

Condemnedland (Grand Opening)

Contents

Overview	2
Greater game context	2
Story Context	2
Inspiration	2
Pillars of Jigsaw Level Design	2
Exploration	2
Fun Interactions	2
Evasion	2
Multiple paths/solutions.....	2
Level Map	3
Level Breakdown	4
Hub and Spokes model	4
Park Entrance & Hub.....	4
Circus Land	5
Spooky Land	6
Expedition Land.....	7
E. Gore and other Enemies	8
Iteration and Development	9
Future Planned Changes	10

Overview

Greater game context

Condemnedland is intended to serve as the first “core” level in Jigsaw. By this point, the player should have a working knowledge of their basic movement kit and the mechanics that make Jigsaw unique from other platformers. Most recently the player has obtained the Roll and in this level the player will learn the Gust action.

In order to function as the level for the Grand Opening demo, some elements are altered including some very basic tutorial signs since Grand Opening does not include a dedicated tutorial level. Gust is unlocked by default along with Pole Climbing which will be obtained later in the full game.

Story Context

Each level is a public location that has been modified into a deathtrap. These locations are typically fairly modern, places that should have people around them but are abandoned.

Condemnedland is a derelict amusement park. Structures show some age, though not a massive amount. Torn police tape present near the entrance and big top tent imply an unsolved crime or death being responsible for the park’s closure.

Inspiration

Jigsaw levels are mechanically built to resemble levels from Nintendo 64 era 3D-platformers, especially Banjo-Kazooie specifically. Environments are low poly, constructed mostly from simpler shapes, making platforming ques very readable. Levels often contain a looping path to guide the player through the level and get them familiar with the layout. Levels are about exploration and in the case of Jigsaw, evasion and hiding as well.

Condemnedland takes real world inspiration from the Magic Kingdom of Walt Disney World in Orlando. This not only reinforces the amusement park theming (as well as potential nostalgic feelings) but assists the design in being easy to navigate from any location.

Pillars of Jigsaw Level Design

Exploration

Levels encourage exploration. Every compelling corner should have a secret and every secret should be compelling to find.

Fun Interactions

Levels should have plenty of places to use abilities and tricks they have learned. Using these abilities should be fun and intuitive.

Evasion

Levels must be built to accommodate E. Gore. They need bottlenecks to promote encounters as well as objects to hide in/behind.

Multiple paths/solutions

Collectibles should often have more than 1 method of being reached. Skilled players should be able to complete levels faster by proving their mastery of the skills and creativity at applying them.

