GDC
Applying 3D Level Design Skills to the 2D World of 'Hyper Light Drifter'
Lisa Brown
Independent
@Wertle
GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | FEB 27–MAR 3, 2017 | EXPO: MAR 1-3, 2017 #GDC17
UBM

# Lisa Brown

INSOMNIAC GAMES

HEART MACHINE™

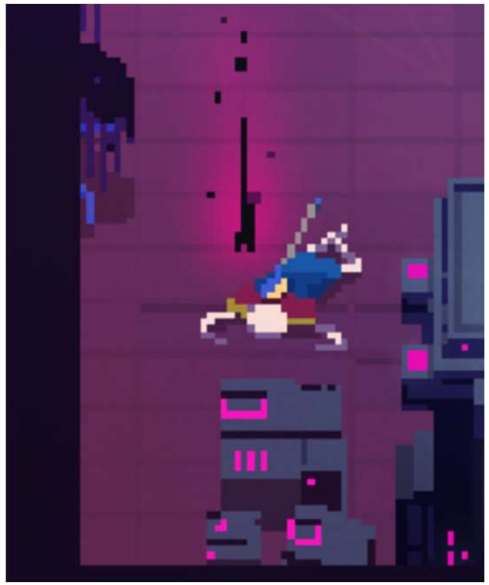
# What we will talk about...

# Constraints and Caveats

- Focus on action combat games

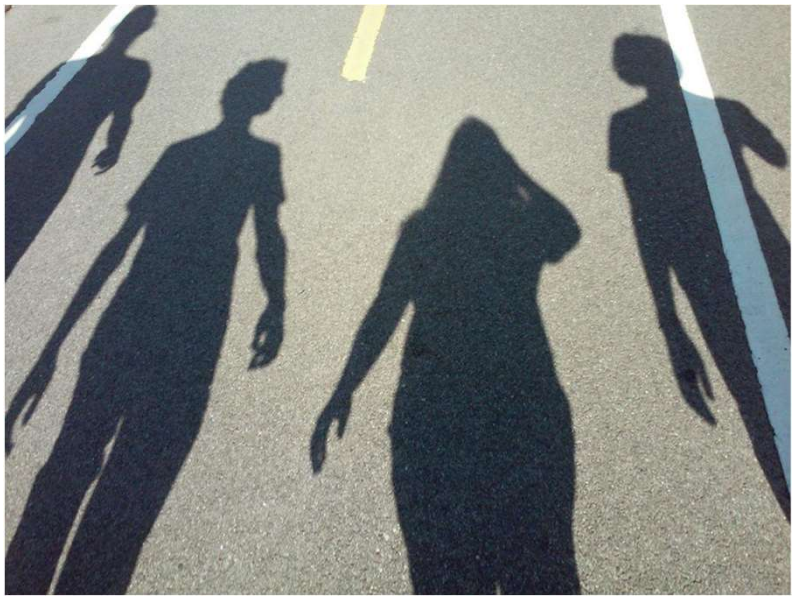
# Constraints and Caveats

- Spoilers!



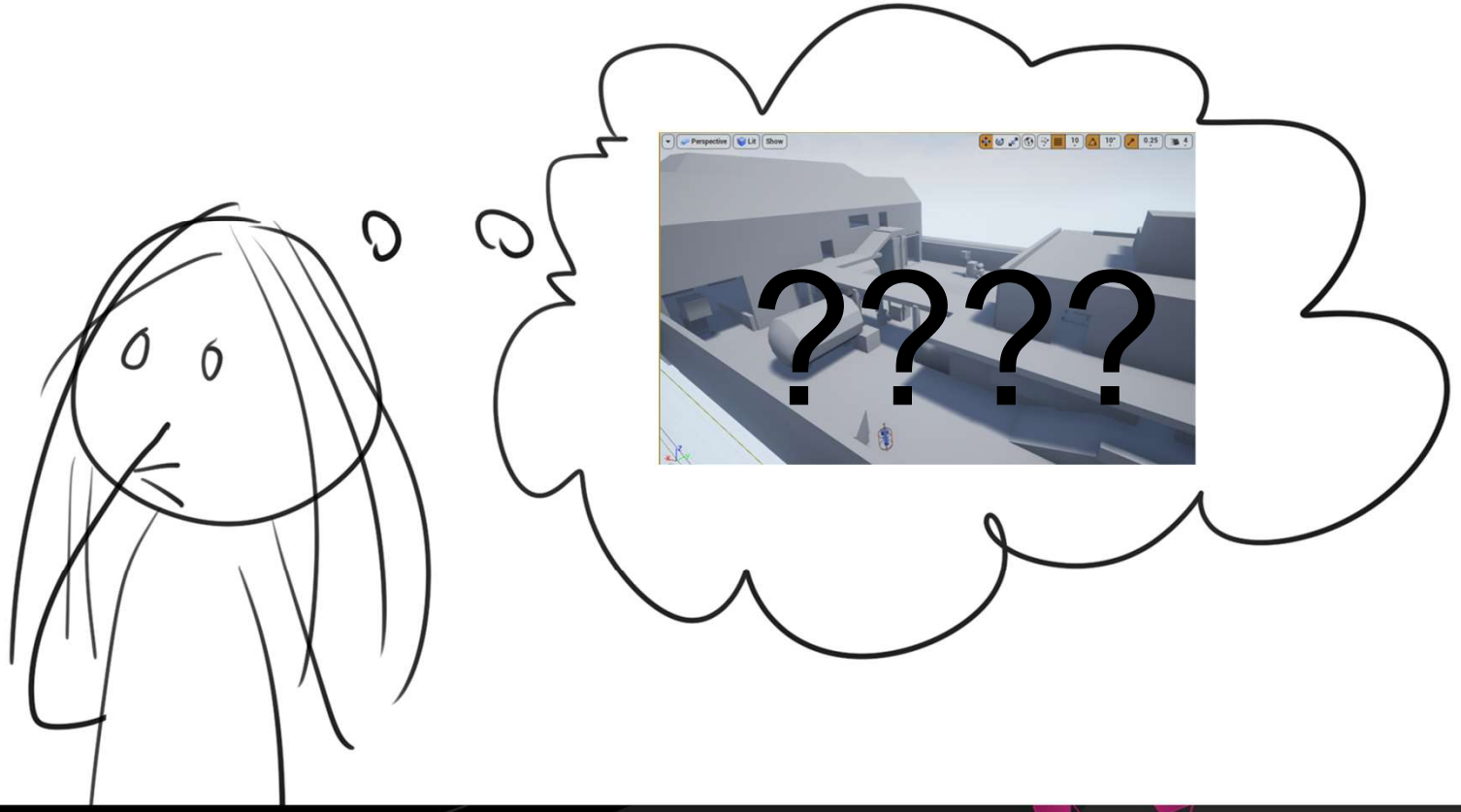
# Constraints and Caveats

- Collaboration!



# My Transition onto HLD

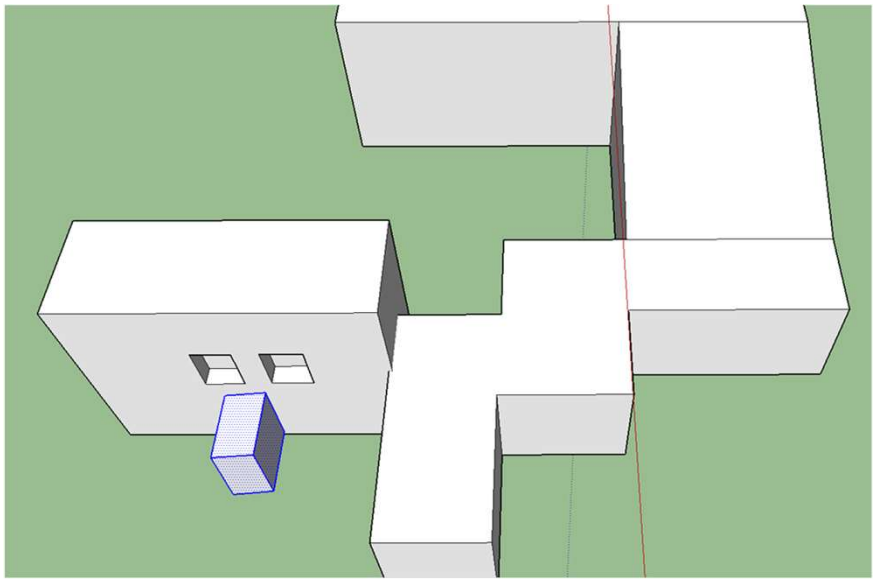
@Wertle

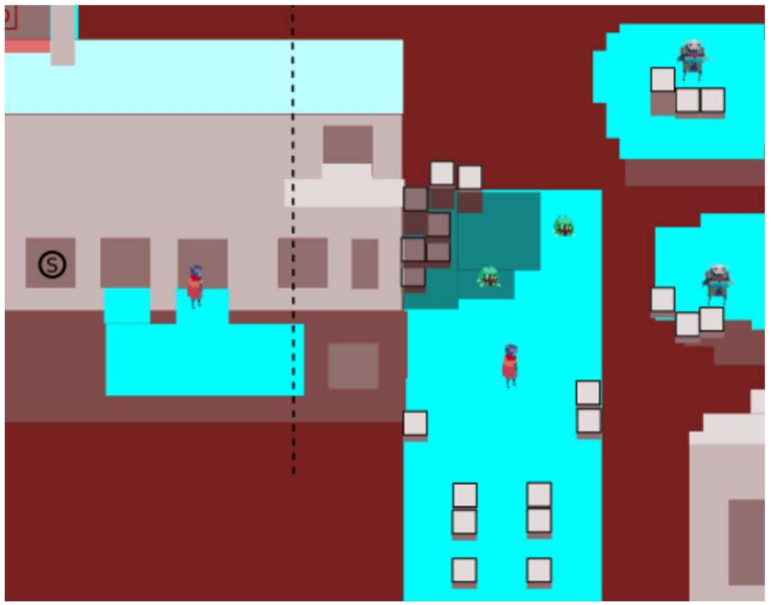


Yes!

