

Cities

For Systems like Buffy, Chill, GURPS, and HERO

Settings play a key role in games and stories, no matter the type of game or medium. It is often said that the setting is a character itself and, to those ends, I have developed a points-based city system to bring that into my games. To be sure, you can spend several (game) years building your city and its history, and you should, as it can be a game unto itself; but, the idea is to build a setting for your PCs that feels as real and alive as they do.

Everything here assumes your city exists on a "real-world" earth not terribly unlike our own. Domed cities and special considerations require further expansion. If you are basing your city on a real-world city which actually exists, be sure to do your due diligence and Wikipedia it up before you even sit down to design.

It's best to play-out your city for a few years (Rounds) before introducing it, giving it some time to become established (and Chartered, et.al.) and develop. Prior to that, your descriptions would consistently need to include scenes of construction, traffic snarls, and so forth; neighborhoods and communities you want to be staples have barely had time to form; common NPCs have no place to stay; etc.

This system is based on a 1-10 scale and specifically designed for UniSystem, Emphyrean, and similar offshoots. It should work with other systems, including **Chill**, with little conversion.

5	Unincorporated
10	City
15	Political Powerhouse

All cities have a profile or statblock detailing their important features, including things like Policy and Direction, which deal with the politics of the area. These are detailed below.

PL: Power Level is a good stat for the QuickSheet and summarizes the scores from the sections below. It is the political clout of the city, and represents its overall size, effectiveness, and political pull. It is not necessary for a city to have a PL, though it is helpful to the GM.

Size (Sz.): 1mn people per 1 Sz. +1 PL for every 1 point over 6. After 10mn people, the area becomes a state or city-state and the system requires further expansion.

AGriculture: 1 feeds 1 mn. people. +1 MOR for every point that exceeds Sz. AG can never be lower than Sz.; AG must be equal to or greater than the city's Sz. If it is not, it means the city cannot provide for 1mn people for every 1 point difference. Although the general scale is 1-10, that is given in millions when discussing the populace. AG cannot exceed RES and never be less than Sz.

RESources ♠♣♥♦ -- 1 employs 1 mn people. Museums; Special Items.

MORale: (+WPR) 1 base. (+1 PL at 9-10, +1 PL for every point over 10.) MOR cannot exceed AG.

ER: Emergency Response; Fire, Law Enforcement, Hospitals, Clinics—Response Time = 2d10(- ER, + Crime, + Weather) minutes. +1 MOR for every point over 8.

STRength: Military OV/DV. +1 PL for every point over 8; +1 MOR at 7-8, +1 at 9, +1 MOR at 10, +1 MOR for every point over 10. 1 Arena (Battlefield) per 5 STR; 1 Monument for every point over 7.

EDUcation: Colleges, Think Tanks, Libraries; Books. +1 PL for every point over 8. 1 Monument at 9, 10, etc.

POL (Policy): Monarchy, Democracy, Anarchy, Authoritarian, Socialist, Communist (Socialist Authoritarianism), Plutocracy, Corporatocracy, +1 PL at 9, 10, 11, etc.

DIR (Direction): Goal, purpose. 1-10 ♦ Prosperity-driven (Economic); ♠ Resources-driven (Economic, Development); ♣ Security

(Authority); ♠ Education (College Town), Magic; ♥ Religious; ♥♣♠ Political

Magic Factor (MF): (3 - World) 3 base.

Faith: Spirituality. Churches, Monuments, add to MOR. (+1 MF at 9, 10, 15, 20, etc.) 1 Church for every 3 points; 1 college for every 5 points; 1 monument per point.

Crime: 1-10 + ♦ (Add to Response Time. -1 MOR for every point over 5; -1 PL for every point over 9.)

Weather: 1-10 (Add to Response Time. -1 MOR for every point over 7; -1 PL at 7-8, -2 at 9-10, -1 PL for every point over 10.)

Transportation: 1-10 Add to Response Time. -1 MOR for every point over 6.

Cities grow at a rate of 1 DP per Sz. per annum, +1 per 1 ♦. Cities cost DP equal to their PL per year to survive. This is basically how taxes work. Any leftover DP can be spent however you choose. If you do not know, roll for DIR to see how the city decides to expend their Development (Drama) Points using their POL as an indicator.

Advantages/Disadvantages

Cities, like PCs, can purchase Qualities and Drawbacks to further develop their region, making them even more like the characters that live there.

Administration

1-pt Advantage

Everything runs smoothly and efficiently. +1 DIR, +1 ER.

Allergies

3-pt. Disadvantage

The city is a magnet for allergens, from dust and dirt to fur, hair, and pollen. Millions of the populace suffer from allergies everyday. -1 Policy per Level; -1 Sz. per 3 Levels (0 at Levels 1, 2).

Architecture

1-pt. Advantage

The city features some architectural features found nowhere else. Add 1 monument for each point. +1 Sz. at level 9, +2 at 10, +1 per every 5 points above 10. Be careful not to attract more Sz. than your city can handle.

Artist

3-pt. Advantage

An Artist (125-points, Art 10) lives in your city. More artists are likely to come. +1 Museum.