Level Breakdown

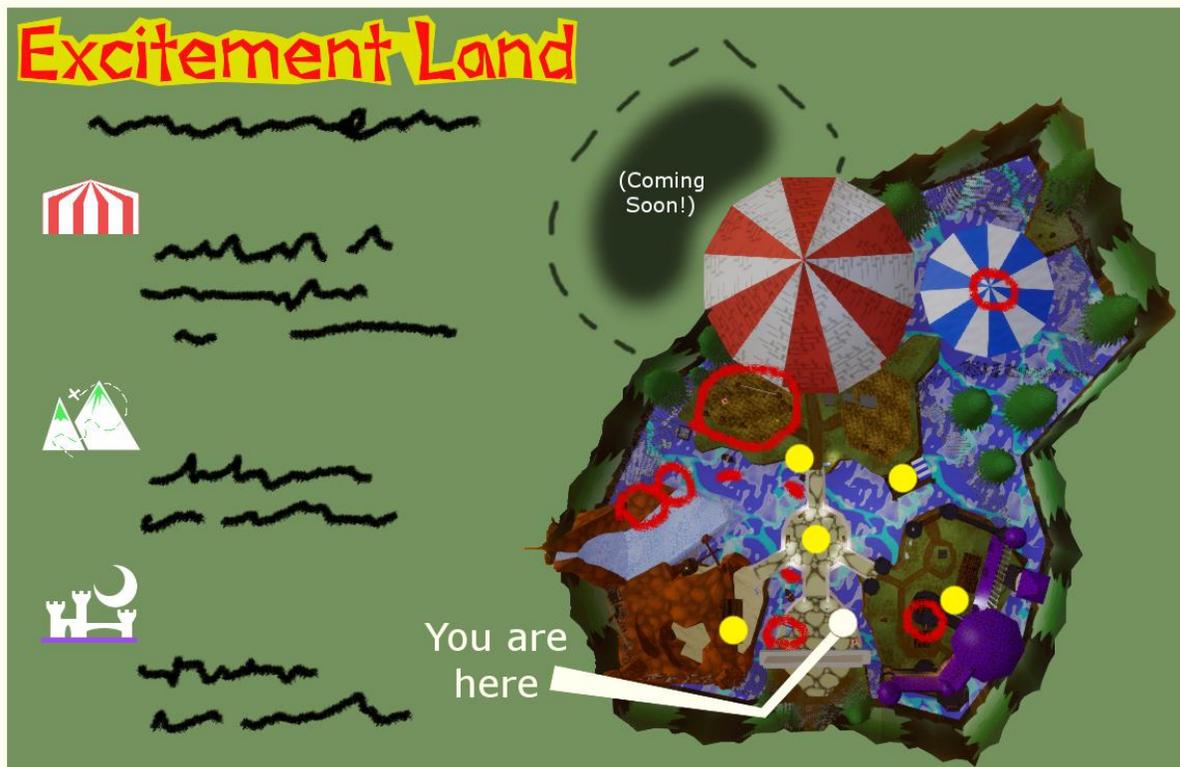
Hub and Spokes model

Like its real world inspiration (along with older parks as well), Condemnedland is built using a hub and spokes model at the center of a number of themed sub-areas. Each of these areas features a prominent landmark and a unique color identity. Getting bearings from anywhere in the level is easy, as the landmarks can be seen from just about anywhere. Condemnedland intentionally omits an outer “wheel” around the center hub in order to make the center of the map more bottlenecked. Doing this increases the chances of the player running into E. Gore. Sub areas not only all connect to the center but also each other, allowing for a trickier but more direct and potentially safer route between destinations.

Park Entrance & Hub

This serves as the spawn for the player as well as their ultimate objective. Upon spawning in, immediately straight ahead is a sign instructing the player on how to pause and check their actions. This ensures that new players can learn the basic skills that are needed to play the level. (In the full game this sign will be omitted, as a proper tutorial level will instruct them on these skills before reaching this point.)

To the player’s right is their final objective: the park’s exit. It has 5 prominently visible locks that will break when the player approaches with keys. Bringing a minimum of 5 keys allows the gate to open and the player to win the level by leaving.



To the left is the park entrance. The massive sign has a huge “Condemned” sign nailed crudely to it, the uncovered letters forming the level’s name. Behind the sign is a trampoline up to the base of the sign. A line of horseshoes hints that the location can be reached and reward the player for finding the way up. Additionally this serves as an alternate means of reaching the Spooky area and Expedition area’s upper level. A high jump from the corner can reach one of the secret pages near the edge of Spooky.

Past the entrance to the park is a Prize booth that awards the Key for collecting all the tickets in the level. The map on the opposite side is a real map of the level with Key and Ticket locations marked on it. A wide bridge takes the player to the aforementioned Hub, making the 3 other areas easily accessible to them as well as E. Gore. The water below will harm players, but also contains the boats used for the Boats Key. One of them is behind the prize booth while the other two are around Circus. The benches allow the player to crouch and hide under them while they wait for Gore to pass. The fountain in the center has a ticket inside it.

Circus Land

Prominently in the center of Circus is its landmark: the big top tent which sports bold stripes of red and white.



Circus features an obstacle course that uses the Timed Switch mechanic. If the player heads to Circus first (which is likely since it's straight ahead) and they attempt to use the Timed Switch, they will not have enough time to complete the small platforming course. However, they will collect 5 Clocks on the tightrope which they can then put in the Timed Switch to extend their time limit. Doing so teaches the utility of the variable time limits of Timed Switches. Skilled players will find themselves being able to get away with collecting and using less Time. From this area Expedition can be accessed, but only if the propeller platform has not already been moved to the opposite side.