# Design Test

# Design Test





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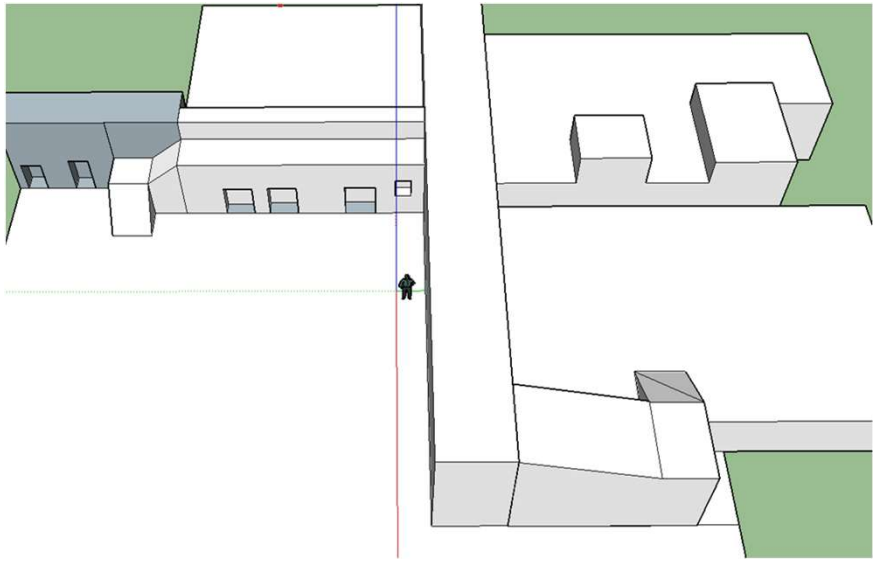

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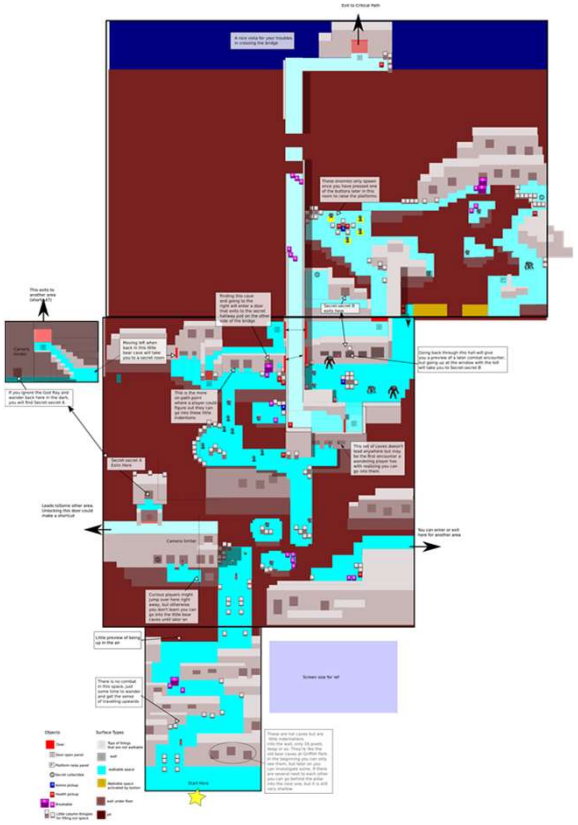
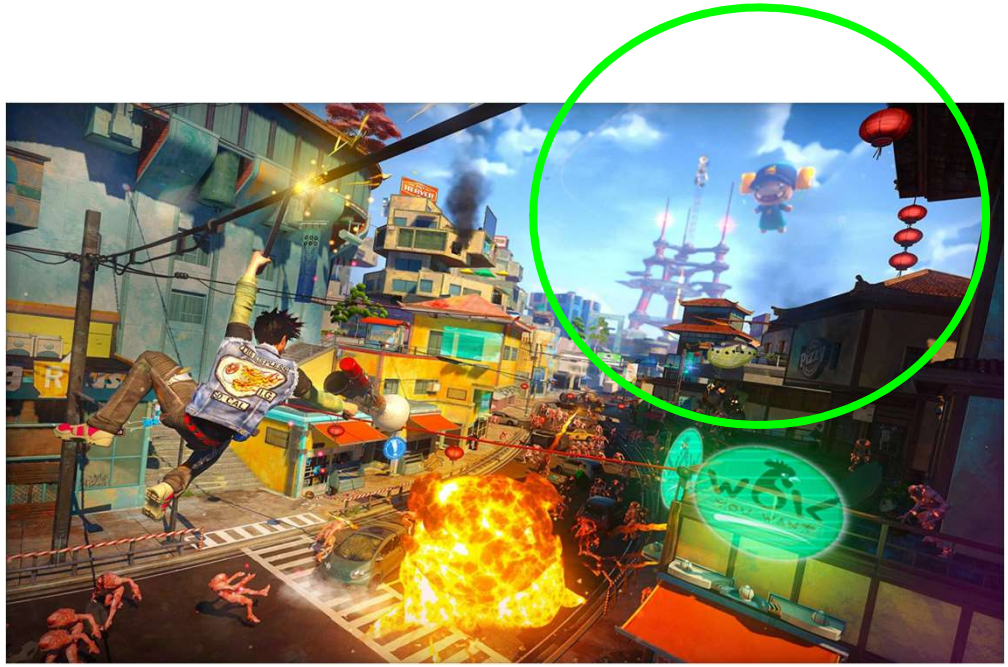


# My Fears

# My Fears

- Thinking in z-space

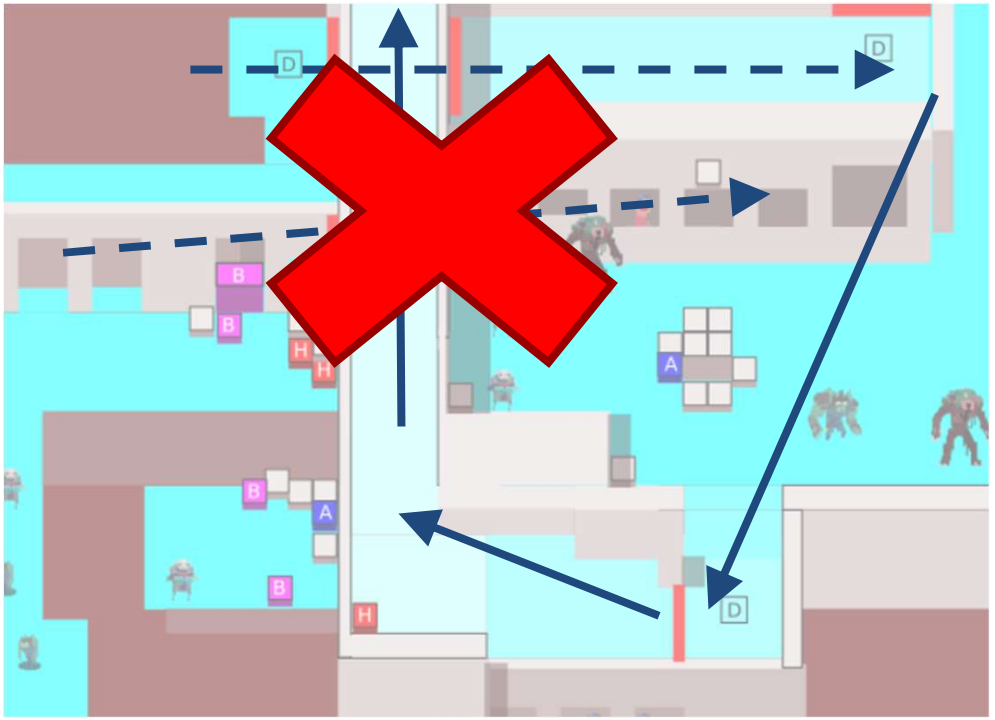


# My Fears

- Thinking in z-space
- Mitigating awareness

# My Fears

- Thinking in z-space
- Mitigating awareness
- Reliance on verticality

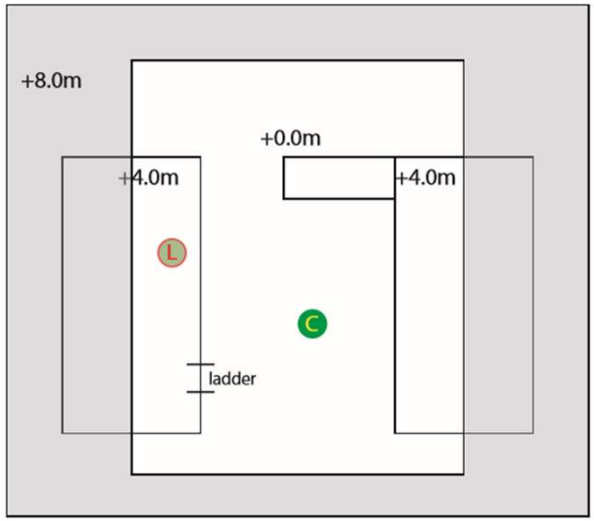


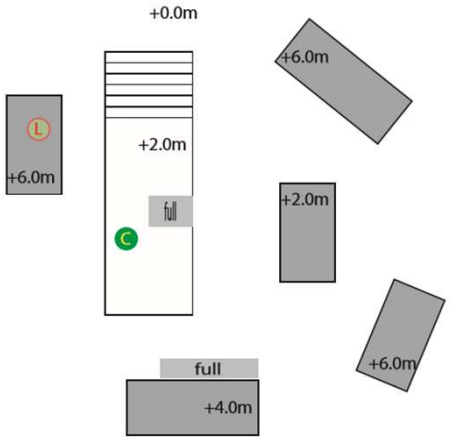
# Processes and Principles that DID Transfer

