

Iron Sands

DESIGN DOCUMENT

Introduction

Game Summary Pitch

Iron Sands is a colony sim where a power hungry mega corporation is developing projects for the 'betterment of humanity', but the player must make all the difficult decisions in the name of progression. You play as an Executive, burdened with all the responsibility of progress at any cost.

Inspiration

Frostpunk

Frostpunk is the inspiration for the tough decisions and **scale of the game world** for Iron Sands, focused around one big project: the colony. Frostpunk is a colony sim where the player may have to make **hard choices** to keep their colony from freezing, even if it means making questionable decisions such as approving child labour laws or enacting longer working hours. The player may not always be well-liked, but a few upset colonists is preferable to the entire colony freezing to death.

Papers, Please

Papers, Please is the **visual inspiration** as well as the **gameplay inspiration** for Iron Sands, with limited detail and colour palette, but in a style that is both highly distinct and that lends itself well to a dystopian atmosphere, where the player personally chooses the outcome of events.

Player Experience

The game will consist of a single replayable level, featuring **player driven** and **randomized events**, placing the player in the shoes of an Executive of a greedy mega corporation, forced to make the difficult decisions for power and profit.

Platform

The game is developed to be released on browser

Development Software

- Godot v4.7.1
- Photoshop for graphics and UI

Genre

Singleplayer, colony sim, job sim

Target Audience

Mechanically suited for all skill levels at any pace, Iron Sands is targeted at a **casual player base**, with more focus on narrative immersion than fast-paced skill-based gameplay, while still offering enough depth for experienced gamers demanding more challenge.

Concept

Gameplay overview

The player manages construction, research & development projects, with near unlimited resources, manpower and money, but only through **bribery**, **budget cuts**, and **human sacrifices**. The player issues orders and acts on events, without any micromanagement. Projects will only

complete if the player pays the necessary price by personally making the choice: ethical and costly, or questionable and lucrative?

Theme Interpretation (The Cost of Progress)

'Cost' interpretation - The player must make questionable and unethical decisions for the betterment(?) of humanity as a whole, to the detriment of those less fortunate.

A colony sim generally requires resource management and decisions on what to build first. But what if 'bad' choices made resources and money near unlimited? ***Cost is not only material.***

Primary Mechanics

Mechanic	Purpose
<u>Decrees</u> A corporate governance decree is an effect the player can enable or disable at any time. Offers a bonus to something, while costing a penalty to something else.	To give the player more ways to play the game, Decrees give game-wide effects not limited to a one-time instance, allowing the player to experiment on different playthroughs, or in the same playthrough.
<u>Orders</u> As an Executive, the player can issue orders to Agents to carry out, triggering other mechanics. Does nothing on its own.	Acts as the main player interaction to progress the game. While results are random, the player chooses what orders to issue and when, giving a sense of control.
<u>Acts</u>	Provides a way for the player to maintain choice and control

Once an order has been completed, the player must act on the outcome. Perhaps an agent found something dangerous when surveying for new business opportunities - should you take precautions or exploit it?	despite Order outcomes being random. The player still chooses the ultimate result, which also makes the player responsible for the cost of progress.
<u>Events</u> Occurring outside of player control, an event can be random or the result of <i>Orders</i> or <i>Acts</i>. Can be an opportunity for progress or a costly hindrance.	While Orders and Acts are player driven, Events shake up the gameplay by being outside of player control, intended to increase replayability. Events often provide the player with a choice to not become frustrating.

Supporting Mechanics

Mechanic	Purpose
<u>Influence</u> Certain choices cost influence, while others grant it. Symbolizes the corporation's power status.	Encourages the player to consider their actions carefully, saving influence for later or using it now.
<u>Security</u> Certain actions increase the corporation's military power, granting better protection against certain events.	Offers the player a way to mitigate 'bad' events, giving a feeling of control and reducing the sting of 'unfair randomness'.
<u>Agents</u> While an Agent is available, it can be Ordered to perform	A way to balance the pacing, each agent lets the player do