Nearby is one of the boats for the Boats Key. Using gust will cause it to move and slowly sink. Jumping on the crow's nest bounces the player like a trampoline, helping escape the water. If the player uses gust from the wrong side, Pan and Flute will comment so the player understands they had the right idea. The last boat is near the Hub, placed close enough to the bridge that once moving, the mast will be under it. This is a trap for impatient players, testing if they will notice and wait until the way is clear to bounce to safety. Skilled players can circumvent the trick entirely by high jumping after using the gust to avoid going under the bridge altogether. One of the 4 lampposts here is backwards, the banners incorrectly indicating the direction to/from Circus. Using pole spin to right this rewards a ticket. This hint proved too subtle in testing so a visible ticket was added to the model and the light only turns on once rotated.

On the opposite side of Circus there is a carnival game stall that awards a ticket for knocking over the bottles with the Gust ability. There's also a page hidden on the backside. If the drawbridge in Spooky is

lowered, it connects to here. The bottomless carousel challenges players to pole jump across moving poles to reach the center for a Key*. The small outcropping on the far side doesn't appear to have a collectible, but is conspicuously placed to be jumped to. Players who do will find a page on the backside of one of the barrels. Skilled players can perform a roll jump to skip some of the poles and complete the challenge faster. (*This key will later be moved and replaced with an optional collectible since Pole Climb will not be given by this point in the full game)

Spooky Land

Spooky is primarily made up by a large, blue castle with purple parapets surrounded by a decorative metal fence. The high walls and fences cut off many possible exits, making encounters with Gore especially dangerous here.

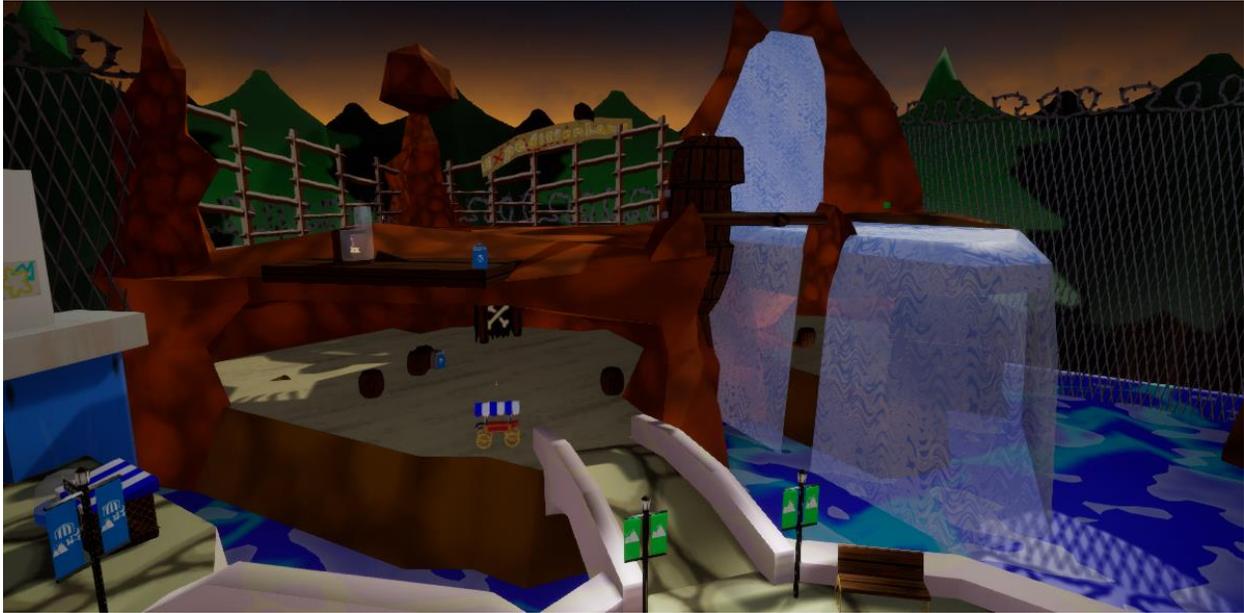


The tall tower and wall in the center are built for climbing and divides the ground level into 2 sections. The right contains the Grandfather clock, an object that refreshes the Clock pickups in the level but also enrages E. Gore when struck. The surroundings can be climbed to reach the center wall with some pole climbing. The left side contains a chapel and cheesy fake graveyard. The graves can be read like signs for flavor. "L is real" is written in blood on the monument in the center as an Easter egg, but the monument itself can be jumped from to get on the chapel. The ground slopes, allowing a high jump from the higher side to reach the chapel roof. The strength test yields a ticket by landing on it from a height. Incredibly clever players might discover that a high jump from the weight itself gives barely enough height to ring the bell after landing. The far side has a drawbridge that can be lowered in exchange for Luck.

