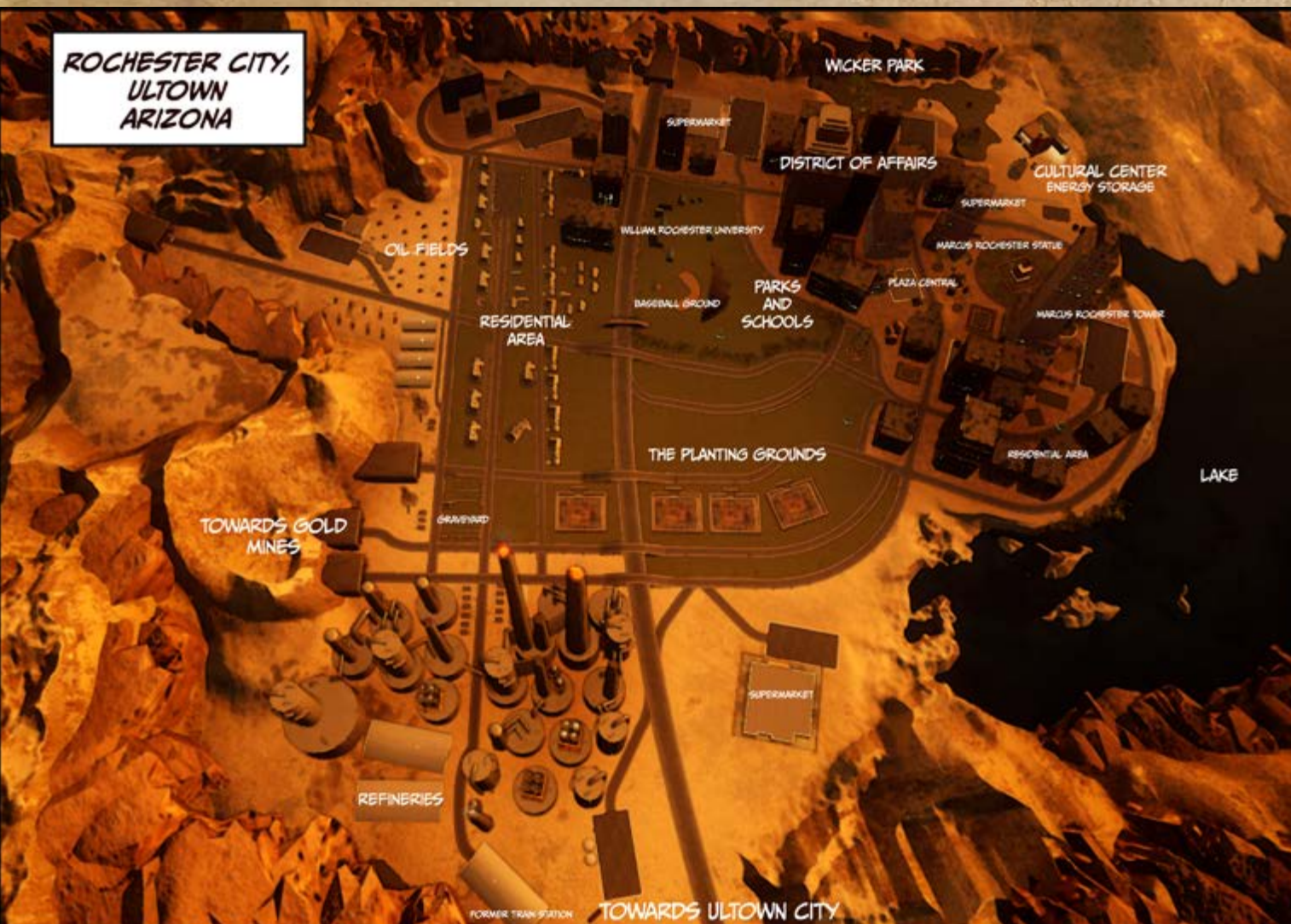


Ultown, Greetings from Rochester City

Context: a virtual dystopia to embody real environmental problematics



You will be exploring Rochester City, the most polluted area of Ultown, and the historical center. The metropolis (Ultown) spreads on both shores of the Lake, right side of the map.



