

# The Tiny Game from a Tiny Studio That Had a Massive Impact on LEGO® Games

LEGO® Tower was a tiny game made by a tiny studio that spearheaded a very big idea at LEGO Games.

The game, developed by two-person studio NimbleBit in 2019, was LEGO Games first overt attempt to appeal to the massive older audience found within the world of video games. It was also the first mobile game released by LEGO Games after that arm of the LEGO Group reworked its strategy for games.

The idea of the game was born of NimbleBit's first breakout success: Tiny Tower.



NimbleBit was founded by brothers David and Ian Marsh in 2009 and found moderate success with Pocket Frogs. But it was 2011's Tiny Tower that thrust the diminutive studio into the spotlight.

After Pocket Frogs, the duo decided to make their next game another free-to-play title, and they were enthralled with the pixel art look of a game called Fez, especially the look of the 8-bit hero, Ian Marsh said. They wanted to use that art style in their new title and tried applying it to a restaurant management game.

"When we were mocking up the artwork and displaying it on the iPhone, we tried first to do it in a landscape orientation, because that was a good fit for a single floor of a building," Ian Marsh said. "But we were also trying to mock it up in a portrait view. And we started noticing that we could kind of stack multiple floors on this restaurant, and it would be in a very natural shape for holding the iPhone up in a portrait view. And so then we started thinking, 'Well, why couldn't we go even higher?' And, 'It doesn't make sense to have a 20-story restaurant. So, what if we thought of each floor as a completely different business or apartment?' And from there, it kind of grew naturally into the Tiny Tower we know today."

The game took about six months to develop and was released in June 2011.

In the diminutive business simulator, players manage a tower that houses apartments for a growing number of tiny bitizen people. The goal of Tiny Tower is to attract more bitizens who can move into the apartments, fill jobs at businesses, and go about their lives in the various shops. Each floor is an apartment or one of an eclectic mix of businesses from coffee shops to laundromats, to fortune tellers.

While the game had a strong start, Ian Marsh said it wasn't really something to take notice of until it started receiving a lot of mass media attention. Wired, The New York Times, Time, and Paste, all started writing about the little game made by two brothers. Then Apple named Tiny Tower the U.S. iPhone Game of the Year.

Tiny Tower continued to grow and soon companies were approaching NimbleBit about creating themed spinoffs.

The first was Disney, which was interested in seeing if the Tiny Tower concept could be applied to the Death Star. The 2013 release of *Star Wars*™: Tiny Death Star was followed by the release of Tiny Tower Vegas in 2014.

While the small studio continued to support Tiny Tower, the developers shifted their focus to other games like Disco Zoo, Letterpad, and Words Royale.

But in 2016, a random piece of fan art would set the stage for NimbleBit to return to the Tiny Tower idea with some interesting twists.

"A Flickr user named WarmHandSanitizer had posted some renders he had made of Tiny Tower floors imagined in LEGO bricks," Ian Marsh said. "They were just awesome to see, and everyone who saw them went crazy for them. We thought it was really cool."

In the spring of 2017, the LEGO Group contacted the studio and asked if they'd be interested in creating a game for the international toy company.

One of the pitches NimbleBit sent back to the LEGO Group was the idea of a LEGO brick take on Tiny Tower. Those amazing Tiny Tower brick fan renders ended up winning over the company.

LEGO Tower was clearly never meant to be a simple reskinning of Tiny Tower. There were several major changes and functions designed around the LEGO theme and core approach to play added to this new product.

The team didn't just host playtesting for the game. They also worked with the LEGO Group to host contests that had fans create both digital and physical LEGO towers for the upcoming game.

Part of that contest also turned into a successful run for a Guinness World Record for the largest LEGO brick diorama.

That event, which was hosted at the LEGO House in Billund, Denmark on June 23, 2019, saw the creation of 540 LEGO brick floors, which combined to form a massive building that was more than 226 square feet big and used about 900 pounds of LEGO elements.

LEGO Tower was released on iPhone and Android devices the next month and has been a rousing success with about 9 million people downloading the game in the first year. Today, LEGO Tower is approaching 20 million downloads.

Explore more...

