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Sun, 15 Jul. 2007

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## 'Rotorua' sold on the internet for \$19.12

14.07.2007

By MATTHEW MARTIN

Rotorua has a new mayor - and he's a Californian lawyer.

Mark Bagby's actually our virtual mayor - having bought Rotorua online for a whopping \$19.12 (US\$15) at [www.weblo.com](http://www.weblo.com).

As well as the virtual Rotovegas, Mr Bagby owns the virtual Las Vegas, Yale University and 221B Baker Street, London (the home of fictional character Sherlock Holmes).

Rotorua's real deputy mayor Trevor Maxwell said anything that promoted Rotorua in a positive way had to be good.

"Naturally it's a fun thing and all positive stuff, [Mark Bagby] obviously knows a bit about Rotorua and our culture so good on him.

"

Weblo, which has been described as "Monopoly on steroids", was launched last September and is the creation of Canadian internet entrepreneur Rocky Mirza. Weblo has gone one step further, creating an entire online world that has been described as "Monopoly on steroids."

"Everything that exists in the real world exists in Weblo, so you could buy Toronto and become mayor of Toronto," Mr Mirza said.

Members can also acquire virtual celebrities, buildings, cities and countries. The virtual England is up for auction with the latest bid standing at \$33,300 (US\$26,130).

Adam Dunkerley of Rotorua computer company Need a Nerd said these types of sites are becoming very popular worldwide.

"Second Life has close to 8 million people signed up with over 1.7 million using it in the last two months. The big concern is that people are getting so consumed in these reality internet sites that they take over their real lives. On the positive side people can learn basic strategy and investment skills and they can earn real money. Like anything, moderation is the key".

Compared with Rotorua's \$19 price tag Tauranga went for \$7.65 (US\$6) and Auckland, \$42 (US\$33), small change compared with California, \$67,500 (US\$53,000) and Texas, \$29,700 (US\$23,328).

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