

Spokane 4th and 6th Graders Learn About Elements of a Community

Summer 2019



By Donna deBit

This past spring I visited three schools in Spokane (Spokane International Academy, Mullan Road Elementary, and Wilson Elementary) in hopes to help students learn and engage in the process of identifying where elements of a community should be placed. The activity was presented to three 4th grade class rooms, and three 6th grade classrooms and included two parts - The Elements of a Community & Building the Community.

Part 1 – The Elements of a Community

This activity begins with introducing the students these basic land use categories:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Public Use
- Industrial
- Agricultural
- Environmental

The students then learned how to sort multiple community elements into the appropriate land use categories. They're recognizing that the places they go to daily (home, parks, grocery store, school, etc.) all belong in a category that then is easily identifiable by a color. In groups, they place the community element cutouts provided to them on the appropriate land use category.

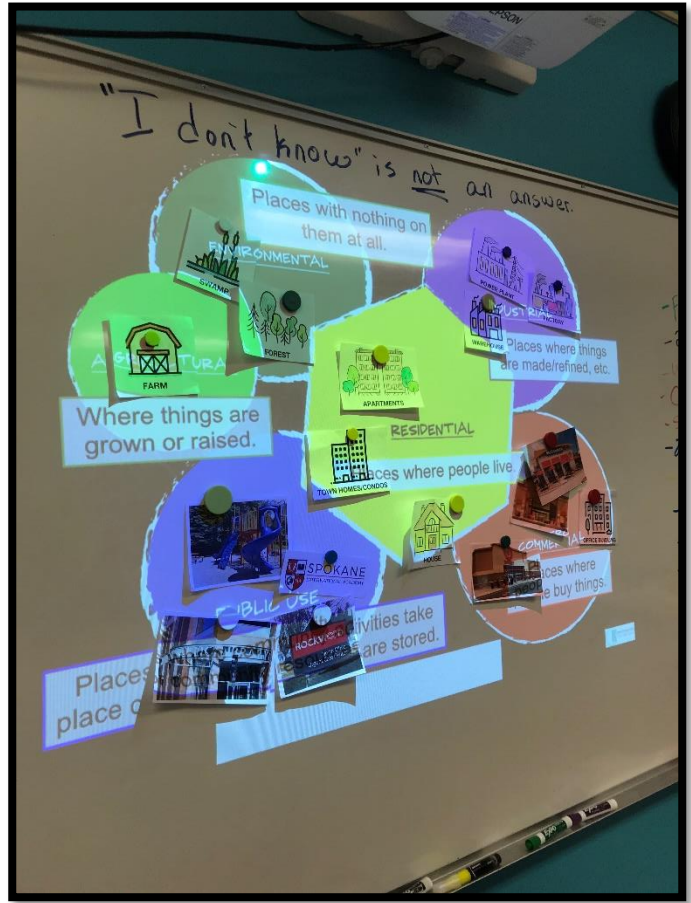
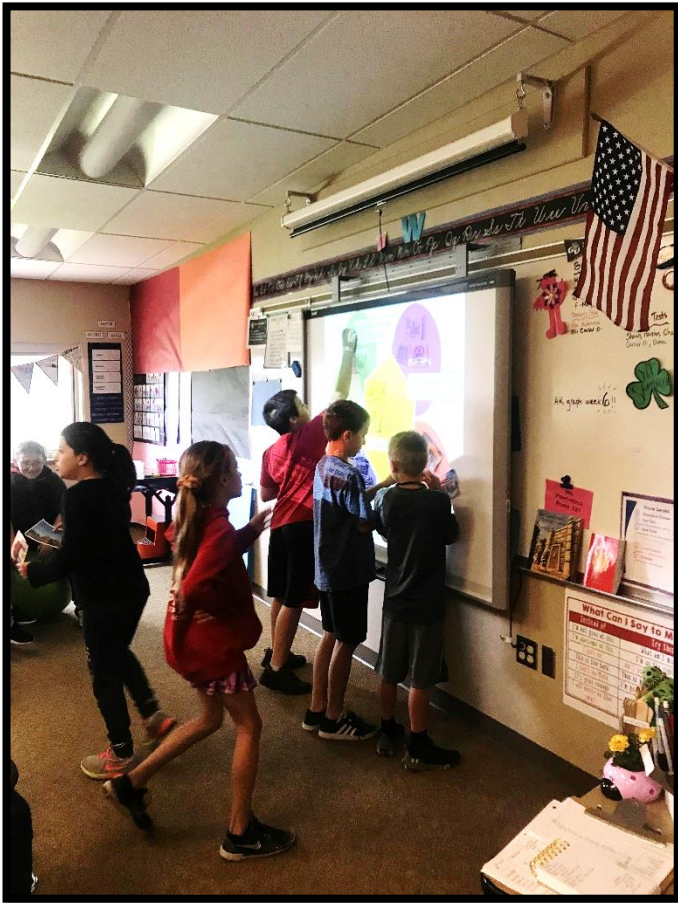


