

SimCity Megalopolis FAQ

by princemercury

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by Justin Holmes (princemercury@hotmail.com)

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1. Introduction

I wrote this FAQ after having played SimCity for SNES since the early '90s without reaching megalopolis status. I bought the game for the Wii Virtual Console (despite the fact that I own it for SNES) and pretty soon got off to building a pretty decent city. I did a little digging on the internet and found out the last few things I should've been doing all along, and after a few hours I had finally built my first Megalopolis.

As this had been something that I had failed to do for years - including many years of seriously trying to crack the 500,000 mark - I felt like I needed to pass on what I knew, as no FAQs on any major sites I found covered some of the most important points.

Now, without further ado, the vital information.

2. Building Your City

The single most important tip I can give you regarding building a megalopolis is to pick the right map. The optimal map is #061, which by the time it's fully developed will only have 13% water coverage. This is significant because many maps will have water coverage in the neighbourhood of 30%. If you want to go rogue and pick another map to do it on, you should probably avoid an island map. More on that later.

Right from the beginning, you should build nuclear plants exclusively, as well as public transit rail. Coal produces unneeded pollution, and also powers less zones, which results in unnecessarily used land. Roads cause traffic, and while rail is twice the price, you need to bite the bullet and just build rail. Nuclear plants should probably be built in the corners of the map, next to industrial zones.

On the subject of what you don't need to build, stick with just one stadium, seaport and airport. You gain nothing from additional zones but used up space. In the case of the stadium, you will want to build three and bulldoze two, so you can get your second zoo. Fire departments are a similar deal - you'll be better off battling fires by bulldozing yourself. You need a minimum of one for your residential units, so you should probably build a bunch of fire departments to earn three Fire HQs and use them to boost land values in poor areas.

When you are filling your map with units, remember to build industrial zones on the edge of the city map and commercial zones on the edge of the water. I cannot stress either point enough. Industrial zones should go to the edge because not only does that take advantage of land that is almost always of a poor value, but it also allows half of the pollution of the unit to spill off the map and out of the city. And whereas industrial zones do not care about land value, commercial zones thrive on it. With as little exception as possible, build commercial zones on waterfronts. Commercials are the hardest of the three zones to properly grow, and to get to the megalopolis level you need to get the most out of all your zones. Commercial zones, as well as police stations as needed, should be used to buffer your outer ring of industrial zones from the inside of the map. Commercial zones don't like pollution, but they can deal with it much better than residential zones.

An important thing to bear in mind while building your city is that you should try to cheat and build as little rail tracks as possible. This means building industrial zones right at the edge of the map - zone against the wall - without any rail on the other side. As well, zones like power plants do not need to be linked by rail. When you're trying to cram in as many zones as possible, one of the best ways to free up space is to look at where you can scrap some rail. Reaching the half million population mark is a lot easier when you're only using as much space on rail as you need to. Park land is similar - building it is great to fill in individual squares, but other than gaining large parks, it does little more than waste space. A megalopolis should probably have a 0% park rating on the city overview screen.

In the middle of these industrial and commercial zones, you get to fill your city up with a lot of residential zones. To hit megalopolis, your residential zones are going to make up over 40% of your city. The key to building units in your city is to use these two patterns -

DONUT BLOCK

PAIR ROW

RRC

RRRRCRRRCRRRR

CGC

RRCRRRRCRRRCR

CRR

I'm not taking any credit with inventing these - anyone who's gotten anywhere in this game will swear by them, and if you've played the game for a while you probably already know about them.

If not, a brief explanation. The Donut Block on the left is residential zones and commercial zones surrounding a gift. This takes advantage of the fact that gifts don't need access to road/rail and minimizes the space taken to lay out nine zones by laying them in a 3x3 grid surrounded by rail. The zones are staggered between pairs of residential and commercial zones to maximize the chance of getting four TOP zones around the gift (this will probably happen around at least one gift in your city if you do it right).

