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Web site sells virtual properties, cities

With Weblo, any schmo can become a real estate titan

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Asset Name	Price
Virtual Property	\$14,270
Virtual Property	\$5,000
Virtual Property	\$18,047
Virtual Property	\$430
Virtual Property	\$2,300

By **David Siders**
 Record Staff Writer
 April 21, 2007 6:00 AM

STOCKTON (VIRTUALLY) - I bought City Hall for \$2 the other day.

Then I acquired Stockton Arena and Stockton Ballpark. I'm the manager of Mayor Ed Chavez, too.

His e-self, anyway.

Chavez said he did not know he had a virtual self, or that I'm selling it, flipping the mayor and my other assets this week at auction.

"That's scary," he said. "Can anybody get on that site?"

That site is Weblo.com, an electronic universe where every city, state and property is for sale. People pay real money - Rick Schwartz, the Boca Raton, Fla., man who bought Stockton for \$14.27 and Lodi for \$5, paid \$18,047 to govern Florida - to build online replicas of the real world.

Online mayors and governors earn a cut of all transactions that take place within their cities and states, and players who develop popular sites earn a share of Weblo's advertising revenue. Property also can be resold: Las Vegas, first purchased for \$430, recently traded for \$2,300.

Schwartz, whom Weblo's Colin Trethewey said is "quite the tycoon," was on a real-world cruise this week, unavailable for comment.

But the virtual mayor of Tracy was around. Steinomite, a Canadian who preferred that his real-world name not be used, owns the Playboy mansion in Los Angeles, castles in Germany and an empire of cities and states worldwide. Tracy's proximity to the coast and to windmills appealed to its mayor, an alternative-power enthusiast.

"I've really lived inside the game," he said.

Since Montreal-based Weblo was launched in December, 22,700

TODAY'S MOST VIEWED

- 'Shabby chic' Stockton home to go on the market
- Crime Stoppers -- Published April 23, 2007
- 4 carry out home-invasion robbery
- Man arrested in rape, kidnapping

THIS WEEK'S MOST VIEWED

- Minor hit-and-run may have triggered multivehicle crash
- 'Shabby chic' Stockton home to go on the market
- Woman dies from injuries in crash
- Man convicted of killing girlfriend

THIS MONTH'S MOST VIEWED

- Escaped attempted-murder suspect, girlfriend still at large
- Crime Stoppers -- Published April 2, 2007
- Stockton teen accidentally kills herself
- Man slain in parked semi

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- 2008 Dodge Avenger - Bright Silver - 8 mi.
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FEATURED HOMES from ValleyHomeFinder.com

users have registered and almost 7,280 cities have been sold.

The company asserts, "Global domination has never been more fun."

For \$24.68, I purchased not only City Hall and the arena and ballpark, but also the city of Lathrop (\$5), The Record (\$2), The Haggin Museum (\$2), San Joaquin County Courthouse (\$2), the Waterfront Warehouse (\$2) and Chavez (each member can be the "virtual publicist" of one celebrity, boss or anyone else for free).

Then I called Gregg Meath, a local attorney specializing in intellectual property law and an Internet law expert, to check if what I'd done was OK.

He thought so, for the most part. His reservation was about the buying and selling of people. And he doubted the value of my domain.

I said, "But I own City Hall."

He said, "But you don't."

Indeed. Lathrop did not hold a parade in my honor, I have no key to City Hall, and I've yet to receive rent from my tenants at the Waterfront Warehouse (consider this a friendly notice, Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce).

Still, Meath said, Weblo is to be admired. "They're making something from nothing," he said.

Hopefully, I can, too: I put the mayor and my empire up for auction Friday.

In the unlikely event that I profit, I'll send a real-world check for that amount to Friends of the Stockton Public Library.

Don't count on it, though. To auction my assets, I had to upgrade from a free account to an \$89 one, and my debt gets paid first.

Surely Chavez could fetch a few dollars?

The mayor isn't so bullish.




"If you get a nickel, I think you're going to be fortunate," he said.

Contact reporter David Siders at (209) 943-8580 or dsiders@recordnet.com. Visit his [blog](#).

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madmansam *April 21, 2007 12:03 PM*
I'd like to buy "www.wilsonwayho.com" or
"www.downtownstocktondangerous.com" or even
"www.stocktonsucks.com". And I wouldn't mind purchasing "Alex Spanos"
as "Intellectual Property"?

Skooter23g *April 21, 2007 09:01 AM*
does this mean I can purchase Wilson Way and....ahem, "reap my
reward"? And purchasing the Mayor as "Intellectual Property"....well, not to
be rude, but he ain't no intellect

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