Road systems in Rochester City were a fundamental aspect of the design. Their plan was directly created from a roadmap of Las Vegas, Nevada, USA, one of the inspirations for Ultown.



Like many modern metropolisi, Rochester City combines a chaotic urban expansion and unregulated industrialisation. Fundamental factors for a disturbed environment and hazardous public health related issues.

In this project, I wanted to create a prosperous city, that had turned dystopic as mass consumption and production slowly degraded its air quality. Inspired notably by american metropolis like Phoenix and Las Vegas, facing issues that are global i.e. air pollution, development of smogs in industrialised cities and all their consequences: heatwaves, higher rates of lung cancers and cardio-vascular diseases. I wanted to design a space that embodied, and symbolised the need for urgent action. but also to tell a story. The story of a world that, due to its deep embedment in conflicts of interests, over productivists logics, was creating strong issues and solving few problems. The appearing intemporality of Ultown serves the fact that even though this game takes place in a given location in the world, the problem is universal, and affects and affected numerous metropolisi throughout the world, creating on the long term a global problem.

i wanted this game to be a learning hub, where the player could understand, through dialogues with the characters, some consequences of air pollution, and symbolize their expression through elements inspired by real phenomenons such as the yellow smog, a mix of pollutants and sand that the inhabitants of the city of Beijing, China, faced in march 2021.

The interest I found in making a game is all the different levels of interpretation that could be expressed in this spatial experience. From gameplay elements, to the explicit and implicit narratives, the freedom in scenography, using music, lights, characters, visual effects, to convey atmospheres, narratives, and knowledge.

This city embodies our last chance to fight air pollution. Its name is a contraction of the prefix «ult» and the word «town». «Ult» can be found in ultimate (the last) but also refers to the idea of «beyond» in its latin understanding, expressing the virtual nature of this work that goes beyond reality in its common understanding.

Designing a virtual space is very similar to designing any other kind of space but without the physical constraints. However, it can be balanced in this case by the need for structure, or intelligible coherence, and storylines.

