

ITEM 8-A

Monopoly Plaza

A Concept for Alameda Point by Amanda Shepard (2013)

It's a Plaza...It's a Playground...It's a Community Art Project...It's a Destination! At 200 feet times 200 feet square, it will easily be the largest Monopoly-inspired board on the planet. The proposed site is located at the northeast corner of Seaplane Lagoon. This plaza could be the heart of the entire development, a place for congregation, relaxation, and especially a place for joy!



Figure 1: The 1998 US version of the game of Monopoly

I have been asked: why Monopoly? It's a game I have enjoyed playing my entire life, that many of us first played as children, and one that teaches important fundamentals, such as negotiation, counting, and even history and geography. It's become a beloved part of our culture and everyone I've talked to about this idea is at least a little excited about it, and some are a lot excited! The design of this Monopoly-themed plaza is, by its nature, an

interactive community project. The concept of this plaza continues to evolve and incorporate suggestions and ideas for its inception from so many members of our community; it's really great how much everyone is being so helpful and supportive!

The design of the actual Monopoly board from the standard 1998 US version is easily translated to the larger scale of a plaza. Most of the game blocks are rectangles that would measure 26' x 16'. The smaller and colorful rectangles which designate rental property color groups would all be benches, as would be each of the question marks contained in the three Chance blocks. Measuring 16' x 6', these rectangular benches would easily accommodate groups sitting on either side, back-to-back. They would also glow at night with colored lights projected from inside the bench, visible through powder-coated metal etched in stars. At each of the four corners where different color groups meet at a 90° angle, notches should be etched at the corner to prevent debris accumulation. At the proposed Seaplane Lagoon site, this plaza will be visible from sections of the Bay Bridge, as well as from aircraft overhead, both day and night. Additional proposals of ways to light the plaza at night include LED strips to define borders on the ground plane and truly monumental arc lights.

