



# STEWARD SHIP

## L A N D I N G

*Steward Ship Landing Project Proposal August 2024  
Storyland Studios Competition*

# ***Steward Ship Landing***

*Location-Based Education & Entertainment for Families and Students*

## **Introduction**

There is a distinct lack of vision today for the next generation. Consider what messages many youth today hear or tell themselves about our future:

- *Humanity is doomed.*
- *Nothing changes so why even try?*
- *Society is going to end up broken so what's the point?*
- *Does anything matter?*
- *The problems all around my community are another group's problems to solve.*
- *If someone doesn't come fix this for us, we are hopeless.*

These mindsets tend to be common where I live, so it's front and center in my mind. I realize the severity of this varies from region to region, however an overall pessimism for the future has taken root in our society. My proposal focuses on forgotten areas of the country but the message of hope is for all.

When I was a child, my family took me to a theme park called Epcot Center. Inside that park was an amazing attraction called Horizons. The hopeful vision and lofty ideals portrayed in that work of art have resonated with me all these years. Even in otherwise discouraging periods, I think about the messages of that experience and it refreshes my perspective; 'If you can dream it, then you can do it. Yes you can!' And 'The wonder of finding new ways that lead to the promise of brighter days' or 'Today holds the challenge to make this world a better place to be.'

Are these kinds of powerful hope-filled messages of encouragement in our world now? Does futuristic optimism exist anymore?

The heart and message of the Horizons installation stick with me all these years later. In no way is it a bandage for the wounds of life, but the painted picture of what is possible stands out in contrast to the messages of the day. It is the strength of Horizons' example that gives me the confidence to come to this conclusion: themed environment design paired with a living vision of hope for tomorrow is the answer. This is a concept I feel has been forgotten or left behind.

Modern themed environment design, domestically, tends towards more corporate IP-slotted products. These have their place, but serve as a short-term revenue stream as long as a property is hot in other media and sells merchandise. It's my belief that the right themed experience can transform culture and forgotten communities with ripple effects that will be felt for 40 or 50 years, and it's time to bring this concept back in a big way.

## Problem

Strip malls and developments are too rapidly built out into areas where economy fails or dynamics change. Industries close or move away, the buying power of a community changes and over time it can change an area in a negative direction, or sometimes its a result of some sort of calamity. The results are a forgotten zone. Sometimes, formerly successful consumer storefront spaces survive as discount or liquidation retailers take up residence. Other times they are left stagnant with no investment or prospects to change or grow. While we seek to bring new life to forgotten zones through these developments, we also seek to inspire the next generation to change the pattern of their thinking through shown example, play, a hopeful vision, and fun.

While the Storyland Studios contest seems to desire a global, easily replicated turnkey solution, the focus is on this problem in our own country right now; retail spaces are being built too rapidly and stagnating due to greed, or parent companies are abandoning formerly invested zones due to economic downturns or tightening liquidity. The end result is the same; a deficit to the children in these communities. With no involvement in their own community outside small school projects, there's no feeling of responsibility, because it doesn't exist. There have been many efforts to inspire these kinds of ideals in young people over the years, from publicly funded ad campaigns to integrated funding projects for schools. The goal is always to inspire hope to the next generation, with arguably variable results.

## Vision

*Steward Ship Landing* is the larger umbrella branding for a series of tailor-made destination experiences starting across America, then spreading worldwide. Guests board a trolley driven by an unlikely engineer who delivers them to a thriving community town founded at a former shipwreck.

While there, they will help gather the harvest at a successful farm maintained and managed by a jolly inventor, drive across scenic roads and nature trails of the Muro Vista Mountain Pass, explore the charming town square with its several shops and curios with their shopkeepers, and enjoy rides and games back at the town square. Finally, they will get to play a part in coming up with ideas for improving their own communities at Town Hall. While there, they can get some food and drink, and design new plans for a great tomorrow. The best designs win seasonal contests where they can go on a big display board in Town Hall for all visitors to see. The best ideas annually will get developed towards implementation into the community (in cooperation with local leadership and the design team at *Steward Ship Landing*).

Central to the theme is the fact that none of the characters that guests will meet at *Steward Ship Landing* built the town, or the shops, or the farm, or the nature trails, or even decided when and where the festivals would be. However, each character displays effective stewardship and how they have made these places better than they found them. Each character our guests will meet have different ways to showcase that in their respective areas.

