

Outer Worlds Area Design Demo

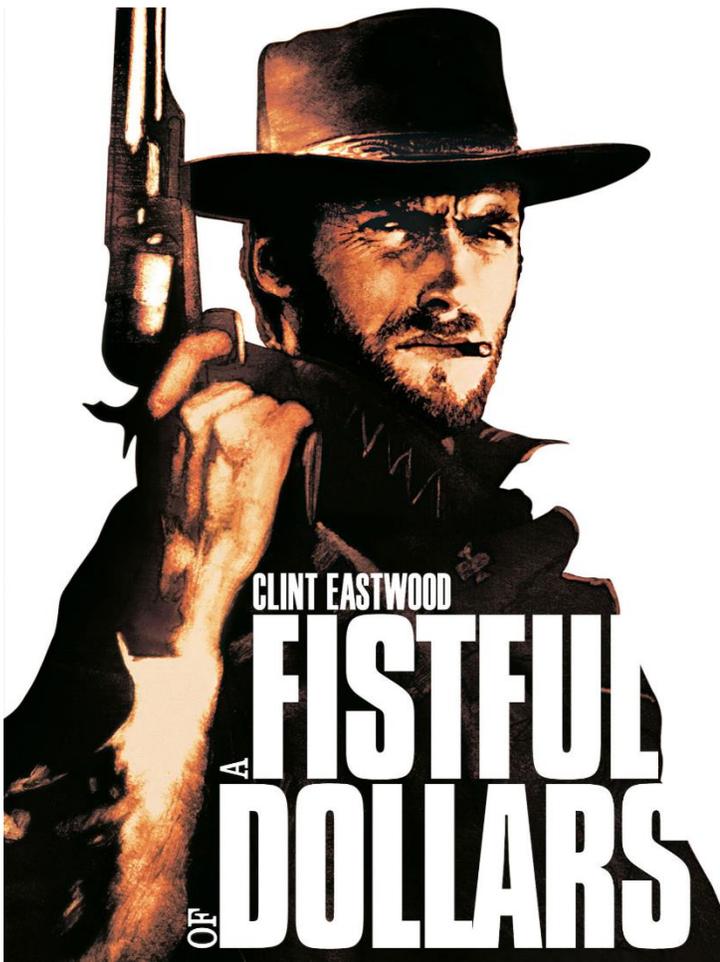
Inspired by the intricate storytelling of The Outer Worlds I designed this area and quest for the game. Based on the old western A Fist Full of Dollars. This document shows the process I took to create this project.

Index

Outer Worlds Area Design Demo	1
Index.....	1
Inspiration	1
Flow Chart.....	3
Theme	4
2D Map Designs	5
Blockout/Grey box	10
Bandit Camp.....	10
Fort.....	11
Visual Walkthrough.....	13
Approaching The Bandit Camp	14
Approaching The Fort	15
Agreeing to help bandits.....	17
Agree to help the sheriff.....	18
Final Stages	18
Procedural Art Pass.....	18
Video Overview References.....	19

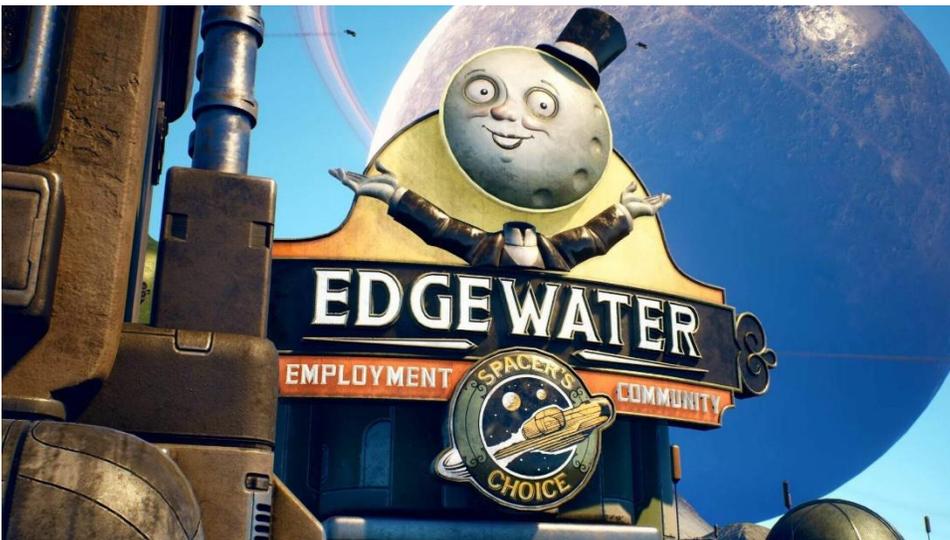
Inspiration

I always start my process by searching for inspiration. I find it to be the best starting point for creating and fueling passion projects like this. I'm a big fan of old westerns so that's where I went to search for inspiration. One of my favorites is Clint Eastward's A Fistful of Dollars.



The two sides are at war, neither are completely righteous. The protagonist plays them both and ultimately decides the victor. Such a great premise and perfect for an Obsidian style RPG. Thinking this through I do believe the story is already in the game. The first major decision the player makes is based in Emerald Vale and I can see similarities in the story of A Fistful of Dollars and the first major section of the story in The Outer Worlds.

Even though the story might already exist in The Outer Worlds I don't see this as any reason to not use it as inspiration for this project. If anything, I take it as an encouragement that I'm on the right lines.

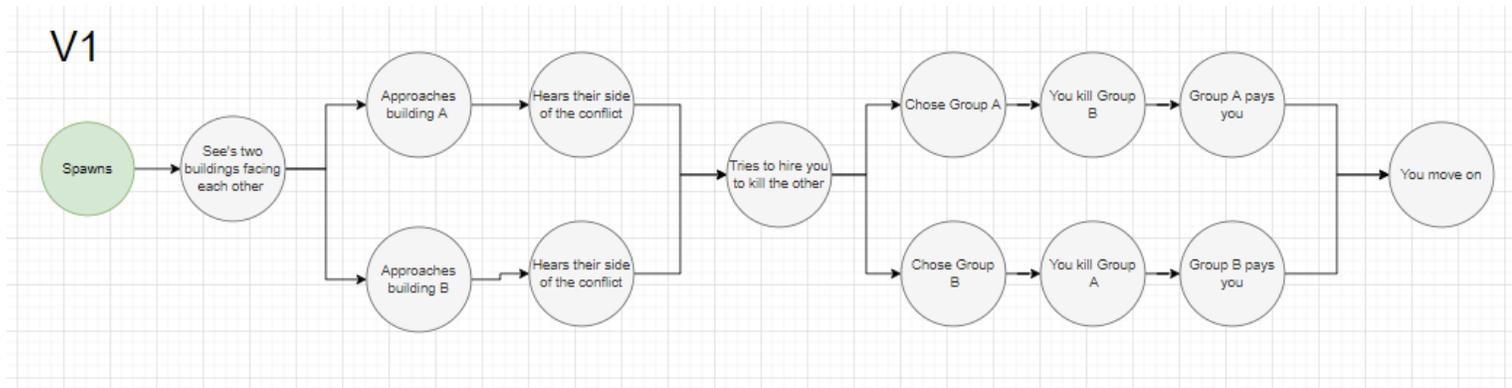


I will take on the design pillars of The Outer Worlds. Three main ways to play the game. Stealth, combat and dialogue. Will be a primary focus of my level.