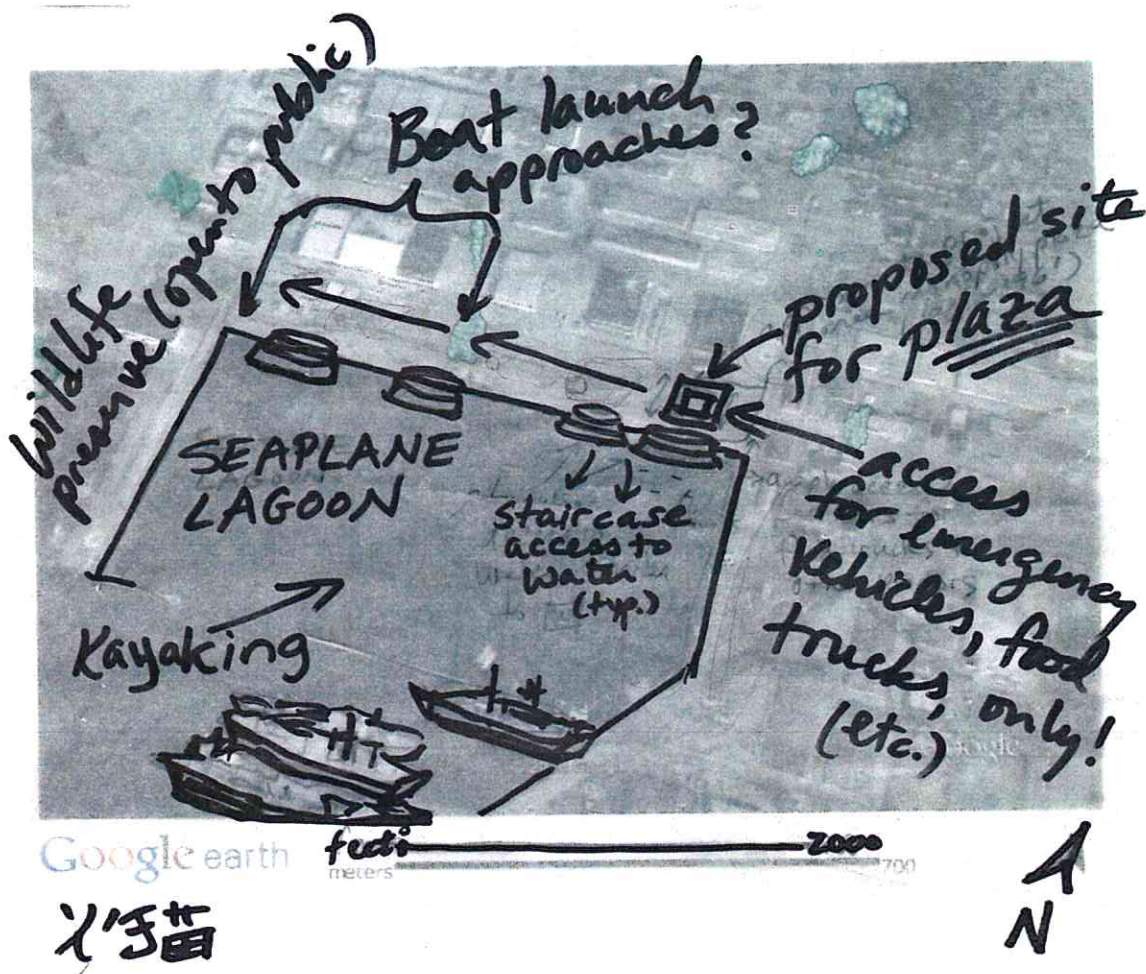


Figure 2: Site Analysis of Seaplane Lagoon

A fundamental aspect of the plaza design is interactive community art and the integration of historical context. For example, the surface of the plaza could be made in a similar way to cushioned tennis courts with a gritty surface that can be stained an appropriate green shade, a tone which also complements nearby former Navy buildings in the historic district. This ground plane can be painted, especially to define boundaries between blocks, but primarily, the surface of the plaza is designed to be receptive to art chalk, for two main reasons: First, Alameda already claims a World Record for the largest community art chalk project, which was created on Alameda Point under the guidance of Mark Wagner with the help of hundreds of students and adult volunteers, so we're already breaking records and gathering international attention for our dedication to chalk art projects. The second reason is the plaza design is open to interpretation, and chalk is an impermanent, fun, and inexpensive medium for self and group artistic expression.

In the middle of the actual game board there are two locations where the yellow and orange cards usually go. Those could both be stages to host bands and other performances in the middle of our plaza.

