



plaza de artes

Play Making and Place Making



Prepared for

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Introduction

Hemisfair Park Area Redevelopment Corporation (HPARC) is responsible for the redevelopment of the entire Hemisfair campus in San Antonio, Texas. In accordance with the Master Plan, approved by City Council in February 2012, initial work will focus on the southwest corner of the site formed by Goliad, Water, South Alamo, and Chavez Streets.

This area, preliminarily named “Plaza de Artes,” currently includes the Magik Theatre, the existing play structure built in 1989, and 11 historic buildings. The first round of development and infrastructure will set a world-class standard for all future development in the area.

This first effort will be cognizant of the larger overall development, particularly in the northwest corner, and will tie into the vision and guiding principles of HPARC. Furthermore, HPARC will deliver – as demanded by its community – a place that transforms San Antonio.

What follows is a vision for what Plaza de Artes could be, facilitated by two organizations with global expertise in play-and place-making, MIG and Project for Public Spaces, who worked together with San Antonio residents through focus groups, interviews, and surveys led by HPARC and the Plaza de Artes Task Force. PPS and MIG has learned over the years that the majority of the success of great public destinations around the world can be attributed to their management and creative programming. As the team to implement and manage Plaza de Artes takes shape, it will continue to evolve this vision, with ongoing involvement with local citizens and the city, and based on additional study of the retail and restaurant needs of this part of the city.

Plaza de Artes will become one of the great attractions of the city, a well-loved local destination for all ages that creates an authentic place for San Antonio residents and makes downtown more attractive and livable.

Plaza De Artes: Play-Making and Place-Making

Process

MIG and PPS worked with Hemisfair Park Area Redevelopment Corporation and the community to develop the vision and program that follows, which will guide future investment in the southwest corner of Hemisfair.

As part of the process, PPS, MIG and HPARC conducted focus groups with local representatives of the arts community, local businesses and entrepreneurs, and area residents to assess current neighborhood attitudes, issues and opportunities. We interviewed individuals with specific expertise, including a local events coordinator, school teacher, convention center director, retail real-estate broker, city staff, and Magik Theatre staff. These interviews helped to identify specific program issues, partnership opportunities, and linkages to area institutions.

The team also studied the results from public meetings conducted during 2010 and 2011 by HPARC and Johnson Fain during the creation of the Hemisfair Area Master Plan.

All of these ideas were then sifted into common themes, which led to a draft vision and program, which was released for public comment. This online survey garnered 494 responses, the results of which were considered and incorporated into the final Vision and Program document which follows.

Throughout the process, the team was aided by the Plaza de Artes Task Force, representing major stakeholder groups, and the Hemisfair Planning & Development Committee. Both groups provided a sounding board to the team as it developed the concepts in this report, and we thank them for their effort.



Site Aerial: This public destination will be located at the southwest corner of Hemisfair formed by Goliad, Water, Alamo, and Chavez streets and is preliminarily named "Plaza de Artes."

Vision

The goal for Hemisfair is not to just build parks and buildings, but to create irresistible experiences that strengthen the community. Supporting the goal of the new Hemisfair to create a vibrant 24/7 neighborhood that adds real value to downtown, Plaza de Artes will be a crossroads of creative energy that epitomizes Hemisfair's role as a "confluence of cultures." It will be an exciting and special social space that attracts local residents, with a focus on art, culture and play.

The play environment, retail, cultural institutions and open space in the Plaza de Artes will activate this section of Hemisfair, which will be the first seven acres to be redeveloped.

The goals for Plaza de Artes vision are:

1. Be Authentic

Create an authentic home for local downtown residents and provide amenities that make downtown living attractive. These amenities will include play areas for all ages, food and drink, relaxing green spaces, health and fitness, and specialty shopping.

2. Complement the Existing "Scene"

Add to the growing artistic and culinary scene in La Villita and Southtown.

3. Create an Active Draw

Establish a multifaceted attraction that helps move people between La Villita, the River Walk, the Alamo District, and Southtown, and that sparks residential, cultural, and unique local retail development.

4. Provide a Magnetic Gateway

Create a unique primary entry into Hemisfair. **Embody Hemisfair's Spirit**
Provide a venue that supports city-wide events that embody the spirit of Hemisfair, like Fiesta and Luminaria,

and integrate them into the Plaza de Artes experience through public art and lighting features.