Flow Chart

Flow charts help me get the feel and pace of a story and environment long before it comes to life, its far easier to edit this stuff at this stage than later done the line. Michael How is a level designer that has worked at studios such as Rebellion, Creative Assembly and now Sledgehammer Games. Shared some of his design wisdom in a podcast “flow first, layout second”. I completely agree with this, and I try to stick to this logic as much as possible.

This is a super simple outline of what I want the stories to be like. There will be two factions that are on the edge of war. The player will be able to side with one faction or play them both.



Group A

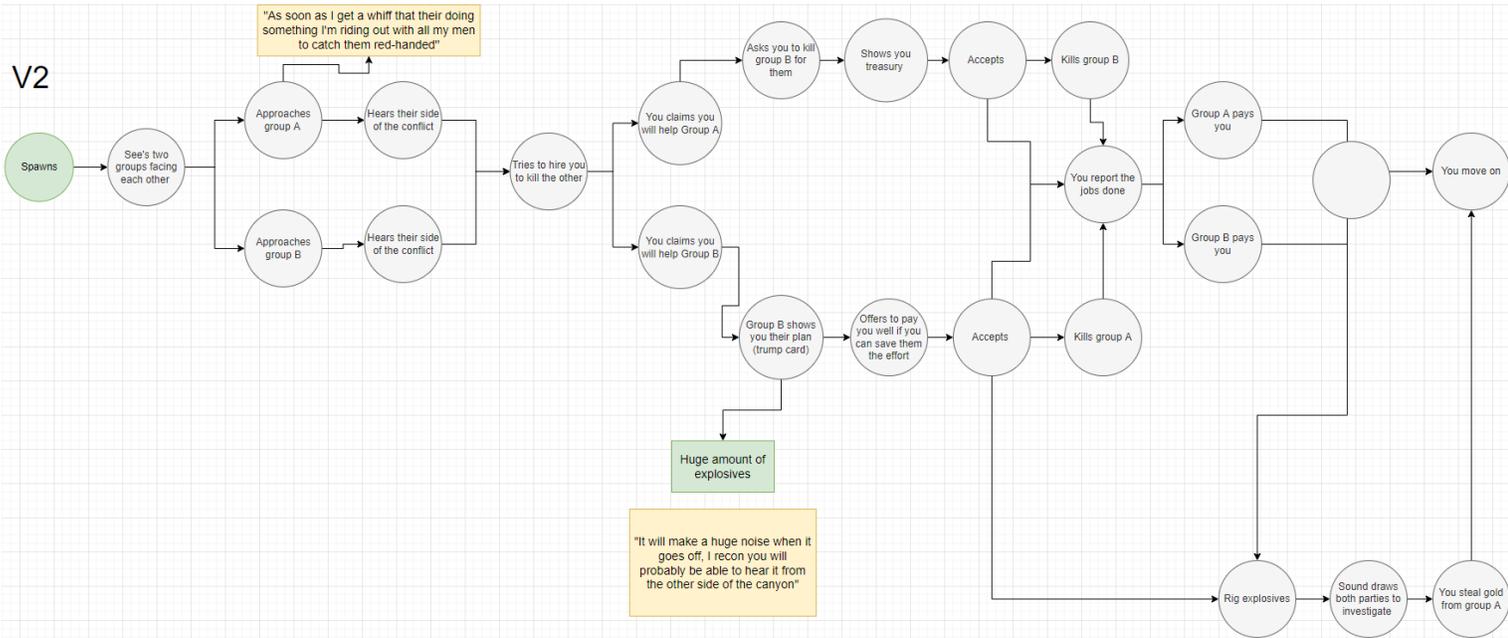
- Local lawman and his men. Taking illegal bribes from local slave traders.

Group B

- Local people indigenous to the region. Make their living as bandits, will murder anyone that gets in their way.

Neither side is completely ethical, which means there is no easy choice for the more passive players.

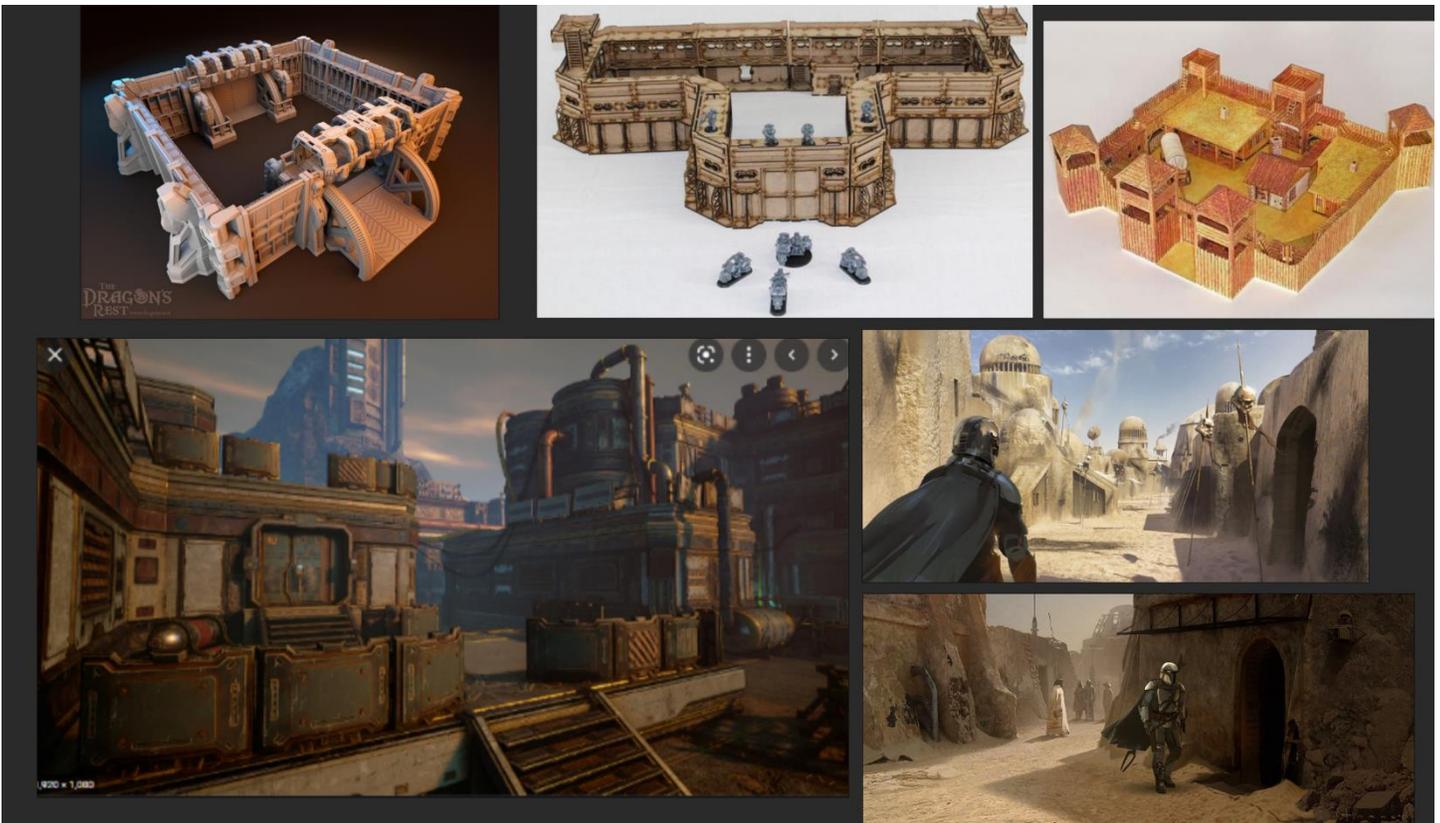
This is version 2 of the flow chart. Here I have built up the various story paths the player can go through. It's not perfect but for this project, I have tight deadlines so if it works it's good enough for now.