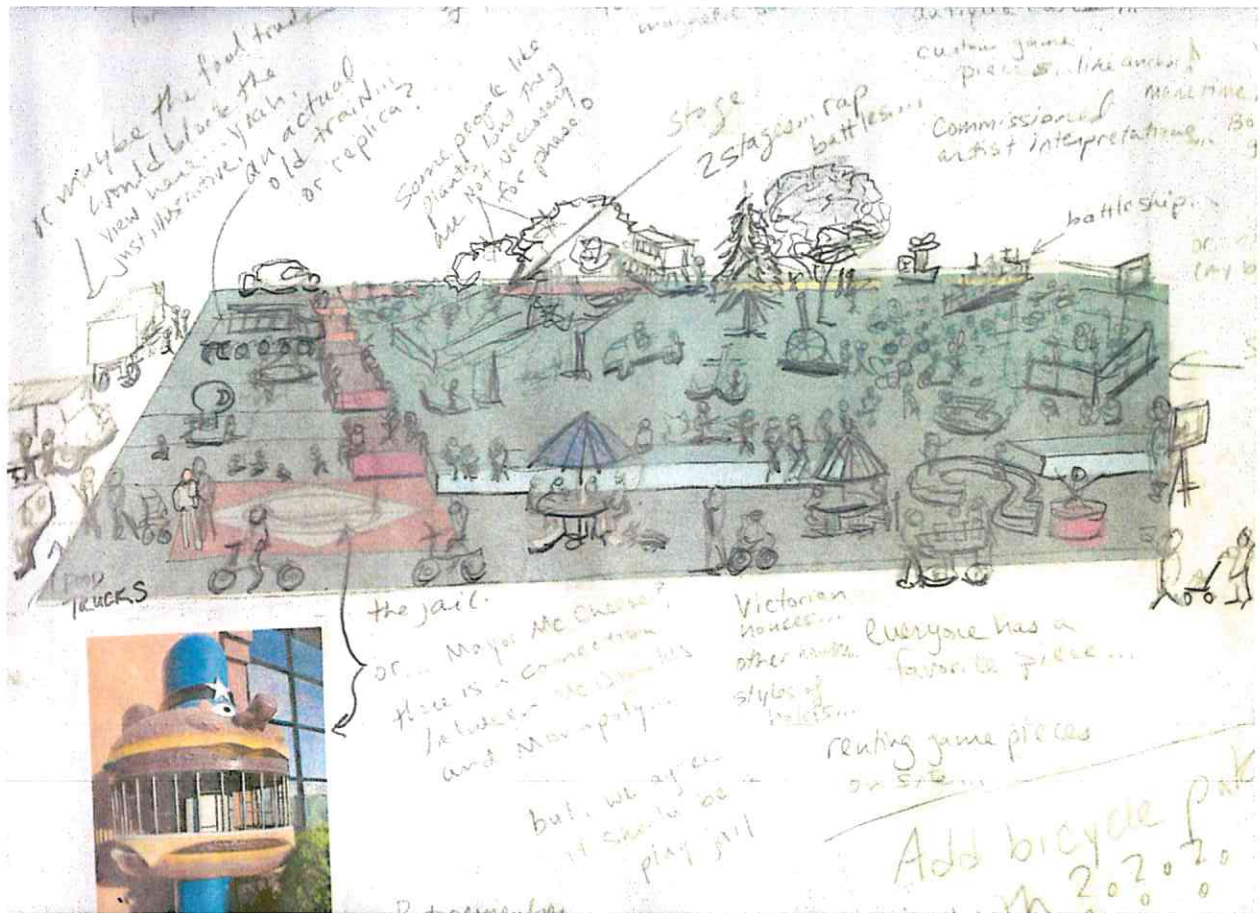


Figure 3: A concept sketch of the completed plaza

The four railroad blocks modeled after those on the actual game board represent another opportunity to celebrate Alameda's history. Alameda hosted four railroad companies between 1864 and the 1950s: San Francisco & Alameda, Central Pacific, South Pacific Coast, and Southern Pacific. We could integrate history and geography at these four Railroad blocks with playground-durable translated replicas of those trains and educational placards.

Certain other blocks are also designated as special. The three Community Chest blocks would naturally be designated as areas for donor acknowledgment, so there is opportunity for encouraging and rewarding project financing built into the design. We envision approaching both Alameda Municipal Power (our island Electric Company) and East Bay MUD (our island Water Works) with proposals for interactive sculptures in those specific blocks, permanent installments as showpieces for the plaza. For example, we could have a giant solar-powered light bulb that can be turned off and on by the push of a durable button, and we could have a water feature where people can touch the water, which could also do double-duty as a hose to wash away chalk as necessary.

Other sculptures envisioned in the center of the plaza include replicas or local artist interpretations of actual Monopoly game pieces, enlarged to appropriate scale. Alameda has a wealth of relevant culture and history that could be made into sculptures which could also look like game pieces: boxing glove, antique car, anchor, maritime knot, baseball, other Navy ships besides the battleship...and the list will expand with more community input.

A public arts commission or other responsible entity could provide incentive for local artists and community members to contribute to the development of this plaza, for example through grants. So many more ideas have been presented, including ways to interact with the plaza to actually play games there, including using both smartphone apps and giant magnetic foam pieces to adhere to magnetic plates installed at each block. There's even been talk of future technologies enabling for a game to be played and viewed from above using computer-driven laser holograms as movable board pieces. The plaza will certainly change as it is created and used over the years. The original game of Monopoly will be 100 years old in 2035. - Wouldn't it be great if, by then, the entire vision for Seaplane Lagoon were realized with a celebration of the plaza?

About Amanda Shepard

By 1996, Amanda had dreamed of living in a place that was a horticultural oasis, with liberal politics, multiculturalism, and homes with amazing Victorian architecture that were all within easy walking distance of shops and restaurants. That same year, she serendipitously moved to her Pacific Island Oasis home of Alameda, and has been quite literally planting roots ever since, especially for the past seven years as a professional gardener and horticultural consultant with her practice, Healing Gardens. She studied the Horticultural trades locally at Merritt College, focusing on Landscape Architecture and Design. It is primarily with this professional training that she approaches her craft and presents her visions for local community cultivation projects. She has participated actively with the Merritt College Aesthetic Pruning Club for the past seven years helping coordinate volunteer training activities and lecturing about pruning and gardening.