Climbing the entire tower rewards the player with a Key as well as a view of the entire level. From this vantage point several collectibles can be reached by jumping off: the Page near the Entrance, the strength test Ticket by falling on it, the page on the far tower of the drawbridge, and the pickups on the towers near the entrance (the last of which can also be reached from a high jump off the bridge railing). The climb up the tower can be shortened with a well-positioned high jump. The roof of the chapel has easy access to/from the center wall, as well as the windows on the back wall. Jumping across these leads over the drawbridge which has pickups, a page, and can be roll jumped from to reach Circus without paying for the bridge to be lowered.

Expedition Land

Expedition is comprised of a sandy, cave-like lower level and an orange, rocky upper level. In addition to a large waterfall it features a big swinging ship.



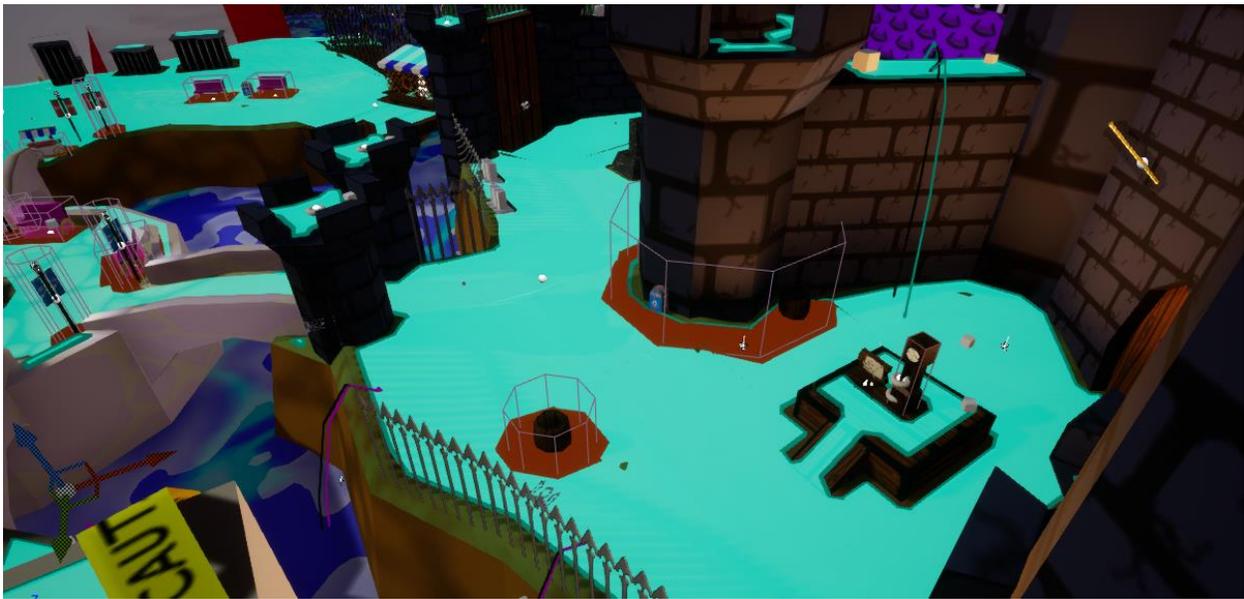
The lower level has some barrels for hiding and an area where the Boats Key will spawn once every boat has moved. Using gust on the propeller platform moves it to and from Circus. The cave is a bottleneck with the option to leap past the ship to escape Gore. Additionally, the back of the ship has a note attached and a tightly timed jump can collect it on this floor. In the back is a ramp leading to the upper floor. Feedback showed that this was much more hidden than intended, but testers remarked positively on discovering this way up organically.