Theme

The Outer Worlds has a Sci-Fi western theme, I will drift a little more into the western style but will still try to capture the “Outer Worlds” look. I create theme boards to help me design the environment in a more realistic way. This is where communication between the design team and the artists will become very important. You both need to be on the same page when it comes to the art style. The artboards I’ve created below will not be what the artists will use. These are far simpler and just for design purposes.

Fort (Faction A)



Bandit camp (Faction B)

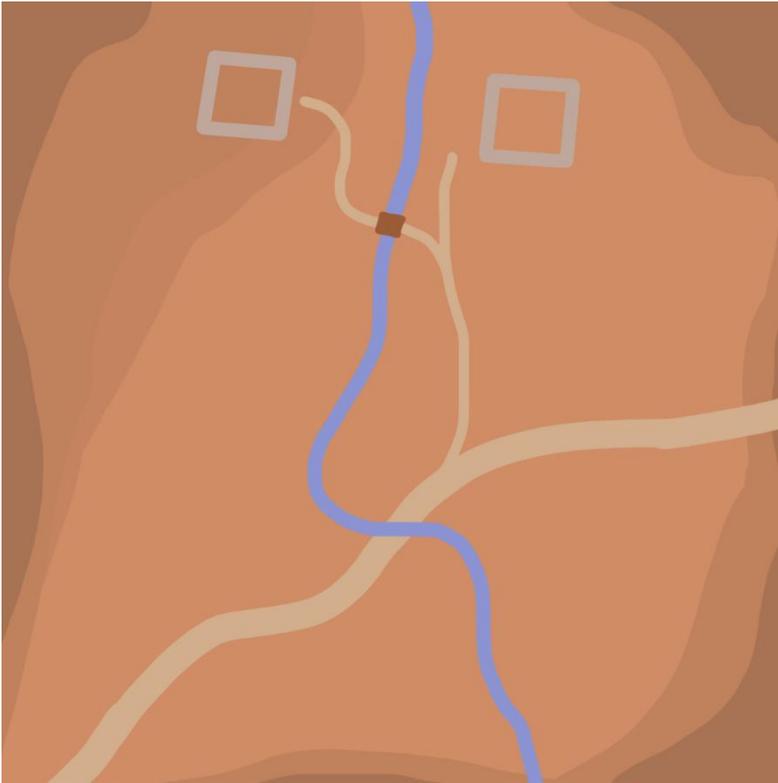


2D Map Designs

After I have the pacing and theme down, I like to move on to 2D maps. I think it's important to do this stage before going into the engine and blocking out. It's quicker and easier to iterate your design when in 2D rather than when in 3D.

Overview of canyon

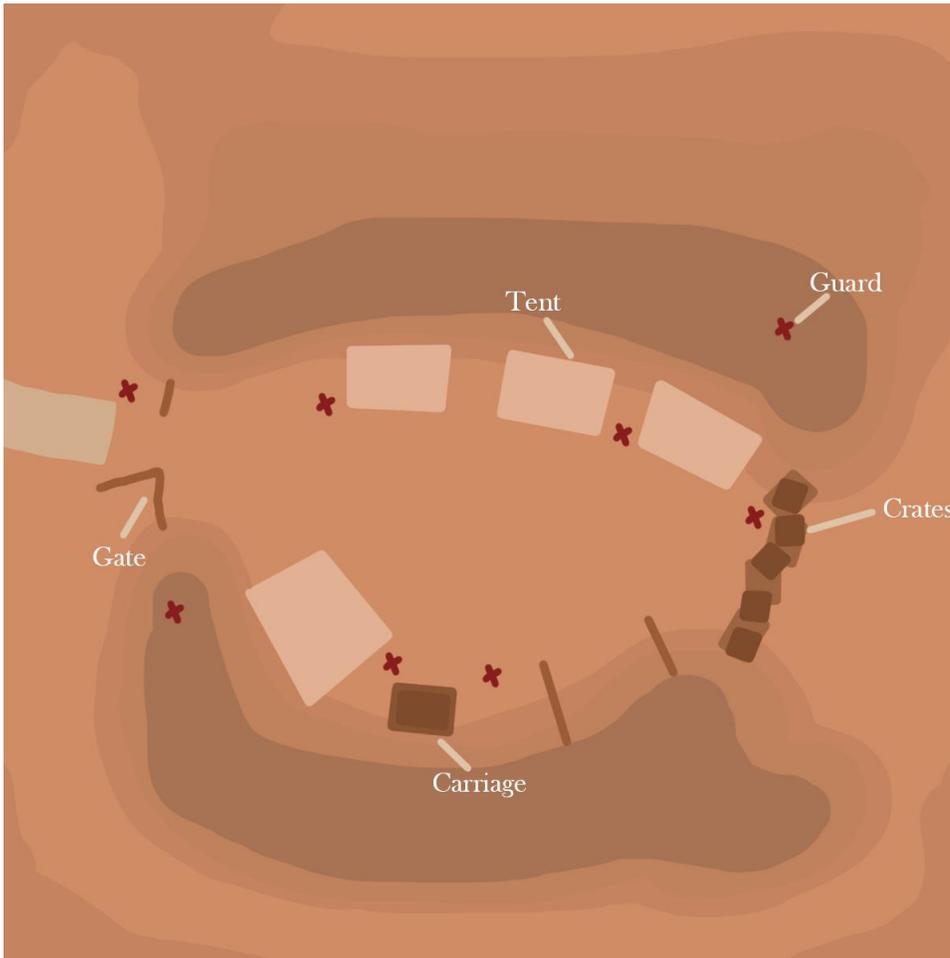
This is a large scale 2D map showing the locations of the two factions.



Banit camp (Faction B)