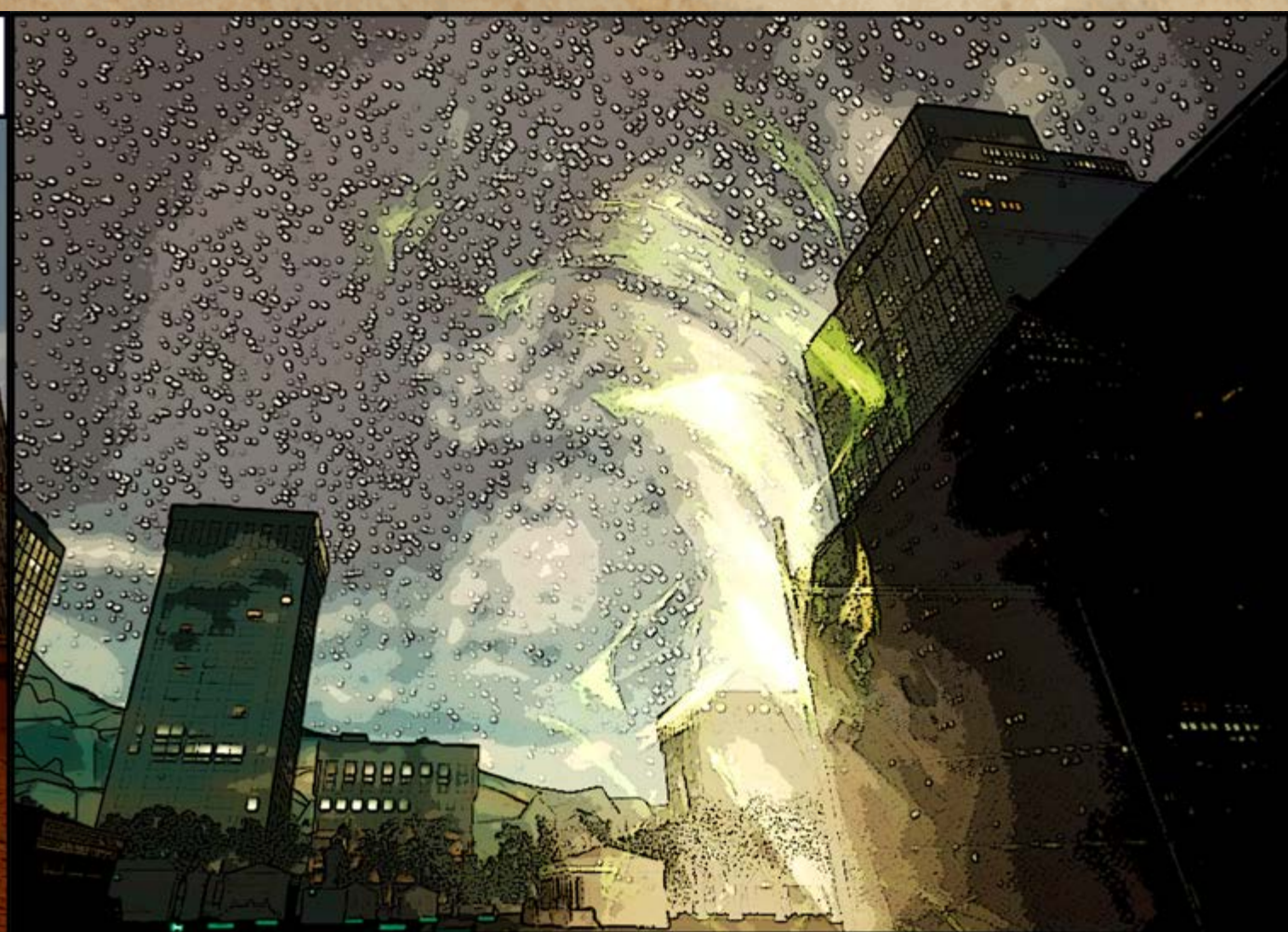
There must be a real reflection, whether it is more conceptual like in «the Future Laboratory: Branded Cities» realized by Inferstudio, or aiming at photorealism for games like GTA where the player evolves in a fictional but believable city. I wanted to anchor my work somewhere between those two perspectives.

Making a virtual space is creating a space, with its own logics and languages; some being commonly understood, others calling for one's interpretation and creativity to fill the voluntary gaps that a creative work might leave.

Process: programming a learning hub and game mechanics



NPCs (Non-Playable Characters) will be your main source of information concerning air-pollution related issues