In order of appearance:

[NimbleBit](#) - Official website

[Pocket Frog](#) - Fandom

[Tiny Tower](#) - Wikipedia

[Tiny Death Star](#) - Wikipedia

[Largest LEGO brick diorama](#) - Guinness World Records

[LEGO Tower](#) - Official website

# Transcript

Bits N' Bricks Season 4 Episode 38: Tiny LEGO® Brick Towers, Big LEGO Brick Ideas

November 3, 2021 • 37:38



## Prologue – 00:00

**Announcer**

Please note that this episode of Bits N' Bricks contains instances of misuse of the LEGO trademark, which must always be used as an adjective and never a noun. As a reminder, it is never appropriate to refer to the company that designs and produces LEGO brand products as LEGO. Rather, the correct name for the company overall is the LEGO Group.

**Announcer**

I hope that was severe enough. Was it severe enough?

**Studio Engineer**

Yeah, that was great, Ben. We got.

**Announcer**

Alright. On with the show.

(Child's voice announcing Bits N' Bricks)

## Bits N' Bricks: Introduction – 00:39

**Ethan Vincent**

Welcome to Bits N' Bricks, a podcast about all things LEGO games. I'm Ethan Vincent.

**Brian Crecente**

And I'm Brian Crecente. Together, we look back at the rich 25-year history of LEGO Games, chat with early developers and seasoned studios, who have all tackled the creation of video games for one of the most popular and respected toy companies in the world - the LEGO Group.

(Bits N' Bricks Season 4 theme music)

**Ethan Vincent**

Hey, Brian.

**Brian Crecente**

Hey, Ethan. How's it going?

**Ethan Vincent**

Good. Welcome back. Here we are: Season 4. Can you believe it?

**Brian Crecente**

Yeah, you know, this is a little bittersweet. This is going to be our last season, our last nine episodes of a more than year-long run of LEGO Games podcast, which I loved making with you.

**Ethan Vincent**

Yeah, it's amazing to think back about how you and I started on this journey at telling the story of LEGO Games and how our ideas grew from, you know, these kind of one-off deliverables to an actual podcast series, you know? Now we're, what?, 38 episodes deep into highlighting this library of video games that has amassed over the past 25 years. And with Season 4, it still feels like we're only starting to scratch the surface.

**Brian Crecente**

Yeah, there's so much left. And you know, this week, we're going to be talking about a tiny studio making a tiny game that spearheaded a very big idea at LEGO Games.

**Ethan Vincent**

That's right! LEGO Tower, which hit in the summer of 2019 was LEGO Games' first attempt to appeal to the massive older audience found within the world of video games. It's also a first mobile game released by the LEGO Group after that arm of the LEGO Group reworked its strategy for games. Under this new approach, the LEGO Group's mobile games were designed to represent the brand as a whole, the very notion of the LEGO toys and everything it stands for, rather than one particular theme set.

**Brian Crecente**

LEGO Tower, like Builder's Journey that would follow about six months later, was an attempt to create an evergreen game that represented the play patterns of creativity and building that's at the heart of the LEGO Group and everything it makes. And it all started with two brothers who loved to play video games.

## Chapter 1: NimbleBit and Tiny Tower – 02:53

### Ethan Vincent

Ian and David Marsh grew up being very enthusiastic about video games, much to the parents' chagrin. While still in high school, David started developing his own modification of popular first-person shooter Counter Strike. One of his creations, a map, found its way into a commercial release before the two graduated high school. Eventually, both of them found themselves working at a small game studio focused on cranking out traditional cell phone games. This is before smartphones like the iPhone dominated the market.

### Brian Crecente

Ian tells us that, when the iPhone hit, he started messing around with it and ended up creating a little puzzle game that pulled in millions of downloads. Soon he tried his hand at tweaking it and releasing it as a paid app.

### Ian Marsh

It started making more money than my day job, so I asked my then-fiance, whether I should quit my job and go into iPhone development full time, and she said now's the best time to make a decision like that since I was still young, and we're just getting married and didn't have kids. So I started making iPhone games on my own. My brother David actually started NimbleBit aside from that, and put out a kart racing game on Steam called Zero Gear –

(“Zero Gear NimbleBit Trailer”)

### Ian Marsh

– which ended up being kind of a flop. But I ended up joining him to focus on mobile game development soon after that, and that's when NimbleBit that really got started doing what we're known for today, which is mobile game development.

### Ethan Vincent

After Zero Gear, the duo developed a game called Pocket Frogs (frog croaking), which had players breeding and selling virtual frogs. It was the brothers' first game designed from the beginning to be a free-to-play title, which was a new idea at the time in the mobile market. They decided to make their next game, another free-to-play title, and were enthralled with the pixel art look of a game called Fez, especially the look of the 8-bit hero, Ian said. They wanted to use the art style in their new title and decided to try applying it to a restaurant management game.

