

NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM



CITY BY DESIGN

This lesson was created as a supplement to the *City by Design* program at the National Building Museum. It is designed to be used in your classroom independently, or as an activity before or after a school program at the Museum. For more information about and to register for the National Building Museum's school programs, visit <http://go.nbm.org/schoolvisit>.

The *City by Design* program introduces kindergarten through sixth grade students to city planning. It encourages young people to explore the complexity of cities and helps them understand the impact of people's everyday decisions on the places where they live, work, and play.

About the National Building Museum

The National Building Museum is America's leading cultural institution dedicated to advancing the quality of the built environment by educating people about its impact on their lives. Through its exhibitions and educational programs, including innovative curricula for students, as well as online content and publications, the Museum tells the stories of the world people design and build.

The Museum is an independent, non-profit institution and is located in a historic landmark structure at 401 F Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20001. Connect with the Museum online at www.nbm.org, on Twitter at @BuildingMuseum, and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalBuildingMuseum.

Where You Live: Take a Closer Look

Treasuring Trees

Trees provide benefits that many communities value such as shade and beauty. Walk around your community and conduct an inventory of the trees by recording the number and type of trees (use a botany/tree book). Based on the number of tree stumps you see, how many trees are missing? Contact your local government to find out where trees are needed in your community and if you would be allowed to plant some. Then ask a local nursery if it will donate trees to plant in the neighborhood or do a fundraiser in your school to collect money for them. As a class, plant them. Remember, it's also important to care for the trees. Make sure there is a system in place for maintaining the trees.

Resources: Casey Tree Endowment, www.caseytrees.org, neighborhood associations, and local departments of public works

Locating Power, Water, and Waste

How is it possible that when we turn on the faucet, clean water comes out; that the lights turn on with a flip of a switch; and that streets are not full of trash? Local taxes help pay for a community's infrastructure—the services that help our cities work such as trash pick-up, power, recycling, and water. Try to imagine what happens beneath the streets to help your community operate. Walk around the block and locate manhole covers and meter boxes. How are they labeled? Water, sewer, telephone, other? Record how many you find in a given block. Are paper, plastic, and glass recycled at your school? Where do these things go? Visit a recycling plant and/or landfill to better understand how trash is discarded and recycled material is reused.

Resource: Local departments of public works

Rebuild or Preserve?

What should be done with an old building? This is an issue faced daily by city planners, developers, and architects, as well as people interested in preservation. Identify a deteriorated old building in your community and find out about any plans for its future. Discuss with your class the advantages and disadvantages of tearing down and replacing the building versus renovating the existing one for another purpose. What factors will influence the decision: budget, the citizen's voice, taxes, safety, etc? Who should make the decision? What actions could the students take to influence the decision?

Resources: National Trust for Historic Preservation, www.nthp.org, and state and local preservation offices and organizations

Making Meaningful Monuments

Monuments and memorials allow people to recognize, celebrate, and remember significant moments from the past and celebrate their community. Some memorials depict important figures and events in American history, while others celebrate ideals and values. Monuments are everywhere—on streets, plazas, parks, and gardens. Show the class images of monuments from around the United States. Have students try to explain what and how each one commemorates a significant event, person, or thing. Assign different events in history to students. Ask each group to design a monument representing that event. Or, create a monument for your community or school. What or who would it commemorate? Where would you place it? Why?

Resource: Save Outdoor Sculpture!, www.heritagepreservation.org. National Park Service, www.nps.gov/nacc