

strategy & Tactics: **Sim City 2000**

by Scott Love

Mayor for a day. Warm up that hard drive. Buildings cities ain't for the weak-spirited. Sim City 2000 is a complex tangle of interrelated systems, buildings, and little Sims bent on boggling the mightiest of weekend mayors. This game will make the most anal-retentive, sock-sorting, CDs-cataloged-by-name-and-date kinda person say, "So what if they want a barg-flecking hospital! Let's shoot down the warb-shlapped helicopter!!"

Fortunately for prospective mayors everywhere, Maxis included a manual in English (no GIGO, it's pure WYSIWYG!) and nifty help dialogues. And Kirk at technical support. He's a swell guy who knows that a Mac isn't just a name for a big lumbering truck or the guy who drives it.

The first thing Sim Mayors will be greeted by is an open expanse of nothing. Gotta buy the game. Then install it. And DON'T read that file!

So you're in. There's a map in front of you. Now what? Assuming all Sim Mayors dream of building the next great metropolis, let's lay down our city.

Sim City is a game of patience. Sim Mayors all suffer from the Frederico Peña* syndrome: wanna build too much too fast and pay too much. \$20,000 or \$10,000 bucks just isn't enough to build a town with 300 Sims, eight hospitals, a prison, highways to everywhere, and the biggest airport in the world.

Start Small. Think Frugal. Be Scrooge.

Build a road, a power plant, some residential and industrial zones, and that's it. After a year or two, add a police station and fund it at 10% or 20%. Add a commercial zone or two when that blue bar starts to wake up. Think cheap. It's not the money in your treasury so much as it is the annual expenses incurred from slapping down schools, hospitals, and so-forth. Every dollar spent on maintenance is one dollar that could be better spent expanding one's city.

When the Sims demand it, add a Fire Station and fund it at a whopping 0%. No — none of

this wimp Sim Mayor charlb for us! Leave that “No Disasters” option alone! For some crazy reason, Arson-Challenged City Servants will come to the scene of a disaster even after being paid nothing for years.

The same goes for a hospital. Doctors won’t be paid after next year anyway: why not make this simulation as real as possible.

You get the idea. Only add city services after you’ve got the tax base to support them. Leave holes in your city for police stations, bus stations, hospitals, and fire houses and fill them in only when the neighborhood around the holes is starting to be visited by the traffic-copter. Density is money.

By the way, low density zoning will leave you with a sprawling suburbia of 1 x 1 buildings.

[I Like Power, You Like Power, Let’s Go Blow-Up A Power Plant!](#)

In a city strapped for cash, it ain’t a picnic watching \$6,600 bucks in oil turn itself into a candidate for the next Tattoone set for Star Wars VII. The best bang (or lack thereof) for your buck is hydro power. Hydro Plants and windmills don’t blow up. Here are the power-to-dollar ratios for all power plants:

Coal:

\$1 / 0.05 watts

Hydroelectric:

\$1 / 0.05 watts

Oil:

\$1 / 0.03 watts

Gas:

\$1 / 0.025 watts

Nuclear:

\$1 / 0.033 watts

Windmills:

\$1 / 0.04 watts

Solar:

\$1 / 0.037 watts

Microwave

\$1 / 0.057 watts

Fusion

\$1 / 0.625 watts

By this chart Fusion is the most efficient power source, but considering that you've got to rebuild it every 50 years at \$40,000 makes it a hefty expense and trashes the chart above. Statistics lie like a rug. Hydro power doesn't blow up, can be built in relatively painless increments of \$400, and takes up no valuable land real estate. If you're a purist and don't add waterfalls to your city before beginning, a hydro-electric power plant can also be built in the midst of the game:

oads, Roads, Roads!

The biggest building a Sim will build is 3 x 3 squares: while at least one square of that building is within 3 of a road your Sims will happily move in, go to work, shop, and pay taxes. It takes time for a building to grow to this size, but theoretically will allow a grid which is 10 x YY. This will maximize land use, but will slow growth. A subway in the middle of the grid will help speed things up.

A Sim will travel 10 squares to get to a commercial and/or industrial building. If he or she (if gender applies to an Electronic Reality-Challenged Being) can't get to work, the family will start packing its bags. Rails and Highways will double this range, but aren't necessarily necessary, depending on your layout: highways and trains are expensive.

Bus Stations and Subways help with traffic and don't extend Sim Commuters' patience.