Broadcast Tower

5-pt. Advantage

Radio/TV/Internet and cellphone tower. +1 MOR, +1 POL, +1 DIR.

The most popular station is WXPO Talk Radio, which plays incidental music when it is not needed. The most popular show is *Coastal AM*, which plays on WXPO seemingly 365/24/7. Also popular is *MST3k/RiffTrax*, as is hacking the network and pretending like you are *MST3k*. + WXPO.

Dead Zone (**Spotty Coverage**).

Charter

5-pt. Advantage

Area is incorporated. +1 ♦ RES, +1 Direction.

Cheapskate

2-pt. Disadvantage

Those streetlights can wait; all the roads have potholes; etc. +1 CRIME, -1 DIR.

Clouds

3-pt. Disadvantage

Clouds of crows, cockroaches, or flies pervade the cityscape, making life unbearable for many. -1 Policy, -1 Direction, -1 MOR per 3 Levels (0 at Levels 1-2).

Construction

2-pt. Disadvantage

Constant construction makes life miserable for the population, leading to delays, traffic snarls, and overall inefficiency of operation. +2 Transportation.

Doctor

3-pt./Level Advantage

An internationally-acclaimed specialist makes her home here. Others are sure to do the same to be so close to greatness. +1 Hospital, +1 ER per Level.

Faith

2-pt./Level Advantage

3-pt./Level Disadvantage (max. -5 [15])

For every 1-pt. invested in Faith, city grows 1 church, +1 POL, +1 DIR; for every 1 Level Disadvantage, city loses 1 church. All cities begin with a base 1 church; cities with negative churches have a cult problem. Those would-be church members will continue practicing their beliefs, which generally includes growing their ranks, but have no centralized place from which to do it. Faith is added to (or subtracted from) MOR, not for "Morality" but for cohesion of purpose and belief which, although not all share for the same reason, all believers and non-believers feel as it pertains to having a place to perform their rituals and perpetuate their "discussion" (as to whose religion is the right one, etc.). Faith is also added to or subtracted from each PCs' *Comparative Religion/Theology* skills and abilities.

Fertility/Food Supply

1-pt. Advantage/Disadvantage

As Spell Verdant Fields. +1 Level feeds 1 mn. people. +1 MOR for every Level above Sz., representing the food in ready supply, well-maintained, and stored and cared for properly. The converse leads to a subsequent loss of -1 MOR per Level of Disadvantage. The Disadvantage Level cannot exceed the Sz. of the city. Food supply may take many forms, from storage buildings to industrial plants to verdant agricultural fields to gleaming water towers. +/-1 AG.

Hero

3-pt. Advantage

A Hero (125-points) lives here. He attracts other adventuring types, and lends to the overall MOR of the city. You can have as many Heroes living in your city as you want, but you don't gain MOR for the first one; +1 MOR for every two Heroes living in your city.

Kaiju

5-pt. Advantage

The city has its own kaiju champion. Hopefully, others will not follow suit! +1 STR.

Kaiju Target

5-pt. Disadvantage

The city is the target of frequent attacks by kaiju. +1 Random Annual Events, +1 Random Monthly Events, +1 What Just Happened (Weekly Events)?

+ Construction

Leadership

3-pt. Advantage

Political power resides in your city, bringing stability and focusing attention on important projects and matters. +1 DIR, +1 POL.

Mage

3-pt. Advantage

A Mage (BattleMage or WarMagus) patrols the city. +1 STR per Level. Choose one Spell for Magical Defense: Early Warning, Magical Ward, Scapula of Protection.

Magic Factor (Dead Zone)

2-pt. Advantage/Disadvantage

Moves the MF of the city by one point in either direction, making Magic more or less easier to cast. Note that this has no effect on Assemblages and similarly crafted items, but *does* affect Enchanted (Magical) items. This Magic Factor is subtracted from the PL of every item and spell, et.al. If the value goes to negative, the spell cannot be cast and/or the item is useless in that area. Ley lines, crystals, glyphs, wards, and the placement of such objects has a profound effect on Magic. Dead Zone.

Monument

1-pt. Advantage

Statue marking an event, personage, or location. This might be as simple as a marker reminding tourists of a long-forgotten battle, or as ornate as a king's tomb. +1 MOR.

Odor

1-pt. Disadvantage

The city is blanketed by a pervasive odor. It may be metallic, chemical, biological, or whatever, but it is unpleasant. -1 Sz. per Level over 3. -1 INT/PCN per point (distraction). Odor of -2 or worse cancels-out Acute Sense: Smell.

Personality

3-pt. Advantage

City has an on-air personality of some note, if not merit. +1 MOR, -1 Weather. Prereq. Broadcast Tower.

Policy

3-pt. Advantage

City has a political and financial policy it follows more often than not. Not everyone agrees with said policy, but a majority does. This gives the city Direction (+1) toward their overall purpose for being or goal for survival. This also sets the Structure of the city as its Policy.

Pyrite Crystal

1-pt. Advantage

Early-warning magic system. Pyrite Crystals sound when a magic-bearing being comes into range, magic is used within range, or magic is detected within range. Range is 30'. Pyrite Crystals can also be purchased, outright.

