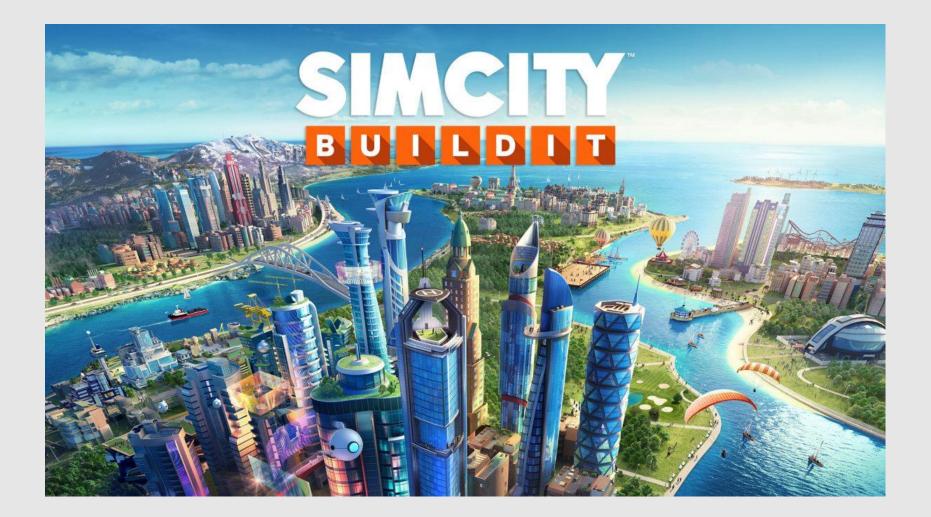# SimCity BuildIt
Reviewed on Android
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Format and Prioritization

Good Practice

- Aspects of the game that should be kept (Good Job!)

Small Intrusion

- Infrequent or inconsequential issues that may only pose minor annoyances to some players

Medium Intrusion

- Issues of the game that may be common or difficult for players to engage with, but surmountable nonetheless

Priority Intrusion

- Aspects of the game that significantly hinder play-experience and/or occur frequently

Questions?

- Parts of the game that may be intentional design choices, oddities, or otherwise are of note

Startup

The game facilitates quick, short sessions

Other than a loading screen, there is no main menu to start the game or interact with the game outside of the main play-area; the city is always "on."

Players will jump straight into the game, helping them get to their game experience without delay. This is particularly helpful for players who play the game in shorts bursts. For example, players who play the game on the bus or who want to make the most of their material production clocks.

(Alternatively) Some players may be overwhelmed with the immediate startup, making it difficult for them to get their bearings. Frequently, players will be returning to the game after production materials are finished being made, so lots of thought bubbles for new construction options, floating production materials that need to be claimed, and other game updates (like deals or challenges) will show up at once.

UI

Players should be able to select specific buildings with a certain level of precision: Thought bubble extending from each building should help players distinguish and select their desired building from its surroundings. Bubbles draw attention to appropriate and relevant information.

Players should be able to quickly distinguish upgradeable buildings: Green checkmarks in a buildings thought bubble are a real-time indicator of whether the player has the resources to upgrade a particular building. This feature allows players, for example, to quickly survey their city and see what they can or cannot upgrade with their current resources.

UI

Players should be able to generally distinguish which building they are in a menu for: Upon selecting a building, the honeycomb-esque UI for the building surrounds the building in question.

Other points to consider:

- The drag and drop mechanism that players use to start creating materials has a generous hit box over the given building, even when zoomed out (particularly accommodating for players of different finger sizes), so most players will likely be able to manage their resource creation easily from their preferred level of zoom on their city.

- Additionally, the building is highlighted and non-centered structures fading into a slight shadow, however this highlight is only easily visible during the night cycle of the game.

UI

Players should be able to quickly look through buildings of the same type: The top arrows of the menu allow the player to quickly zoom to each building of this given type (e.g. all "High-tech Factories"). Players should be able to quickly manage their resource gathering without having to remember where each building is located and have to select each building.

UI

Players should be able to find the newest and most needed buildings for their city: Upon unlocking a new feature, building type, or service, the corresponding menu that holds that new feature will get a red highlight. This also happens if a service is not being fulfilled (e.g. if houses don't have electricity, the menu that holds the electricity-producing buildings gets highlighted), effectively pointing players towards a solution.