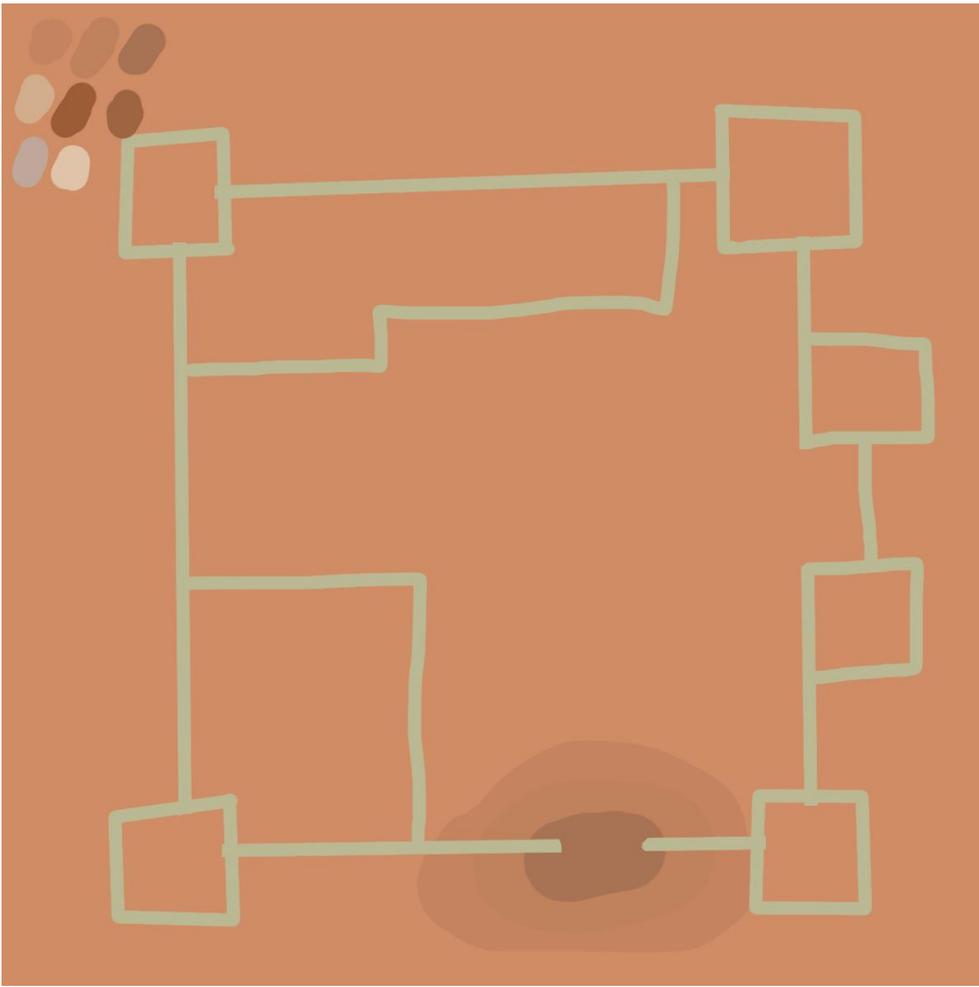
This needs to be designed for the player to be able to approach this environment in a few different ways. The player will need to enter in a neutral capacity, but also it needs to be a combat environment as well. I usually find it easier to design cover and line of sight when in a 3D engine instead of 2D so this will be thought about later in the process.

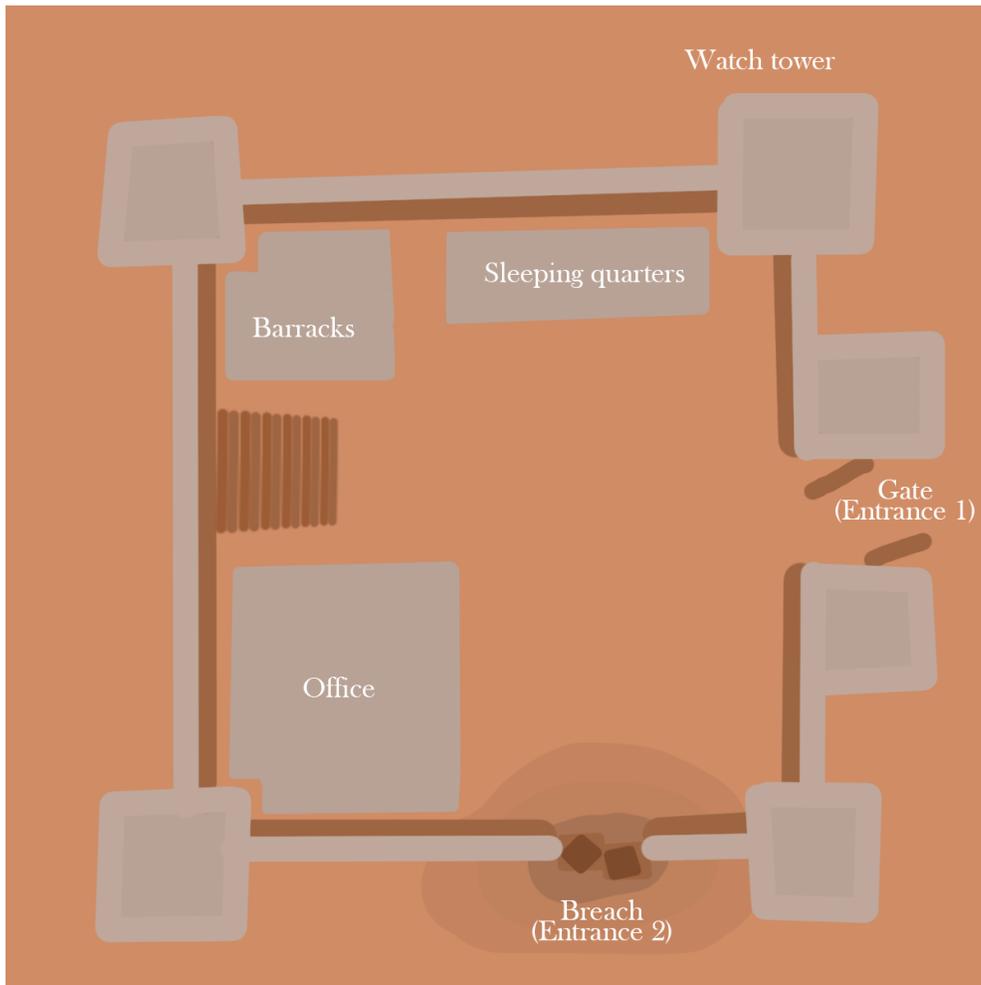
The large tent will be where the leader will be located.



Fort

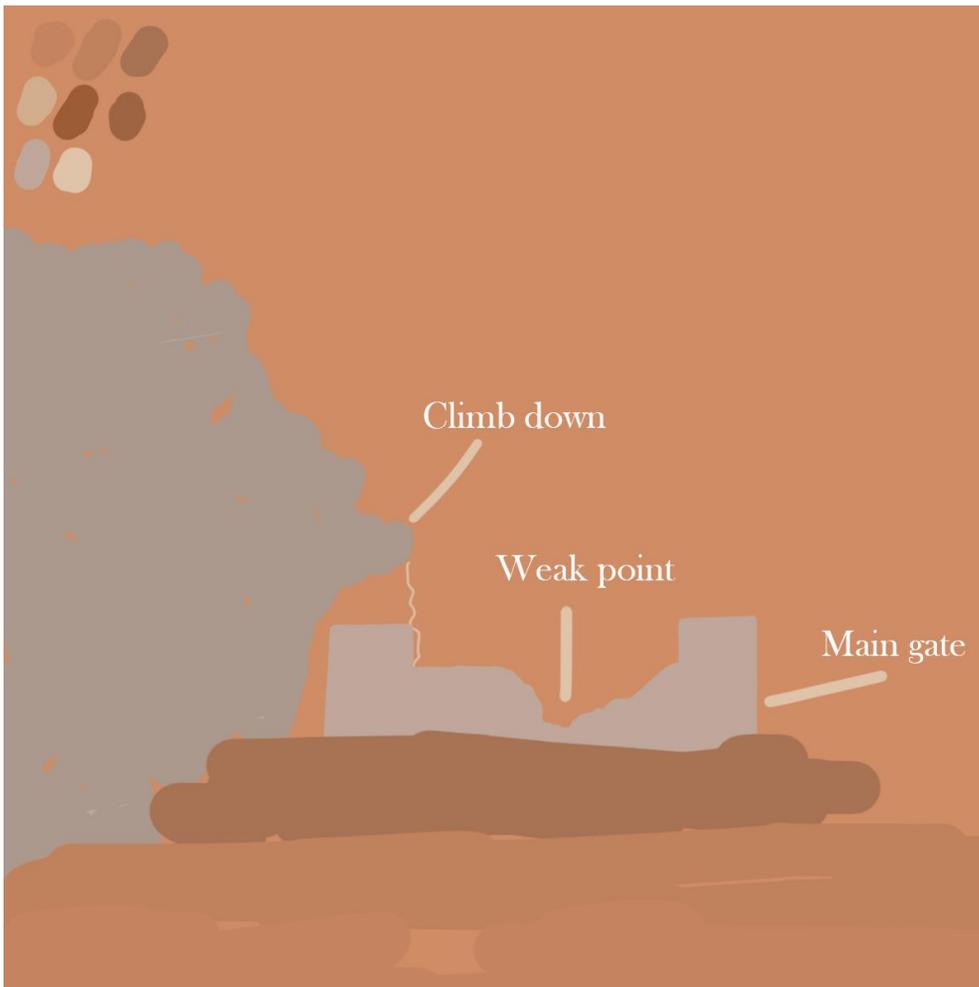
With the fort I started with a very basic draft. Which I then refined and made more detailed.