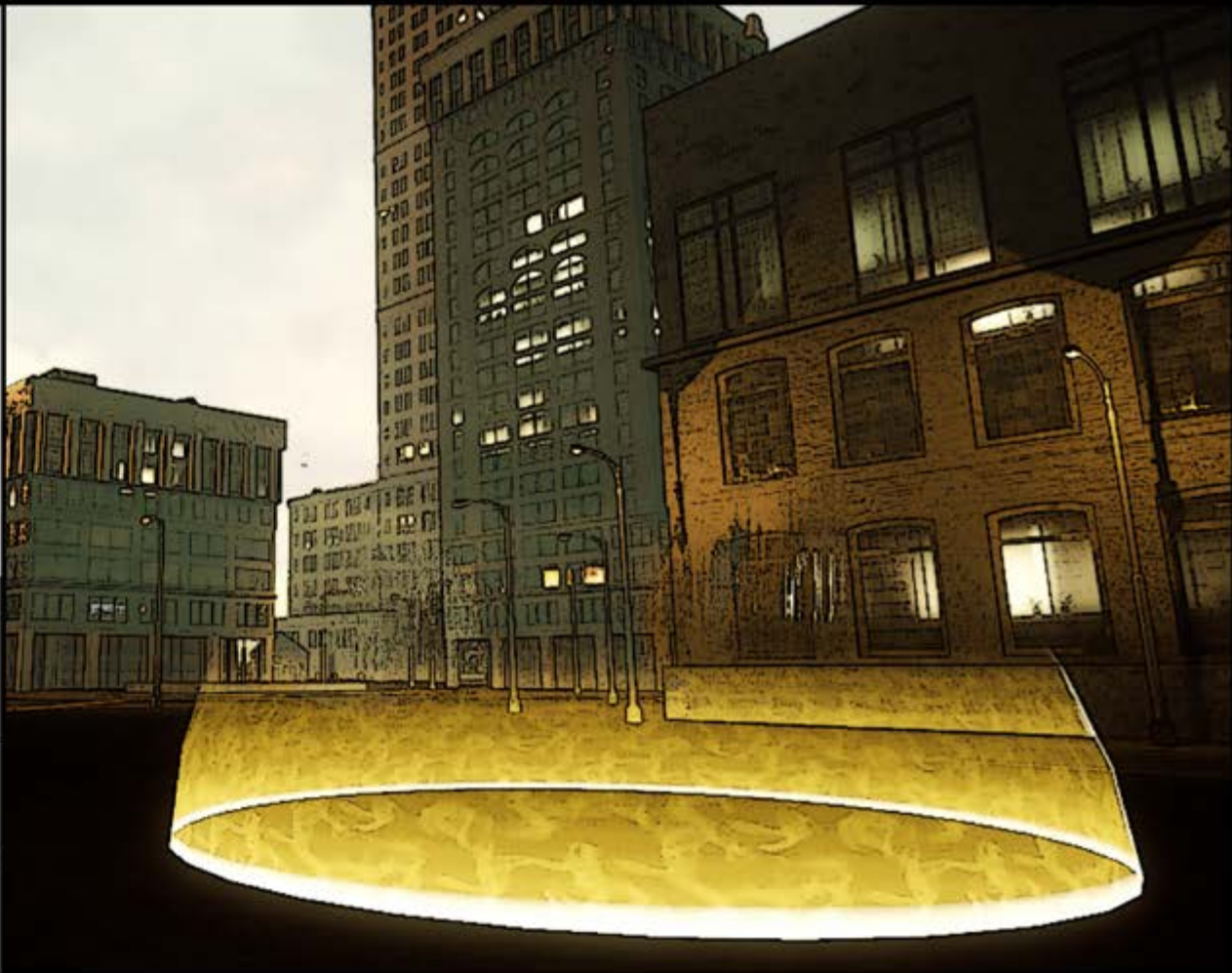
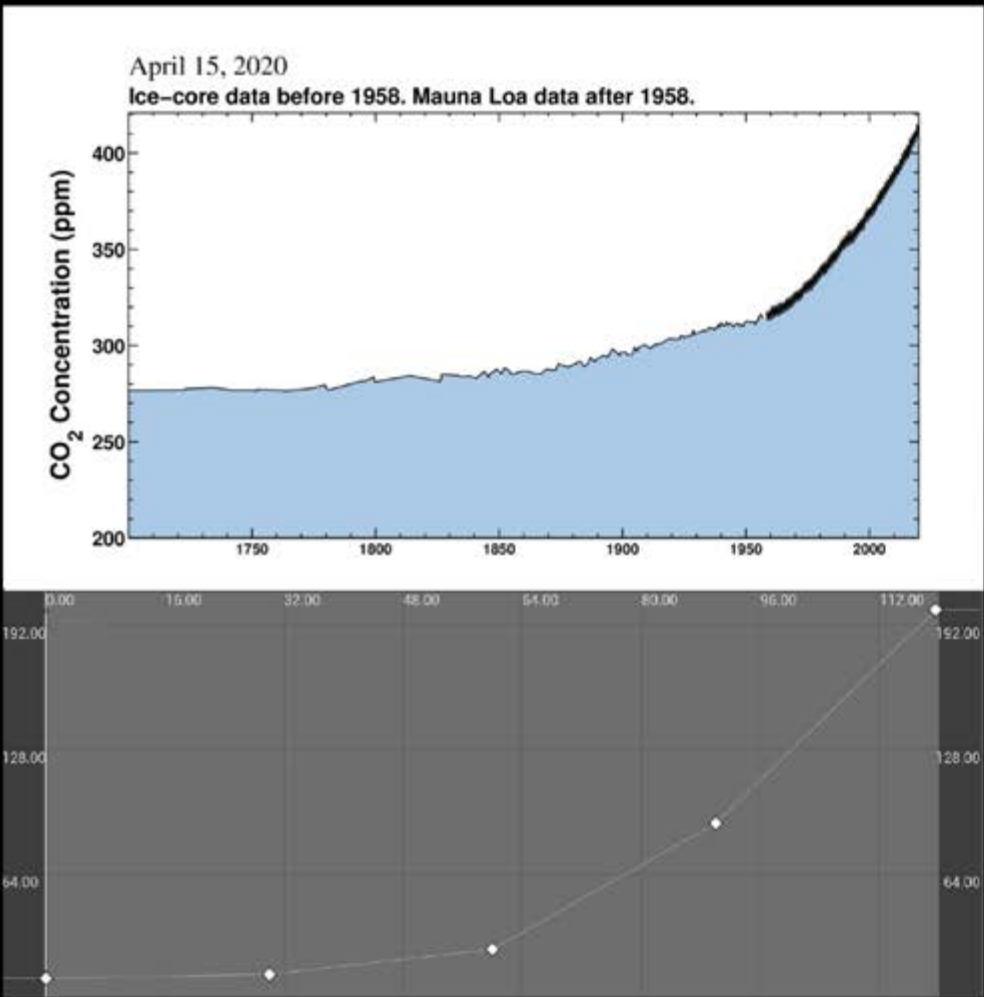


