

Lesson 23

Development Debate

How does planning and zoning decide land development use?
How does analyzing a problem from different perspectives help?

GOAL To compare and contrast lifestyles of the colonists and Native Americans

OBJECTIVES Students will:

- ✓ read Riverway story
- ✓ analyze problem from different perspectives
- ✓ provide alternatives

MATERIALS Riverway study, paper, pencils

CORE CURRICULUM CONTENT STANDARDS

- Language Arts 1(13), 2(2,4), 3(3)
- Science 1(1,2,5,6), 6(4), 7(5,6,7), 8(2-4,6), 14(1)
- Social Studies 3(5), 6(3-5), 8(3), 9(5), 11(1,4), 12(3,5)13(2,4)

VOCABULARY planning and zoning, bordering, vernal pool, protection

PROCEDURES

1. Explain to students that they will be taking part in a planning and zoning meeting. The topic concerns a proposal for a new development. Instruct student groups that they will receive a role to play. They must stay with their assigned characters for the duration of the simulation.
2. Explain that the planning and zoning commissioner will run the meeting and at the end of the debate provide his/her recommendations to the council.
3. After the meeting, student groups will discuss how well they worked together.
4. Explain that the meeting concerns a town called Riverway. The narrative at the end of the lesson provides a synopsis.

GLOSSARY

bordering - the line or frontier area separating political divisions or geographic regions; a boundary

planning and zoning - a program, or method, or guided worked out beforehand for the accomplishment of an objective for an area or a region distinguished from adjacent parts by a distinctive feature or characteristic

protection - the act of defending

vernal pool - a contained basin depression lacking a permanent above ground outlet; in the northeast, it fills with water with the rising water table of fall and winter or with the meltwater and runoff of winter and spring snow and rain; some organisms such as salamanders, fairy shrimp and frogs are obligate vernal pool species, since they must use a veranal pool for various parts of their life cycle (http://www.vernalpool.org/vpinfo_1.htm)

Riverway

Riverway is a community that has enjoyed many years of little development. It has remained the same, except for the last several years. Situated on a river, the townspeople have enjoyed the fishing and beauty that it has offered to them. Acres of forestland surround the area and people from all over have hiked the many miles of trails.

Recently, it has become more populated and a scarcity of new homes has been a concern. Taking advantage of a business opportunity, a developer decided to purchase acres of land with one side of the land bordering a protected area. This section can not be developed.

Ideal woodland lots entice potential homeowners to the area and the developer is looking forward to beginning construction. The area is zoned residential. The site, itself, is located on a hill overlooking a panoramic view of the forest and river. Roads will need to be cut through the forest to reach the homeowner sites.

In the woodland, there are areas of land depressions that fill up with water during the spring (a type of wetland, known as vernal pools). Salamanders and frogs lay their eggs in these breeding areas. As the vernal pools dry up, the salamanders migrate to higher elevations on land. This type of habitat is essential to the salamander and other amphibians because it protects them from many predators, such as fish. The vernal pools border the site proposed. Also, the potential loss of this habitat will result in a decrease in the diversity of species in the area.

The Developer

The proposed site is perfect for development. It has a great view and with the scarcity of homes in this area, this development serves a need. The land is zoned residential and the developer is willing to work with the officials and people of the community.

The Environmentalist

Concerned with the proposed plan as it is; the land bordering the development is an important habitat to certain species' survival. Already, markers have been placed and it appears that the trees close to the vernal pool will be cut down. This will severely impact the ecology of the area. Also, with the river as close as it is, the sediment run off can be a potential problem.

The Farmers

Have a small farm in the community and sometimes, use the river to irrigate crops. Concerned that there will be a drain on resources in the community. Also, uneasy about potential runoff problems. However, as a small farmer and who sells produce to the locals, you are hoping that more people will purchase your produce.

The Planning and Zoning Commissioner

The land is zoned as residential, but there is concern about the drain on resources and town services. Houses are scarce and the commission wants new people to live in the town to bring more income and taxes to the town.

The Water Inspector

Responsible for ensuring that the water quality remains high. Since the river recharges the groundwater, you want to make sure that it is not contaminated with sediment.