RES

1-pt. Advantage/2-pt. Disadvantage

♦ 2-pt./-4-pt.

As a Disadvantage, city lacks the specified RES (♠♣♥♦, ♦ RES are worth double); as a Advantage, city has specified RES in spades... so to speak. Per level of Disadvantage: -1 EDU ♠; -1 STR ♣; -1 MOR ♥.

Size

1-point Advantage/Disadvantage

If taken as a Advantage, city has room to grow: Approximately enough room to house, employ, and feed 1mn. people per 1 point. If taken as a Disadvantage, city lacks one or more RES needed for 1mn people, be it housing, employment, education, et.al.

Smog

3-pt. Disadvantage

Driving -1 per level, lose 1 far Range band per Level.

Spotty Coverage

3-pt. Disadvantage

City has spotty cellphone and/or TV and radio coverage. Roll each time a cellphone is used; no service on 1-4 (d10). +1 to no service range per Disadvantage Level (1-5 at Level 2; 1-6 at -9; etc.).

Dead Zone

Teachers

3-pt. Advantage

Teachers in the region are unionized and quality control is high. +1 library or school for every Level Advantage; +1 EDU per Level Advantage.

Traffic

3-Pt. Disadvantage

-1 Direction, Policy per Level; -1 MOR per 3 Levels (0 at Levels 1-3). +3 Transportation. Traffic snarls and snares are everyday problems for the city.

Weather

2-point Disadvantage

Severe Weather outbreaks cost time, labor, and money. The Weather Score is added to ER Response Time, just like the Crime Score. The Weather Score is also added to Weather Randoms rolls, et.al., making extreme weather events more common.

Villainous Neighbors

3-pt. Disadvantage

A villain lives in your midst, but it is known and overlooked. This can become the focal

point of campaigns or lurk in the background, ever waiting to fall in the PCs' laps. +1 Crime.

Zut Allors!

3-pt./Level Disadvantage

Rats. -1 ER per Level in Disadvantage.

City Randoms

1. Storefront
2. General Store
3. Fast Food
4. Nightclub
5. Bar
6. Gun Store
7. Bank/Cash Advance
8. Gas Station
9. Vendor
10. Criminal Base of Operations

Crime Randoms

1. Non-Violent Mugging (Hold-Up)
2. Mugging (Pickpocket)
3. Kidnapping
4. Carjacking
5. Armed Robbery
6. Assault
7. Brutal, Armed Assault
8. Armed Kidnapping
9. Robbery
10. Home Invasion

Historical Events

1. **War:** Like most places, the city was once the setting of a major war.
2. **Drought:** Real Grapes of Wrath -type stuff.
3. **Economic Depression**
4. **Racial Strife:** Self-explanatory, but this does suggest a multicultural region.
5. **Religious Upheaval:** A particular religion took precedent or was ousted.
6. **Revolution:** Political (usually) or otherwise, the city was once the backdrop to Revolution. A burgeoning political movement or new political party/direction may have arisen from this event, and may still be in effect.

7. **Claim to Fame:** Local celebrity done good; an important brand or corporation is located here.
8. **Origin Area:** Of something important in the campaign/world.
9. **Hero's Birthplace**
10. **Renown:** City was once renowned for something and is still widely-recognized for that, even if it no longer has anything to do with that for which it was once renowned; New Orleans is a good example.

Pop-Cultural Events

1. A popular song was written here or the songwriter hails from the city.
2. A popular novelist, movie, or TV show uses the city as its setting.
3. A famous movie was filmed here.
4. A famous novel was written about the city.
5. A local nightclub is renowned for making stars of up-and-comers.
6. The local sports team(s) is a winner.
7. A ubiquitous colloquialism involves the city, like "As big as New York City."
8. The city has a nickname, like "The Big Apple."
9. The city is routinely referenced by news and comedy stations, including WXPO.
10. The city's name is synonymous with some activity, outlook, or lifestyle.

NPC Randoms

1. Civilian.
2. Civilian.
3. Police.
4. Criminal.
5. Upstanding community member.
6. Politico.
7. Reporter.
8. Investigator.
9. Supernatural.
10. Ultratech (and/or Cyborg).

Things to Consider

Does the weather, climate, location, or atmosphere have deeper meaning? In what season or time of year does your story take place? How does this affect your story?

Is the setting illuminated in warm light, a harsh glare, partial shadow, or gloomy darkness?

Is nature portrayed as welcoming or foreboding?

How are buildings described? Do they suggest grandeur or squalor, openness or Claustrophobia, upkeep or decay, comfort or discomfort? What do furniture and any decorations suggest?

What items of value are in your city—artworks, important financial contributors to the larger region, et.al.?

What year is it?

Which neighborhoods are your PCs' Contacts from? How does this help or hinder them? How does this change what they know?

What can't your character do due to where they are? What are the laws and legalities of the region? What are the norms, mores, and values of the area?

Where will the plot of the story reach its climax?

Where does your main character(s) feel most out of their element? Where does your character feel most at home? How does this affect their actions and choices?

Sources:

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