The office will be where the leader will be located.

In my experimentation, I created a side-on view to explore other ideas. This mountain behind the fort offers another entrance for the player, this one being most stealthy. The player would be able to use a rope to lower themselves into the fort. Due to time constraints, I fear this won't make it into this demo.

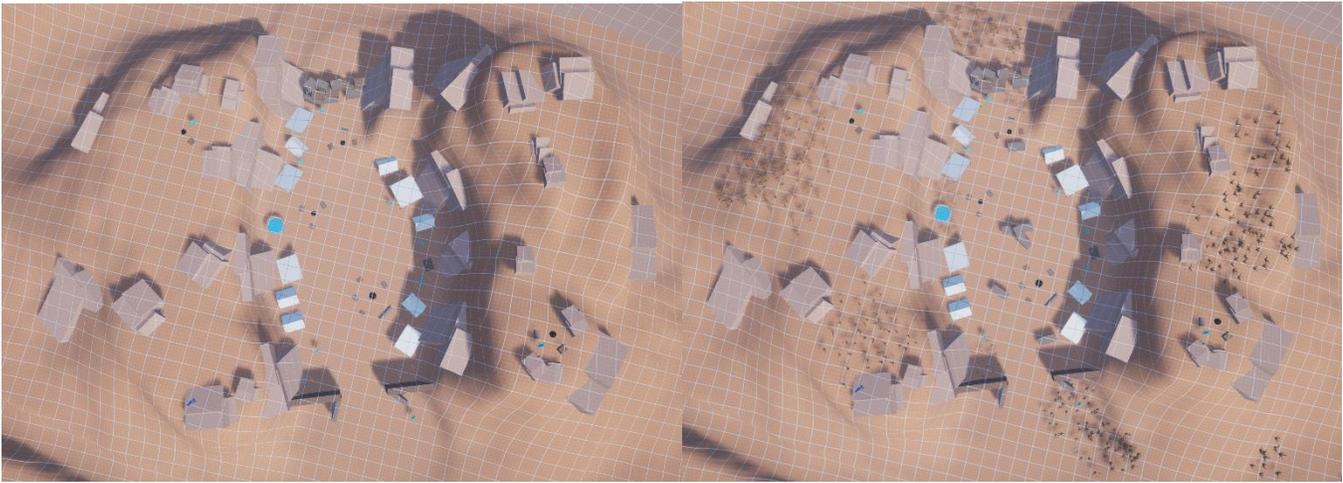


Blockout/Grey box

Bandit Camp

I started by creating two blocks that represented the two areas I was designing. The Fort and the bandit camp. I started with the bandit camp. And relied heavily on my 2D map design to create a rough layout. I also added rocks that would be used as cover to allow the player a stealthier approach. I created these rocks by simply throwing a few cubes together and grouping them.

I made sure to continually place down mannequins and constantly play test to help me gauge the scale. I then did a foliage cover. I created spots of grass that the player could sneak in and hide from enemies.

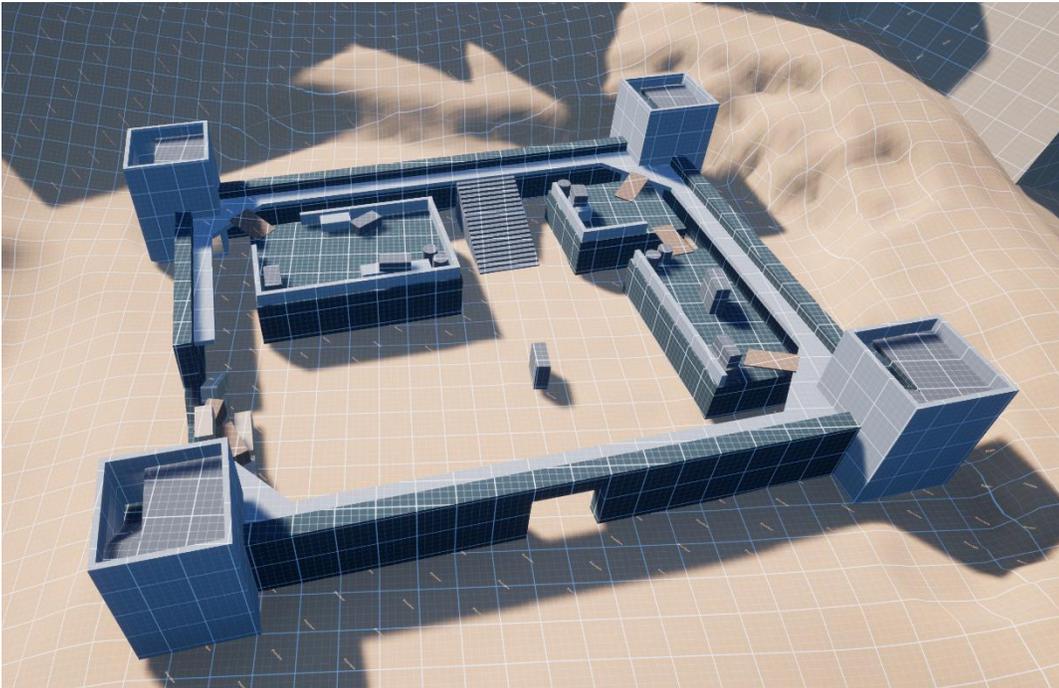


It was really important that I stick to the design pillars of The Outer Worlds, which always offers players a stealth option. Along with this I also added cover inside the compound, this would help serve the stealth and combat approaches.

Some early iteration was the moving of the leader's tent location in the bandit camp. I found that having it positioned next to the entrance won't encourage players to look at the whole environment, so I repositioned it to the other side of the compound.

Fort

Using my 2D designs I blocked out a very simple version of the fort. And then bit by bit added to it.



