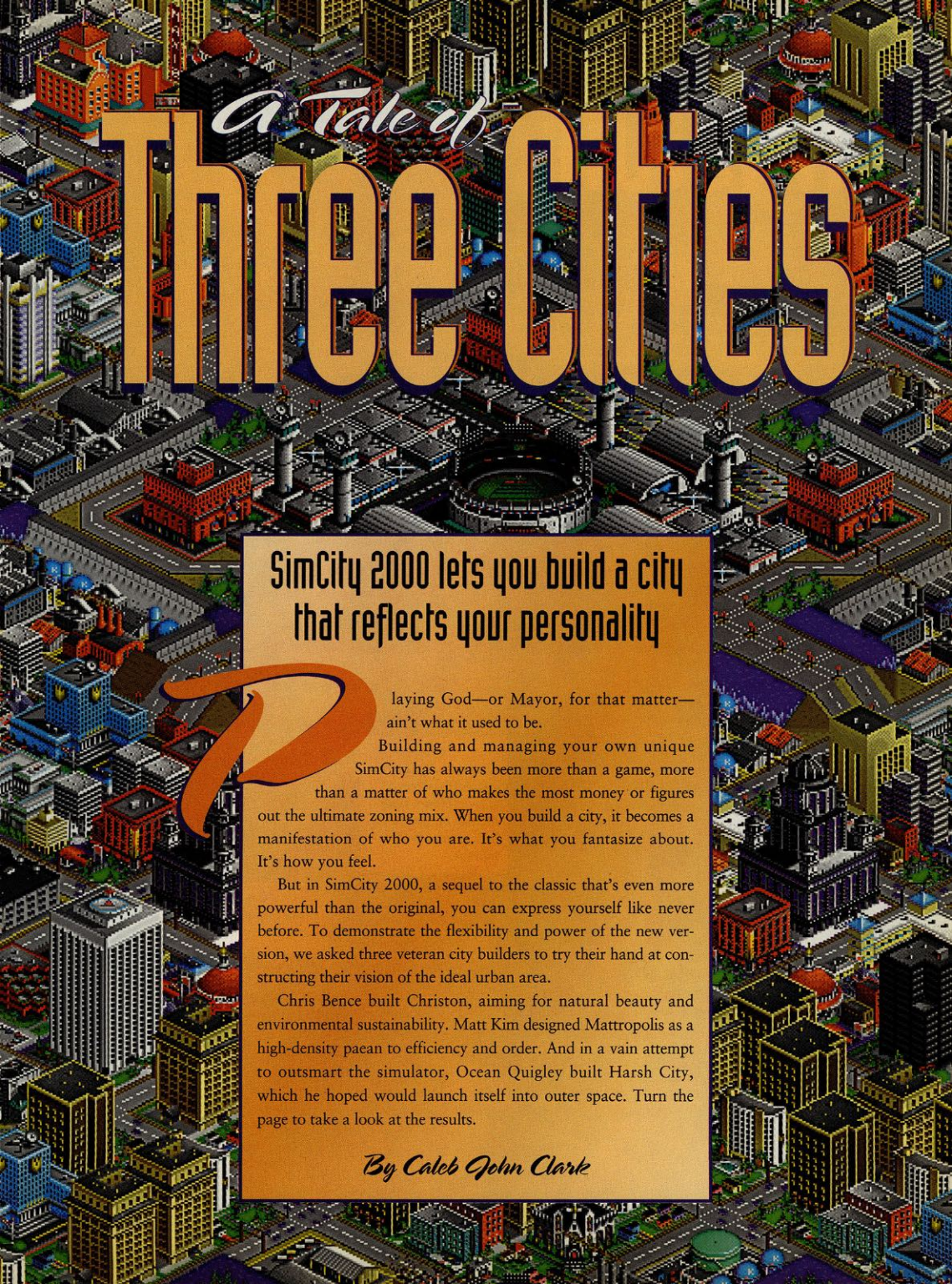




A Tale of Three Cities

SimCity 2000 lets you build a city
that reflects your personality

Playing God—or Mayor, for that matter—ain't what it used to be.

Building and managing your own unique SimCity has always been more than a game, more than a matter of who makes the most money or figures out the ultimate zoning mix. When you build a city, it becomes a manifestation of who you are. It's what you fantasize about. It's how you feel.

But in SimCity 2000, a sequel to the classic that's even more powerful than the original, you can express yourself like never before. To demonstrate the flexibility and power of the new version, we asked three veteran city builders to try their hand at constructing their vision of the ideal urban area.

