

Virtually, the whole world is for sale

Weblo offers buying and selling of real-world cities, properties

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Apr 15, 2007 — City of York: \$5.

York Airport: \$1.

Harley-Davidson's Springettsbury Township plant: \$2.

That's right, York County and all things within its outline are for sale - sort of- on the Internet.

Creators of Weblo.com have made a carbon copy of the real world - far beyond York County - and turned it into a real-life game similar to the Monopoly board game.

It's a place where everything from the Empire State Building to the city of London have sold and resold.

"A lot of people bought things they have a personal attachment to. ... One gentleman bought a bunch of Philly steakhouses," said Weblo spokesman Colin Trethewey.

Cities with a population of less than 40,000 people start at a selling price of \$5 and all properties start out at no more than \$2.

The most expensive city was New York, with an original selling price of \$410. Philadelphia sold for \$72.38.

"The prices aren't really crazy, it's just that people decide that there's value in these cities," Trethewey said.

Weblo determines the prices of cities by using a formula that includes population, the percent of population that has access to the Internet and the percent of the population that are Weblo members, he said.

Owners of cities, townships, villages and properties create their own Web sites and get money when someone clicks on one of the advertisements Weblo has posted on their sites. How much money depends on their Weblo membership level.

"Even people that have free sites are earning money. Not a lot: \$15 or \$20," Trethewey said.

Unlike social networking sites, including MySpace.com, Weblo.com pays members when more people visit their sites, he said.

People can purchase cities, villages, baseball stadiums and steakhouses through PayPal, which is widely used by eBay buyers and sellers to transfer money. "Although one person tried to send cash to buy something," Trethewey added. "We sent it back."

And those who buy cities are considered their mayors in the Weblo world - an idea that did not bother York's real-world mayor, John Brenner.

"That's great. There's hundreds of mayors all over the United States," he said. "If they want to share some of the responsibility (of running a city) - now there's a Web site I'd like to visit."

Mayors of cities on Weblo also receive part of the profits when anything within their city is sold. The same goes for owners of states.

There are more than 21,600 Weblo members.

"Some of them have thousands of properties and hundreds of cities," Trethewey said.

He added: "The idea is to just keep it growing. The goals are actually quite large - the goal is to be up to 10 million members by the end of 2008. And we're starting to see that growth now where it's doubling every month."

Brenner, for one, said although he only had just learned of the site, he was impressed.

"It's very creative, and anything that raises revenue should always be taken seriously."

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Weblo at a glance

How do I find it?

Go to <http://www.weblo.com>. In the upper right-hand search bar, type "York," "Harley" or anything else you might be looking for. Remember to choose if you're searching for cities, states, celebrities, domains, properties, airports or Weblo.

RecentWeblo purchases:

- Arkansas: \$3,779
- Idaho: \$1,964
- Kansas: \$3,807