The upper level can be reached from the ramp, a precise high jump onto the skull shadow hole or jumping off the Entrance sign. The latter leads right to the dunk tank, which grants a ticket for rolling into the target. The back of the swinging ship is much easier to reach here, acting more like a platform that rises. Roll jumping from the back of the ship at the height of its arc allows the player to cross most or all of the log flume boats. The axle of the ship has pickups along it for players bold enough to balance on it. The log flume river provides a platforming challenge across several moving platforms. From the Flume Key platform, the player can drop down and in to land at Boats Key, or roll jump across to Circus.

E. Gore and other Enemies

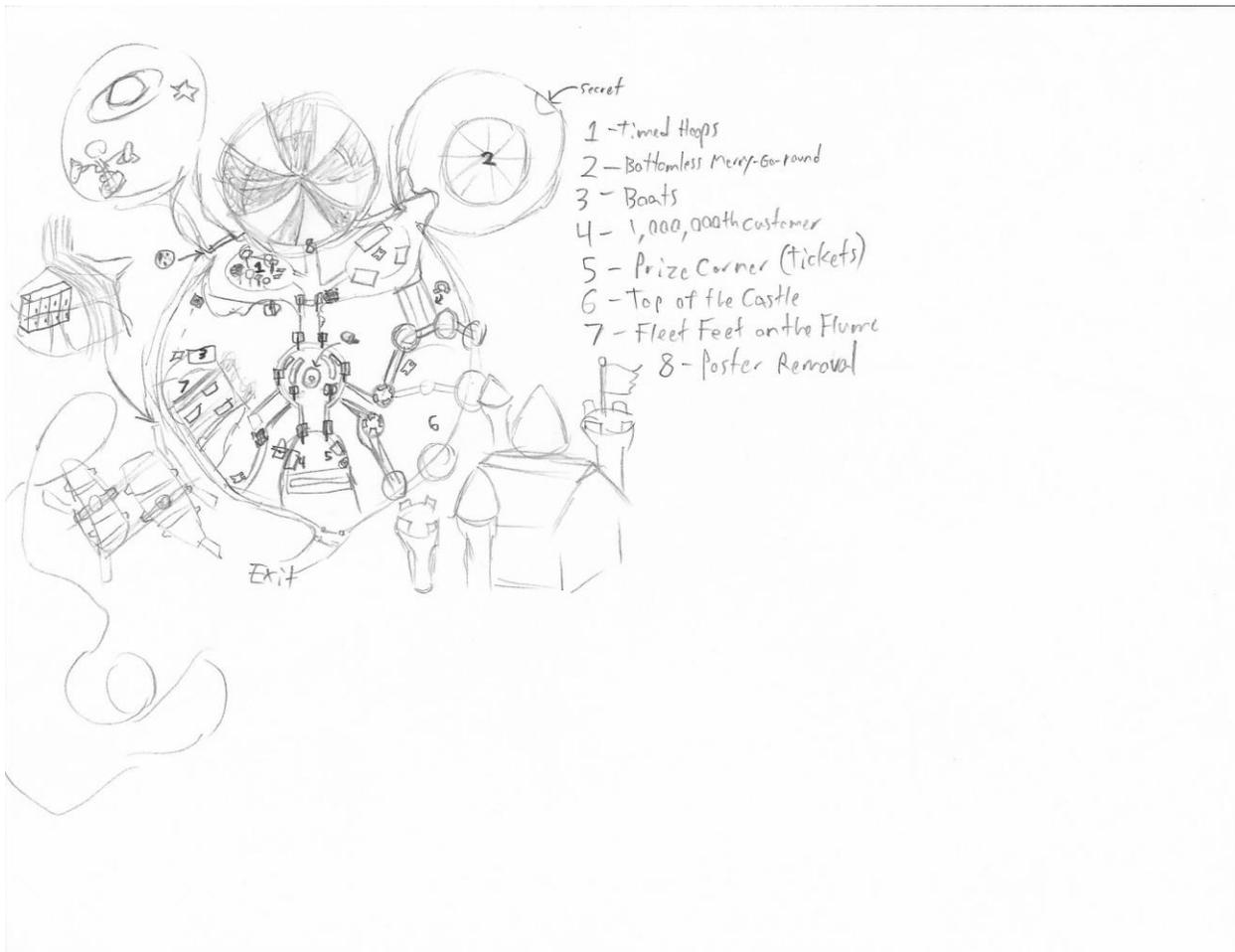
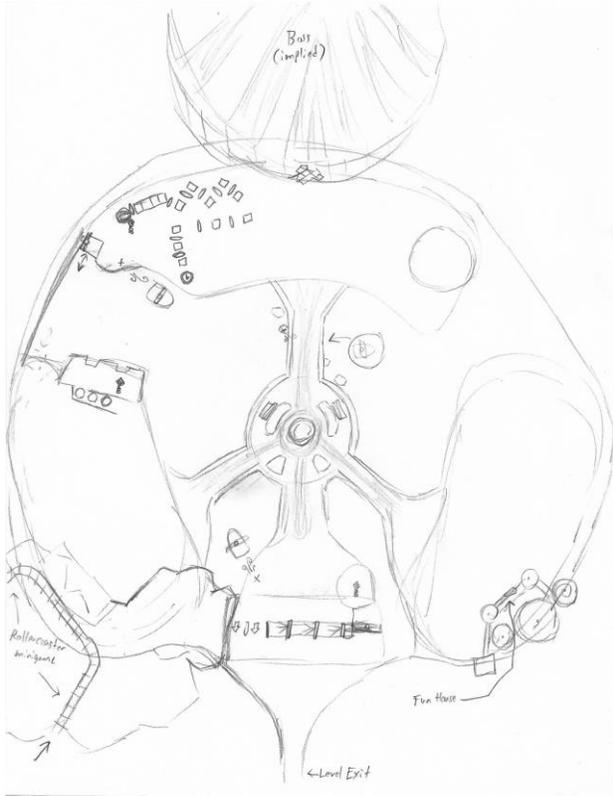
Jigsaw levels must support the cat and mouse dynamic between E. Gore and the player. The player is provided some objects to help them evade the monster. Benches let players crouch to hide under them. Barrels block Gore's line of sight and some can be jumped inside. Radios cost Luck but make a noise that distract Gore. Carts can be moved into the main paths using Luck. The player can roll under them easily but Gore will have to stop and break them.