5. Be Multi-use and Flexible

Create a multi-layered experience for diverse audiences throughout the day and evening, with many overlaps that will help create vibrancy and community. Create places that are flexible, can be used for a variety of programs, and that locals and tourists of all ages and backgrounds can explore for hours.

6. Be Playful

Provide a spirited environment that children and adults can enjoy together, while engaging people's minds and encourage learning and exploration of the history, arts and culture of San Antonio.

7. Incorporate Sustainability

Incorporate sustainability in many ways with particular respect to water, energy, and the use of native species.

Phasing

When fully developed, Hemisfair will include uses ranging from a high density children's play environment to an open civic park, and from event performance areas to dining, retail and residential developments. All support the overall objective of establishing a world-class urban park surrounded by a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood. Plaza de Artes will be the first step towards accomplishing this overall vision. As the first part of Hemisfair to be developed, for a period of time the Plaza de Artes will represent the "new Hemisfair" experience.

Until other key components of the overall plan are completed, particularly the quiet spaces offered by the Civic Park, the construction of the Plaza de Artes may be phased to offer some passive spaces, thereby reducing the initial density of activities. Therefore, some portions of the plan may be delayed, such as the Play Plaza and/or Tree Climb, in order to provide a balance of active and peaceful experiences in the first phase. Once the Civic Park is complete, the development of these highly-active features, described in this document, will continue.

Concept Illustrations



Key



1 View from S. Alamo St



2 View From Cesar Chavez Blvd: Bubbling Spring Plaza



3 View from southern end of Acequia Walk

Concept Plan

The Plaza de Artes is the first phase of development on the west side of Hemisfair; phase 2 will include a larger green space (the "Civic Park") that, at 12 acres, is almost twice the size of Plaza de Artes. Together with the River Walk Park described below, the west side of Hemisfair will offer a wide range of active spaces, lawns, gardens, and programmable spaces, with Plaza de Artes as the active focal point.



Destinations & Places

1 - The Play Experience

- A Springs Plaza (Cesar Chavez Entry)
- B Bubbling Springs Play
- C Tree Climb and River Play
- D Acequia Walk
- E Play Plaza (Goliad Entry)
- F Music Garden (South Alamo Entry)
- G Play, Art and Bicycle Center
- H Café Bakery

2 - The Big Back Yard

- A Back Yard/Bookstore Café
- B The Palm Porch
- C Games Plaza
- D Picnic Area and Lawn
- E Multi-use Fun & Wellness Center (Kampmann Solomon House)

3 - Goliad Gateway Local Retail & Dining

- A Gateway
- B Goliad Row
 - i The Mayer/Half House
 - ii The Hermann Schulze House
 - iii The Sweeney House
 - iv Acosta Half House

4 - River Walk Park

5 - A Creative Community



Destination 1 - The Play Experience

Objective: The destination play setting is designed to attract San Antonio families seeking a place to play and relax. It addresses vision goals **1** Be Authentic, **2** Complement the Existing "Scene", **3** Create an Active Draw, **4** Provide a Magnetic Gateway, and **6** Be Multi-use and Flexible.

The design will honor the history of the waters of San Antonio: its source at the springs, the built acequia and aqueducts that irrigated the land, and its status today as the famous River Walk that draws visitors from all over the world.

Beautiful colors and designs worked into the Plaza's surfaces and overhead canopy will make the entire area an artwork in itself. Visitors will be able to enjoy the space for hours at a time, with enough activities for grownups to feel as entertained as children.

Places

A Springs Plaza (Cesar Chavez Entry)

At the Cesar Chavez Boulevard entry to the plaza, a multitude of spheres or "bubbles" – large, colorfully painted art balls of various materials, designed by local artists – will spill out into the surrounding landscape. These spheres hearken back to the 1968 World's Fair that brought various cultures from around the globe together in San Antonio. They celebrate this part of the city's history while providing activity and play for today's generation. In certain places the bubbles also play on children's water activity and even reference the springs of the San Antonio River bubbling up from the ground. The different-sized bubbles can be decorated by local artists, providing another link to San Antonio's culture. In the evening, the plaza becomes a place for all ages to stroll, sit, and gather to enjoy the art, lighting, small events, and garden atmosphere.