Chris Bence built Christon, aiming for natural beauty and environmental sustainability. Matt Kim designed Mattropolis as a high-density paean to efficiency and order. And in a vain attempt to outsmart the simulator, Ocean Quigley built Harsh City, which he hoped would launch itself into outer space. Turn the page to take a look at the results.

By Caleb John Clarke

Christon

WHEN CHRIS BENCE STARTED PLANNING CHRISTON—"The Small Pretty City"—her goal was to build a place you'd travel through and say "I'd love to live here."

Bence likes to go camping, so she started with lots of mountains, trees, and rivers. Then she created Power Island. The idea was to construct a clean power source way out in the ocean, so nobody would have to live next to an ugly, dangerous power plant. Power Island features large, symmetrical waterfalls for hydroelectric power and two large plateaus to hold windmills and microwave generators. When it became clear that Power Island supplied

SIMTIP: Parks raise property values only in the four-tile area around them. So it's better to scatter small parks around the city rather than putting them together.

UNIVERSITY ISLAND

SIMTIP: Be careful when you build subways; you can't blow them up to get rid of them. Avoid mistakes by putting in the stations before laying the track.

THE ROCK

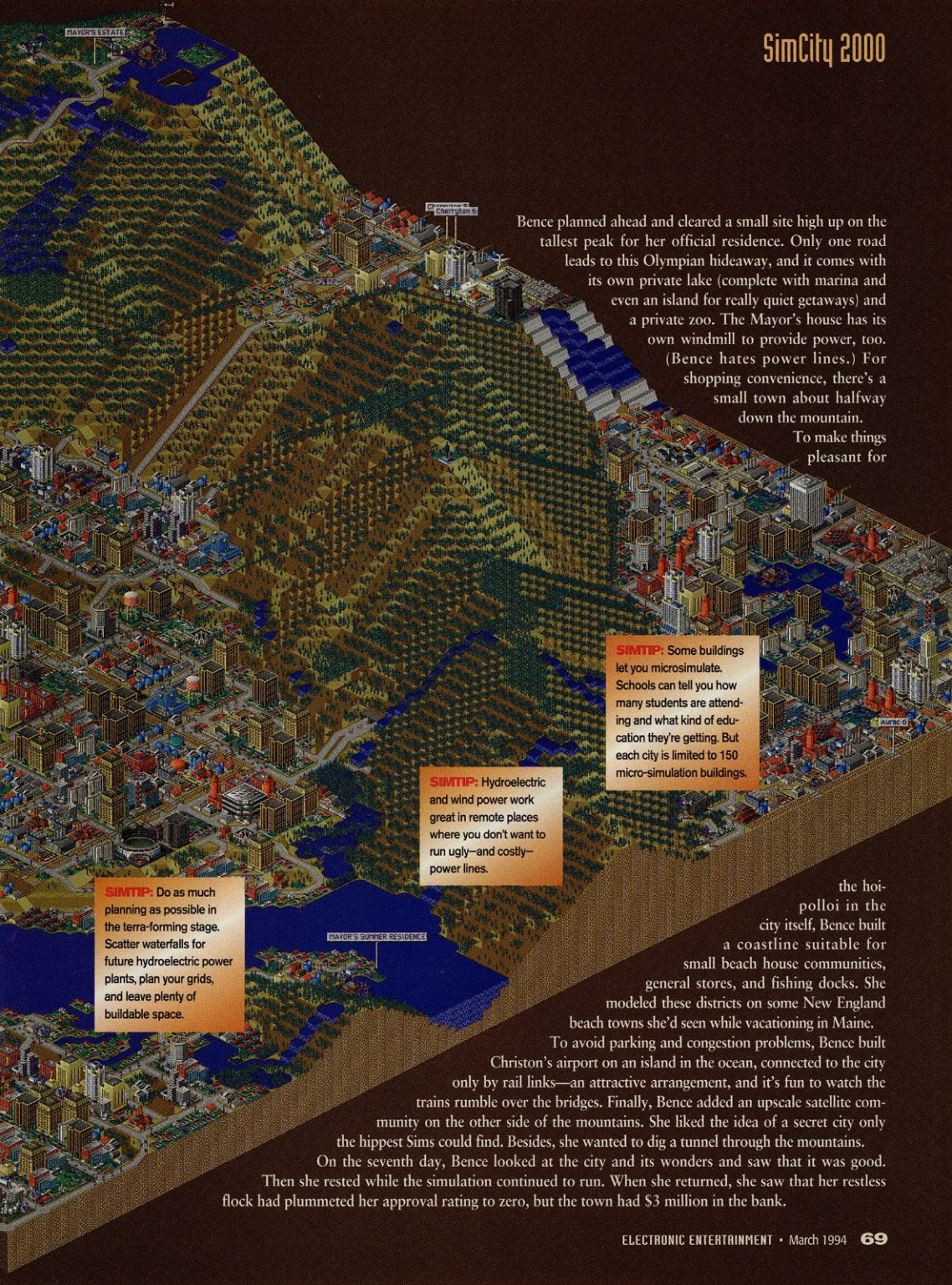
SIMTIP: Bus stations reduce traffic better than subways and rail systems.

more than enough power for Christon, Bence scaled back the island to a single plateau.