The game is meant to reflect the emergency of dealing with pollution problematics. Just like in reality, time goes by in the game. On day 2, tornados, mix of burnt pollutants and sand will appear and make your task harder. You should avoid them at all cost. They embody natural catastrophies aggravated by human activities



The smog is not only hazardous for health, it increases aridity, and changes the appearance of the city

As time goes by, a smog, developing at a rate proportional to the CO2 concentration in the atmosphere since 1700, will cover the city. If it cannot be stopped, the city is lost



One solution adopted by the inhabitants is Urban Greening. As the player, you will directly participate to it by collecting seeds and powering irrigation (cf. presentation videos p.5 for entire presentation)



Designing an atmosphere, an ambiance, buildings for gameplay, conveying the narrative and supporting spatial experience



A greenish smog is coating the city. Note the size of the refineries, overhanging not only the canyon and cliffs, but also the buildings. This is meant as a symbolic representation of the weight of an incautious industry on our societies



The design process included many dimensions to be thought through. From colours used, graphics style, to the music, monotonous and gloomy, percussions creating a sense of intemporality, distorted electric piano creating a sense of gloominess

There is a written legend of the foundation of the city. You can learn it in game talking to Nathan, one of the NPCs. To resume it, the land was given in the late 19th century to Marshall D. Wicker by the U.S. government as a reward for his service in two wars. William Rochester (left) inspired by Rockefeller bought the land back to the son of Marshall as he knew there was petroleum. Since then, the Rochester family have been owning most of the cities' exploitations, casinos, hotels, etc.