Plaza De Artes: Play-Making and Place-Making

B Bubbling Springs Play

The Bubbling Springs will contain a number of different play areas. Just inside the entrance would be sets of art balls of varying sizes to relate this area to the Springs Plaza. This rolling, hilly landscape is also a safe play surface, so that children can climb, scramble, sit, stand, and jump on and around the bubbles to their hearts' content. Creativity with the art balls could also result in a giant climbing ball with crevices and handholds mimicking natural rock to present an extra challenge. There is also spinning play, slide play, and a shaded area with large disc swings that could hold 1-5 kids at a time.



Canopy
(Concept Illustration)

Images

Destination 1 - Play Experience



Spinning Play



Bubble Play



Bubbling Spring Play
(Concept Illustration)



Spray Play



Big Dig



The centerpiece of the Bubbling Springs Play area would be a large mound that can be seen from every entry point. This large “bubble” promotes climbing activity and provides an overlook at the summit. On the backside, the hidden source of water for the water play experience would be revealed, with water bubbling out into a rocky aqueduct, down into shallow pools, and through an armature, feeding a channel that spills into and moistens the sand in the Big Dig area.

The “Big Dig” would feature large replicas of artifacts found in the cultural institutes nearby, covered and hidden in the sand. Here, children could turn themselves into archeologists uncovering the history of San Antonio. At the base of the aqueduct, springs bubble up into a foggy, misty spray. Structures imitate a natural waterway but are designed so that all ages can safely play in and around the pools, rocky aqueduct and rippling stream. The water elements would also be designed to function when dry.

An adjustable shade canopy would make the entire Springs Plaza and Bubbling Springs Play area comfortable year-round, and can also be strung with lights for artful light shows at night.

C Tree Climb & River Play

The Tree Climb and River Play area offers two levels of adventure around a water element. Visitors can take a gentle stroll along the stream, or ascend to an enclosed net structure ten feet off the ground. The tree net climb is a playable art piece that looks like the surrounding trees. An enclosed net path comes off the tree net climb up high and goes right through the trees, with lookouts along the way. Up here, children can also explore botany and learn more about local plants and trees. Below, children can play in the stream and build their own structures with the natural materials supplied. Adjacent to the stream will be a play village designed and built by local teams of architects and youth during an event to bring together community members and build excitement for the area. Plenty of comfortable seating throughout will be provided for parents or kids to take a rest.

D Acequia Walk

The Acequia Walk will lie between the Tree Climb and River Play area and the future site of a mixed-use development that would include residential units and possibly retail/restaurant and a cultural institution on the ground floor. A tree-lined walkway, starting at the Acequia Plaza and running alongside the remnant of the original acequia, would feature interpretive information on the history

Plaza De Artes: Play-Making and Place-Making

of the acequia and provide comfortable shaded seating. This area also serves as a natural divider between play, the cultural venue, and the residential areas.

E Play Plaza (Goliad Entry)

The Goliad Street entry is located across the street from the River Walk and forms an integral connection to the future changes north of Goliad Street. A large “net” or latticework climbing bubble, and art/play bubbles dotted over a grass mound will encourage visitors on Goliad to explore the play area to the south.



Tree Climb
(Concept Illustration)

Images



River Play



Tree Climb



Aqueduct Play



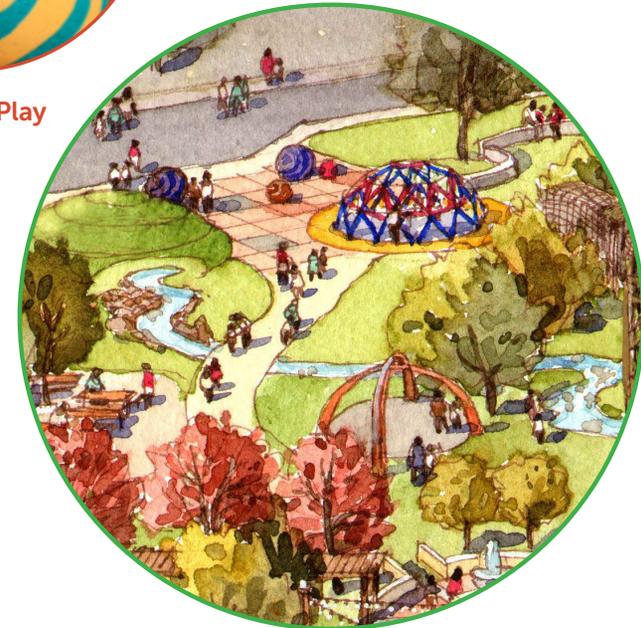
Bubble Play



Acequia Walk



Play Village



Play Plaza - Goliad Entry
(Concept Illustration)