The main city nestles comfortably on a flat plain between the ocean and a majestic mountain range. To make sure everyone knew whose city it was, Bence added a large area of virgin forest with a lake in the form of a giant C—for Chris—right in the middle.

Next came College Island: two universities, a little light commercial and industrial development, its own power source, and some high-density residential areas for the dorms. The only way to get there is to sail, and bicycles rule once you arrive. Bence believes that college and cars don't mix. And in a nod to her San Francisco Bay Area home, Bence tossed in her own Alcatraz island, complete with prison. It'll be good for tourism later.

When a SimCity's population reaches 2000, you can place the Mayor's house anywhere you want.



Bence planned ahead and cleared a small site high up on the tallest peak for her official residence. Only one road leads to this Olympian hideaway, and it comes with its own private lake (complete with marina and even an island for really quiet getaways) and a private zoo. The Mayor's house has its own windmill to provide power, too. (Bence hates power lines.) For shopping convenience, there's a small town about halfway down the mountain.

To make things pleasant for

SIMTIP: Some buildings let you microsimulate. Schools can tell you how many students are attending and what kind of education they're getting. But each city is limited to 150 micro-simulation buildings.

SIMTIP: Hydroelectric and wind power work great in remote places where you don't want to run ugly—and costly—power lines.

SIMTIP: Do as much planning as possible in the terra-forming stage. Scatter waterfalls for future hydroelectric power plants, plan your grids, and leave plenty of buildable space.

the hoi-polloi in the city itself, Bence built a coastline suitable for small beach house communities, general stores, and fishing docks. She modeled these districts on some New England beach towns she'd seen while vacationing in Maine.

To avoid parking and congestion problems, Bence built Christon's airport on an island in the ocean, connected to the city only by rail links—an attractive arrangement, and it's fun to watch the trains rumble over the bridges. Finally, Bence added an upscale satellite community on the other side of the mountains. She liked the idea of a secret city only the hippest Sims could find. Besides, she wanted to dig a tunnel through the mountains.

On the seventh day, Bence looked at the city and its wonders and saw that it was good. Then she rested while the simulation continued to run. When she returned, she saw that her restless flock had plummeted her approval rating to zero, but the town had \$3 million in the bank.

Mattropolis

BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO BUILD HIS OWN CITY, Matt Kim spent hours carefully observing other players create their own visions. He read the manual twice and practiced optimal grid utilization on graph paper.

Once Kim began playing, he trashed his first nine practice cities. Only then did he start work on his ultimate creation, dubbed Mattropolis.

Mattropolis is divided into 12 boxes separated by one-tile-high, waterfall-edged crosses.

The waterfalls are for hydroelectric power, water pumps, and—though he hates to admit it—aesthetics.