### Ian Marsh

When we were mocking up the artwork and displaying it on the iPhone, we tried first to do it in a landscape orientation because that was a good fit for, you know, a single floor of a

building. But we were also trying to mock it up in a portrait view, and we started noticing that we could kind of stack multiple floors on this restaurant, and it would be in a very natural shape for holding the iPhone up in a portrait view. And so then we started thinking, "Well, why couldn't we go even higher? Does it make sense to have a 20-story restaurant? So what if we thought of each floor as a completely different business or apartment?" and from there, it kind of grew naturally into the Tiny Tower we know today.

(Music plays)

### **Brian Crecente**

The two worked on the game over the next six months or so and then released Tiny Tower in June 2011 to very little fanfare. In the diminutive business simulator, players manage a tower that houses apartments for a growing number of tiny citizens known as bitizens. The goal of the game is to attract more bitizens who can move into the apartments, fill jobs at businesses, and go about their lives in the various shops. Each floor is an apartment or one of the eclectic mix of businesses, from coffee shops to laundromats to fortune tellers.

### **Ethan Vincent**

While the game had a strong start, Ian said it wasn't really something to take notice of – that was until it suddenly started receiving a lot of mass media attention. Wired, The New York Times, Time, Paste all started writing about the little game made by two brothers. Then at the end of the year, the game was named the iPhone Game of the Year by Apple. Just as it seemed that Tiny Tower couldn't get any more attention, David and Ian had a run-in with the massive game developer and publisher Zynga.

### **Ian Marsh**

That's where most people really have heard of NimbleBit, for better or worse, but someone I think sent us a link to this app made by Zynga which was being soft-launched in, I think the Canadian App Store, and it was close to a one-to-one copy of Tiny Tower and all its mechanics just with a more cartoon style. And we were young and snarky so we posted a public letter.

### **Announcer**

"Dear Zynga, all 2,789 of you, we noticed you were about to launch a new iPhone game called Dream Heights. Congratulations! We wanted to thank all you guys for being such big fans of our iPhone Game of the Year, Tiny Tower. Good luck with your game. We're looking forward to inspiring you with our future games. Sincerely, all three of us, NimbleBit."

### **Brian Crecente**

The callout sparked a bit of a public feud between the Marsh brothers and Mark Pincus, CEO of Zynga at the time. It also led to a massive amount of attention for the studio and the game. The Zynga game quietly disappeared, but Tiny Tower continued to grow and

soon companies were approaching NimbleBit about creating themed spin-offs for the game. The first was Disney, which was interested in seeing if the Tiny Tower concept could be applied to the Death Star.

**Ian Marsh**

The issue was that we didn't have the resources to develop it ourselves. We didn't want to hire a bunch of people, and we were still just three guys at that point. We had hired one of our friends from high school: Tim. So we decided to just license the Tiny Tower IP to Disney, and they developed the whole thing in-house. The unfortunate part of that was that after Disney mobile restructured their operations about six months later, it became a casualty, and they didn't want to support it anymore, so it was taken off the store.

(Tune break)

**Ethan Vincent**

The 2013 release of *Star Wars™: Tiny Death Star* was followed by the release of *Tiny Tower Vegas* in 2014. While the small studio continued to support *Tiny Tower*, with a major 10-year anniversary update hitting over the summer of 2021 and the last update hitting just two months ago, they also started to shift their focus to other games like *Disco Zoo*, *Letterpad*, and *Words Royale*, but in 2016 a random piece of fan art would set the stage for NimbleBit to return to the *Tiny Tower* idea with some interesting twists.

**Ian Marsh**

Someone sent us a link to a Flickr user named WarmHandSanitizer who had posted renders he had made of *Tiny Tower* floors imagined in LEGO bricks. And they were just awesome to see, and everyone who saw them went crazy for them. And we thought it was really cool, but, you know we didn't think there was anything to do with it except for tell them how cool it was.

## Chapter 2: LEGO Tower – 09:58

**Brian Crecente**

As Ian, David and the other one or two, who made up NimbleBit at the time, continued to create small, memorable, playful experiences on the iPhone, they were garnering the attention of a growing fan base at the LEGO Group. In the spring of 2017, the international toy company contacted the studio and asked if they'd be interested in creating a game for the LEGO Group. Specifically, they told NimbleBit they were exploring a new approach to mobile games, Ian said.