F Music Garden (South Alamo Entry)

Another grouping of bubbles, located at the Alamo Street entry, would spill out onto the sidewalk and lead into the Music Garden. A variety of outdoor instruments could sprout from the ground, inviting visitors to join together in spontaneous jam sessions.

G Play, Art and Bicycle Center

Located next to the Music Garden, the Play, Art and Bicycle Center could be entered either through a decorative trellis on Alamo Street or from the Springs Plaza. The Center could feature year-round play programs, both preregistered and drop-in. It will also have bicycles and tricycles for rent and classes on bike maintenance and repair for kids and adults. Additionally, the Center could double as a venue for other hobbies involving wheels, such as remote-controlled toy cars for rent.

H Café Bakery

Play requires fuel. The Plaza is intended to entertain visitors for long periods of time and must have convenient and reasonably priced dining. Fulfilling this important purpose, the Café Bakery would be set adjacent to the

Springs Plaza, offering healthy and fresh food. A seating terrace would overlook the Bubbling Springs Area.

Amenities and Design Considerations

Public restrooms will be located throughout the Plaza, including – at a minimum - the Bakery, and the bookstore/café. Changing rooms for kids will also be needed after water play. In drought conditions, water play could be curtailed – the design will factor this in and provide alternative ways for kids to play with the acequia, such as the use of multi-colored marbles that communicate the idea of water.

Many parents brought up concerns about the sight lines into the existing playground – that it is common to lose sight of young children in the current setting. In redesigning Plaza de Artes, visibility will be an important objective. Having ample seating, shading and cooling devices (such as misters) provides comfort and protection for kids and adults; these elements will be a priority in the Plaza de Artes design.



Art & Play Center
(Concept Illustration)



Luminaria, Hemisfair,
San Antonio, TX

Images



Music Garden



Music Garden - Alamo Entry
(Concept Illustration)



Plaza Art



Misters & Water Play



Plaza De Artes: Play-Making and Place-Making



Bicycle Center

Destination 2 - The Big Back Yard

Objective: The Big Backyard will create an authentic home for local downtown residents and help complete the amenities that make downtown living attractive. These amenities will include food and drink, relaxing green spaces, family attractions, and informal places to recreate and meet neighbors. It also addresses vision goals **1** Be Authentic, **3** Create an Active Draw, **4** Provide a Magnetic Gateway and **6** Be Multi-use and Flexible.

Places

A Bookstore / Café with “Back Yard” patio

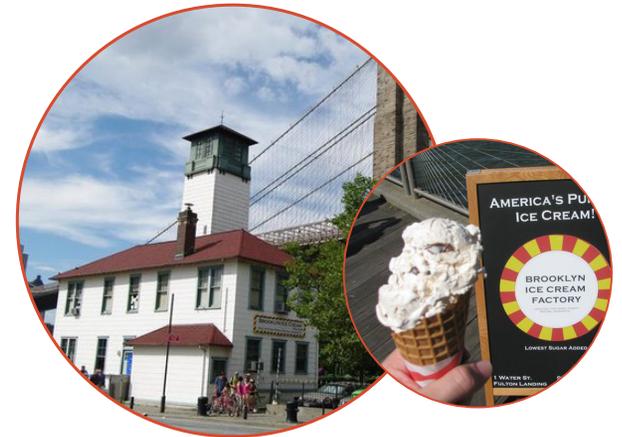
With so much play for children, the grownups deserve a spot of their own too! The Eager House, an 1870s historic building with frontage on South Alamo Street, could become a bookshop and cafe with indoor and outdoor seating – a gathering place for moms and dads during their daytime visit with the kids. The patio overlooks the lawn area so parents can relax while their children play. During the evening, the café could become a beer garden – the social hub of the park. This bookstore/café can host community-based events such as open mic night or poetry readings.