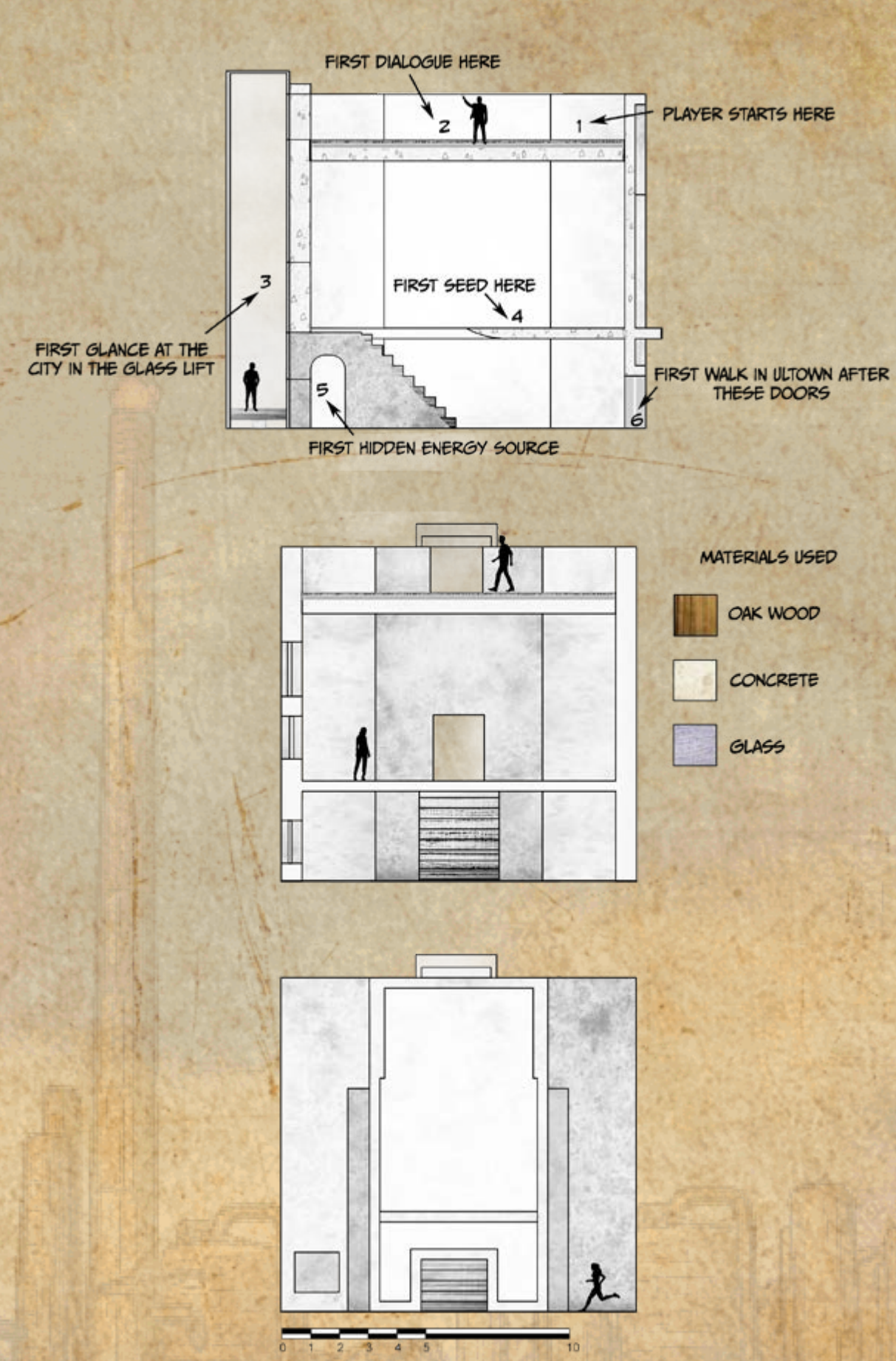




The Rochester Energy Storage allows you to power you the irrigation using collected energy. Doing this will make possible the action of planting seeds in front of the refineries



The Cultural Center contains 4 essential buildings and facilities. The player will often come back here to make progress in the game or to talk to important characters.



This building, the Tutorial Museum is where the player starts and was designed to include all the elements that he or she will be encountering throughout the game