One note on bus stations: they cost money. It isn't mentioned in the manual or in the help window for bus stations, but notice that for every station you place, your transportation costs increase \$25 per year.

Tunnels may save on land use, but don't try creating exclusive underground road systems. Sims hate elevators apparently.

Connecting a city to another by extending a road to the edge of the map will stimulate commerce and industry, but watch out: if your city is unattractive more Sims will move out using the very road you just paid \$1000 for! If traffic loads up on this road, build more connections to the same city: you'll spread the traffic load out across a few roads.

A last note to Sim City Classic veterans: it's absolutely impossible to build a viable city without roads. Sims got smarter. Roads are here to stay.

For Healthy Growth, Water Liberally and Place in Good Light:

A recent review in Mac Home Journal (January 1994, vol.2#1) told readers not to bother with water systems: This may save some mayoral hassle but will restrict your city to 2 x 2 buildings only. A good water system is necessary for the city to grow to its maximum possible density.

A quick water tip: placing treatment plants around the map helps only slightly with pollution, but if built next to a water pump a treatment plant will increase that pump's output by 10 to 20%. Just don't ask what's in the extra 20%.

Water towers help and hinder — you've got to have enough water in the system to fill the darn things.

Altitude is a water system's enemy. No matter how many lakes exist on that mesa of yours, water will have a hard time figuring out what to do with a pipe up there. Sim Earth must be a really hot place for all that water to evaporate just 100 feet up!

Rivers — if you create a river of your own in the edit map, it must be laid on the lowest squares on the map. Otherwise the game won't recognize that long skinny filled-with-water thingy as a river. Boats will stay away. Seaports will be a collection of warehouses filled with Bill Gates' Windows for Warehouses.

Pink Floyd Say: Money, It's A Crime.

I wonder if Maxis would take Sim dollars for all the Sim products they keep pushing on computer game junkies?

To make your city grow, lower taxes to 5% or 4%, but watch out: Sims get used to low taxes and will protest just as loudly when you raise taxes from 4% to 5% as when you raise them from 9% to 10%. Leaving taxes at a constant level will avoid roller-coaster move-in move-out troubles that playing with tax levels will create.

City Ordinances are a great place to help your city along: read the help windows in the Ordinance screen. One effect not explicitly made there is that Energy conservation, in addition to lowering a city's power demands, will help lower pollution as well. In general, ordinances which raise money for your city really do slow growth. Their returns aren't worth it. Even the parking tickets. So what if Sims triple-park. They're only driving Sim Hyundais anyway.

Bonds are bad news. Death to any otherwise healthy Sim City. Patience is a virtue and debt is a great way to get to know that guy Guido everybody talks about in movies.

Trouble In Your Heart-Shaped World.

It's obvious that this game was created by someone living in California. Traffic problems are relentless, though less so than in Sim City Classic. Add bus stations. Build more expensive subway systems only if you must. Rail will help, but takes up valuable land space. Highways hog far too much land value to be of much use. God agrees, apparently... at least insofar as Los Angeles' highways are concerned.

Pollution is a problem that won't go away. Can't build a city without roads or industry. Trees help. Parks help. City ordinances help. Leaving your city at population 800 will help the most. Treatment plants mean well, but in the end only deliver good intentions.

Crime. Cops seem to be able to deal with crime in Sim Nation. Just wait until Arcos show up: then your crimeless city will suddenly become a battlefield of biker conventions clashing with frat boys on break. Prisons will help, as will building two or three police stations around the base of each Arco.

News Flash: Nixon Innocent! Victim of Elaborate Film Student Prank!

Everybody wants to know what happened to our old friend FUND. It's still there — and brings out bonds for 25% interest. Ouch. Bonds are the kiss of mayoral death and FUND brings the Stealth-Ninja-Bomber version of Bonds out from under the rocks.

The following three lines are separate commands which, when typed into the game, bring various results.

fund
Brings a 25% bond down your throat.

cass
Will raise \$250 for a quick bit of help, but also comes with a 1 in 15 chance for a fire storm to erupt in the exact center of your city map.

joke
Type this and find out for yourself what happens.

porntipsguzzardo
This is the mother of all cheats. \$500,000 drops into your city along with all the rewards a Mayor can garner.

An entertaining albeit somewhat sadistic Easter Egg in the game occurs when, using the cross-hair centering tool, you click on the traffic copter.

Good luck with Sim Mayoring and happy zoning!

If you have any questions or comments, contact Scott Love through CompuServe at 72613,2733.