# 1. Initial Construction Process

# Initial Construction Process

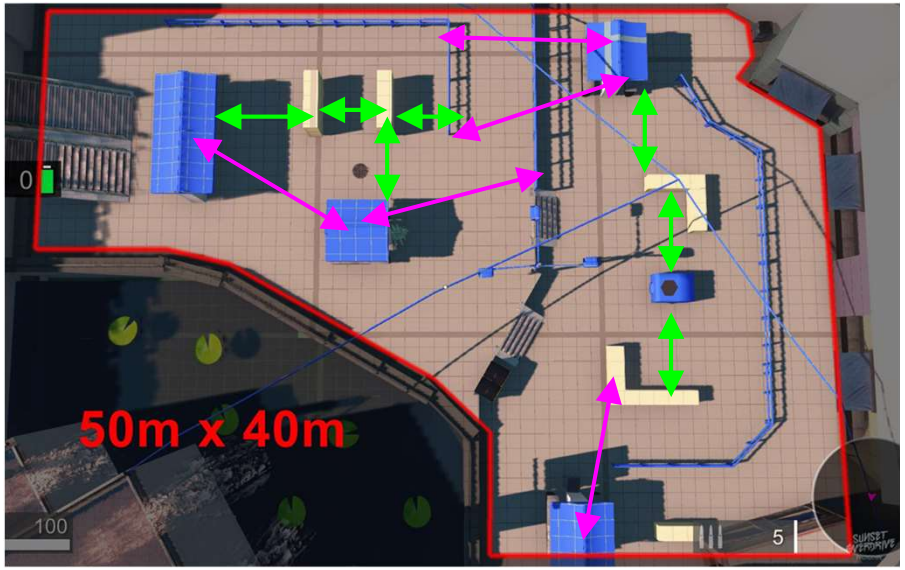
# Metrics as Initial Constraints



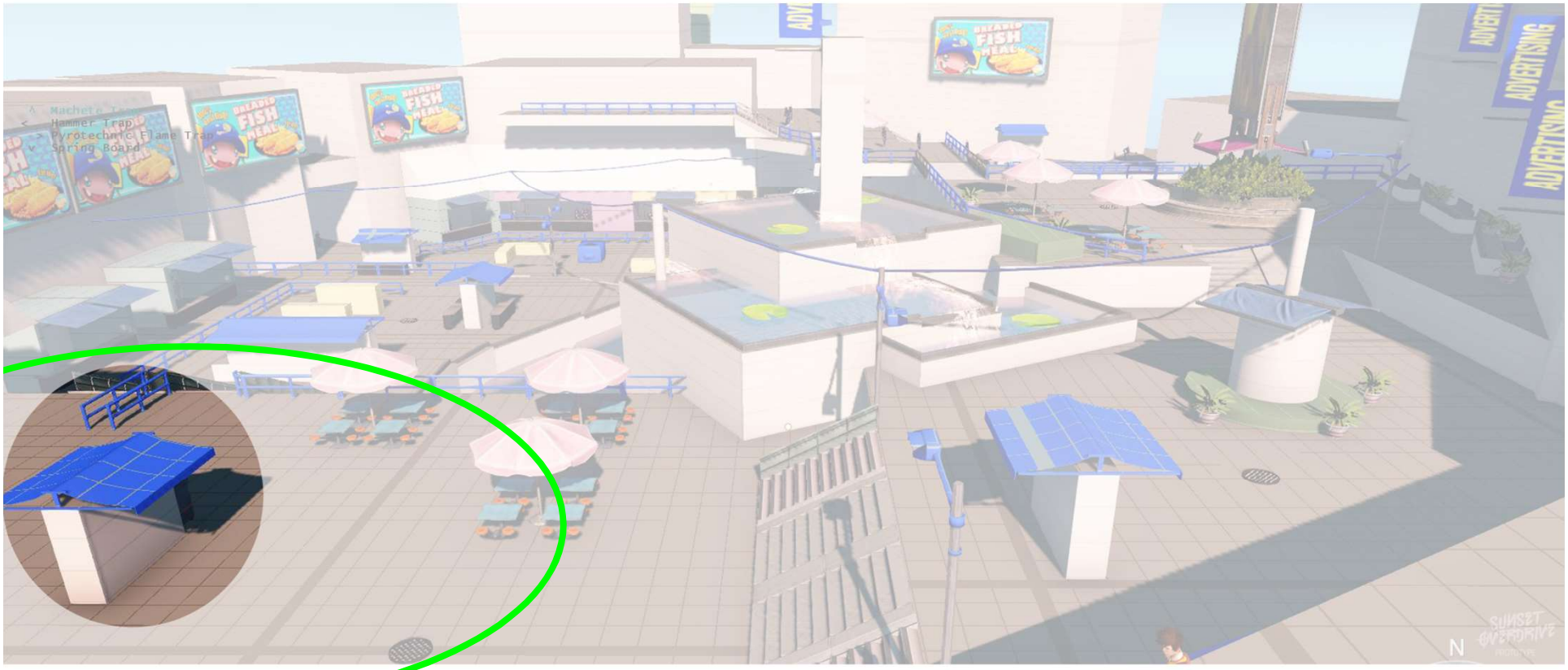
# Metrics as Initial Constraints

- Min corridor width for enemies
- Min corridor width for player
- Jump heights/distances
- etc...

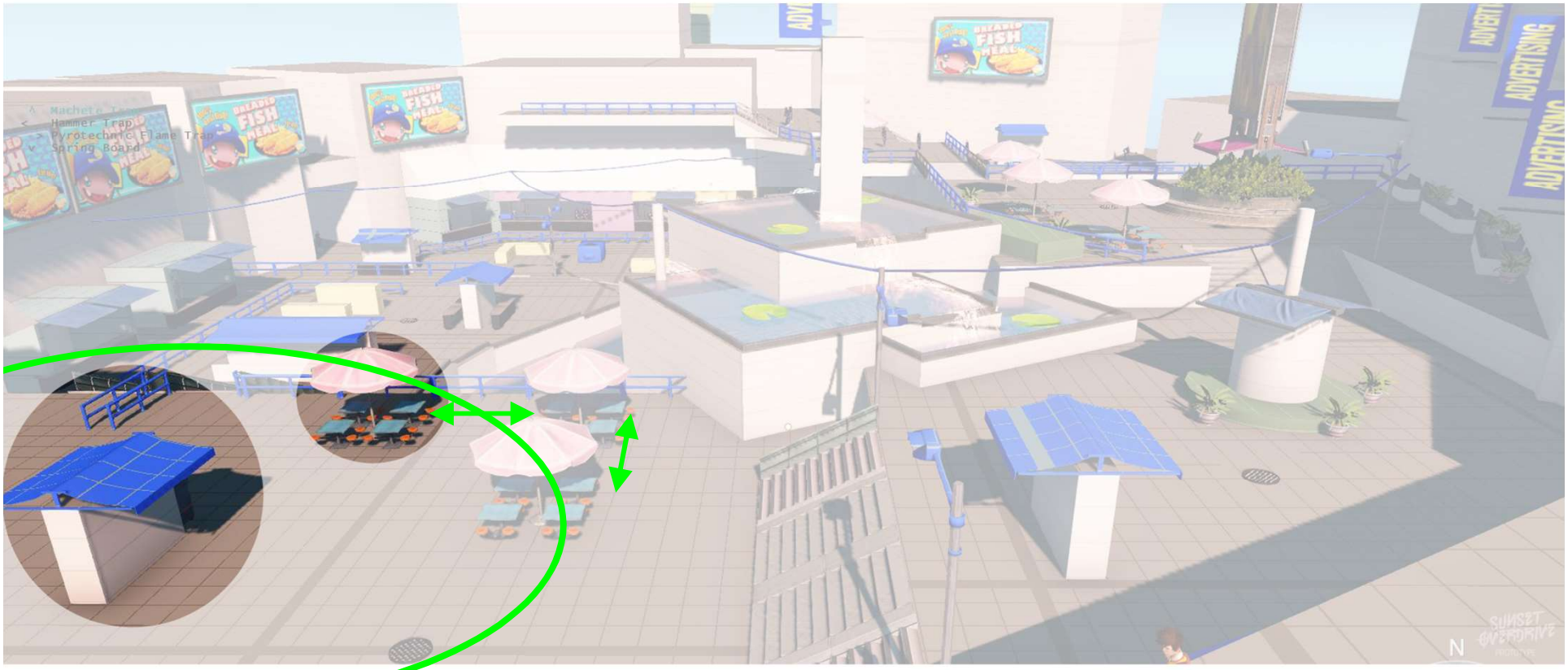


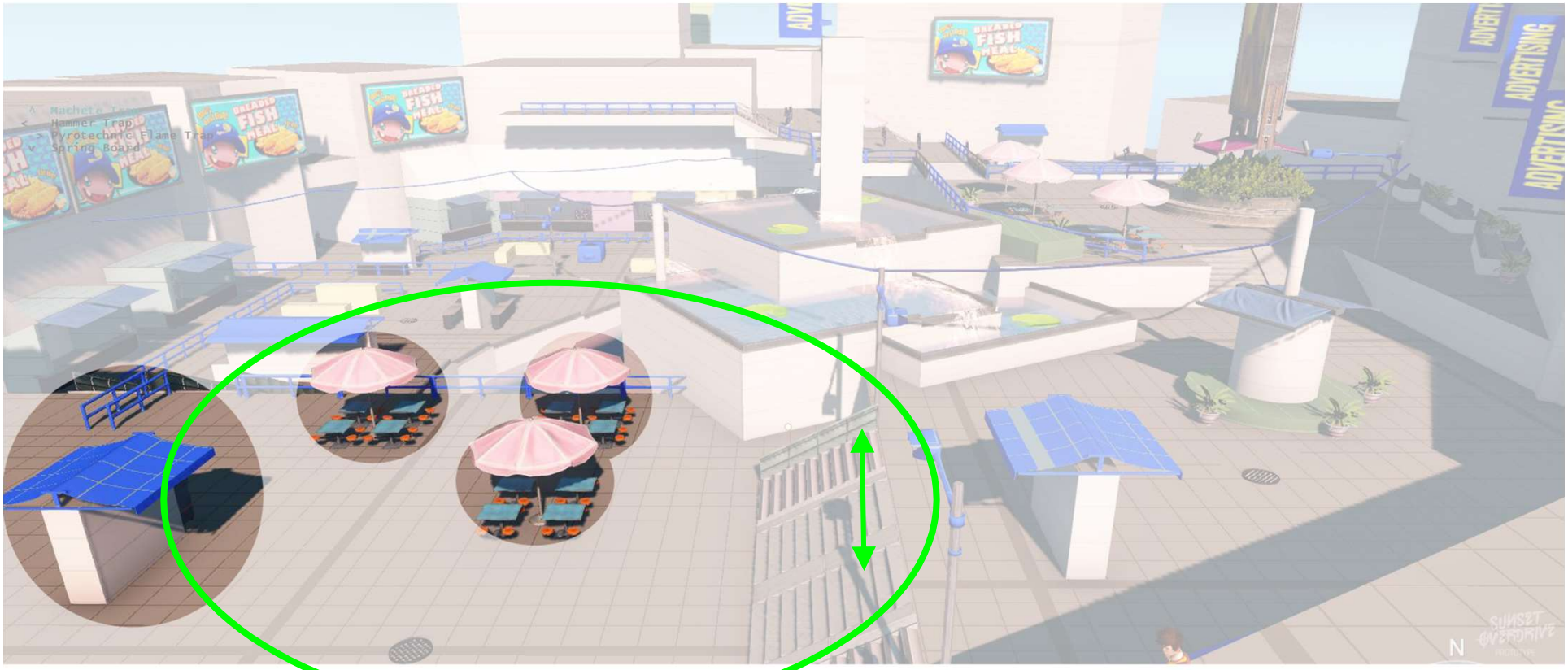
# Example: Sunset Overdrive

Machete Trap
Hammer Trap
Pyrotechnic Flame Trap
Spring Board
BRAADED FISH MEAL
ADVERTISING
SUNSET OVERDRIVE PROTOTYPE


Machete Trap
Hammer Trap
Pyrotechnic Flame Trap
Spring Board
BREADED FISH MEAL
ADVERTISING
N

