Technical walkthrough

Lighting:

As the structure was abandoned the entirety of the space uses natural directional lighting meant to simulate the late afternoon. Due to the city being abandoned for a very long time there is no artificial lighting leading me to design the palace with lots of windows to allow light in while doubling a way for the player view the surroundings. My choice of having the main room that leads to the section of the palace that was burned down being a ball room is to emphasize the scale of what once was that large portion of the structure. The only form of artificial light is the light green mana crystals that act as a light source within the basement of the palace which I felt was reasonable as it is owned by the very wealthy leader and furthermore is the final goal of the main mission that leads to the vault. This light source could be replaced with flitting light streams that come through the rubble but the visibility will likely suffer as a result.

Foliage:

I tried to emphasize the different sections of the map itself putting distinct foliage types within each. I put a dense forest across the mountains and coastline to emphasize the description in the summary that says this area has exquisite trees. The area in and around the church and nearby graveyard I replaced the normally lush foliage with dead looking winter and fall trees to imply the supernaturally dangerous nature of the area. I made sure to fill the fields across the river with wheat like plants to reference the history of the hillside in how it produced crops for this prosperous city before they were left unattended when the citizens were slaughtered leading to the crops covering much of the country side and even growing onto the road. Even lesser locations like the river bed and the rubble have been given appropriate aquatic and weed plant types repectively.

Traversal:

I wanted to leave a few different ways to get to the upper levels of the map beyond just the main path described in the summary thus I added a couple of different hidden pathways to reach the upper area. A hidden route through the graveyard and over the cliff drops the player off in the ruined section of the palace. The downed tower that collapsed under trebuchet fire during the raid allows the player to climb up to the upper walls. While along the coast there is a jumping puzzle short cut that takes the player up to the front entrance of the palace circumventing the port and kelpies entirely.

Landscape:

I tried to replicate realistic water runoff for the majority of the environment, with rivers and lakes having distinct paths dug out from the passage of time.

Technical Issues:

The version 4.25 seems to have a lot of errors with regards to the terrain and decal texturing leading to me spending a few hours trying repeatedly to get the numerous terrain textures I collected to function at all to no avail. It seems that I will need to work to familiarize myself with this version of unreal before jumping head first into my design work next time. I have applied landscape textures on a number of occasions with .23 and .24 versions with no issue however since there is no backwards compatibility with regards to unreal versions I ended up working with what I had rather than wasting my limited time frame trying to recreate the entire landscape again in an earlier version. The decals also seem not to allow any form of texture application despite me even looking up some videos on the subject to verify my work. As a result, all of the decals project the same color texture despite me applying a different color for each of the main and secondary missions. Another startling issue I ran into about half way into the design process was a bizarre issue where the player character when using play from here or the play button would randomly find themselves in the sky skating down an invisible series of surfaces before running into the landscape below. I attempted to check a number of settings including the collision of the objects and player pathing to try and understand the nature of the issue. However even after google searching and youtube searching the issue I found no results, making me believe that this is a new issue connected to version 4.25.