

**Platform:** PC (Windows 7 only)  
**DRM:** EA Origin and GlassBox  
**Digital Distributor:** PHYSICAL COPY ONLY!

**Developer:** Maxis  
**Publisher:** Electronic Arts

## RYG's VERDICT

**29%** **BARGAIN BIN MATERIAL**  
**64% and Below**

### 1. Product Info

**Note:** GlassBox is a data-driven game engine designed specifically for persistent online gaming. Its data, simulation and "rules" of gameplay are stored server-side.

**See Also:** Online Manual can be found through [SimCity's official website](#).

*Looking at how much information is provided on SimCity on its website prior and on release.*

- ✓ Minimum and recommended specs provided
- ✓ EULA, Privacy Policy and TOS fully accessible on [store.origin.com](#)
- ✓ All game-related information can be found on [store.origin.com](#)
  
- ✗ SimCity released with different global dates
- ✗ Available only on Windows
- ✗ Base game sold as multiple "editions" with varying selections of day-one DLCs
- ✗ Closed beta access only
- ✗ Only advised EA Origin DRM was to be used for SimCity
- ✗ No advice on how GlassBox DRM would affect users before & during gameplay
- ✗ No Manual and/or Readme provided

### 2. Privacy Policy

**Note:** 2,997 words found within [Electronic Art's Privacy Policy](#).

**See Also:** Section 1, *Introduction* and Section 7, *Where The Information Is Held?* where a level of care is described by EA, but later waived in respect to the level of security they have with the user info they possess.

*Looking at SimCity's Privacy Policy found only through Electronic Art's official website.*

- ✓ Privacy Policy found on [www.ea.com](#)
- ✓ Policy applies to SimCity, EA Origin DRM and GlassBox
- ✓ Users can access their EA Origin account
- ✓ Users can modify their EA Origin account
  
- ✗ Difficult to read, understand and is inconsistently worded
- ✗ Users not visibly notified of any changes made to the Policy
- ✗ "Personally-identifiable" and "non-personally identifiable" info are intertwined
- ✗ Doesn't define what info is specifically collected before and during gameplay
- ✗ Not advised where the info is specifically stored
- ✗ Assurances of safety and security of information not provided
- ✗ Not clearly defined how info is used by EA Origin and/or GlassBox
- ✗ Third parties not identified
- ✗ Opt-in / opt-out process not provided in respect to GlassBox DRM
- ✗ Users have limited control over their info

**Note:** Privacy Policy was retrieved March 2013; Effective Date of EA's Privacy Policy prior to this evaluation was September 2012.

## 3. EULA / TOS

**Note:** 4,517 words found in SimCity's EULA. EU Version can be found on [EA's Product EULAs page](#).

**Note:** Limited warranties, waivers of liability and indemnity are commonly found within many software EULAs and TOSs

## 4. Setup / Install

**Note:** SimCity was advised it will require ~10Gb to play, but we've found it to only take up 3Gb of HDD space, even with the latest updates applied.

**Note:** It is advised that first-time users of EA Origin should install and update EA Origin before installing SimCity.

## 5. Updates / Patching

- ✗ Users can't validate what they've provided
- ✗ User data is retained by EA for an extended period of time
- ✗ Can't review and query changes made to the Privacy Policy
- ✗ Users must accept ALL changes made to the Policy before playing SimCity

*Looking at SimCity's End User License Agreement.*

- ✓ EULA / TOS is found on EA's website and in-game
- ✓ Won't blacklist specific background services or software
- ✓ Users can criticise or provide criticism about the game without reprisals
- ✗ EULA / TOS only covers SimCity and EA Origin DRM (not GlassBox)
- ✗ Difficult to read, understand and is inconsistently worded
- ✗ Drafted to only abide by the laws of the US
- ✗ Users not visibly notified of any changes made to the EULA
- ✗ Can't review and query changes made to the EULA
- ✗ License to play the game only provided
- ✗ No refunds or exchanges for purchased games
- ✗ Replacement copies provided for a fee
- ✗ Terms and conditions for GlassBox DRM aren't clearly defined
- ✗ Circumvention of all DRMs implemented in SimCity are prohibited
- ✗ Back-ups aren't permitted
- ✗ SimCity's source code isn't to be modified or reverse-engineered
- ✗ Not permitted to create "mods"
- ✗ Monitoring services / software are required to play SimCity
- ✗ Warranties waived (excluding physical merchantability warranties)
- ✗ Cover waived against any unforeseeable damages, disruptions of service
- ✗ Termination process dictated by EA
- ✗ Arbitration process isn't freely-provided and is overseen by EAL
- ✗ Legal action is waived