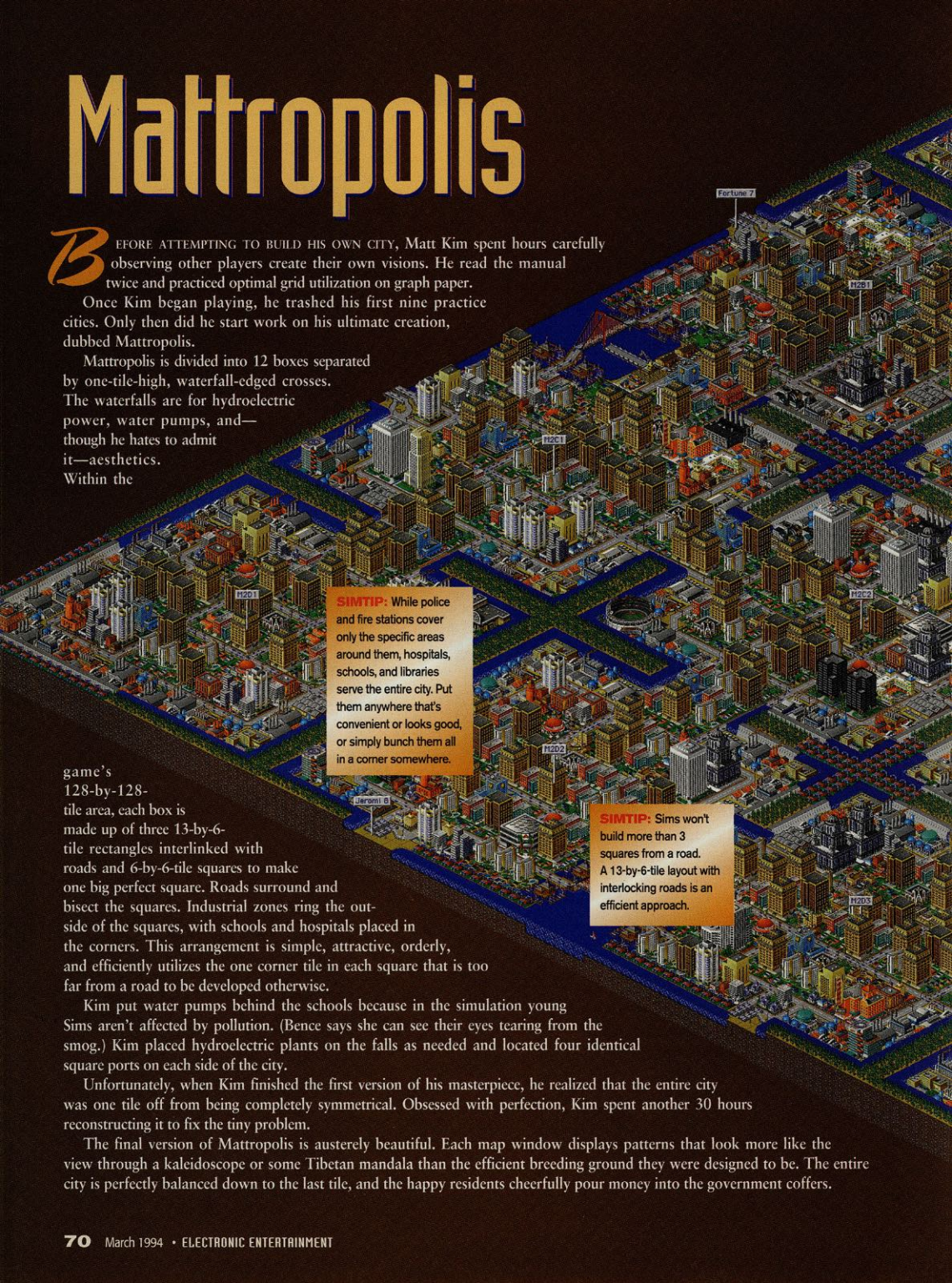
Within the

game's 128-by-128-tile area, each box is made up of three 13-by-6-tile rectangles interlinked with roads and 6-by-6-tile squares to make one big perfect square. Roads surround and bisect the squares. Industrial zones ring the outside of the squares, with schools and hospitals placed in the corners. This arrangement is simple, attractive, orderly, and efficiently utilizes the one corner tile in each square that is too far from a road to be developed otherwise.

Kim put water pumps behind the schools because in the simulation young Sims aren't affected by pollution. (Bence says she can see their eyes tearing from the smog.) Kim placed hydroelectric plants on the falls as needed and located four identical square ports on each side of the city.

Unfortunately, when Kim finished the first version of his masterpiece, he realized that the entire city was one tile off from being completely symmetrical. Obsessed with perfection, Kim spent another 30 hours reconstructing it to fix the tiny problem.

The final version of Mattropolis is austere beautiful. Each map window displays patterns that look more like the view through a kaleidoscope or some Tibetan mandala than the efficient breeding ground they were designed to be. The entire city is perfectly balanced down to the last tile, and the happy residents cheerfully pour money into the government coffers.



SIMTIP: While police and fire stations cover only the specific areas around them, hospitals, schools, and libraries serve the entire city. Put them anywhere that's convenient or looks good, or simply bunch them all in a corner somewhere.

SIMTIP: Sims won't build more than 3 squares from a road. A 13-by-6-tile layout with interlocking roads is an efficient approach.

SCENARIO STRATEGIES

SimCity 2000 includes several specific scenarios of common urban ills. Here's how to handle them.

Charleston: Pause the game. Build water pumps in the swamps, then rebuild the connections to other cities and put more ramps on the freeway system. Then let the simulation run, keeping taxes low while you create dense zoning in areas damaged by the hurricane.