**Ian Marsh**

They made it obvious that they wanted to make games that stood on their own and weren't simply advertisements for existing LEGO products. Originally, they kept the slate pretty blank. I know we pitched them probably three or four ideas, mostly LEGO versions of some of our preexisting games.

**Ethan Vincent**

Among the pitches were LEGO brick versions of Pocket Planes and Pocket Trains, but it was the pitch for a new take on Tiny Tower that really stood out. And that's in large part thanks to that Flickr user with the unforgettable, pre-COVID handle, WarmHandSanitizer, and their fan creations.

**Ian Marsh**

We included these Tiny Tower floors that had been reimagined in LEGO brick form, and I think they really sealed the deal as to what kind of game we were going to go forward with because it looked like such a natural fit just from the beginning.

(Tune break)

**Ethan Vincent**

Abhinav Sarangi joined the LEGO Group in 2018, after running a small indie studio in India for six years, and the first thing he was asked to do was work on this new take on Tiny Tower – LEGO Tower.

**Abhinav Sarangi**

When we started talking to them we were trying to find what is the best way to take some of the learnings from their work with Tiny Tower, but also to figure out how it works as a LEGO game. So that was one of the things coming from the prototyping phase, and to the phase when I started, was figuring out how we take the heart of the experience that they had developed in Tiny Tower, and fuse it with the core of LEGO play, and then come up with something which is its own thing, and can be a true product, which works for both the audience that they had as Tiny Tower fans, but also for all the LEGO brick fans – that we have a product which works for the LEGO brick fan.

**Ethan Vincent**

LEGO Tower was to be the first game released under this new approach by LEGO Games to not just publishing games, but identifying developers that should work on those titles, Abhinav said.

### **Abhinav Sarangi**

So the start of this change of process was the idea that to make the best games we have to have a product-first approach. Games are a tricky, tricky business to succeed in. And working on a product-first basis where you actually understand what the players want, you actually figure out what play needs the players have, and how you serve those play needs with a product, I think that comes first. And part of that strategy was identifying partners like NimbleBit, who have a great understanding of their audience, and who have a good understanding of what makes a product a good product. So LEGO Tower from that perspective was one of our first experiments of being product-led steeped in understanding of play need, and then delivering that play need to the players.

(Tune break)

### **Brian Crecente**

The game was also in development at a time when the LEGO Group was starting to become more aware of just how big its audience of older fans was, Abhinav said. These were fans who had been following the company for three, four or even five decades, and we're still very much into everything connected to the LEGO brand.

### **Abhinav Sarangi**

We didn't have a lot of digital products to cater to these fans. One of the things which, talking to Tiny Tower, we've – were really surprised and pleasantly surprised to learn was that players who had been playing the game for the whole lifetime of the game, so at that point seven, eight years since the launch of the game, so they had actually players who started playing the game when they were teenagers, and they were still playing the game as they became adults. And that started this notion of how do we develop this product which, one, can like continue the journey of a player through as the play, but also cater to these older segment of LEGO brick fans, who we interact with through our AFOL channels, who we interact with on social media and have a product which works for them? Part of the journey of actually discovering what LEGO Tower could be was working closely with the AFOL media, going to the different events that we went to where we could interact with them, get their feedback, and really trying and making sure that we have a product which works for the younger audiences, but also for the older audiences who want to still interact with the brand.

### **Brian Crecente**

With all of this in mind, the LEGO Group set to work with Nimblebit, helping that studio translate the gameplay and look of Tiny Twer into something that would fit within the LEGO DNA.

### **Abhinav Sarangi**

We still had to go on a journey to understand, figure out, work with our audience, and some of the older fans of LEGO bricks to like really understand what it is about the game which would work the best for them. As an example, where we went a lot deeper than where Tiny Tower was, and we could do because of the nature of IP, was in the customization options that we could give to the players. We could customize the lobby of the game, the lift, the topper you put. You could customize the residents by collecting the different pieces, the minifigure residents that you have in the game. So went really deep into the customization aspect of it. And that came from the insight from just understanding that a lot of LEGO play is about storytelling, and storytelling through actually building things and building things your own way. So that's just an example of, you know, how we tried to really make sure this product works for the LEGO audience as well.

