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## Cyber City Tours promote Oakland

### Program puts county's downtowns on the Web

By Oralandar Brand-Williams  
*The Detroit News*

**ROCHESTER** — Soon, taking a trip through this Oakland County city's downtown will be as simple as striking a couple of keys on a computer.

County Executive L. Brooks Patterson and other officials have unveiled a new high-tech program that will transform Oakland County downtowns and districts into a world of virtual reality.

The county is partnering with Royal Oak-based Virtualeyes, the creator of Cyber City Tours, to give Oakland County residents the ability to take virtual tours of downtown areas and businesses from the comfort of their homes.

The Cyber City Tours program is an extension of the county's Main Street program, which was designed to infuse life into historic businesses districts.

Royal Oak, Ferndale, Farmington, Lake Orion and Rochester are Oakland County cities that are part of the Main Street program. Pontiac will soon join. There are 1,600 communities nationwide in the program.

Royal Oak is the only city to participate in the Cyber City Tours program, but other cities are expected to join shortly.

"This is just the beginning to promoting Oakland County and its quality of life as well as doing business here," Patterson said.

By logging on to Cyber City Tours' Web site, Internet users can get a three-dimensional, panoramic "tour" of a downtown street, and even go inside specific businesses.

Through the virtual tour, an Internet user can "go inside" the dining room of a restaurant or even view its menu. Merchants will be able to display individual products to potential customers.

Michael Medalia, president of



Photos by Daniel Mears / The Detroit News

**A bronze samurai shooting arrows by Gyoko, circa 1870, is part of the collection of Paul R. Haig of Rochester's P.R. Haig Jewelers. He plans to add Cyber City to his marketing plan.**

### Virtual tours

■ Royal Oak is the first city to showcase its downtown district and latest development on [cybercitytours.com](http://cybercitytours.com). The site is aimed at improving a community's Web presence through a fully interactive service that takes Internet users on a virtual tour of downtown streets and businesses, through three-dimensional imaging.

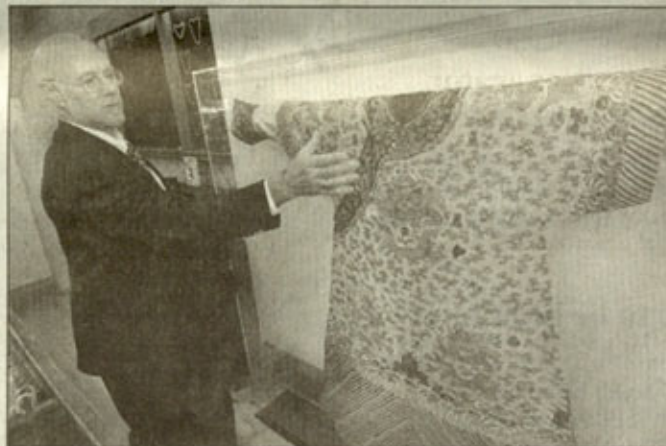
■ Ferndale, Rochester and Pontiac are expected to sign on to the Cyber City Tours network in the next few months.

Virtualeyes, predicts the virtual tour will be popular for merchants and Internet users.

"You can freely move around the downtown area and virtual window-shop and check out what the city has to offer," Medalia said.

"It connects the city's new businesses, new development to the Internet community and the world.

"This technology is evolving



**Cyber City will give him a new edge in getting more customers, says Paul Haig, who now uses e-Bay to sell about \$1,000 a day in Asian art and fine jewelry.**

and growing with the cities. As the cities change, so will this model. It keeps changing."

Businesses will pay \$500 to have a link on the site. There will be additional costs for features such as panoramic views and other technology-based features.

Virtualeyes is building the 3-D models at no cost to Oakland County, Patterson said.

"The application is endless," Patterson said. "We can go to conferences. We can use it for business

attraction. We can go on and on."

A handful of Royal Oak businesses such as the Royal Oak Brewery already have links on the CyberCityTours Web site and say it has been good for business.

"People come in saying they saw us online or they saw our menu online," said Kristi Trevarrow, a spokeswoman for the company.

Trevarrow, a volunteer for Royal Oak's Downtown Development Authority's Main Street

program, said the \$750 investment the brewery made for the site was worthwhile.

"I couldn't even imagine hiring someone to come in to do something like this," said Trevarrow, referring to the Cyber City's Web site. "For some businesses that don't have a Web site, this is a way to have a presence on the Web."

Rochester business owner Paul Haig said he will definitely add the Cyber City Tours Web site to his marketing plan. He now uses e-Bay to sell about \$1,000 a day in Asian art and fine jewelry.

Haig, the owner of Haig Galleries and Jewelers, said Cyber City will give him a different sort of edge in getting more customers.

Oakland County became the first county in the nation to take part in the national Main Street program when it was accepted into the historic redevelopment and preservation initiative in February 2000.

"The advantage is getting more local customers," Haig said.

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