Donut Blocks should be clumped together in groups of about three to build some strong land value. These groups should be spread throughout the city, filled in by the above pair rows. The one above is just an example - they can be as long or as short as needed, and can have any combination of residential and commercial zones (and no doubt some PDs thrown in), surrounded by rails. The key here is to simply stuff the city with residential zones while still having some commercial zones to combat unemployment.

2a) Gifts

Let's go over the gifts so you know how to get them, and what to do with them.

Amusement Park/Casino

Obtained: You have to build a stretch of roads for three of them. The other two don't require roads. I'd love to know the exact requirements but the bottom line is the three come after you build 500 km of road and the other two you'll get without much difficulty through city building.

Where to build: I can't stress enough that you want the amusement park. It provides some serious growth potential and doesn't cause crime at the expense of the spare cash the casino provides. Keep 'em around residential areas in a donut block.

Bank

Obtained: Have a city and have less than \$2000.

Where to build: Donut block, near a commercial part of town. This is a very good donut block gift, so make sure you get it. If you're going to use the \$999,999 code, you should consider holding off until you've build up to the city level.

City Park

Obtained: 300, 600, 900 acres of parks.

Where to build: In a donut block. This one's just average, but it's easy enough to get.

Expo

Obtained: Build an airport and seaport.

Where to build: This one's not gonna do much in a donut block. You're best using it to separate industrial zones from residential zones with the Expo in a poor area where the land value bump will come in handy.

Fire HQ

Obtained: Build 6, 12, 18 FDs.

Where to build: A good unit to drop amongst a poor part of town, and good to separate the industrial rim from your residential zones. Probably shouldn't be used in a donut block.

Fountain

Obtained: January 1950

Where to build: Another strong gift in terms of donut block growth. Probably best kept near to commercial zones

Landfill

Obtained: Run out of land!

Where to build: In the middle of the water. Put two next to each other, build commercial zones, run some rails by it and at worst you'll get two high value commercial zones - often you'll get a C TOP. The almost criminal thing about Landfills is you get more in levels with less water - in map #061 you can get up to seven landfills as opposed to four or five in some other maps.

Library

Obtained: When you have three, six, and nine schools. This'll just kind of happen at some point.

Where to build: Donut block near residential zones. The library isn't going to improve land value radically, but it sure is better than nothing.

Mario Statue

Obtained: Megalopolis

Where to build: Build a donut block and be prepared to be wowed. This won't

help you get to megalopolis, but it'll keep you above 500,000 when you build this and transform a poor part of town into a couple of TOPs.

Police HQ

Obtained: Build 6, 12, 18 PDs.

Where to build: This'll boost some land values, but you're better off taking advantage of its widened range so you can free up some nearby zones for residential zones where you'd normally need PDs. Don't build in a donut block.

Train Station

Obtained: Build 50, 200 km of track.

Where to build: Outside of a donut block, around some commercial zones. Should give some nearby units a real kick in terms of land value.

Windmill

Obtained: Develop 150, 350 zones.

Where to build: In a donut block. Expect solid growth.

Your House

Obtained: When your village becomes a town.

Where to build: This is one of the sweetest gifts in terms of donut blocks.

Build it in a donut block and watch the surrounding zones skyrocket.

Zoo

Obtained: When you build your first or third stadium.

Where to build: Another solid donut block one. Seems good for residential areas.

I emphasize that if you want a megalopolis, you should aim to get every single gift you can. That means building tracts of park, road and FDs as well as extra stadiums just to bulldoze to unlock gifts.

2b) \$999,999 Code

Getting to a megalopolis is plenty hard even with this code, let alone without. If you want as close to a million dollars as you can get in the game, all you have to do is spend all your money - right down to \$0 - and let the game play out the rest of the year. Once the budget screen comes up, hold down the L button and select 'go with figures'. Then, still holding down L, go back to the screen, and set all three funds to 100%. Select go with figures, then when you get back to the map, let go of L. There you are, \$999,999. That will help a little on the road to a 500,000 population.

