

Sneak Peek: **SimCity 2000**

by Tuncer Deniz

NOTE: Screen shots and information presented in this article are based on a pre-release version of SimCity 2000 and are subject to change before final release. This article is not a review.

In 1989 a relatively small and unknown Macintosh software publisher introduced a revolutionary new game called SimCity. It went on to become one of the top-selling computer games of all time and brought a new sophistication to computer gaming. Often described as a “software toy” (as the company likes to call it), SimCity allowed players to create worlds using experimentation and, more importantly, their imagination.

Now four years later, Maxis is ready to unveil SimCity 2000: The Ultimate City Simulator. Like most sequels, this highly anticipated game promises even more buildings, more tools, more views, more colors, more control, and more realism than its predecessor.

When the designers of the original SimCity sought out to create the sequel, they first took a look at the thousands upon thousands of ideas and suggestions SimCity players had mailed or posted on online services. Using the best ideas, the designers sought to make a game that featured spectacular 3-D graphics and dozens of new features while maintaining the ease of use of the original SimCity.

The New Look. The most drastic change in SimCity 2000 is the three-dimensional view. The 45-degree angle perspective lets you look at your city from a “side” view giving the 256 color graphics a wonderful 3-D look. The game features three magnification levels so you can zoom in to inspect something or zoom out to get a panoramic look at your fledgling city. And if that weren’t enough, you can also rotate the city four ways to get a different view.

The terrain in SimCity 2000 is divided up into tiles and has up to 64 levels of altitude. Each tile is approximately 200 X 200 feet square and can be raised, lowered, or covered with water. Using the tiles as building blocks you can create level terrain, mountains, valleys, lakes, rivers, streams, and waterfalls using the built-in terrain editor. After creating your custom terrain or the program’s own generated terrain, you can begin to create zones and roads on top of the tiles. One section of road is equivalent to one tile, while larger buildings can take up a number of tiles.

The entire city limits is yours for creating and expanding. A city in SimCity 2000 can be small or can fill the entire rectangular city limits. It's all up to you.

Getting Started. To start the game you can either load a saved city, start a new city, edit a new map, or load a scenario.

As planner and mayor, your job is to designate zoning areas in your city for residential, commercial, or industrial building. Using the appropriate zoning tool, players can create zones by clicking and holding on the terrain, then dragging the mouse to create variable-sized zones. Zones you create can be as small or as large as you like. After you've created a zone, your Sims will create their own housing, office buildings, etc.

Your main control center for building, modifying and running your city is the City Toolbar. Here players can modify the landscape, zoom in and out, rotate the city, zone areas, build infrastructure, add special-purpose buildings, add signs, and inspect city areas. Other tools turn on and off the display of various objects and layers and open various information windows.

hat's New. After creating a power plant in your new city and adding a few zones, your citizens will start developing housing, offices, and industrial enterprise. To further the growth in your new city, SimCity 2000 comes with plenty of tools to help you build.

In addition to the surface level, SimCity 2000 allows players to see and work underground. Here the player can install underground water pipes. Building water pumps, water towers, treatment plants, and desalinization plants in your city will help maintain a healthy flow of

water through the pipes and keep your city growing. In addition, players can create subway systems by laying underground rails and subway stations. Subway-to-Rail junctions allow you to hook up your subways and above-ground rails for a continuous transit system.

Highways, which were probably the most requested feature, are now incorporated into SimCity 2000. They can handle four times as many cars as regular roads, and they help relieve congestion in heavy traffic areas. On-ramps allow cars to get on and off highways.

As with most cities, education is a major societal problem. However, players of SimCity 2000 can avoid this problem by placing schools, colleges, libraries, and museums throughout the city.

City Services is a multi-function tool that lets you provide your city with services like police stations, fire stations, hospitals, and prisons. Other tools let you place small parks, large parks, zoos, stadiums, and marinas. These provide recreation for your citizens and help beautify your city.

You didn't think the good people at Maxis would forget those wonderful disasters now, did you? Well, in addition to the disasters found in the original game, SimCity 2000 comes with even more chaotic events such as nuclear meltdowns, mass riots, and volcanos.

[Yes, Mr. Mayor.](#) To provide your citizens with services, roads, and recreation, you'll need funds, mulla, dinero....ah, you get the point. The Budget window reports and lets you adjust your city's budget. Here you can set your property tax rates and allocations for police and fire departments. If you should run out of money, you can always issue a municipal bond, which is basically a loan from your citizens.

If your city's population should prosper, you'll be given a few rewards like a mayoral house, a City Hall, and other things to boost your SimEgo.

[Sim 1993.](#) Although many movie sequels fail to deliver, this sequel promises not to disappoint. Combining the ease of use of the original SimCity with wonderful three-dimensional graphics and dozens of new features, SimCity 2000 takes city planning to a new level of realism.

After years of nail-biting, the wait is almost over. SimCity 2000 is scheduled to be released this November.