@Wertle

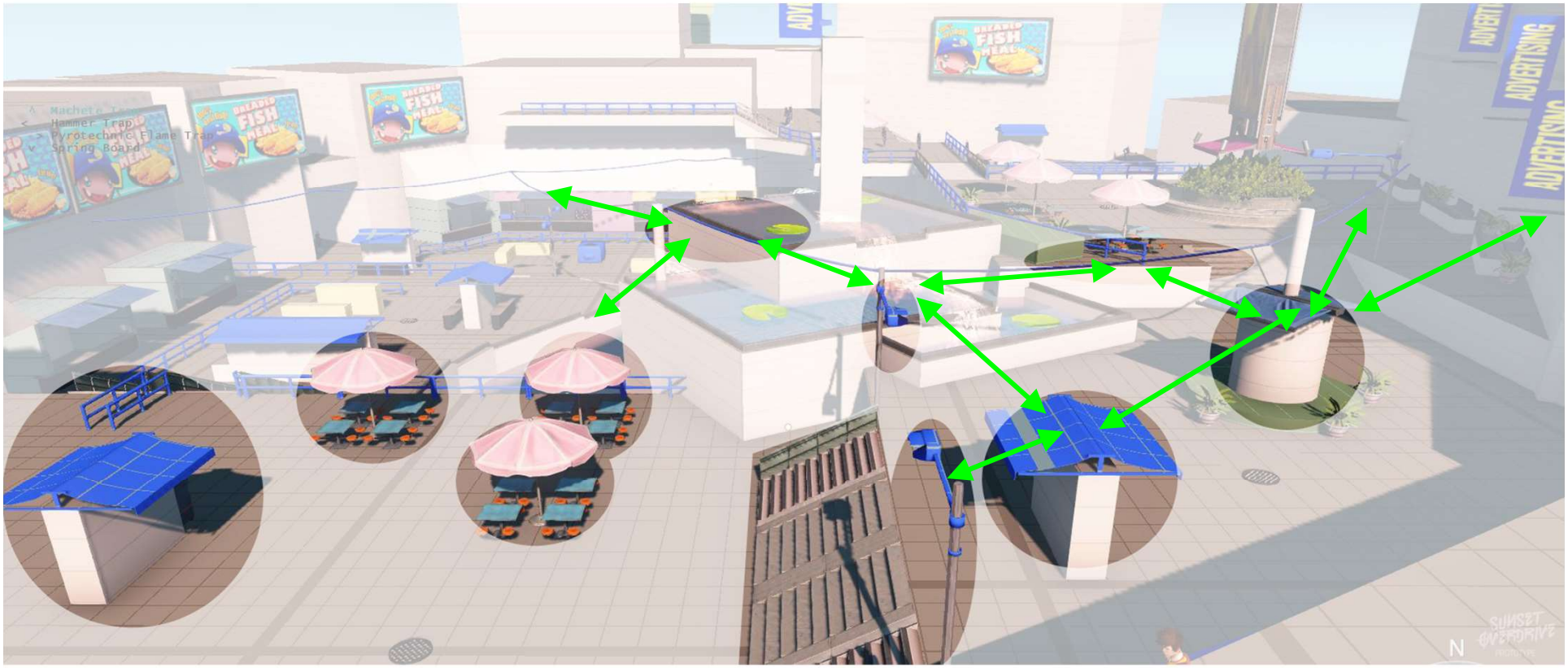

Hammer Trap
Pyrotechnic Flame Trap
Spring Board
ADVERTISING
N

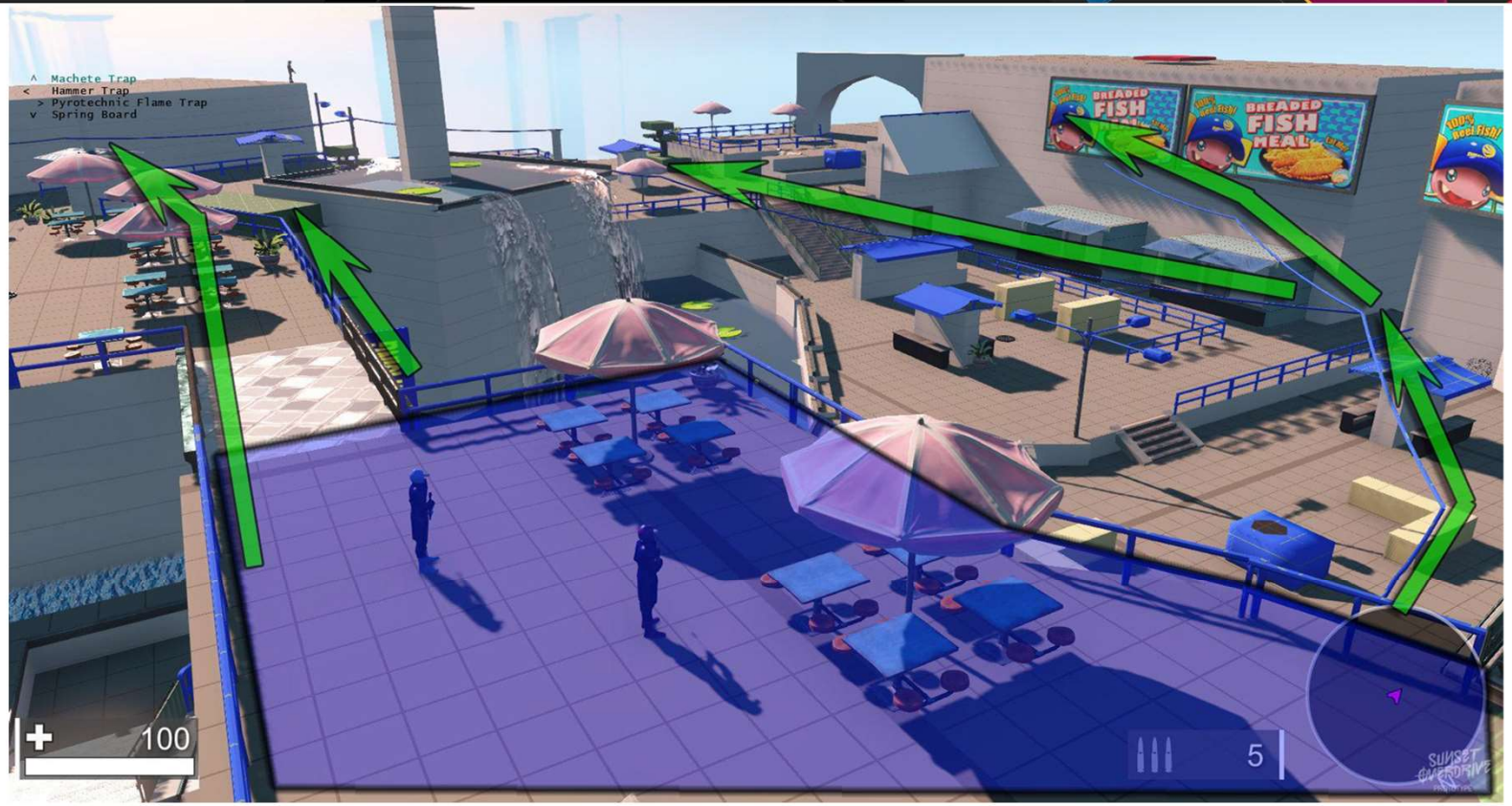

Machete Trap
Hammer Trap
Pyrotechnic Flame Trap
Spring Board
BREADED FISH MEAL
ADVERTISING
N

@Wertle

Hammer Trap
Pyrotechnic Flame Trap
Spring Board
ADVERTISING
N

Machete
Hammer Trap
Pyrotechnic Flame Trap
Spring Board
BREADED FISH MEAL
ADVERTISING
N

