between some of these points and the slides (see below), too—a problem that affected several presenters. One slide per main point might have helped us “button” the two together.

Student C’s most effective contributions were in response to questions, extemporaneous (unscripted), in exchange with Xav. Again, this is the *opportunity* in a briefing—to create a conversation that informs or teaches important points—and not a sign of shortcomings. **Student C’s** explanation of risks in various engagement strategies signaled preparedness, more than the easy answers that aren’t credible (in the field) any more. But on repeated questioning, try not to aim for the *one* right answer. You’re not being tested. You’re in an informed conversation with stakes for real decisions: Explore the options with the briefee. You don’t need to know everything.

¹ “Wonk” is an idiom. It’s “know” spelled backward. In the simplest terms, a wonk is *technically* savvy but only that. Wonks struggle to build constituencies for their ideas. We use “wonkish” to convey a style of speech that is needlessly complex, even inaccessible.

In general, **Students D and E** also had important points but relied heavily on notes and rushed somewhat, making it harder for us to understand key points made by both. A reference to “it is not here,” for example, left us wondering, as we looked again at the slide, “what’s the ‘it’”? **Student E’s** points about reactions of the tenants were critical, but they seemed directed at the screen.

Cherie Abbanat noted that transition remarks, to get you from speaker to speaker, were some of the team’s best, because they were “off script.”

The closing message could have been simplified for greater impact, and you probably should have noted Commonwealth’s uncommon demographic make-up. That is, context matters. The supporting slide (Principles for future redevelopment) was too “busy,” offered too much text. A graphic integrating the physical and non-physical elements of your message here would have been super.

Visual aids (slides)

Too many of the visuals seemed weakly linked to the spoken points, also oddly timed, as though you needed more practice with the slides and some revision to get a clear and persuasive “storyboard” together—a logical, intuitive package to back up your remarks.

On the other hand, individual slides were gems, e.g. Slide 8 (Physical design interventions), which combines a clear header with specific design advice and quotes by residents. Plus several that follow in that section. These would be enormously helpful to key briefees, or secondary audiences, not in attendance. These have a stand-alone quality.

Score: 90

Grade: B+