Essential reveals Project Gem smartphone with very long, unusual design



We know next to nothing about the images you're about to see — except that they don't look like any phone we've ever seen before. The first photos come from Andy Rubin, the controversial mobile industry executive who co-founded Android, left Google amid allegations of sexual misconduct while retaining a huge severance package, and went on to create the Essential Phone. (He also co-created the T-Mobile Sidekick, aka Danger Hiptop, many years ago.)

The photos appear to show an elongated phone with a very, very tall UI composed of card-like apps, but with big buttons that look like they'd be perfectly at home on a smartwatch. It look extremely small in his hands, too. The device has a large button and volume rocker on the right edge and a fingerprint divot around back, below what appears to be a single main camera.

And as you can see, these devices have some decidedly flashy

finishes that change color when you view them at different angles – a sea green that shifts to yellow and blue, for example.

An Essential spokesperson confirmed to the *The Verge* that this is the company's new phone, adding: "We've been working on a new device that's now in early testing with our team outside the lab. We look forward to sharing more in the near future."

A couple hours later, Essential tweeted some slightly more official images of the new phone, which it's calling Project Gem:

> *We've been working on a new device to reframe your perspective on mobile. It's now in early testing with our team outside the lab. Look forward to sharing more in the near future!* *#ProjectGEM pic.twitter.com/BnVy7yM2Kj*
>
> *— Essential (@essential)* *October 9, 2019*

The original Essential Phone was known for its flashy design, including a sea green color with gold accents known as Ocean Depths. And in late 2018, *Bloomberg* reported that Essential was working on a phone with a smaller screen that'd be controlled mostly through voice commands, with an AI assistant automatically performing tasks for you. In December, Essential all but confirmed it was working on a second phone.

"now in early testing with our team outside the lab"
If some leaked code snippets spotted by XDA-Developers pan out, the Gem may activate its voice assistant when you tap your finger to that divot around back – the code snippets mention a "fingerprint walkie talkie" mode. They also suggest it runs Android and point at a Qualcomm Snapdragon 730 processor, whose midrange performance might make sense for a device that's designed more as a mobile companion than becoming the digital center of your life.

One XDA-Developers reader also spotted an Essential trademark application for the name “GEM,” suggesting it could potentially be the final name of the device as well.

While we wait for more info, perhaps you’d like to know more about that robot dog that’s lurking in the background of Rubin’s snapshots? That’s the Boston Dynamics Spot — from a company that Andy Rubin helped Google temporarily purchase back in 2013, by the way — and we’ve got an awesome video about Spot that you can watch below.

Update, 9:01 PM ET: *Added new images from Essential in a new tweet about the device.*

https://www.theverge.com/2019/10/8/20905525/andy-rubin-elongated-phone-essential-android