B The Palm Porch

The shady entrance of the Magik Theatre can be transformed into a courtyard environment with a small stage for puppet shows and performances. It will welcome kids as they spill out of the theatre, stimulated by the show and looking for ways to expend their creative energy.

C Games Plaza

Visitors are encouraged to settle in at the Games Plaza and stay for a while. Trellis seating arranged around a fountain provides room for spectators or board games. Adjacent to the Eager House is a carriage house with appealing architectural qualities that would make a wonderful ice cream shop facing the Palm Court, and even a pretzelry facing the patio. For family nights the oven could be used as a community pizza oven. The outdoor patio will include a variety of seating and hammocks, overhead canopies and lights, a music performance area and public restrooms, and a few games like horseshoes or bocce ball. Wi-Fi will be provided here and in other areas of Plaza de Artes. It has a dressed up rec room feel that draws people in from the adjacent patio.



Ice Cream Shop



Community Pizza Oven

Images



Outdoor Patio



Games



Outdoor Fire Pit



Outdoor Reading Room



Outdoor Patio



Colorful Planting



D Picnic Area and Lawn

Behind the Games Plaza, the Picnic Area and 1/3 acre lawn will offer a multitude of settings to enjoy a picnic, as well as hammocks and swing benches for even greater relaxation. An adjoining large picnic area beside the Magik Theatre could provide seating for theater-goers to eat lunch before or after the performance. There is also space in front of and around the theatre for retail or indoor/ outdoor dining.

E Multi-use Fun & Wellness Center (Kampmann Solomon House)

The Kampmann Solomon House could be an active hub that appeals to adults' interest in health and wellness. This center could offer climbing lessons, sports, and hobby retail (climbing/kite shop/rentable remote control cars). The lawn outside could offer a climbing wall.

The second floor of the house could be a getaway for anyone looking to relax or be pampered— from a parent who has dropped off their kids with a play leader to a conventioner enjoying time off. It is a

small day spa with massage and pedi/mani treatments, along with Yoga and Pilates. The space can also be used for dance classes for adults and kids. These classes move outdoors in good weather, reinforcing the rich mixture of play and creativity at Hemisfair.



**The Big Back Yard
(Concept Illustration)**



Seating



Swing Benches

Images



Moveable Seating



Picnic Tables



Lawn Play



Wellness Center



Wellness Center



Lawn Games



Bean Bags



Destination 3 - Goliad Gateway Local Retail & Dining

Objectives: Provide a magnetic gateway into Hemisfair that attracts residents and visitors with its unique, local shopping and dining; add critical mass to downtown's culinary scene and specialty shopping at La Villita; provide elegance and entertainment at this entrance to Hemisfair. It also addresses vision goals **1** Be Authentic, **2** Complement the Existing "Scene", **3** Create an Active Draw, **4** Provide a Magnetic Gateway, **5** Embody Hemisfair's Spirit and, **6** Be Multi-use and Flexible.

Places

A Gateway

Framed by the new Magik Theatre and Schultze store, this gateway needs to have active uses (local retail and restaurants) on both sides of Goliad. Its design should also extend across S. Alamo Street to La Villita and the Fairmount Hotel. The proposed Magik Theatre mixed-use expansion project could house a restaurant or retailer. The architecture of the building expansion could create a playful and climbable environment for kids to explore. The Schultze Store is also a gateway building that could offer a signature, two-level restaurant.

Other gateway features include a kiosk(s) selling flowers and toys, a Welcome Center that provides information on what Hemisfair offers, and a concierge service to arrange catered picnics and dinner reservations, play leader appointments, ticket sales for events, and game rentals.

B Goliad Row

Situated between the theater and play areas on the south and the Civic Park to the north, the historic structures on Goliad Row offer the opportunity for a sequence of highly individualistic commercial uses. An art gallery, local retail and restaurants are all potential uses that would serve nearby residents and create an attractive draw..