Dullsville: Pause the game. Lower taxes to zero until the population is big enough to make you money. Then build dense using 13-by-6-tile zoning. Take out a bond if you have to.

Flint: Click on the book for property taxes, and set industrial taxes to zero. Find a good hangout and wait.

Hollywood: Control the fires the monster sets and after he leaves, lower property taxes to zero. Then go see a movie.

Oakland: Control the fire using bulldozers to clear a fire break and just ignore the Sims' complaints. Then set taxes as low as you can and build dense in the empty area by Lake Temescal.

SIMTIP: Don't overspend. Remember, your power plants blow up every fifty years. If you don't have enough cash to replace them you'll find yourself back in the Dark Ages.

SIMTIP: Highways sit on their own phantom four-square grid, so you can't just plop them down anywhere. This can be a real problem when the highway grid doesn't match up with the space available in a developed city.

SIMTIP: Avoid diagonal roads and rail lines. They're wasteful.

Kim created his stunning municipality with a lot of patience and a few clever tactics. His key rule: keep taxes low and build dense. In fact, he developed an opening strategy for fast growth: Set taxes at zero for each new city's first 15 or so years since the population is so small. You won't collect much money in the beginning anyway, and the Sims move in so much faster with no taxes. Mattropolis' only quirk? There are no zoos. Kim didn't get to go to them as a child, and he felt that his namesake city could get by without them, too.

Harsh City

OCEAN QUIGLEY TOOK A PERVERSE APPROACH in designing his city: He hoped to create an environment that would encourage the resident Sims to form self-contained communities that would eventually take off into space. This Exodus process is one outcome of Maxis's SimEarth simulator, and Quigley hoped to duplicate it in SimCity 2000.

This expectation isn't as unreasonable as it might sound. SimCity 2000 includes a new feature called an Arcology, a sort of self-contained city within the city. One of the four types is called a Launch Arcology. Because of the word

"launch" in the name and the last sentence in the Launch Arcology dialog box—"build enough of these and you may discover the final secret of SimEarth"—Quigley assumed that if he built enough Launch Arcologies, they would spontaneously begin the Exodus process.

Quigley started with totally flat terrain, the only water being a three-tile-thick border for ports and water pumps. He added marinas only because the Sims demanded them. The city's zoning layout consists of a 13-by-6 grid of interlocking tiles surrounded by roads. Initial power came from coal-fired generating plants—who cares about the pollution? Eventually, when he needed more power, he replaced the coal-burning power stations with a pair of clean but expensive fusion plants.

To keep pollution down in his high-density city, Quigley scattered low-density industrial zones among residential areas. He stressed education, but only to stimulate industry.

The goal was to push population in order to support the Launch, and with SimCity 2000's three-quarter perspective view, it soon became hard to find the Mayor's house and City Hall among all the tall buildings.

As soon as Harsh City was big enough to allow Launch Arcologies, Quigley's sole priority became putting them in prime



SIMTIP: To get rich "quick," save your game and then let it run overnight. Just make sure you've deployed the police and fire departments and turned off the disaster function.

SIMTIP: Politics aside, military bases are good for quelling riots, fighting off monsters, and boosting commercial zones.

sites. To raise the money to build the Arcos, he let the city run on its own overnight. With Harsh City's huge tax base, he sat down to breakfast with a cool \$30 million.

As Quigley put in more and more Launch Arcologies, he noticed that the city was slowly becoming nothing but Arcos, police stations, and schools. He was sure

SIMTIP: Type CASS (for SimCity designer Will Wright's daughter, Cassidy) and you'll get \$250, but you'll also face a 1 in 18 chance of a major disaster hitting the center of your grid. The old Shift-FUND cheat that garnered a cool \$10,000 in SimCity has been made honest. In SimCity 2000 it issues a bond at a whopping 25 percent interest.

SIMTIP: Find the right zoning ratios. Two residential to one commercial and one industrial is a good rule of thumb. As your city's Education Quotient goes up you'll need fewer industrial zones.

SIMTIP: Use low-density zoning to lower pollution and raise land values.

Exodus had to happen soon.

But when Harsh City's population hit 5 million and no launches had taken place, he called Maxis's technical-support line.

To Quigley's horror, the tech representative said it was all a joke. There is no Exodus in SimCity 2000! He added that future revisions of the game might change the offending message in the Launch Arcology dialog box.

Crushed, Quigley immediately loosed a space monster on Harsh City hoping to destroy it. "Eventually I'll build my ultimate city," Quigley promises, "which will look more like Nova Scotia."