## Solution

Building an immersive themed environment into a former grocery store or department store is achievable and if the destination is done well, can even play a part in transforming the industry itself. Meow Wolf has been successful doing something similar as they design and build colossal art museums and experimental explorations of space and visuals in formerly vacant buildings. Their production is not a museum, not a themed environment, but something existing on the borderlands of both. I believe adapting this method of site conversion into a destination environment is the way, but it requires something more charming, more repeatable, full of heart, while inspiring youth to dream and hope again by the renewing of their minds.

## Structure

While we look back for inspiration and relevance, the heart of the experience is looking forward to new ways to do things in a changing world. The challenges these kids will experience when they are grown will be much different than what we face today, and we want to model some of that in the design. New farming methods, innovative community garden designs, new ways of shopping and showcasing products, and neighborhood beautification projects will all be on display.

'Show, Don't Tell' is the core of the *Steward Ship Landing* model, so instead of typical museum info boards attached to displays with text, we intend to communicate the intentions and information through character's spoken dialogue as well as catchy songs and hands-on areas in vignettes. It's my view that when you use *inferred storytelling* vs overt, there's a magic that happens when viewers put things together with their own imaginations in their minds.

Repeat visits are done through season passes as well as seasonal overlays. Autumn months would dress the experience as Autumn with changing leaves in the trees and magic hour all around, Winter dressed as Winter with dark skies, warm festive lights, and snow, and so on, with all the expected decor one would expect for the season.

There will be one area in the main town square where rotating exhibits can be held. Special art exhibitions or inventors showcases can be held here. The foundation for which would operate in a similar way to an art museum with traveling exhibitions. We can work with local artists or inventors that help portray wonderful stories about stewardship and making communities better.

There are four rides in the experience. Two are simulators.

The first one is the train ride in.

Guests board a small shuttle that moves through the space to deliver a simulated train ride from one platform to another. In reality it is a small enclosed track that goes from one room to the other with screens on the windows to simulate the ride.

This experience is optional for those with motion sickness.

All following experiences are also optional.

The other simulator is a simulation of a custom advanced piece of farming equipment. Guests board the inventors fancy harvester with all of his tools to help bale hay or harvest grain.

The third is a slow moving automotive ride that moves through dark ride scenes in a big sculpted mountain in the far corner of the building and above the other sections. This ride overlooks the town and winds over bridges on top of other areas in places as well as gives history to the town.

Finally, there is a teacup spin ride in the town square festival at the end. The rate of spin will be adjusted so no-one can go too fast.

This experience isn't about the rides but it makes the environments fun and come to life. There are midway games in the town square as well.

## Tomorrow's Child

*Steward Ship Landing* is about painting a vision of the power of taking responsibility for our shared environment and communities through *action* as good stewards. Inspiring children and their families to see a world where everyone works together using their strengths to make life better is a worthwhile pursuit. The effects of a fun enjoyable town where these things are possible will inspire kids to make choices that do this in their own lives. Showing how even so-called 'important' characters like the Mayor pick up trash on the nature trail will motivate kids to get involved in their local trails and parks.

In fact, we will even sell fun trash pick up kits for kids at the store in City Hall. They can buy them and take them home and use on their own walks.

Seeing how the communities these installations will be built might be economically impaired at the time of opening, we will aim to bring people in from outside the community to see the spectacle of it as well as build supplementary installations where available. For example, empty strip mall parcels next to the attraction could be fitted as branded farmers markets, a computer lab, or other additional type of resource.

To directly reach children in the region, we will work with local schools, VBS camps, education centers, and continuing education programs to bring the guests to the experience as a sponsored field trip through grants, scholarships, and the selfless giving of *Charter Members of Steward Ship Landing*.

*Charter Membership* works like a season pass for the buyer, but the price is higher with the understood intent of giving paid entry, a meal, and souvenir merchandise annually to 3-4 children (or more) that otherwise wouldn't be able to go. We will host special events seasonally to fundraise and showcase the importance of our experience and selling these charter membership packages.

Finally, many destination experience installations last ten years or less. My vision for this proposal is the installation lasts 20-30 years with the success of the project being the transformed community around the space. The other mark of success will be the carried memories of the lives impacted by the vision painted inside; one of the unyielding hope for a better tomorrow and a renewed sense of stewardship of what we have been given. This responsibility is not just for our own good, but for the good of our neighbors and our children's children, and the world we leave behind for others.