### **Ethan Vincent**

LEGO Tower was clearly never meant to be a simple re skinning of Tiny Tower. There were a number of major changes and functions designed around the LEGO theme and core approach to play added to this new product, Abhinav said.

### **Abhinav Sarangi**

The visual identity which LEGO bricks brings, that was one thing which really helped us in setting this apart from the original game. Another thing that we did was, because of the nature of minifigure and the collectability which comes with minifigures, we could go really deep into the collection aspect where players can collect the different head, torso, leg pieces for their minifigures. They can trade those pieces with their friends. That's something which we found was a really good indicator for engagement where we saw players, essentially engaging with other players in the community by trading those pieces. Another thing was, we had this aspect of gameplay which was around essentially a unique minifigure that you had to unlock, which was again steeped in the minifigure line. And these unique minifigures, they give you bonuses, essentially, so that, you know, you could level up your towers faster. So there were a few things like these which really helped bring something new to this genre of games and to this type of gameplay, which the players and fans were familiar with.

### **Ethan Vincent**

As with other LEGO smartphone games of this era, the developers also had to come up with the right way to monetize the game. The team used the same fair and transparent approach used by the TT Games' team on LEGO *Star Wars*™ Battles.

### **Abhinav Sarangi**

We came up with something which worked well for the audience, gave a lot of value to the audience, and NimbleBit was happy about that. I can talk about one of the examples here. We launched something called a VIP pass in the game. And the VIP pass, it sounds like a

battle pass. So you could buy a VIP pass for a specific number of days, either a week, a month, or a year when the game launched. And when you bought it for a year, it was not just a calendar year, but it was based on the number of days that you played. So if you came into the game, and you played for more than five minutes, we would count it as one day. So if you come into the game and only play for two minutes, you actually didn't get a day cut off from your 365 day purchase. And that, we felt, was something which was really valuable to the players, we had a lot of early players really jump into it. And in an update last year, we actually removed the need for 365 days, so we made the VIP pass a lifetime pass into the game, and that was also I think well received by the community.

## Chapter 3: Playtesting and LEGO Ideas Contest – 18:57

### Brian Crecente

As the team was working toward launch, they also relied heavily on playtesting. Specifically, the LEGO Group wanted to make sure it could engage with older fans of LEGO bricks and get their feedback about the game and what changes would make the most sense.

### Abhinav Sarangi

One of the avenues for that was LEGO Ideas contest that we ran before the launch of the game. The LEGO Tower LEGO Ideas contest was one where we supplied a template for a tower. So we said the tower in LEGO Tower is nine bricks high. It is 32 studs wide. It is 12 studs deep. So within these constraints, can you build a floor of your choice – it could be a business floor, it could be a residential floor – and submit it? That contest was very successful. We had more than 550 entries, which at that point was one of the highest entries in our LEGO Ideas contest. Through that engagement and just being part of that community, we got a lot of great ideas around what kind of floors they want to see. We actually selected six winners and included them in the game itself when we launched. So the LEGO Ideas contest was a great way for us to get a sense from the community itself and make the community part of the development of the project in a very natural way. That also allowed us to really build the template for a tower.

### Brian Crecente

Among the biggest takeaways from those fan events was that the game needed to be a bit easier to get into, and that players may need a bit more instruction on how to play the first time they tried LEGO Tower. They also discovered that despite aiming for an older audience, the game was attracting a lot of young players.

### Abhinav Sarangi

One of the things which we learned early on is that the moment we put the red LEGO logo onto a game, we do attract significant portion of the younger audiences. And having a

significant portion of younger audiences meant that we had to make the game easier to understand as fast as possible. We're talking about attention spans, so which, especially in mobile gaming, they don't last long, so making sure that we have a streamlined, early user onboarding process, which can explain the game quickly, as quickly as possible to the players was really important to us. And that took us a few iterations to really get right. As a simulation game, there are a lot of systems in LEGO Tower, as also in Tiny Tower, so trying and understanding what is the best way to teach all these different systems and not just teach them as - at one go at the start of the game was important. So, you know, having a great onboarding was really important for us early on. Another thing was customization, the ability for players to really make a tower their own way, so, you know, customize it as much as they can, also the minifigures, customizing it as much as they can, that was really important. So we had to really scale up the amount of options that we give to the players in terms of, you know, what toppers they would have access to, what lifts they would have access to, what lobbies they would have access to, and how many pieces, minifigure pieces, they would have access to. So the players can really go deep into the customization aspect and really make a tower their own. I think those were the two big things that we had to focus on and really get right based on the feedback from the game.