This is particularly important in the early parts of the game to ease players to the increasingly complex systems and considerations (e.g. power, water, sewage, fire department coverage, etc.) as they progress.

UI

- **Players can quickly gauge what they can build:** The number of buildings able to be constructed are indicated on the side of their corresponding menu, telling players how much they can or cannot build at any given time.

UI

- Players may become confused about their current resources and capabilities: There are four different "currencies" that a player can use: Simoleons, SimCash, Platinum Keys, and Golden Keys. Though the in-game descriptions of each currency are helpful, they are not simple and players may get confused and frustrated by the different levels of gatekeeping that come from these currencies (i.e. can only construct certain buildings with SimCash while some constructions can only be built with a platinum key vs a gold key).

- Currently, all four currencies are introduced to the player in the introductory tutorial yet the 'key' currencies are typically reserved for advanced purchases. Introducing the gold and platinum keys, the currencies that unlock advanced items, until later levels may help players better understand both how to collect and utilize those currencies.

- Possible Solution: Simplify currencies to just three (Simoleons, SimCash, and Keys) or even two (Sim $ and Keys). This can keep in-game currencies stratified for specific tasks whilst limiting cognitive overload on the players or the likelihood players will unintentionally buy something they thought used a different currency.

Building Cities

Players may not know what resources they should start gathering: Building upgrades do not seem to have a discernible pattern (e.g. 1st upgrade *always* takes 3 metal, 2nd upgrade takes 3 metal + 3 wood, etc.) in terms of the kinds and amounts of materials needed. Consequently, players may struggle to plan out their material gathering because they cannot predict what amounts or kinds of materials any given upgrade may require.

- Alternatively, this may be a way to encourage players to diversify their resource gathering. Is this part of the gameplay design?

- Further playtests should examine to what extent players struggle with this mechanic and whether diverse resource gathering A) occurs in the first place and B) is worth the player confusion/frustration that fosters such gathering behavior

  - Indeed, players may struggle with this issue little to no extent as well, which would remove the need for significant changes anyway

Building Cities

Other points to consider:

- Because building upgrades do not have a discernible pattern, players may not understand the utility or value of certain resources compared to others. It is still unclear to this reviewer whether "plastics" (which take 9 minutes to build) have more, less, or any different kind of use than "metal" (1 minute to build) to justify the difference in time creating them.
    - Is this part of the gameplay design?
- The 'New Building Plan' feature reshuffles the required building materials (in exchange for ~30 minutes wait time or currency), meaning players will be less likely to get hung up on specific resource gathering, removing a potential hurdle to progression.

Building Cities

Players may play the game in short bursts, not long sessions: Because the materials mechanic is determined by a real-time clock, all materials are only produced after a given production time (unless using SimCash to immediately purchase). This means some materials are only available after a long period of time, for example the "measuring tape" takes 20 minutes to produce and the time-to-production only increases with higher level materials. Especially if level progression is highly influenced by the progression of a certain, time-expensive resource, players are more likely to quit the game for the allotted time period and return later.

Goals of the Developer?

- This current setup rewards players to consistently come back to the game—for example, a player may set all of their factories to produce materials at once then return to the game later in the day to continue.

- However players can be caught simply waiting for, quite literally, the minutes to go by in order to continue playing if gathering a particular material (or stockpile of resources) is crucial to their play.

Building Cities

Most players should be able to freely and confidently build and move buildings: Constructing buildings and roads has a green check mark or red "X" to confirm or reject building placements.

Typically the game considers touching outside of the given menu or message blurb to be a 'back' or 'escape' feature; for example, touching outside of the objectives menu will bring the player back to the main play screen over their city. However, in the build screen, the player only exits upon touching the check mark or "X"—in other words, players are free to use their fingers to zoom and rotate their view without having to worry about accidentally exiting the build screen or misplacing their building.

Without this feature players may accidentally exit the build screen when attempting to rotate their view or moving a building to a potential new location.

Building Cities

Other points to consider:

- Even if a player does misplace a building, or simply would like to change their city layout, constructed buildings or landmarks can be moved without penalty. Players should be free to tailor their cities with minimal barriers to entry (such as waiting for deconstruction times or cost penalties that would otherwise discourage editing).