



Sim City 2000

A Preview of Life in the Next Millenium

The buildings visibly deteriorate over time if the area's suffering from economic decay... each square of terrain is so detailed it represents only a single acre of property... communities within the city can be broken down and managed separately, and thrive or deteriorate in response to both local and intra-city conditions... heck, up to six city newspapers get published regularly, with options for the mayor (you) to subscribe and read 'em or not. Whoah! Dude!

I have to admit I've been a fan of Maxis simulations from **Sim City** on the Amiga onwards, and I'm particularly biased in favor of *more* detail rather than less. Thus, for instance, I prefer **Sim Life** over **Sim Ant**.

Nevertheless, like many users of **Sim Earth** and **Sim Life**, I've been left with the haunting suspicion while playing that, despite the incredibly detailed compendium of information systematized in these designs, there *must be a better way* of presenting complex systems in such fashion as to seem dynamic, more interactive, more informative of what's going

on at the micro level in realtime.

And I've been worried in particular that with the city simulation design in **SC2K** now approaching the complexity of a **Sim Life**, it might prove equally as burdensome to manage.

To my delight: **not so!** **Sim City 2000** is, if anything, *more* dynamic and elegant than the original design. It's a pleasure to play, and things are happening all the time while the game's running, at a pace that's challenging but quite manageable.

So most importantly: what's *in* the game? First, you can now modify terrain both prior to building your city (as was the case with the original, using a separate utility) *and* while the city's running. This is quite useful, particularly since there are now thirty-two levels of altitude, from mountains to lakes (put a waterfall in your city's Central Park and make them New Yorkers moan with envy!). Terrain modification is limited, of course, by what's built or not on it when the city's running, and costs to change. Prior to starting the city, however, the player is Terrain God and can produce any kind



of base landscape for the city desired. The modeling is so detailed that water always flows downhill (the little glints on bodies of water on the surface are truly pretty, by the way), which should be taken into consideration when laying out the city's subway and underground water pipelines (memories of Chicago 1992 come into play here...).

Second, **SC2K** features a zoomable, rotatable City Window, which completely transforms the way the player can keep an eye on what's going on. Given the two-thirds overhead perspective, it becomes possible to enjoy looking down city streets, watching as some buildings overshadow others (when skyscrapers are constructed, you get to see them develop), checking out traffic reports and problems, watching portions of the city **BURN, BABY, BURN!!!!** — whoops! sorry, had an LA moment there. I promise it won't happen again.

There are scads of little nifty features that contribute to the liveliness and interest of the cityscape; for instance, you can add signs and markers, to name streets or buildings. The good old football stadium which featured seasonal crowds and game scores is complemented by a host of other special buildings, such as museums, zoos (can't wait to see what the Maxis Loonies come up with for this one!), libraries, opera houses, rock concert arenas, universities (to supply fodder for the concerts, of course), parks, and marinas. The city's water system, laid out in underground pipes the same way streets and rail are laid out above, can also require water towers, water pumps, water treatment plants, and de-salin-

ization plants for optimal management. Roads and highways are complemented by on- and off- ramps for freeways, tunnels, and user-selectable bus depots. Fire and police departments can be deployed tactically to block or contain fires, riots, and parades (well, this last crowd phenomenon I'm making up... I admit it! Guilty!). When rails are laid, trains pop up and run around in full isometric detail.

I was hoping traffic barriers for residential neighborhoods would be included in the final design, but couldn't slip that suggestion past any of the programmers, who've had their share of navigating such streets in Berkeley, CA. Oh well... can't have everything.

The City Newspapers idea is one of my favorites in **SC2K**. Papers appear from different sections of the city (the number of papers a city can support — up to six — depends on the size of the city, just as in real life), and provide all sorts of amusing reports, which respond to how the mayor's doing, what's going on in the sector of the city covered by the paper, and other things. This kind of system gives the player a chance to hear squeaky wheels along with reading demographic and economic reports, and thus adds a human face to the whole design.

SC2K brings the whole **Sim City** idea to a new level of interaction, by improving on some of the most exciting advances made in successful designs like **Populous** and **Syndicate**. Oh! Almost forgot to mention: ya get *volcanoes* to toy with... **BURN, BABY, BURN!!!!** Whoops! There I go again....□