(Tune break)

## Chapter 4: Guinness World Records – 22:25

**Ethan Vincent**

So, Brian, as you know, Abhinav was telling us, before LEGO Tower launched, there was this online LEGO Ideas contest, you know, it started on March 26, 2019 and ran for a little over a month. This was a digital event, meaning LEGO fans and contestants were asked to build digitally, right?

**Brian Crecente**

Yeah, that's right. They were encouraged to use LEGO Digital Designer, but they could also submit their digital floor creations using other third-party tools. The idea was that the winner's floor would then be integrated and displayed in the game when LEGO Tower went live. But it wasn't just that that they were competing for. There were also a bunch of other prizes. In addition to being in the game, the winner also got the LEGO Creator Corner Garage set, the LEGO Ideas Ship in a Bottle model.

**Ethan Vincent**

Yeah, that one's awesome.

**Brian Crecente**

Man, I love it.

**Ethan Vincent**

Me, too.

**Brian Crecente**

A \$200 shopping spree certificate, and even a special unlock feature in the soon-to-be released LEGO Tower game, something that we now know was an exclusive tower topper for the game.

**Ethan Vincent**

That's right.

**Brian Crecente**

So ultimately, some of the winners and some of the sort of highlights of this contest included a floor that was a dinosaur museum, there was this old gold mine, we got one that looked like the inside of a pirate ship, there was a monster room, there was a bike shop, and of course, a capsule hotel.

**Ethan Vincent**

Yes, to me, there's like no doubt in my mind. They're winners. They're really unique. They have, you know, embraced all the many flavors of LEGO styles and, man, just really cool to look at. So if that digital online competition wasn't enough to create buzz for the game, the LEGO Games team put together yet another event in the summer of 2019, June 21 to June 23 to be exact. And what was cool is I happened to be in Billund during that exact time, Brian. I was filming, and I was able to interview some of the folks from the LEGO Games team. And yeah, it was all staged at the LEGO House in Billund, Denmark, and I spoke to Edgaras Racinkas who, at the time, was the associate marketing manager at LEGO Games, and the marketing lead for LEGO Tower. So, I just talked to him about this ambitious goal they had at the end of the three-day building event that took place there.

**Edgaras Racinkas**

It is an awesome event. It's a big event. I mean, we have lots of people here for three days at LEGO House. They are building LEGO Tower. Two sections: You can play the game. You can also build it. So we can build digitally, build physically with bricks, so it's all about building all the weekend. They would get the floor from the table, they pick the bricks they like, they put the minifigures in, they slide in the floors they like, put it on the on the stands there in the center, and that's how we build more than 500 of these, for the largest LEGO brick diorama.

**Ethan Vincent**

So as families were coming in to visit the LEGO House during the summer break, you know, keep in mind, this is 2019. You know, there's this large entrance, kind of a square meeting

area, and there are several tables filled to the brim with LEGO bricks and minifigs, and then these prebuilt floor dioramas. And just, Brian, this – the gravitational pull to this area was tremendous.

**Brian Crecente**

I bet.

**Ethan Vincent**

Yeah, I mean, not only were families, you know, kind of lured into going there, but also LEGO employees from right across the street from LEGO Headquarters, and later on, you know, even fans came there, and I talked to Sean McEvoy, who's the vice president of LEGO Games about this as well.

**Sean McEvoy**

This event really brings together the two crucial aspects of what we're doing. So as you can see, everybody is really engaged in building. And then just behind that, we've got our setup with all of the devices that have LEGO Tower playing on them. So folks can seamlessly integrate between that building experience physically and playing the new LEGO Tower game. So it's really bringing together those two worlds – physical building and digital building – all in one spot.

**Ethan Vincent**

Abhinav was also there. He was at the LEGO Tower game area, and he would help kids as they finished, you know, putting their diorama onto the tower and kind of putting it in the slot and they would come over and then immediately check out the game.

(Summer 2019 LEGO Tower building event in Billund, Denmark.  
Child's voice: "Oh cool!" Abhinav: "And you can do the same with this.")

**Ethan Vincent**

And so Abhinav told me a little bit about that process and what that was like to work with the kids and to see them go from the physical to the digital as well.