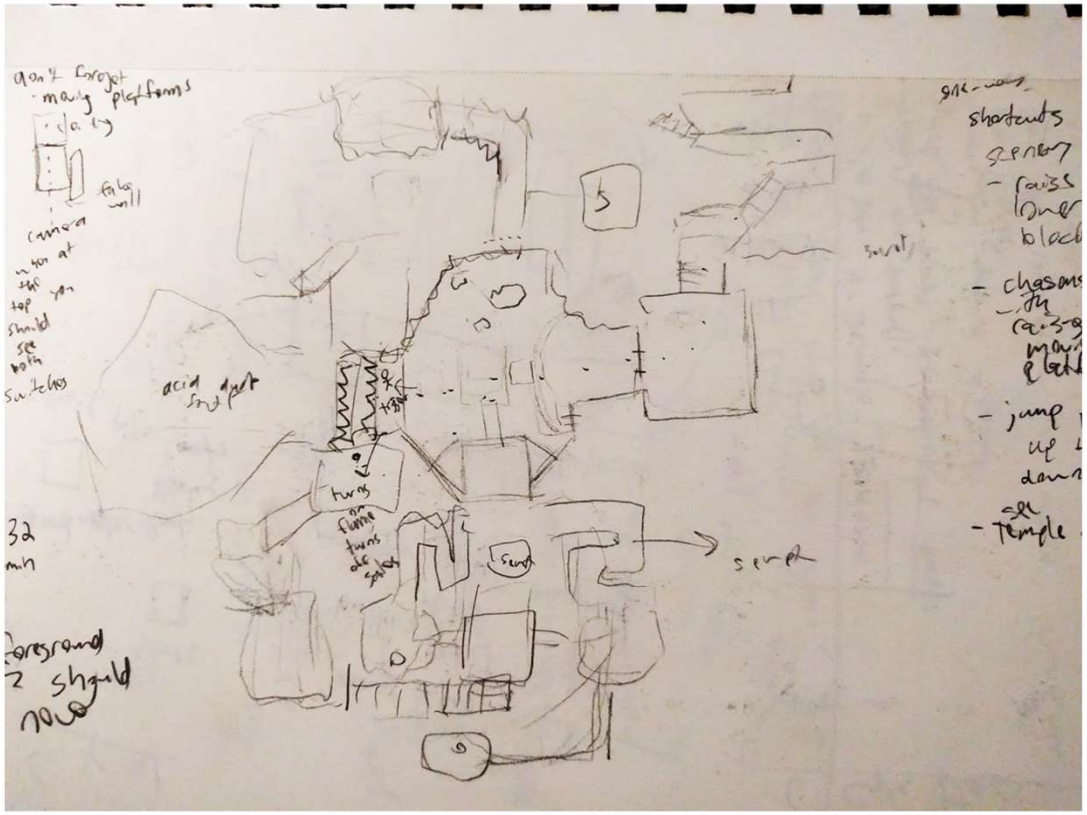

Machete Trap
Hammer Trap
Pyrotechnic Flame Trap
Spring Board
ADVERTISING
N

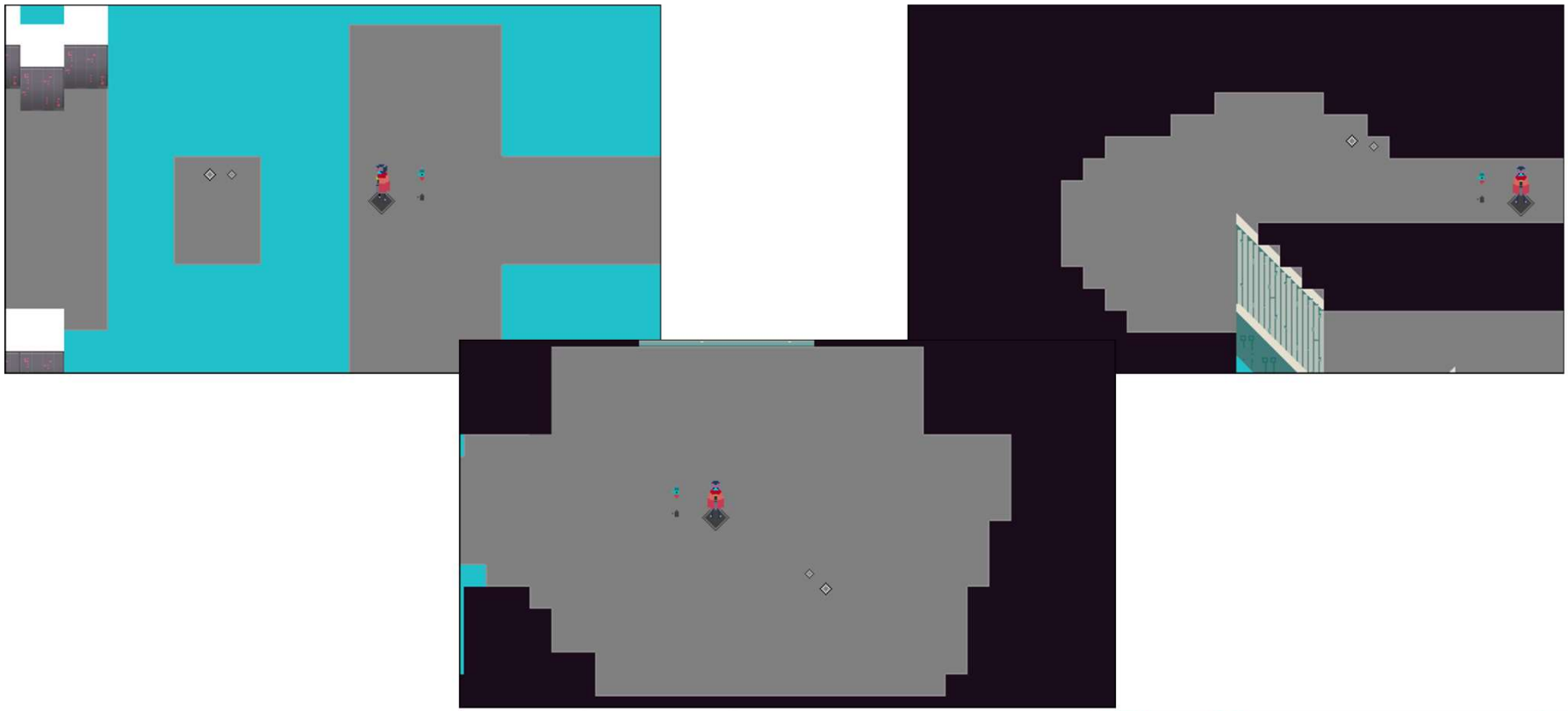

^ Machete Trap
< Hammer Trap
> Pyrotechnic Flame Trap
v Spring Board
BREADED FISH
BREADED FISH MEAL
100
5
SUNSET OVERDRIVE

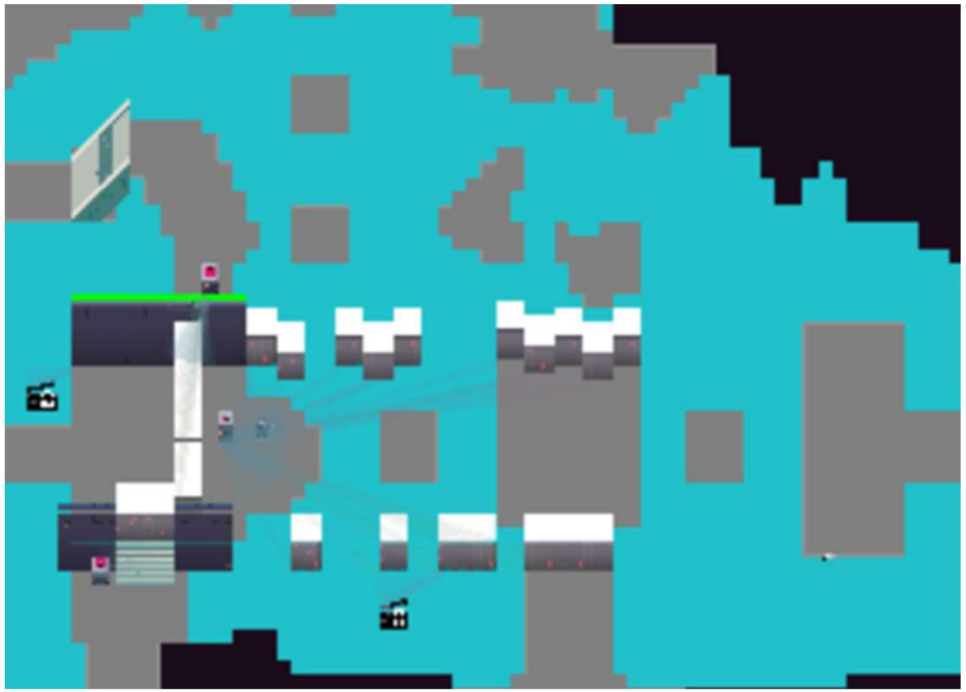
# Example: Hyper Light Drifter

My very first task:

- Huge room
- Multiple paths
- Introduces [x] enemy


shortcuts
scenery
- raiss
lower
- chasms
- jump
- temple
acid
turns
32
min
foreground
should
now





[Link to GIF]

# Processes and Principles that DID Transfer

1. Initial Construction Process
    a. Using established metrics as constraints

# 2. Player Defense Shapes the Level

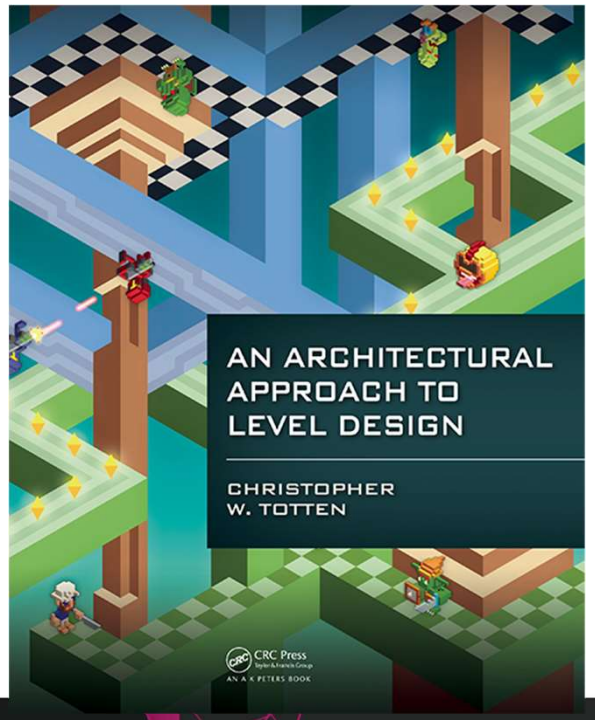
# Drew Murray

"Defensive capability of the player in shooters is more important to level design than offensive power"

DragonSlayer

# Appealing to Survival Instincts

"Emotional Level Design through Survival Instincts"



# Prospect and Refuge Space

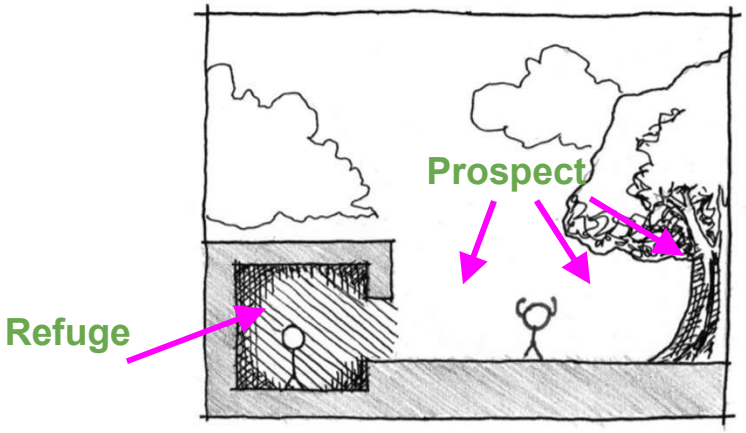



FIGURE 5.6 Refuge spaces provide protection from external dangers and a place from which to plan how to move forward.