tasks. Might be possible to acquire additional agents, increasing the number of Orders that can be active at the same time.	one more action, resulting in more progress over time.
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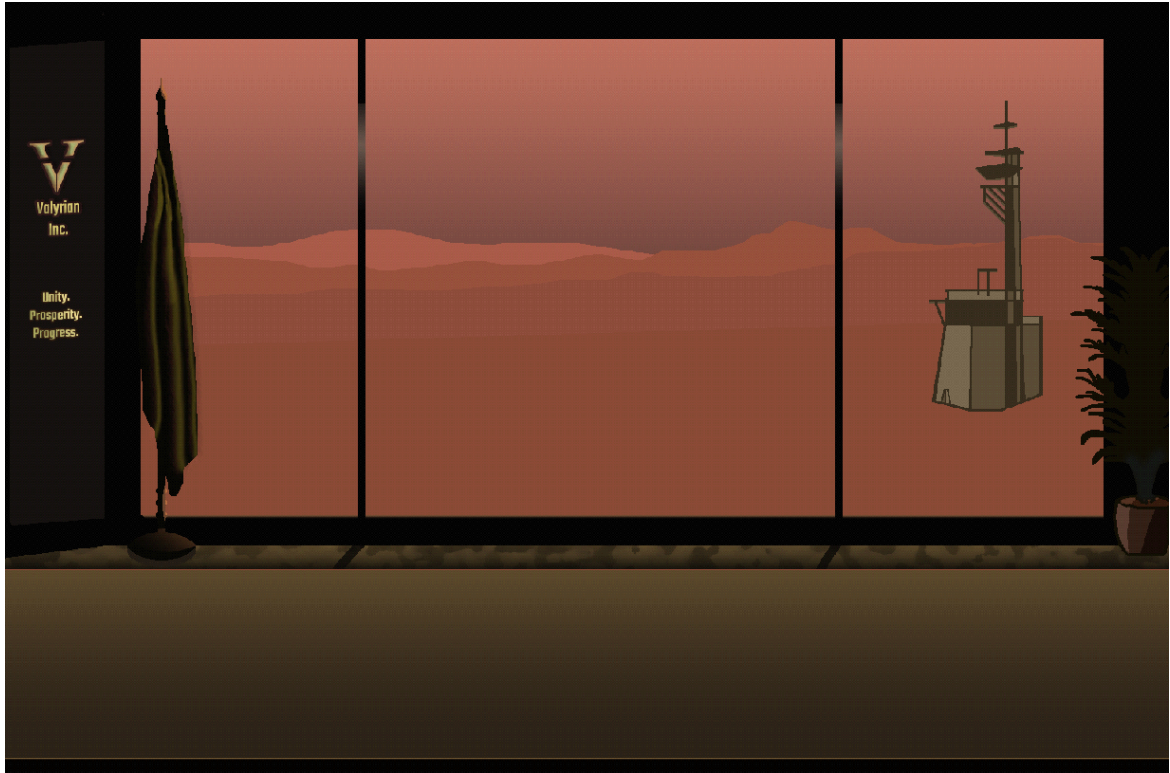
Art

Theme

The limited colour palette should lean heavily toward an orangey red for the backgrounds, the colour of rusty desert sand rich in iron. Man-made objects on the other hand will have a sickly 80's sci-fi dark green tint in contrast, as projects and structures grow like weeds, infecting the natural order.

Design

Featuring desaturated, limited palette 2D art with limited detail, heavily focused on distinctiveness, readability and physical presence. Buttons and devices should be in-world as much as possible. The natural backgrounds and dynamic foreground will be distinctively contrasting to make the game easily readable.



*WIP Art, not final**

Audio

Music

70-80's thriller / horror sci-fi inspired music intended to give the game a feeling of unease, as the player makes great strides for progress, but in a dystopian way at great cost.

Sound Effects

Focused on player feedback, simple retro sounds will be used to make player actions feel responsive and physical.

Game Experience

UI

Limited as much as possible. Any interactive elements will be kept within the game world, such as buttons, pens, stamps and papers. Acceptable exceptions include a main menu or pause menu, and any dialogue or other speech and text.

Controls

Mouse & Keyboard

Mouse Only (MVP)

Gamepad

D-pad and Face Buttons (Not in MVP)

Development Timeline

MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT

#	Assignment	Type	Status	Finish By	Notes
1	Design Document	Planning	Done	Jul 16, 2026	
2	Create placeholder art for background and interaction	Art	Done	Jul 17, 2026	
3	Basic interaction / Learn Godot	Unreal Dev handicap	Help	Jul 18, 2026	
4	Gameplay Loop	Programming	Done	Jul 23, 2026	
5	Create final art	Art	Done	Jul 25, 2026	
12	Sound effects	Audio	Done	Jul 26, 2026	
13	Music	Audio	Done	Jul 27, 2026	

16	Add more Orders, Acts and Events	Content	Done	Jul 28, 2026	
17	Extra polish	Polish		Jul 30, 2026	
18	SUBMIT		Done	Jul 31, 2026	

EXTRA (if time permits)

More Art Variety			
Extra Orders / Acts / Events			
Settings Menu			