

Information technology Story

Memo Wellington: Auckland's worth \$36, you're \$18

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By [James Ihaka](#)

It's not known what the new "mayor" of Auckland plans to do about the city's soaring water rates.

Nor has further light been shed on who will foot the bill for Eden Park's World Cup revamp, and there has been no council comment on a second harbour bridge.

But before ratepayers flood the council's office with complaints, they should know a little more about the mayor.

He is known only as Richard. He's not a New Zealander, and he doesn't live here. He paid \$36 for a virtual replica of Auckland City in an online world called Weblo.

Weblo is a virtual e-commerce community based on the real world and adds to the growing list of alternative-reality websites that include Second Life and World of Warcraft.

Its members – known as Weblonians – can buy virtual real estate anywhere on the planet, or purchase identities, cities, states, internet domain names and even countries.

Promoting these online assets can translate to cash in the real world, based on page traffic, "taxes" on transactions and managing virtual celebrities.

Weblo's marketing director, Sean Morrow, said internet users wanting to make money online would be attracted to the site as "online publicists".

Almost nothing is exempt. Wellington sold for \$18.50, Christchurch \$37.50 and Napier fetched \$6.65.

Even the All Blacks have gone, to a British Columbian for \$2.

But Mr Morrow said the money changing hands could be big – Las Vegas was bought for \$49 and sold recently for \$3232, Texas went for \$30,594, California for \$70,500.

And Baghdad is currently available for \$1290.

But all are expected to be outdone by the auction for England, which should fetch about \$93,000.