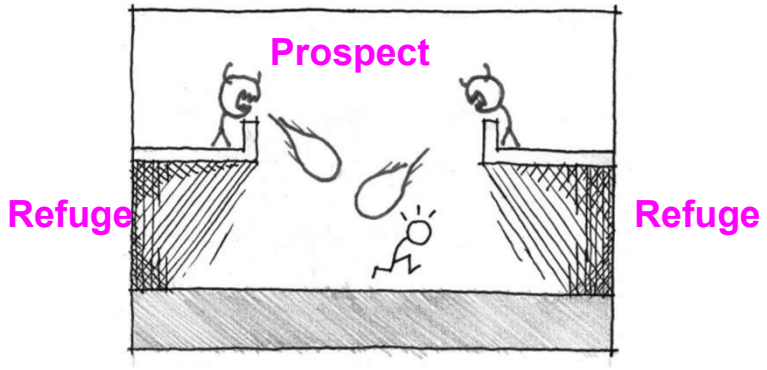
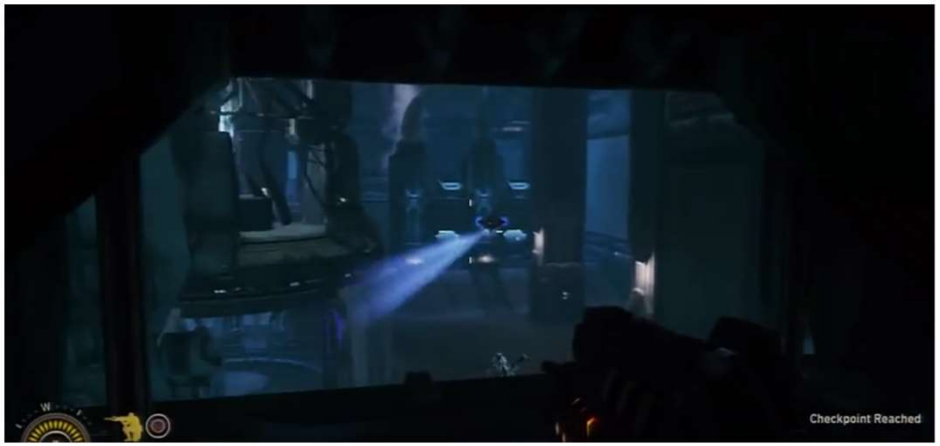


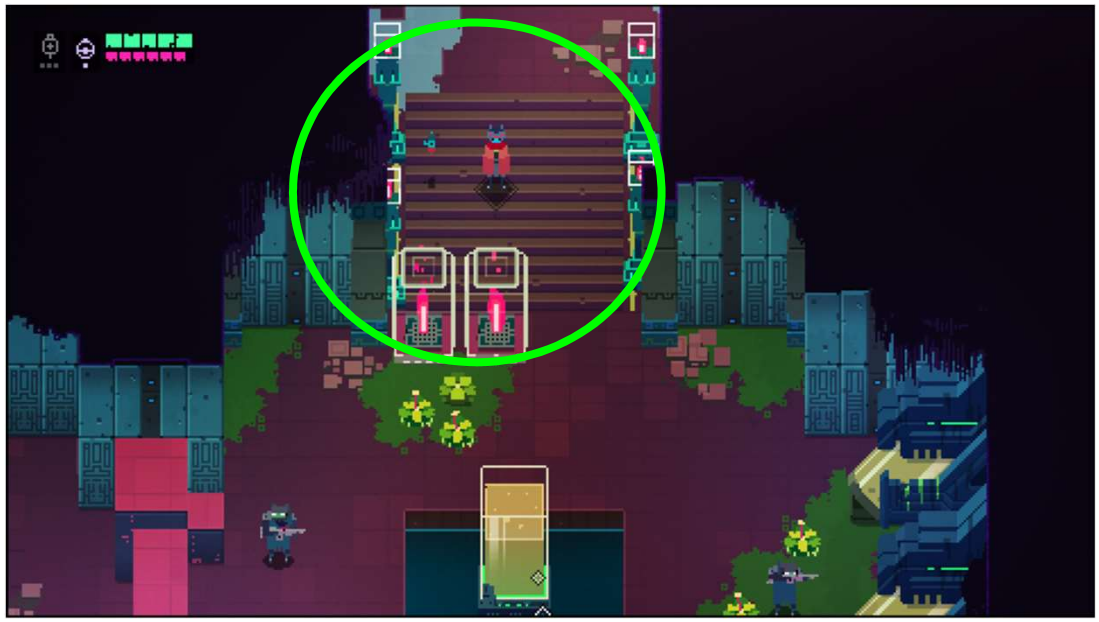

FIGURE 5.8 Refuge–prospect–secondary refuge alternations can create interesting gameplay scenarios.

# Example: Resistance 3

Press Esc to exit full screen


Checkpoint Reached

# Example: Hyper Light Drifter



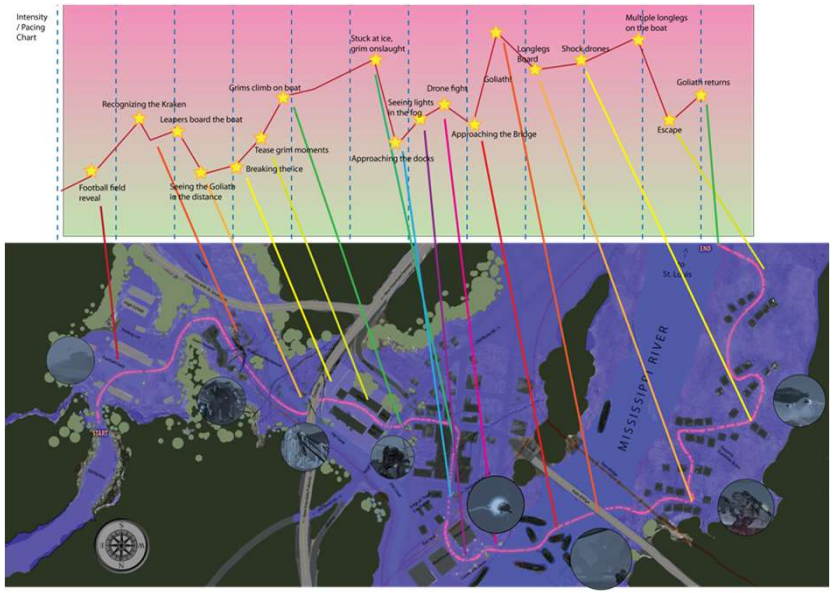
Danger!
Danger!
Safe

# Processes and Principles that DID Transfer

1. Initial Construction Process
   a. Using established metrics as constraints
2. Player Defense Shapes the Level
   a. Prospect and Refuge Space

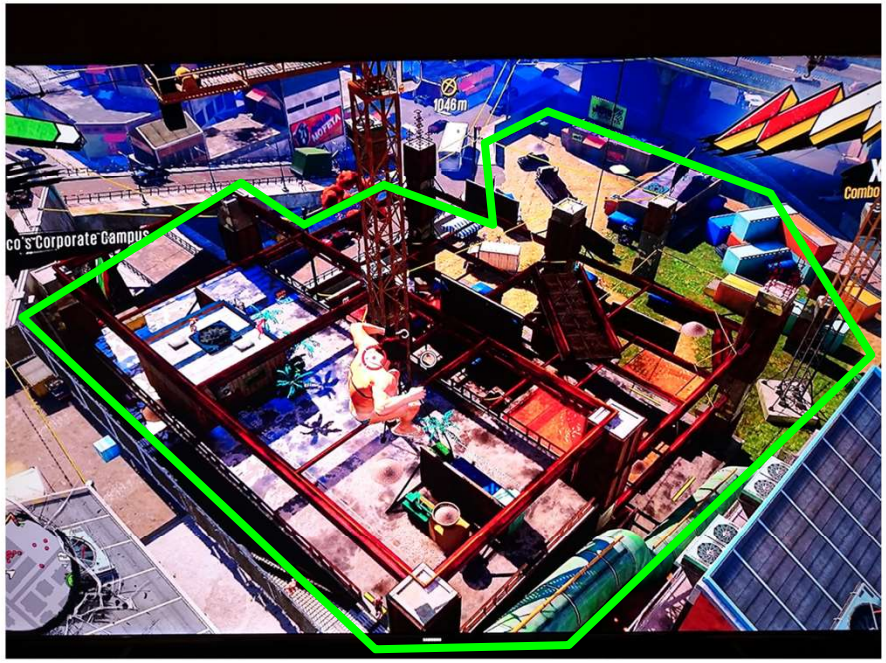
# 3. Using Space to Control Combat Pacing