*Looking at how SimCity is installed on Windows PCs only.*

- ✓ Custom installation options are provided
- ✓ Currently-executing background services won't interfere with installation
- ✓ Error-free installation
- ✓ Installation completed just under 30 minutes
- ✗ No installation logs of files and registry keys
- ✗ Extra game and DRM files found in /AppData/ and /ProgramData/

*Looking at how SimCity is patched prior, during and after gameplay.*

- ✗ Automatic updates are mandatory

**Note:** First time users of EA Origin will require a 60Mb update.

**Note:** Users will need to download a 60Mb + 400Mb day-one patch.

**Note:** Subsequent patches are required for gameplay as SimCity was designed to have its game and data-engine updated via. GlassBox.

## 6. DRM & Activation

**Note:** SimCity will connect to the following servers prior and during gameplay: EA Origin, Electronic Arts, AdNexus, Adobe SaaS Networks, Akamai Technologies, Amazon Web Services, AppNexus, EdgeCast Networks, Facebook, Level 3 Communications, Limelight Networks, Lithium Technologies, NetDNA, OpenX Technologies, Salesforce, SoftLayer Network, Twitter, Verisign and X Plus One Solutions.

## 7. Gameplay Experience

**Note:** Minimum Specs described are in relation to online connectivity before and during gameplay.

**Note:** SimCity will frequently verify if the game is the original AND will verify if the connection is stable.

**Note:** SimCity will also have issues during the setup phase of gameplay (I.e. claiming cities).

- ✗ Day-one patch required
- ✗ Requires ALL patches to play SimCity
- ✗ Will install GlassBox DRM from the day-one patch
- ✗ Patches only installed via. automatic updates
- ✗ Details of patches not provided prior to installation
- ✗ Notifications not provided for availability of game patches
- ✗ Changes to the Privacy Policy and/or EULA not provided
- ✗ No installation logs of files and registry keys
- ✗ Rollback option not provided
- ✗ No plans to sunset EA Origin and/or GlassBox DRM

*Looking at EA Origin and GlassBox DRM in relation to SimCity and its effects on Windows PCs only.*

- ✓ Won't interfere with currently-executing background services or software
- ✓ Firewall and AV settings aren't modified
- ✓ Username, password and email are only required in respect to EA Origin
- ✓ Unlimited online activations to any one PC
- ✓ Unlimited installations to any one PC

- ✗ No instructions provided on the activation process
- ✗ Can't verify the safety and reliability of the activation process
- ✗ Activation pathway isn't explained
- ✗ No offline activation option
- ✗ A non-transferrable user account is required
- ✗ Constant and tethered internet connection required to play SimCity
- ✗ Game is locked to specific account after activation
- ✗ EA Origin and GlassBox DRM are implemented
- ✗ Limited to 5 hardware activations in a rolling 24-hour period
- ✗ No support or troubleshooting process
- ✗ Activating the game isn't simple and hassle-free

*Looking at the gameplay aspects of SimCity and how it interacts with PC Windows.*

- ✓ Disc not required for gameplay
- ✓ Can play in windowed mode
- ✓ Won't interfere with services and background software
- ✗ Minimum specs provided are inaccurate
- ✗ Requires original copy to play the game
- ✗ Limited graphical settings provided
- ✗ Only playable on mouse and keyboard
- ✗ Requires constant and tethered internet connection for gameplay
- ✗ Requires constant and tethered internet connection to access DLC
- ✗ Will "phone home"
- ✗ Connectivity issues are commonplace
- ✗ Will encounter gameplay, launch and connectivity errors
- ✗ SimCity will reset or modify some in-game settings without users permission