Boutique Retail

Images



Toy Store



Boutique Retail/
Restaurant



Art



Indoor / Outdoor Boutique
Restaurant



Luminaria, Hemisfair,
San Antonio, TX



Destination 4 - River Walk Park

Images

Objective: Create an intimate green environment that becomes an oasis for downtown residents, visitors, and conventioners, adding a much needed park amenity to downtown. It also addresses vision goals **1** Be Authentic, **2** Complement the Existing "Scene", **5** Embody Hemisfair's Spirit and **6** Be Multi-use and Flexible

Located near the juncture of the active zones in Hemisfair, the River Walk Park will be away from the hubbub of Plaza de Artes, but close enough to the action to still feel a part of it. Its main attraction will be a pond or water feature with gardens and seating, quiet natural areas, and an iconic interactive art piece (such as Central Park's Alice in Wonderland Sculpture, or Millennium Park's Silver Cloud or "Bean"). It also offers paved surfaces for various markets (e.g. arts/crafts, a dress market, books, antiques or flea), and smaller music performances and events that would be overwhelmed by the size of the Civic Park. This park will be especially beautiful in the evening, illuminated by luminaria throughout its gardens and water features giving it an ambience unique to San Antonio.



Destination 5 - A Creative Community

Images

Objective: Create an appealing living environment in downtown supported with flexible work spaces. The vision for this destination addresses goals **1** Be Authentic, **2** Complement the Existing "Scene" and **6** Be Multi-use and Flexible.

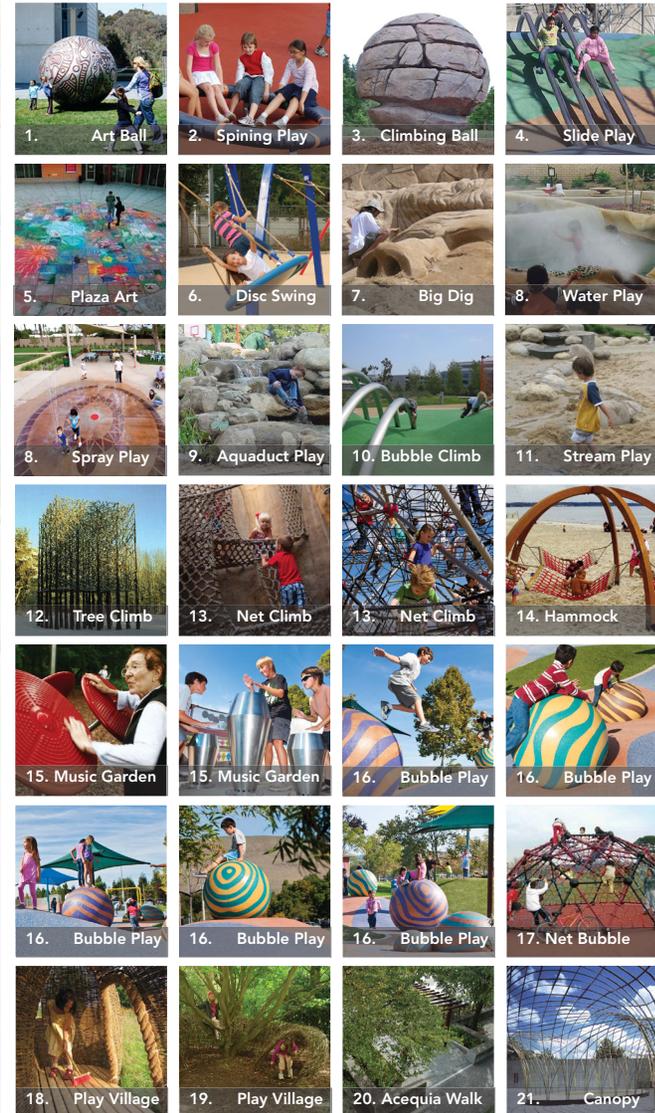
At the back of the Plaza de Artes, a residential building could host a cultural institution or commercial space to face the public space on the first floor. The Water Street entry, separated from the play area by a row of trees, will provide easy access to residents. The second floor could be artist live/work housing or creative enterprises, while floors three and above would be residential.

Until construction begins on this structure, the site could be a grassy open space — a play lawn that compliments the play experience.