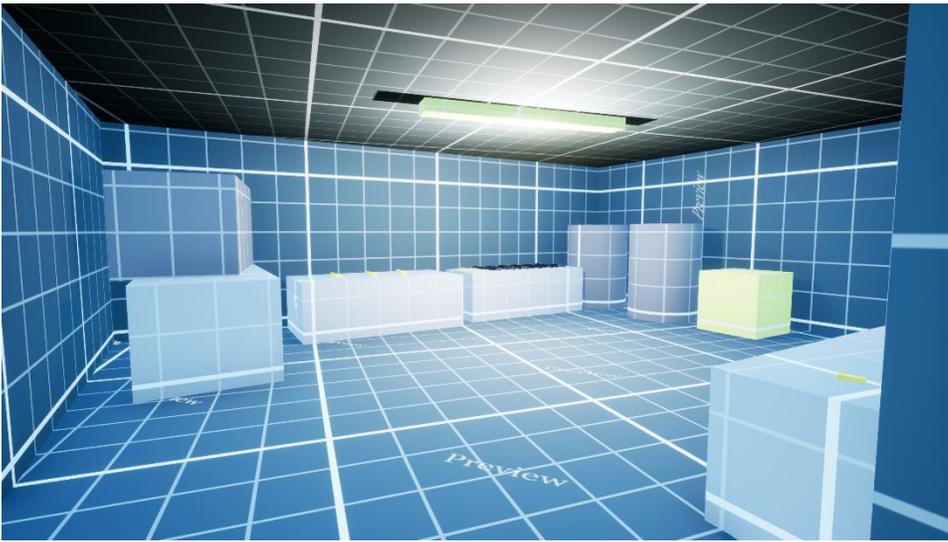
This is the initial grey box, it has two entrances and three buildings that will have interiors. I also added areas on the roofs that can be accessed, and I put some cover down. This was something that I hadn't originally planned in the 2D map. When designing in 3D I often find many unforeseen design decisions. If I went straight into 3D without 2D plans I would probably get overwhelmed by the amount that needs to be thought through. Designing in 2D simplifies many of the big decisions, the great thing about level design is its flexibility so you can always change a 2D design when you create it in 3D.



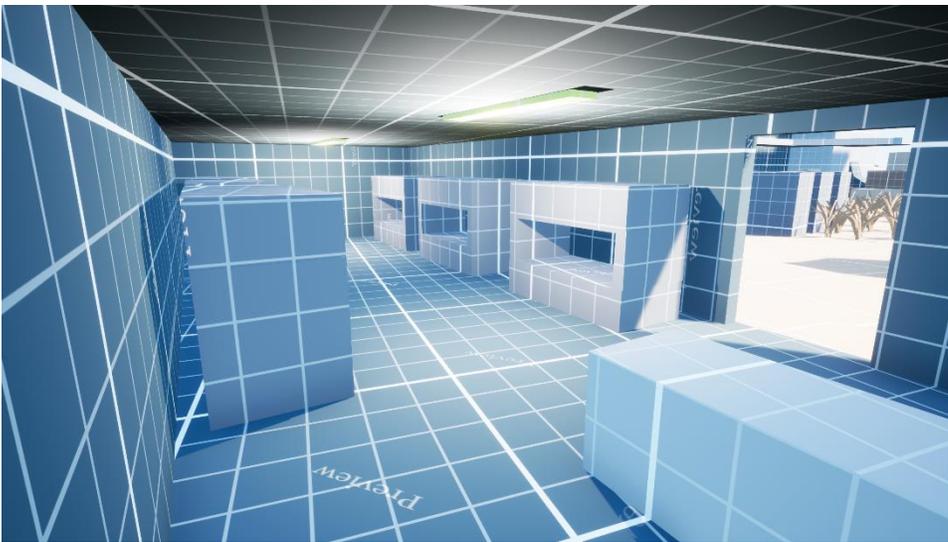
In this screenshot I have advanced the grey box. I placed grass to allow the player to stealth in. And More cover around the base to make combat more interesting. When designing cover, I primarily focus on line of sight. I additionally placed some blue characters; these will serve as placeholders to characters in the final project.



This is the office where the sheriff will be located.



This is the barracks where guns, ammo and money are stored.



These are the sleeping quarters.

Visual Walkthrough

Start your journey by seeing both locations. The fort and the bandit camp.



Approaching The Bandit Camp

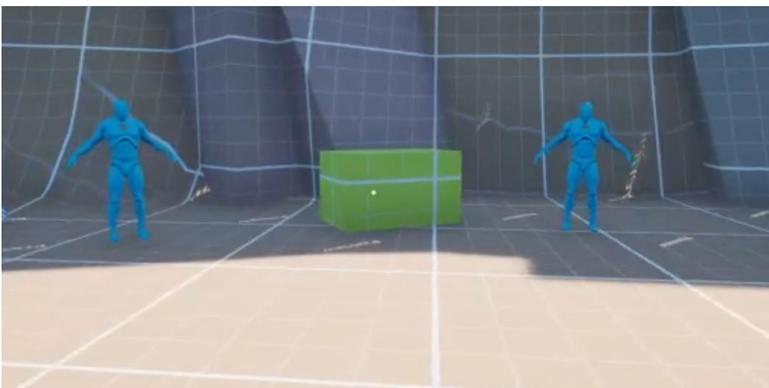
When approaching the bandit camp.



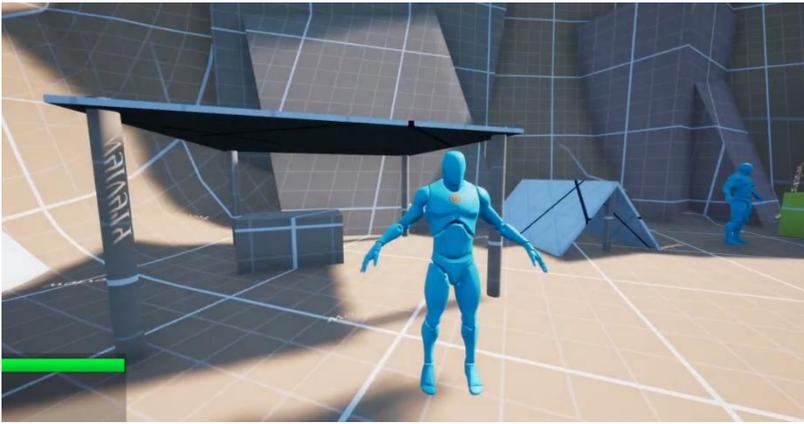
This chap will be working and will ignore you.



These guys will say "Keep moving, nothing to see hear"



This guy will introduce himself as the leader. "Hello there! I am the leader of this group. What do you want traveler?"



He will explain his side of the story. He and his people are indigenous to the region. Make their living as bandits. Their aim is to kill the Sheriff and his gang. He claims the Sheriff has been taking bribes from slave traders. These slave traders kidnap his people and sell them on as slaves. He warns you not to get in his way.