3. Maintaining Your City

Make sure you keep an eye on your zones that aren't producing - these are ideal places to build new donut blocks or place other gifts. Change residential zones to commercial, commercial to industrial, etc. Check the maps to see what might be negatively affecting the area (crime). Sometimes simply bulldozing a zone, replacing it with parkland for a year and building a zone again later will make a difference.

Also, when building tracks of row pairs of residential zones, sometimes you're best to build them a pair at a time - let the two residential zones develop, then build two next to them with accompanying rails on either side. This can make for more sustained and positive growth.

In addition to optimizing the map, you also have to optimize your zones by giving your SimCitizens little to complain about. Problems like crime and housing costs are going to be difficult for any city, but most issues can be solved through careful city planning.

Crime

This is going to be a big one - trying to keep it between 10% and 15% is probably the best you can do. Try to keep police stations spread out, make good use of Police HQs and make sure you keep lots of PDs near industrial zones. Also, you're better off building Amusement Parks instead of Casinos to keep crime down.

Pollution

Another one that you're going to have to deal with. Build industrial zones almost exclusively on the edge of the city map, as that causes half the pollution to spill off the edge. Build nuclear plants instead of coal. You don't want your airport in the middle of an industrial area - you're probably better off putting it on a small island. That said, the area around the airport isn't going to be good for growth of much other than industrial zones. Using park to fill in empty spaces will help a little, but nothing will stop polluting zones from polluting.

Housing Costs

If this is your city's biggest issue, you're not doing too bad. What this essentially means is that your residential zones as a whole have a very high value, which means that they are able to house more SimCitizens, which is your goal in building them. The best way to handle this is to simply build more residential zones, but don't worry too much about this one.

Unemployment

This one's a little tougher. Often this means you don't have enough industrial zones in the city, or that you don't have enough commercial zones mixed in the middle of your residential zones. This one can be indicative of the growing pains between metropolis and megalopolis, as to hit the half million mark involves a lot of residential growth.

Traffic

The best way to deal with traffic is to not build roads. From village to megalopolis, you should be functioning solely on rails. Bear in mind that you might want to build a good stretch of unused roads at some point to pick up some amusement parks.

Taxes

Like traffic, the best way to deal with this issue is to eliminate it completely by using the \$999,999 code and setting taxes to 0%. If you want to gain your megalopolis the honest way, you'll have to strike a balance between what your city will pay without hurting the growth of your zones. A good way to free up money if you need it is to cut fire department funding, as you can deal with a fire cheaper than funding departments.

4. FAQ

Q) What is a Megalopolis?

A) A city in SimCity with a population of at least 500,000.

Q) What do you get for achieving that level?

A) A pretty nifty Mario Statue. You also get a new background behind

Dr. Wright, new music, a different icon on the save screen. What you don't get is an improved Your House, unfortunately.

Q) What is a TOP?

A) When two residential or two commercial zones directly next to each other are in a very high land value and growth area, they will sometimes merge and become one zone called a TOP. These zones are what you are aspiring to gain in order to become a megalopolis.

Q) What is stacking?

A) Stacking is where part of a building is taken out (by a fire, plane crash, what have you) and the blank space is filled in with a zone to maximize space.

Q) Is stacking necessary to build a megalopolis?

A) No, but it does help and it can get you to put up some pretty obscene numbers in terms of population. However, it does result in a pretty cheesy and ugly city, so I don't really recommend it.

Q) What are the most important things to remember when building a megalopolis?

A) Use map #061 or another low-water map.

Build commercial zones by water.

Build industrial zones at the edge of the map.

Build residential zones in rows of pairs.

Build gifts in donut blocks.

Only build rail, and only build as much as you need.

Be creative and look for ways to improve your city.

Be patient.

Q) Any other tips?

A) Yeah, save all the time. You don't want a plane crashing on a gift zone.

Afterword

Thanks for reading/hosting this FAQ. This FAQ cannot be reproduced without the explicit permission from Justin Holmes (princemercury@hotmail.com).

Special thanks to Nintendo and Maxis for giving us an SNES game still worth writing about in 2007.

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