Plaza De Artes: Play-Making and Place-Making

Appendix: Concept Design Plans & Perspectives



Program Vision



Concept Vision for Phase 1 and 2



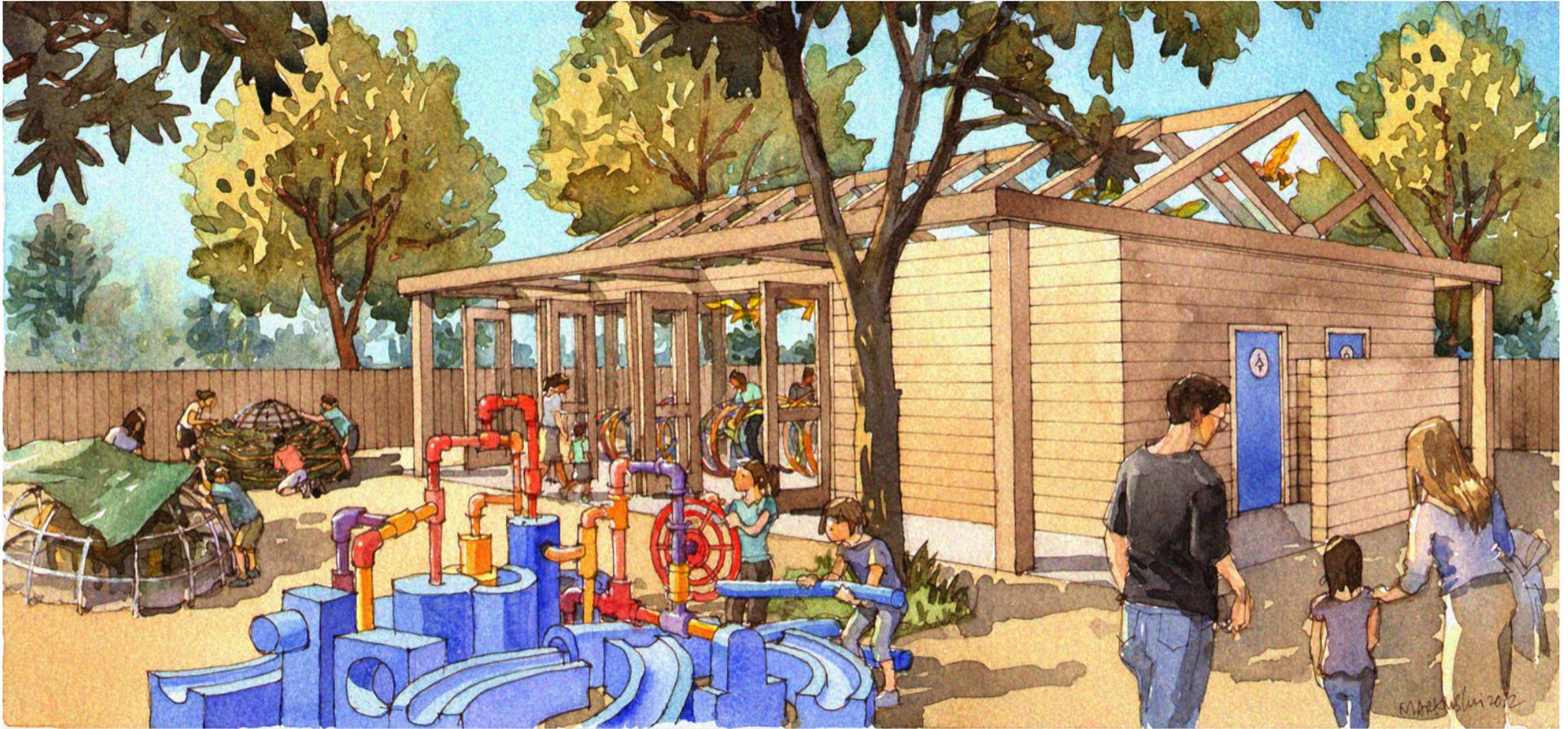
View from southern end of Acequia Walk



View from Chavez Gateway into Bubbling Springs Plaza



General perspective of Plaza de Artes looking East.



Art & Play Center: Facilitated Play Program

Acknowledgements

Our thanks go out to the many San Antonio residents who participated in the visioning for Plaza de Artes, including:

Local artists and cultural organizations

Local Businesses

Area Neighbors

Public school educators

The Magik Theatre

San Antonio Convention Center

Event coordinators

and the 494 people who participated in our Plaza de Artes Survey

For their leadership, special thanks also to the Plaza de Artes Task Force and the City of San Antonio