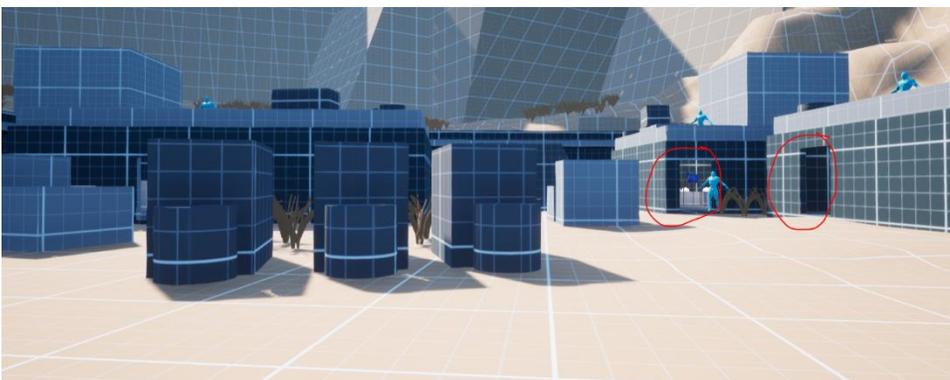
He sees you armed and offers you a job to kill the Sheriff and his gang. He claims he will pay very well.

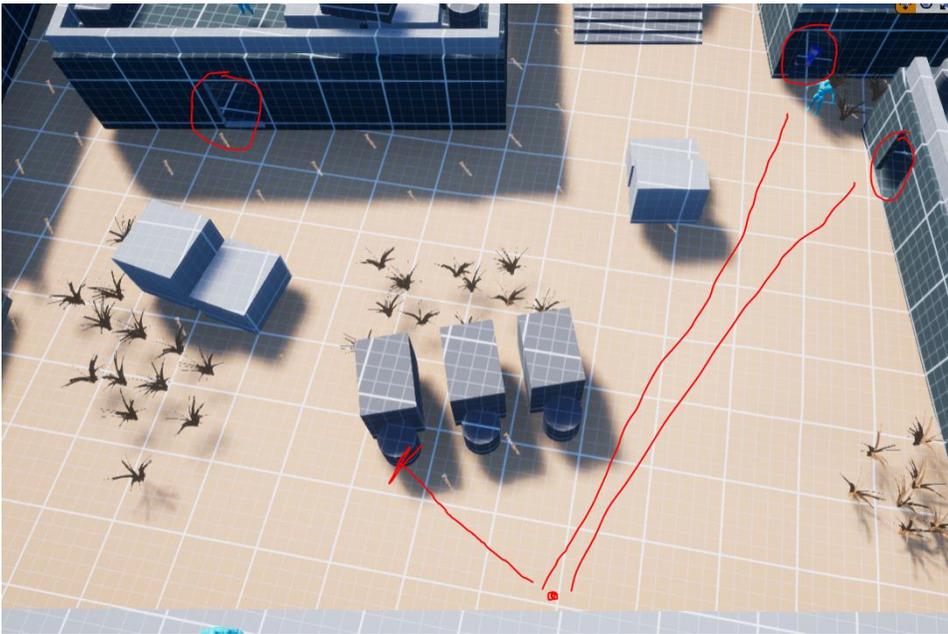
Approaching The Fort

When approaching the fort, you may notice that it's well fortified.

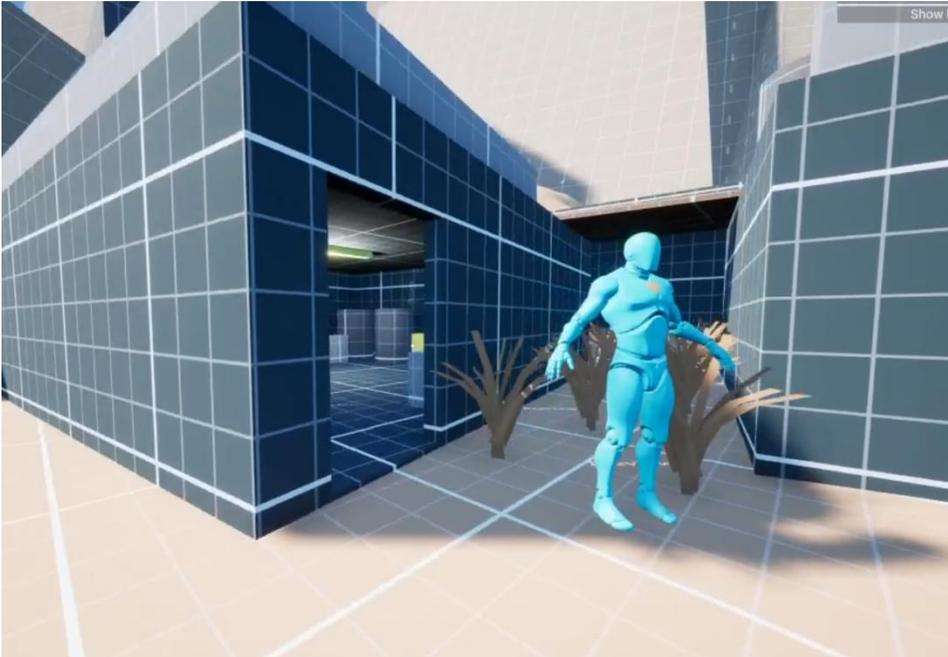


When inside you will see two doors, there is three but the third is blocked from view.



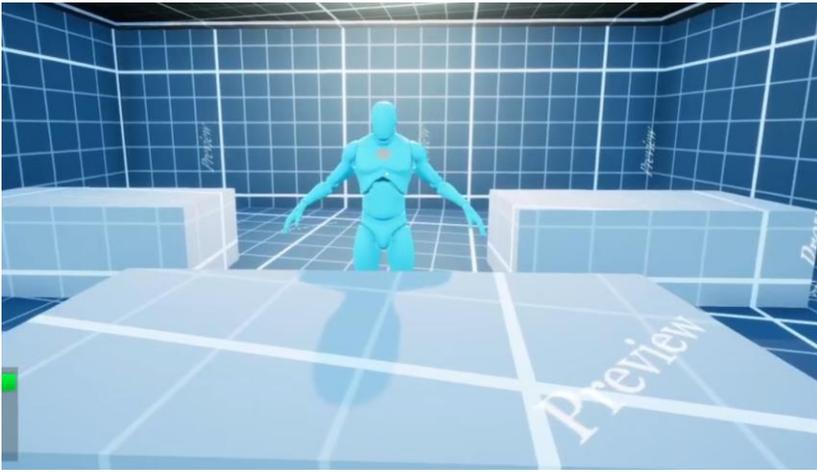


I want the player to be led to the barracks which stores a money chest and the guns. The player will also discover there is a guard protecting the room and prevent the player access.



The player should then see the office. When inside they will be able to talk to the Sheriff.



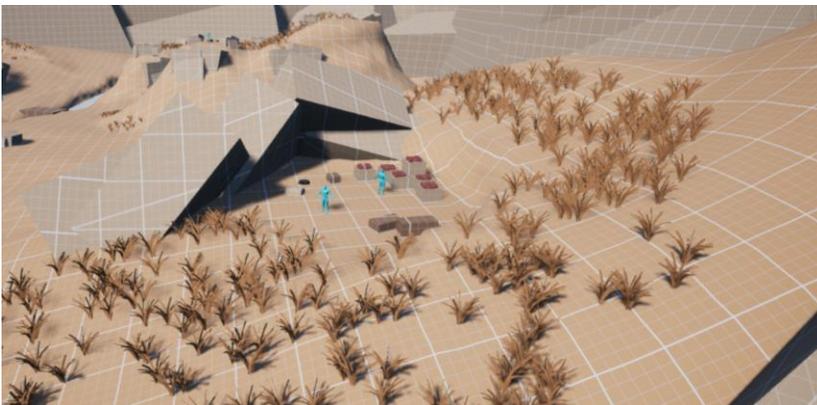


The Sheriff will tell you his side of the story. He will tell you about the bandits and how they are driving business out the region. It's his responsibility to stop the bandits from ambushing the traders coming through. The sheriff wants to wimp out the bandits as soon as possible "As soon as I get a whiff that their doing something I'm marching out with all my men to catch them red-handed"

He sees your armed and offers you a job to kill the bandits. He claims he will pay very well.