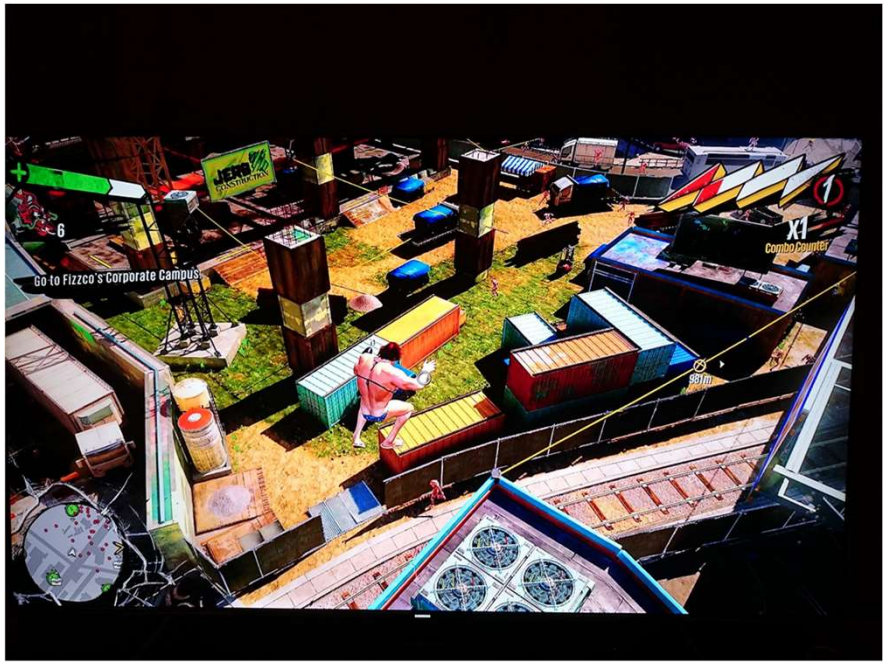
# Isolating Combat Moments



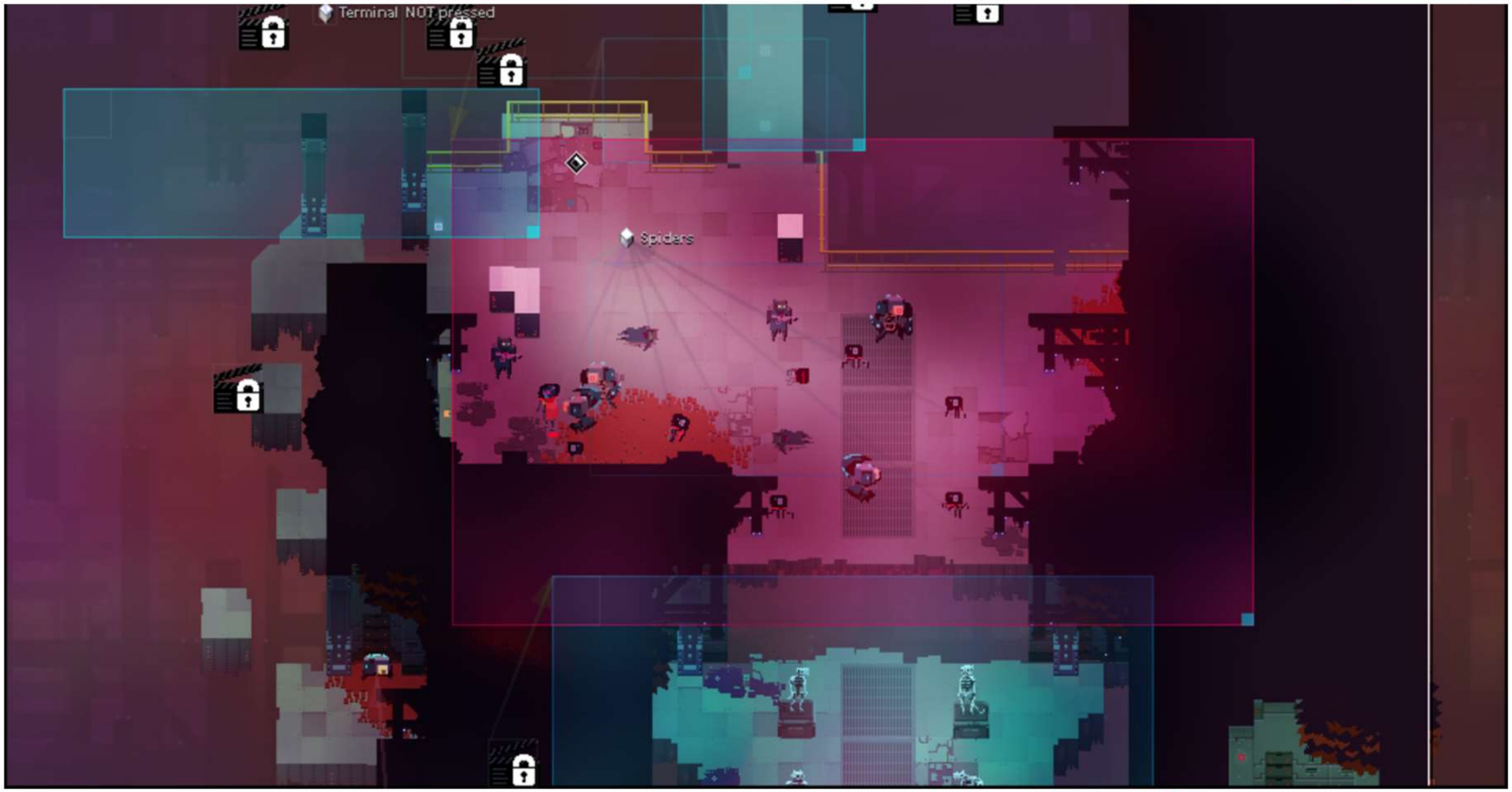
# Example: Sunset Overdrive

Crazy
PIZZA


1046m
Combo
co's Corporate Campus


6
Go to Fizzco's Corporate Campus
X1
Combo Counter
997m

# Example: Hyper Light Drifter

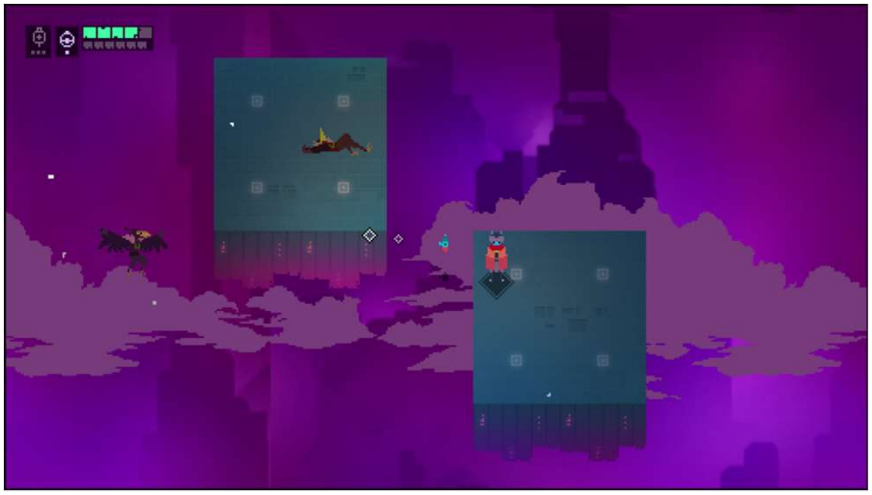

Terminal NOT pressed
Spiders

Horizontal
Camera Lock

# Denying Refuge Space for Tension

# Denying Refuge Space for Tension

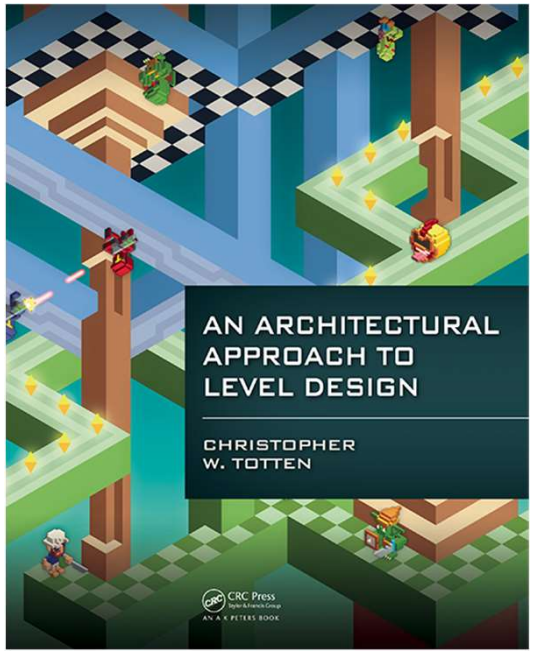
# Denying Refuge Space for Tension



# Processes and Principles that DID Transfer

1. Initial Construction Process
   a. Using established metrics as constraints
2. Player Defense Shapes the Level
   a. Prospect and Refuge Space
3. Using Space to Control Combat Pacing
   a. Isolating Combat/Denying Refuge Space

# Other Carry-overs



# Walkthrough Example

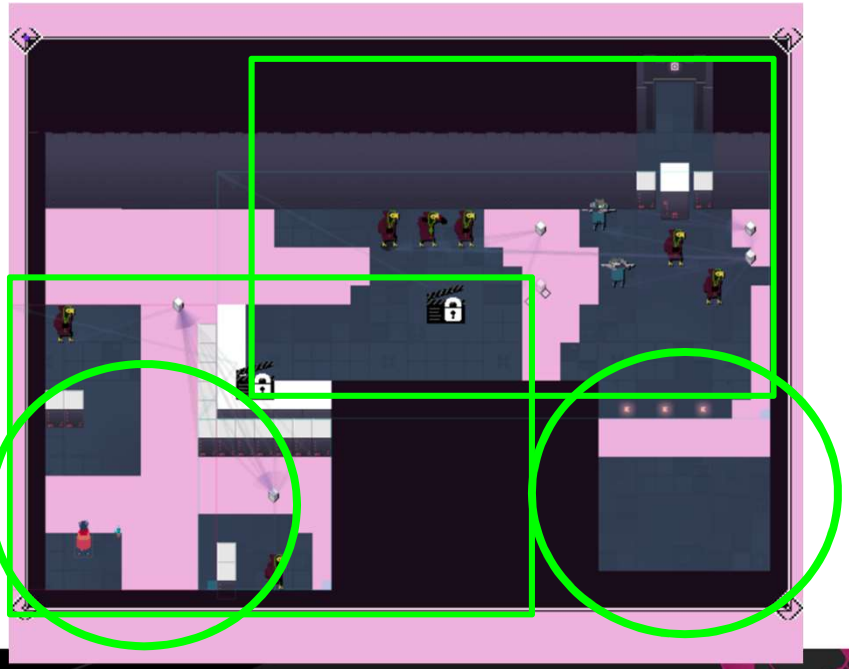
PLAY
TEST
LEVEL
SAVE
Setting
LOG
HELP
DRAFTR
GOD
noCLIP
TELE
Editor CAM
ZOOM
SVR POS
Room Setting
GRID 16
SNAP
SKETCH
OBJ'S
LAYER

[Link to GIF]

# Team Goals

- Spaces for North Enemies
- Experiment with combinations of enemies
- Tightly focused room (only a few screens)