E. Gore himself lies dormant in a cage in Circus until 2 keys are collected. Gore is initially limited to the ground in his movement, though he has a ranged attack if he cannot reach the player. As the player collects more keys, Gore gains more options including the ability to climb walls. He can climb the central wall in Spooky (skilled testers cited this as the easiest place to evade him) and the flag to the upper level of Expedition. With even more keys, Gore gains the ability to jump into the moat and climb out in several locations, allowing him to surprise players and take shortcuts.



There are much less threatening enemies scattered around the park, disguised as trash cans. When the player approaches, the trash mob will reveal its eyes and run at the player. If it loses the player it returns to its home and lies in wait again. These are placed in locations to blend in with the environment, near benches or against walls, to act as traps for unobservant players.

Iteration and Development



I started with a sketch on paper before blocking out, though the block out is close to final since a low poly environment is part of the game's aesthetic. Testers did not notice the backwards banner and had difficulty finding the Ticket. In order to make this clearer, 2 more lampposts were added nearby, the backwards lamp's light was turned off, and finally a visible ticket was affixed to the pole. This is also a large part of why I added the map to the beginning of the level, since hunting down the last ticket or Key can be frustrating, especially when health is limited. After the most skilled players complained about Gore being too easy to escape from in certain areas, I added points for him to climb in key areas.

Future Planned Changes

- Remove Grand Opening tutorial signs
- Addition of Teeth as "coins" to lead players more effectively
- Swap Carousel Key so "All Keys" is possible on first run in full game
- Add more interactions to the upper level of Expedition
- Add House of Mirrors section and Well sections to Spooky
- Add Witch Dentist booth and Wisdom Tooth for getting new power (gust)
- Add more gust puzzles to focus on new move
- Add NPCs in line to give Boats Key its intended context instead of a sign