

**Know Your ‘Hood - : Building Your Dream ‘Hood**

Understanding Planning Process and Community Engagement

**By Michael William Figueroa, M.A. and Edward Hill, BUP****classroom@creatives4community.org**

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**Educational Goals:**

* Provide a hands-on, construction oriented class project that encourages creativity, team decision making, and gives students practical experience with consumer issues as they relate to development and planning.
* Learn how to make basic urban plans for fulfilling the goals identified in a class discussion about communities.
* **Geographic Skills:**
* Identifying map area and resources within that area
* Answering geographic questions relating to a specific map area
* Analyzing diverse Geographic information
* **Connections to the Curriculum:**
* Geography, social studies, economics, planning, civics

**Description:**

In this lesson, students will make decisions about buildings, businesses, services, and housing areas to include in the development of a new neighborhood\*(see netlink below). After discussing essential elements of a self-sustaining community, the students will prepare a map and give oral presentations on different aspects of the new town.

**Time:** 60-180 minutes (one to three sessions)

**Materials Needed**

* Graph paper
* A GIS Base map of at least a 1-mile radius of their neighborhood or community.
* Large sheets of drawing paper
* A letter to your students (the instructor can modify the example below and hand it out at the start of the lesson)
* Internet Connection + Projector or Multiple Work Stations for: 15 mins. ([http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/00/earthpulse/sprawl/indexflash.html)](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/00/earthpulse/sprawl/indexflash.html%29)
* Rulers, pencils, colored fine-point pens.
* Tracing Paper rolls

**Directions**

**Opening:** Hand out a letter to the students requesting their help in planning a new community. Here is an example (This is also a separate file (Planning Letter) on your USB Flash drive):

*Dear Students:*

*The council members of Chill Town have recently acquired a large plot (parcel) of land. The members of the council would like your assistance in creating a new hood’ on this land. The council will provide funding for 20 buildings in the first year, but it is important that you make wise choices about which buildings should be constructed. Once you have settled on specific sorts of buildings, you will need to draw up plans in the form of a large-scale map. Please present your map and supporting documents to the council on (specify a date).*

**Development:** Survey the students to determine which sorts of buildings (commercial, residential, industrial, and municipal) they want to include in their new neighborhood. Organize this information into a chart listing type of building and how many.

Discuss with the class why certain buildings are necessary—a school, perhaps, and a fire station, a gas station, a grocery store, a residential building (such as an apartment complex), an office building, and so on. Introduce the concept of growth. Should some buildings go up before others? Which should be built in the first year? These should offer employment for a few people who move to the town as well as for others who commute. What services should support these people?

Other threads for the discussion:

* What factors would help determine the buildings needed and how many of each (e.g., population of the town, distance from next town, or physical obstacles such as rocky soil, a large river, or a lake)?
* Where will people be employed? In what industries?
* Are there some sorts of buildings we could really do without?
* Do we need more than one grocery store?
* Are there some options that we could combine (e.g., gas station and video store)?
* Will any critical factors change with time (e.g., population, income level, and/or land availability and value)?

Next discuss locations for the various buildings. Consider such questions as, "Would the

following locations be logical?" Explain your answers.

* A grocery store on the outskirts of town?
* An elementary school next to a jail?
* A library near a school?
* Four grocery stores next to each other?
* A video rental store near a busy road?
* A school on the opposite side of town from residential areas?
* A shopping mall in a sparsely populated area?
* A park next to a neighborhood?

Have students form into small groups representing construction “companies.” The companies should determine which buildings they are going to build the first year and provide valid reasons for their choices.

Have the students list which businesses they would like to build the second year and into the future. When would something such as a fingernail salon go up? How quickly would the town expand? What factors would influence growth? Would there be any reason not to grow year after year? What happens if a major employer leaves town or goes bankrupt?

Using graph paper, have the student construction teams draw plans for their new neighborhood. How would they lay out the community? Would everything in the first-year plan be on a main street or widely dispersed? Once the plans are drawn, they should be presented to the town inspector (the teacher) for approval.

After inspection, have the class vote on their favorite plan from among those submitted. Transfer that plan grid square by grid square to a large display in your classroom.

**Closing:** Repeat the process for subsequent years of town growth, using different colors and a different "construction firm" for each year's new development. Discuss the map's evolution with your class, noting the unexpected paths development can take with so many different people shaping the town. Would your students advocate a town council with strong zoning authority if they were to construct the town again?

**Suggested Student Assessment:** Hand out a map similar to the one the students made. Have some important features missing from the map. Place the fire department at the far outskirts of town. Place two grocery stores on the map, both in the same neighborhood. Have students analyze the map and answer questions such as the following:

* When planning a new town or city, what are some things you should definitely include?
* Where would be a suitable location for a school in this town? An entertainment complex?
* What is wrong with the location of the fire department?
* Why are there two grocery stores? Is two enough? Too many?

Students should recognize important needs such as a fire department, a hospital, a school, a post office, residences, and grocery stores. They should also understand that in general these types of structures take priority over businesses that serve a smaller segment of a town's population. Can they suggest communities that might be exceptions to such guidelines?

**Extending the Lesson:**

* Invite guest speakers (e.g., town planners, civil engineers, or town council members) from your community to speak to the class.
* Analyze a real map of your community. How was it settled? Why did early residents stay in this place?
* Describe the types of settlements that existed before cities emerged (for example, stopping places on the routes of hunters and gatherers, isolated farmsteads, villages).
* Discuss the geographic reasons for the location of the world's first cities.

**DURING CLASS**

0:00 - 0:10: Introduction.

Ice Breakers are highly recommended if the class has not socialized amongst themselves very much thus far. This lesson plan involves students being very hands-on, a best ratio is 3 per team, with no less than a student-teacher ratio of 5:1. Ensuring that they will all work together enjoyably is important.

0:10 - 0:15: Describe the Project.

Introduce the project to the students. Explain that they will be working to identify what their community or neighborhood has, not what it doesn’t have. Focus is on valuing community services, municipal support, schools, open space, household skill sets, etc. Feel free to add or accept additional suggestions as to more effective building approaches as you see fit. Students will be more than capable of figuring things out on their own, but guidance is recommended.

0:15 - 0:45: PLAY

After students have been briefed on what they will be doing, they will be set free to do it on their own. Supply students with the materials and let them begin brainstorming. Ask for reporting as the identification goes on. Give students occasional updates on time remaining so that they stay on task but try not to rush them. Instructors should walk around and keep an eye on students as they draw and map the new community.

0:45 – 0:55 DEBRIEF

Once the 30-minutes of mapping is up, have the kids stop what they're doing. Have them report out and show their maps and discuss what they see as most important. Other teams will find some differences to each team, discuss. Consolidate all suggestions and locations on the larger GIS map.

1:00 - 1:20: REPLAY

Have the teams brainstorm about infilling gaps, missing elements onto the large GIS map. Have the teams create a better neighborhood by inserting the missing pieces they feel are needed to improve and build a SMART/Healthy Community \*(reference Smart Growth elements from EPA Sheet).

1:20 - 1:30: WRAP UP!

Have the students finish their drawing, finalize map key, or if their previous map attempts, compare. Keep the drawings on the wall as references for future workshops or sessions. Clean-up!

**Additional Resources**

**Topics to Discuss**

o How do we ensure that as many people as possible have the services and resources they need?

o Did anyone get left out or are there issues with getting everything you want or need within the map?

o Did anyone discuss funding or money? What are some issues with money right now in California media?



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