Agreeing to help bandits

If you agree to work with the bandits, they will show you their trump card. Which is a stash of explosives. If you can take out the Sheriff and his gang, they won't need to use the explosions. "It will make a huge noise when it goes off, I recon you will probably be able to hear it from the other side of the canyon"



The player can then accept to help the bandits and can then attack the fort in multiple different gameplay styles. The player attack with combat.

Refer to overview video

The player can then report the job is done and get their payment.

The player could attack in a stealthier way.

Refer to overview video

The player can then report the job is done and get their payment.

Or if the player wanted, they could try to talk there through it. If they then tell the Sheriff about the explosions, they will get some money as a reward. If the player is particularly clever and have spoken to the sheriff themselves, they will know that the sheriff is just waiting for an excuse to march out with his men. The player can deal with the two men

guarding the explosions. And rig them to go off on a timer. Both parties will be attracted to the noise and leave there bases less protected for the player to steal their riches. This is the ultimate playthrough of the experience and will leave the player having the most money possible.

Agree to help the sheriff

If you agree to help the sheriff, he will show you his money chest.



The player can then attack the bandit camp in multiple different gameplay styles. The player attacks with combat.

Refer to overview video

The player can then report the job is done and get their payment.

The player could attack in a stealthier way.

Refer to overview video

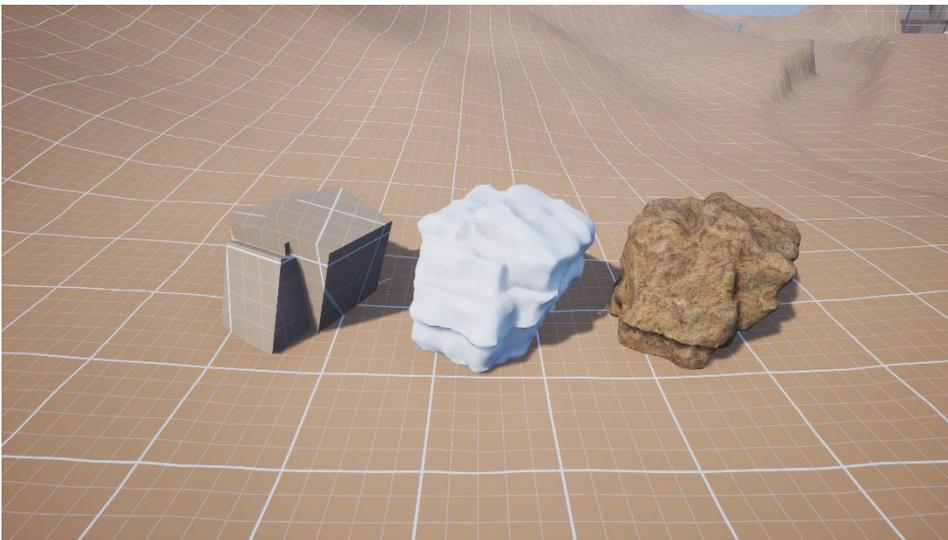
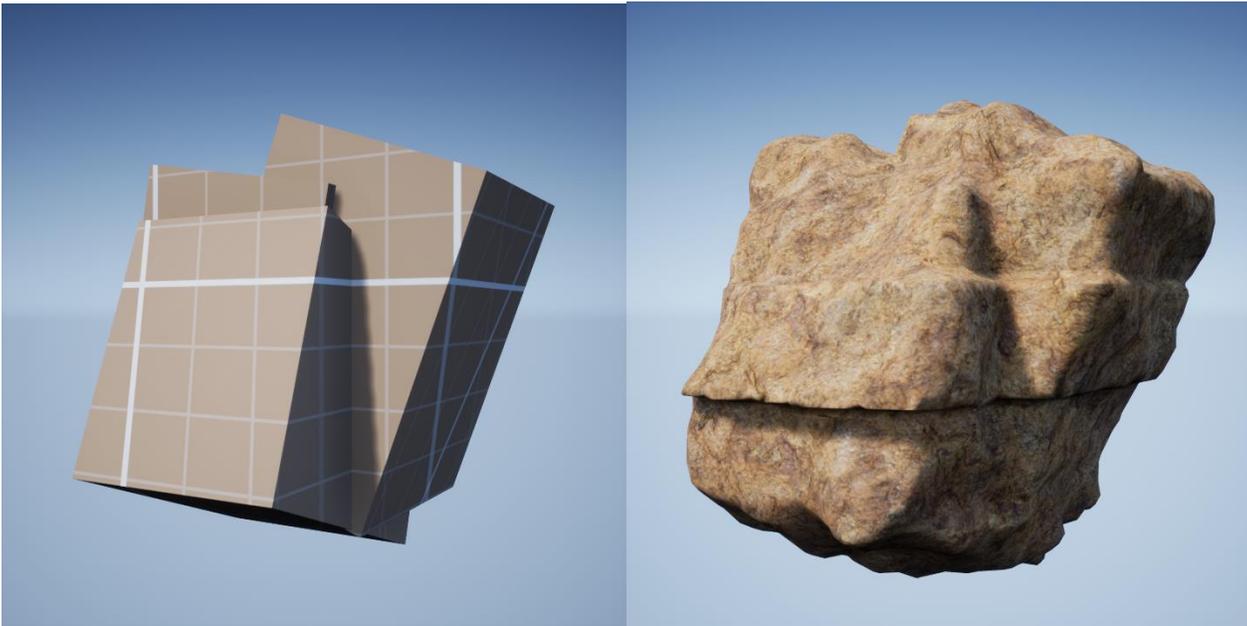
The player can then report the job is done and get their payment.

Final Stages

Procedural Art Pass

Using my Houdini knowledge, I created a tool to help me sell the feel of the environment. This tool would help me quickly do an art pass on my area.

It allows me to use simple cubes and will then turn them into rocks. To make this clear it would not be used in the final game but enables me as a designer to rely on my ideas more fully. Showing the art team what the final game environment could look like. This will really help artists to understand what I was intending with my design. It should hopefully prevent miscommunication within the team, helping us all be on the same page. And ensure the environment is easily readable to the players.



Video Overview References

References to the various clips I used in my video. Not referenced to any academic standard, just a link. If footage from one source is used multiple times, there will only be one reference, when it's first used.

Background Music - [08 - A Fistful Of Dollars Suite - A Fistful of Dollars \(Original Soundtrack\)](#)

00:11 - <https://www.unrealengine.com/en-US/blog/ue4-is-free>

00:26 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzZ6Gv4TIAw&t=1273s&ab_channel=theRadBrad

00:44 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPnvU6YLki8&ab_channel=TheGaroStudios

01:40 - [Level Design Lobby - Michael How #107](#)

03:19 - <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-illustration-of-a-cartoon-firework-firecracker-or-dynamite-character-54629578.html>

03:43 - https://www.kindpng.com/imgv/hboJmTb_vbucks-fortnite-png-download-vbucks-transparent-png-png/