**Note:** You will lose your city if you choose to connect to a different regional server.

**Note:** Savegames are stored on EA's servers.

## 8. PC Checkup

- ✗ Won't resume at the last checkpoint
- ✗ Can only play on one PC at a time per game / account
- ✗ Can't modify savegame and/or ini file
- ✗ DRM and monitoring services will operate during and after gameplay

*Looking at whether SimCity will modify certain PC settings without users permission / consent.*

- ✓ PC clean after scanning for viruses
- ✓ PC clean after scanning for malware and spyware
- ✓ PC clean after scanning for rootkits
- ✓ HOSTS wasn't modified
- ✓ Played SimCity without major errors
- ✓ Start-up settings remain unaltered
- ✓ No DRM / monitoring services running in the background after shutting down
- ✓ System configuration files remain unaltered

## 9. Removal Uninstall

*Looking at how clean, efficient and effective the removal process is for SimCity (How much legacy material is there after the removal of SimCity?)*

- ✓ Procedures to remove SimCity and EA Origin provided via. [EA's website](#).
- ✓ External tool to remove game + DRM files is easy to use
- ✗ Will need to uninstall the game via. Control Panel
- ✗ No prompt to backup savegames provided
- ✗ EA Origin and SimCity files and registry keys remain
- ✗ Incomplete manual instructions to remove game + DRM files provided

## 10. Customer Support

*Looking at the customer support side of SimCity through EA's Support*

- ✓ answers.ea.com is easy to use and navigate
- ✓ Searching on answers.ea.com is direct and quick
- ✓ Info is easy to read and understand
- ✓ Arbitration / resolution service is available
- ✓ Arbitration / resolution process is easy to follow / understand
- ✓ Consumers can initiate legal action if arbitration process fails
- ✗ Customer service / support is spread out between websites and services.
- ✗ Customer service via. EA Origin takes more than 24 hours to respond
- ✗ Customer service via. EA Origin will take more than 24 hours to resolve issues
- ✗ Tone and language used is distant, robotic and impersonal
- ✗ Focused on generic suggestions and solutions within their FAQ
- ✗ Arbitration / resolution process favours EA
- ✗ No option provided for giving feedback on the service of customer support

**Note:** Unfortunately, much of the issues surrounding the connectivity of SimCity could not be resolved and required users to simply wait until EA had issued hotfixes and patches to SimCity server-side.

## **RYG's VERDICT**

# 29%

## **BARGAIN BIN MATERIAL**

**64% and below**

## **SHOWS PROMISE & POTENTIAL**

**Between 65% and 84%**

## **WORTH SUPPORTING**

**85% and above**

*When SimCity and its engine/DRM, GlassBox, was designed with a singular purpose and intent (persistent-online, community-driven PC gaming) it was going to be hard to make any adjustments to cater for the massive influx of gamers trying to log onto the servers. With lengthy queues, poor support services / documentation, as well as a game designed with heavy (DRM-related) restrictions it comes as no surprise that SimCity is destined to be bargain-bin game of 2013.*



### **Colophon**

This analysis of SimCity was compiled by Lisa and Martin Pham. Typeface used is ITC Stone Sans. RYG thanks Anna Henriksson, **Josh Bush**, **Ethan Lee**, **Adam Ames** and **David Hatch** for their insights and suggestions in the design of this analysis. SimCity was bought with RYG funds through EB Games.

### **Disclaimer**

These analyses are only a guide and represent RYG's perspective into SimCity as a product. We believe everyone should perform their own research and reach their own conclusions. This is one view of many, we hope. Again, we thank you for taking the time to read our analysis of SimCity and hope you continue to support our work.

RYG is a user research and design studio for video game developers and publishers. Our focus is planning and designing games with a gamers'-first mentality through user and product research. RYG is led by a husband-and-wife team of Lisa and Martin Pham. RYG is operated in the heart of Sydney.

RYG Analysis: SimCity  
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