**Abhinav Sarangi**

One of the things which was really interesting for me, or really insightful was the creativity which can come from constraints. So if you just see a pile of LEGO bricks, it can be overwhelming at first. You don't know what to build. But the moment you have, like a template, which was the template that we had provided. We had pre-made four floors, and there was like an empty floor where you could fit in your floor, and then stand next to it and take a picture. I think that really helped kickstart the creative process for a lot of the fans who were in LEGO House. So the moment they saw, "OK, if I put three or four things, three or four small builds like a sofa, like a table, or a bed, I can have something and I can

build from there," I think that really helped kickstart the process for a lot of people, and then by the end of the first day, when we had already started building up the diorama. On the second day when fans came in, they could see that there are already these things which people had built. And it was just easier for them to then relate to that and build something on their own. So I think the creativity through constraints was something which was really interesting for me to see.

**Edgaras Račinskas**

And when I was a little child –

**Ethan Vincent**

This is Edgaras speaking.

**Edgaras Račinskas**

– I mean the first things I built was towers, tall towers, various towers. I want to put my minifigures in, you know, in a place where I can live and, you know, foster and grow right. So that's this mini city, and that's exactly what we're trying to build. It's a giant city of towers. And that's what a game is all about: building a tall tower, you know, and having your citizens, and, you know, we see a clear connection.

(Tune break)

**Ethan Vincent**

As I mentioned, all of this took place in the LEGO House, known as the Home of the Brick, which is this incredible building. It's built like 21 giant LEGO bricks, kind of stacked and balanced on each other. And the facade is covered in tiles that look like classic two-by-four LEGO bricks, and inside is almost 130,000 square feet or 12,000 square meters, and it's filled with 25,000,000 LEGO bricks. You have these waterfalls that are built out of bricks, giant animals, plants, they have the fish tank that we've talked about, too, in previous episodes. But if you haven't been there, it's definitely worth the trip. And I mentioned all of this, of course, because I had the privilege to talk to Jesper Vilstrup who is the managing director of the LEGO House, and he talked to me about holding the LEGO Tower event there.

**Jesper Vilstrup**

Well I think the LEGO House is a fantastic place to host events. And we love when our colleagues and the rest of the LEGO Group, when they want to use the house as a home to get some, you can say, more activities and more life here in the LEGO square as well. So I mean we love having events here.

**Sean McEvoy**

Well the thing we love the most about it –

**Ethan Vincent**

This is Sean speaking.

**Sean McEvoy**

– is the fact that you can customize your own LEGO tower, build your own floors, bring in your own minifigures, and really have that ultimate experience of customization throughout the entire play experience. So fluid play bringing together physical and digital in one single play session. And we feel like an event like this brings those together in a really interesting way as well.

**Edgaras Račinskas**

On Sunday we have a Guinness Book of Records coming to measure that the record.

**Ethan Vincent**

This is Edgaras speaking again.

**Edgaras Račinskas**

We plan to hit the current record off 17 square meters. So that will, in numbers, that will be more than 500 of module builds. We have elevators next to it, like there is in the game. You have toppers.

**Sean McEvoy**

The amount of work behind the scenes that we have invested –

**Ethan Vincent**

-Here's Sean again.

**Sean McEvoy**

– as a team, Edgaras, and Danny, and Abhinav, and Sandra, and the entire LEGO Games team, it's just a huge shout out to them. They are the ones who really brought this together in partnership with our friends at LEGO House and across the group. So big, huge shout out to the team.

**Ethan Vincent**

Yeah, I mean, this whole event was really cool, Brian, and of course, what was really frustrating for me is I had to leave on Saturday. So I couldn't be there for the actual, you know, Guinness Book of World Record people to come and to make their announcement.

**Brian Crecente**

Oh, that's a bummer. That's the big event, the big sort of unveiling of whether they broke the existing record and get to sort of place their stamp inside the Guinness Book of World Records.

**Ethan Vincent**

Exactly, exactly. But I did get this recording from Edgaras that we should probably just listen to, and then you – we can find out, right?

**Guinness Book of World Records Official**

Now the minimum requirement for this record was 17.13 square meters. And I've measured this diorama, and I've done the calculations. I can tell you: this diorama measures 21.04 square meters. It's a brand new Guinness World Record title.

**Ethan Vincent**

So there you have it, this was, you know, the largest LEGO brick diorama – 21.04 square meters, which I'm sure you can calculate in your head, Brian. How much is that in feet?

**Brian Crecente**

Yeah, totally. I will tell you exactly without any pause because I'm that good at math: 226 square feet and 68 square inches.

