Civic Center Plaza Playgrounds
imagining a new place to play

July 15, 2014
SF Main Library
CIVIC CENTER PLAZA HISTORY
REALIZED AND PROPOSED DESIGNS, 1912-2012

Design by A. Lacy Warswick
 Installed for the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915
 Circular fountains flank each side of the ceremonial axis along Fulton Street and define a minor cross-axial

Design by Douglas Baylis, after the 1958 plan was deemed ‘too cluttered and without enough lawn’
  Funds appropriated for fountains, sculpture, embelishments were not used.

The San Francisco Civic Center: a Study in Urban Form, Oct. 1987
and "Civic Center Proposal" Dianne Feinstein
Possible restoration plan based on original Waswick Design Concept.

The original design concept created a central focal area suitable for major civic events
  Seating was concentrated around the periphery and along major pathways which unified the space
  and provided users with greater security
  Tree plantings reinforced the design and maintained a degree of transparency for the viewer
  Surrounding buildings were joined with the Plaza through a complex of formal axes and sightlines

"Solutions for San Francisco’s Civic Center", KMD Architecture

"San Francisco Civic Center Plaza", January 1999,
Bureau of Architecture (BPA), Rec&Park

"San Francisco Civic Center (Historic) Saliency Improvement Project",
October 1999, Acme-Martin-Nagel-Wadsworth-Munu and Dill-Partnership

9 pre-fabricated army barracks are located in the plaza between 1943 and 1946 to provide lodging for WWII soldiers.

"First Prize" awarded in 1965 Civic Center Re-design Design Competition, but not implemented.

Lawrence Halprin’s 1966 plan was based on the 1912 plan and approved by the Arts Commission, but never implemented.

ANDREA COCHRAN
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
2325 Third Street #210
San Francisco CA 94107
415.503.0060

Civic Center
Playground Replacement
Community Meeting
07.15.2014
CIVIC CENTER PLAZA: 1930
CIVIC CENTER PLAZA: 1965
CIVIC CENTER PLAZA: existing conditions 1998
CIVIC CENTER PLAZA PLAYGROUNDS: existing conditions 2014
Data Collection, November 2013: Park Observation

- More younger children at North Playground
- Fewer teens
- Many caregivers
- More users on the weekends
- Surge of playground users on event days

North Playground

South Playground
Data Collection, November 2013: User Survey: Frequency of use

- Most respondents were caregivers
- Some large school groups at lunchtime on a field trip
- Most (50%) visit playgrounds 1x per week
- 30% visit several times per week
- 10% visit daily
- 20% were first time visitors
CIVIC CENTER PLAZA PLAYGROUNDS: today

What we heard

What is working
- Great location
- Near many youth + family destinations
- The fences creates an enclosed space

What is not working
- Current equipment is not challenging enough for older youth and teens
- Flooring is old + wood is splintering
- No group sitting areas
- Lack of trashcans
- Tall vent structures impact the playgrounds
- Views into the playground are blocked at the corners
- Unclear pedestrian access to playgrounds feels unwelcoming
- Low evening lighting makes the space feel unsafe
CIVIC CENTER PLAZA PLAYGROUNDS

goals

• Create an inviting, inspiring, fun and safe place for families
• Create unique and artful play spaces that fit with the scale of Civic Center
• Increase programming opportunities with cultural institutions
• Engage and activate children’s sense of play
imagine a new place to play

DISCUSSION / WORK SESSION

What do you like and dislike about the current playgrounds?

Please describe a favorite play experience you had as a child.
CIVIC CENTER PLAZA PLAYGROUNDS

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We have been talking about memorable play moments from our own childhoods and how we can help encourage similar types of experiences in children’s lives today.

What are the essential components of these common experiences and how can they inspire design?

How can we translate these elemental experiences into a new landscape for play?
CIVIC CENTER PLAZA PLAYGROUNDS

imagine a new place to play

surprise + delight  
retreat + escape  
explore + roam  
experiment + investigate  
challenge + thrill

How does this feel? How might this look?
surprise + delight
surprise + delight
retreat + escape
retreat + escape
explore + roam
explore + roam
experiment + investigate
experiment + investigate
challenge + thrill
challenge + thrill