Game Design Document (GDD)

Title: Haunting Grounds (placeholder name)

1. High Concept

Haunting Grounds is a multiplayer cooperative horror survival game where players explore haunted environments, uncover dark secrets, and work together to pacify or banish supernatural entities. Players must complete ritualistic tasks, manage limited resources, and survive against unpredictable AI-driven enemies.

2. Genre & Platform

- Genre: Multiplayer Horror, Survival, Co-op
- Perspective: First-Person (optional third-person toggle)
- Platform: PC (Windows, Steam), future support for consoles
- Mode: Solo & 2–4 player online co-op

3. Core Gameplay Loop

1. Enter a haunted location (house, forest, asylum, etc.)
2. Explore and collect ritual items while avoiding the entity.
3. Perform rituals (e.g., burn cursed dolls, cleanse totems, prepare potions).
4. Survive escalating ghost aggression as the ritual progresses.
5. Successfully pacify/banish the spirit OR be eliminated.

4. Player Roles

- Investigator: Standard explorer, balanced speed/vision.
- Occult Specialist: Identifies cursed objects, slower movement.
- Technician: Fixes tools, manages light sources.
- Scout: Fast and agile but fragile.
(Optional: let players pick roles for varied strategies.)

5. Controls (PC)

- WASD – Movement
- Mouse – Look around
- Shift – Sprint (limited stamina)
- E – Interact / Pick up item
- Q – Drop item
- F – Flashlight toggle
- Tab – Inventory / Objectives
- C – Crouch (stealth)

6. Game Mechanics

- Entity AI: The ghost roams, hunts, and reacts to sound/light. Aggression rises as progress is made.
- Ritual System: Each map has unique rituals (burn cursed dolls, cleanse effigies, seal portals).
- Dynamic Fear: Screen distortion, whispers, hallucinations when near the entity.
- Item System:
  • Ritual Items (dolls, candles, bones)
  • Utility Items (keys, lockpicks, holy water)
  • Defensive Items (charms, salt, wards – temporary protection)
- Death/Downed State: When caught, player is incapacitated; teammates can revive (limited chances).

7. Progression & Difficulty

- Maps unlock progressively (Haunted House → Forest → Hospital → Church, etc.)
- Ghost Variants: Different spirits (child ghost, witch, demon, shadow man) with unique behaviors.
- Difficulty Scaling: Faster hunts, fewer resources, more complex rituals.

8. Art Style & Atmosphere

- Realistic horror aesthetic (dark hallways, flickering lights, foggy forests).
- Lighting: Limited visibility, flashlight-dependent.
- Sound Design: Heavy focus on whispers, footsteps, sudden bangs, 3D positional audio for scares.

9. Multiplayer Features

- Online matchmaking or private lobby.
- In-game voice chat with proximity effect (closer = clearer, farther = muffled).
- Limited communication when downed (ghostly whispers to teammates).

10. Win/Lose Conditions

- Win: Complete the ritual and banish the entity.
- Lose: All players captured or ritual fails.
- Partial victories (one survivor escapes, but others die) possible.

11. Target Audience

- Horror fans (16+ age group).
- Streamers/YouTubers (gameplay is very "react" friendly).
- Fans of Phasmophobia, Pacify, Devour.

12. Monetization Strategy

- Base game with 3 maps.
- DLC / Expansions: New maps, ghosts, rituals.
- Cosmetics: Skins for characters, flashlights, charms (no pay-to-win).