**Ethan Vincent**

Yeah, see, I knew you could do it.

**Brian Crecente**

I'm a math genius. (laughs)

**Ethan Vincent**

Yes. Yes, you are. And you know, this was achieved by the team, and it's just amazing to see it. It took three days to build and consisted of approximately 400 kilograms of LEGO bricks. And there were over 1,500 members of the public that took part in this and gosh, they – I think they created what? 500, over 500 rooms. I think it says 540. Just overall, a real impressive event.

**Brian Crecente**

Yeah, if you go to the Guinness Book of World Records website, you can actually see a picture of it. It's like this big – it looks a little bit like a massive apartment complex. It's like this massive rectangle made up of all of these minifig-sized rooms, all of which are different little dioramas, which we've obviously talked about, but it's pretty, pretty cool.

(Tune break)

## Chapter 5: Conclusion – 32:49

**Brian Crecente**

The game was very well received by the LEGO Group. In fact, it was so well received that some of the LEGO Game team members were reluctant to rebuild the towers once they maxed them out. So in LEGO Tower, once a player hits 50 floors, they have the option to rebuild their tower, essentially starting from scratch, something built into the game to keep it fun and exciting. But they simply didn't want to demolish their virtual brick masterpieces, Ian said.

**Ian Marsh**

They were very positive. I think there were a lot of internal competitions going to see who could keep their tower the highest. They would always be asking us when the next floors are coming in the next version because they had built them all and they were hungry for more.

**Brian Crecente**

The game's arrival on Google Play and Apple's App Store in July 2019 elicited what Ian called an interesting mix of responses from players. The studio also continued robust support for the game after launch.

**Ian Marsh**

A lot of NimbleBit fans downloaded and played it. And a lot of LEGO brick fans who had never played our games before played it. I think it was probably another kind of flavor of Tiny Tower for most of our NimbleBit players. And for LEGO brick fans it probably, I think they were excited to have a game that was kind of a new genre as well as the new, not franchise, but something fresh and not just another formulaic kind of sequel to something else. The business, the casual simulation genre, I think, has a lot wider appeal than some of the other games that were out at that time. So I think that the reception was pretty positive from both groups.

**Ethan Vincent**

In its first year, about 9 million people downloaded the game. The game is still being updated today and is now approaching 20 million downloads. And Abhinav said that the experience creating the game was almost as fun as the game itself.

**Abhinav Sarangi**

Working with NimbleBit has frankly been a joy. For a small team, they work hard. I mean, they are nimble – sorry, excuse the pun, but they are very nimble in how they work,

and they really know the audience that they cater to. I think that has been very important when you are that size. You have to be very focused on what you make, but also on what you don't make because you cannot make, you know, things which a 50-member team can make. So being really focused on, and being really player-first driven, I think has been a strength for NimbleBit. But generally I think they're, as people, I think they're some of the nicest people I've known in games. It has been a pleasure and actually a privilege for me, working with NimbleBit, working with them and seeing, you know, how they've been able to make brilliant products, which I know, which a lot of the industry, a lot of the game development industry, I think has a lot of respect for how they have, you know, conducted their business over the years and how they have, you know, been a beacon for indie developers in terms of, you know, how to do well in the mobile gaming space.

(Postscript music)

## **Bits N' Bricks: Credits – 36:26**

### **Ethan Vincent**

Bits N' Bricks is made possible by LEGO Games. Your hosts are Brian Crecente and Ethan Vincent. Producing by Dave Tach. Our executive producer is Ronny Scherer. Creative direction and editing by Ethan Vincent. Research and writing by Brian Crecente. Art direction by Nannan Li. Graphics and animations by Manuel Lindinger and Andreas Holzinger. Mixing and sound design by Dan Carlisle. Disclaimer voice is Ben Unguren. Opening's child voice is Milo Vincent. Music by Peter Priemer, [foundermusic.com](http://foundermusic.com), and excerpts from the game Tiny Tower and LEGO Tiny Tower. We'd like to thank our participants: Ian Marsh, Sean McEvoy, Edgaras Račinskis, Abhinav Sarangi, and Jesper Vilstrup. We'd also like to thank the entire LEGO Games team. For questions and comments write us at [bitsnbricks@LEGO.com](mailto:bitsnbricks@LEGO.com). That's bits, the letter N, then bricks@LEGO.com. And as always, stay tuned for more episodes of Bits N' Bricks.