# Initial Construction



# Prospect and Refuge space

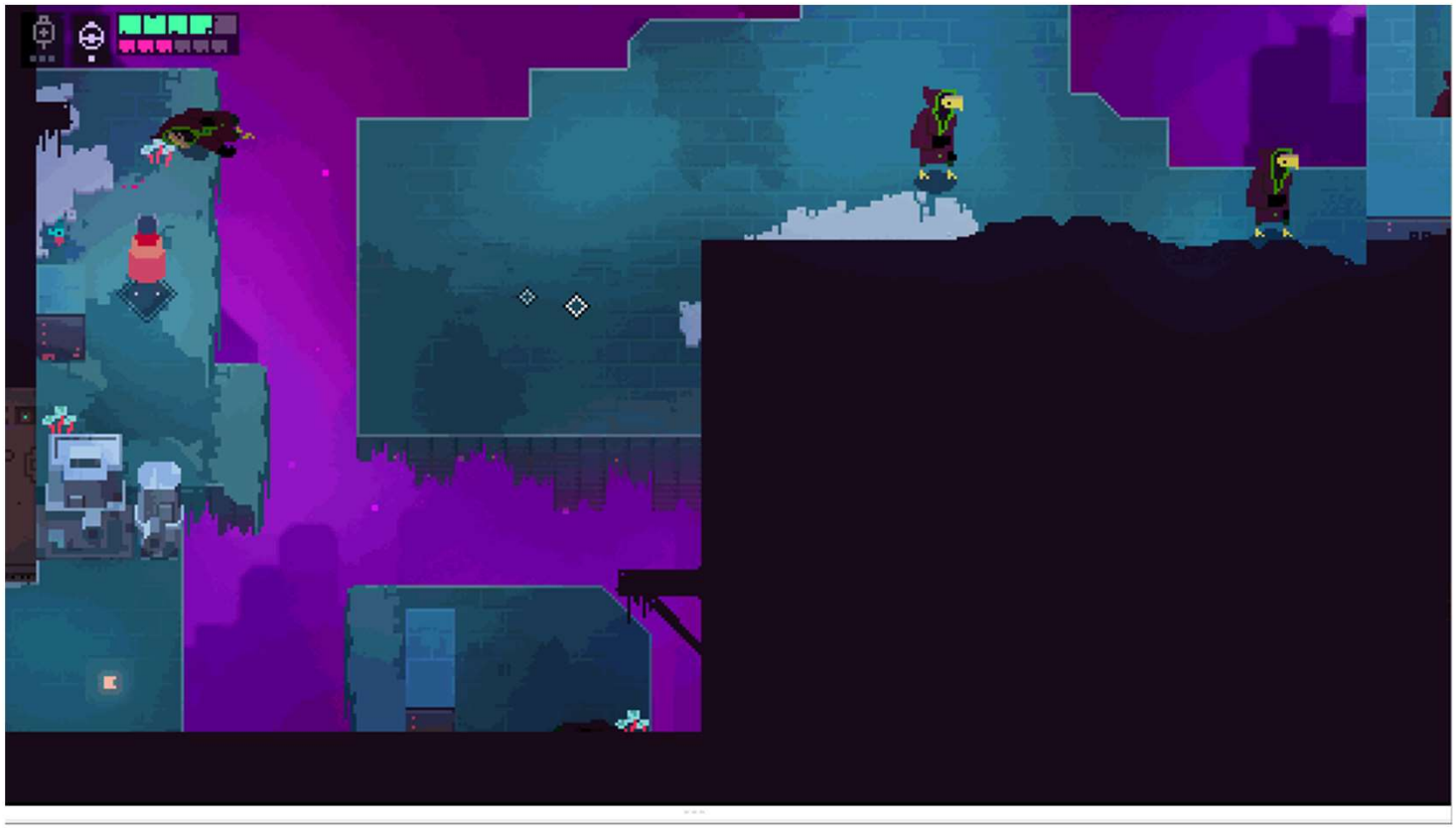
# Prospect and Refuge space

# Prospect and Refuge space

# Using Space for Pacing

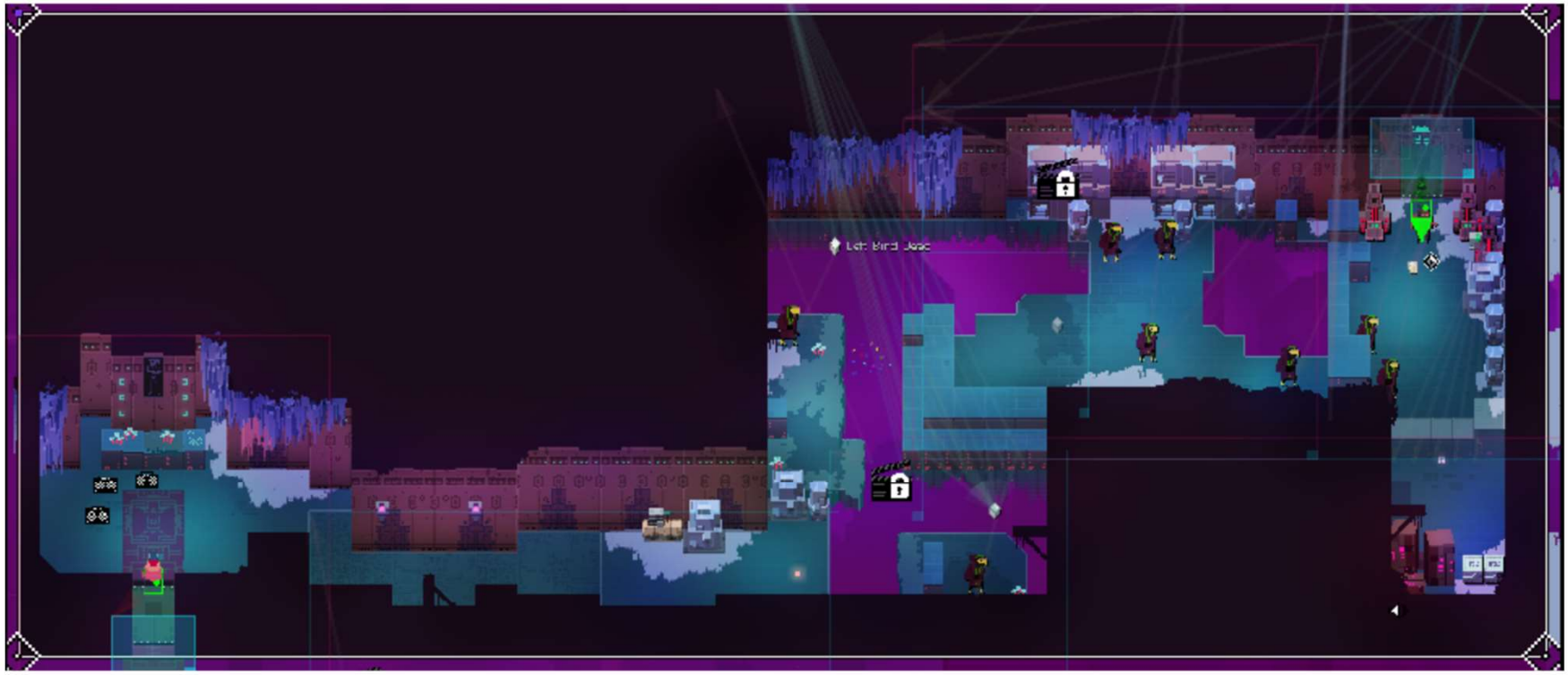
# Isolating Combat

# Denying Refuge Space



# Using Space for Pacing

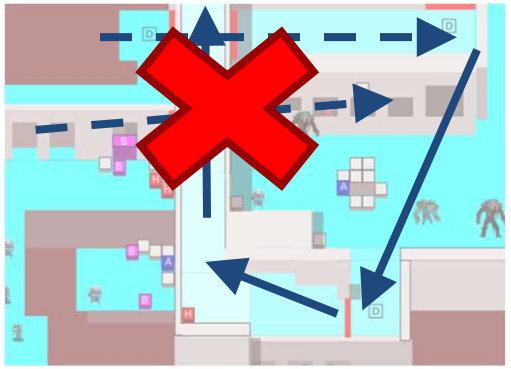
# Using Space for Pacing



# Conclusion

# Conclusion

- Fears: not an issue



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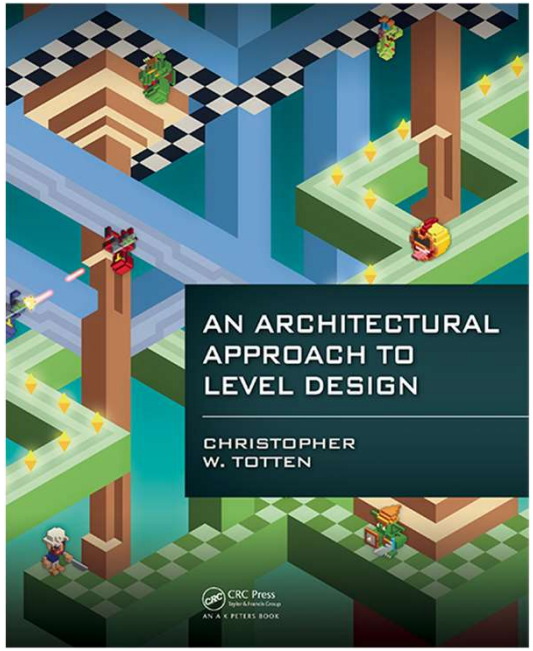
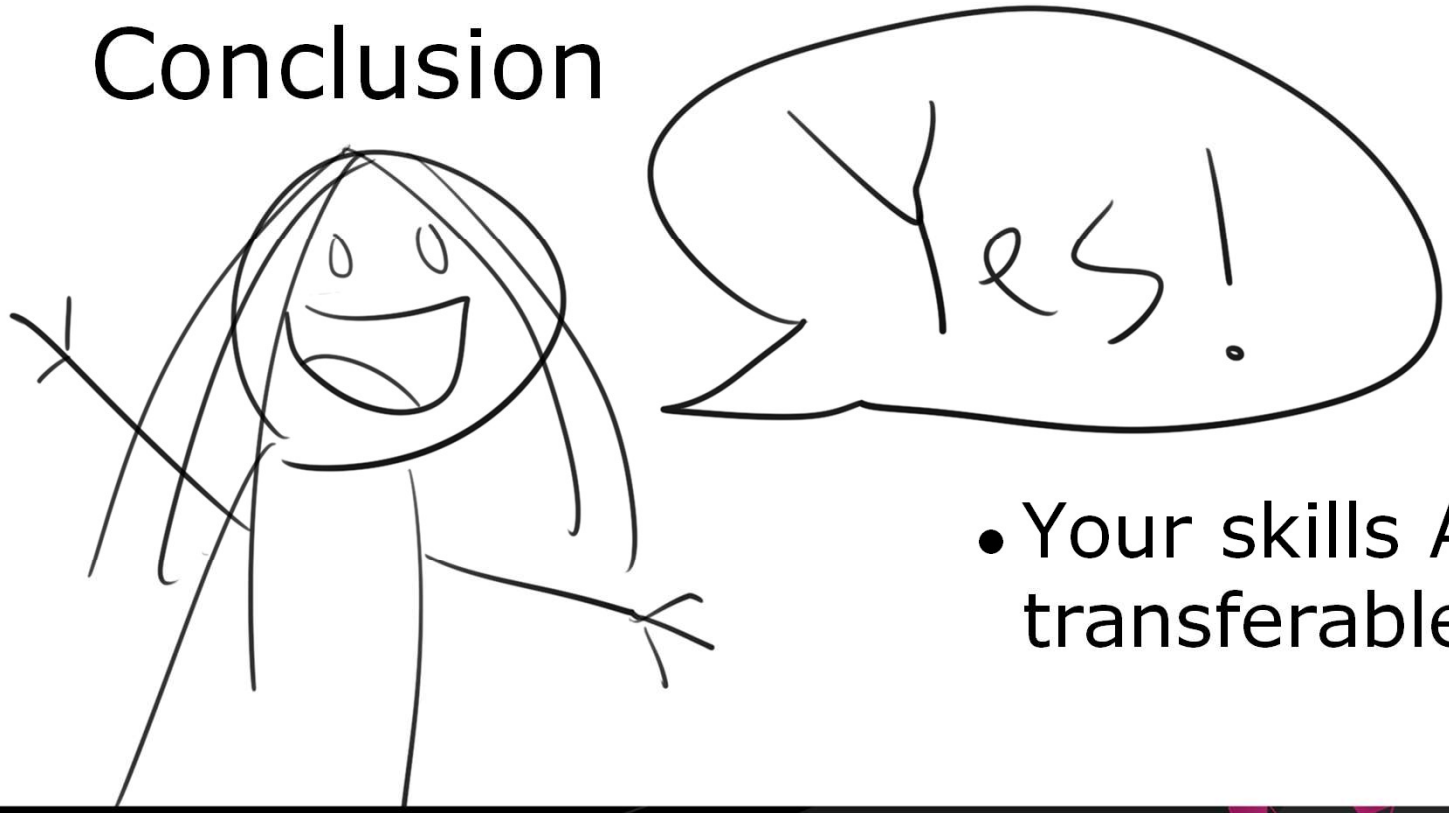
# Other Carry-overs



# Conclusion




- Your skills ARE transferable!

# Thank you

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