Image: Students match the cutouts of uses to their appropriate land use category at Mullan Road Elementary and Spokane International Academy

Part 2 – Building the Community

The students are now familiar with the land use categories and elements that make up a community. In this next activity the students apply what they just learned in Part 1 by creating a Land Use Map. We discuss the importance of why community elements are located where they are, and why each element of their community exists. We look at examples of existing land use maps and evaluate different landscapes and how other cities have been designed. Some questions asked include:

- What would you want to live by?
- What would you *not* want to live by?
- What community element would you want to be in walking distance to?
- What would be your mode of transportation?

In groups, the students create their land use maps. They use the colors identified in Part 1 to represent the different land use categories and negotiate the layout of their City. They have free reign to create different uses within their City, or use the icons provided. The groups are thinking critically about why the community is being planned the way it is, and what their experience would be if they lived in that community.



Image: 6th grade students create their Land Use maps at Spokane International Academy

After the Land Use maps are complete, the groups present their cities to the class. They address:

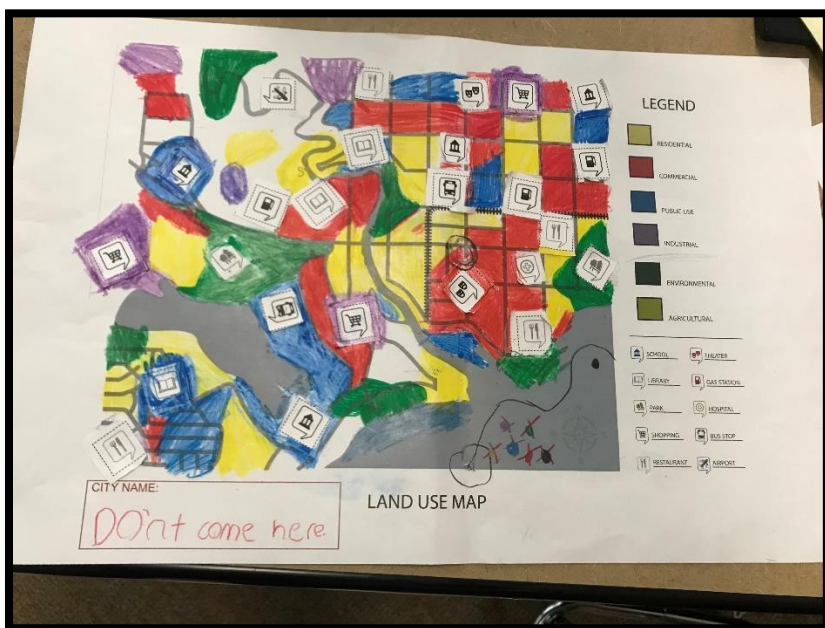
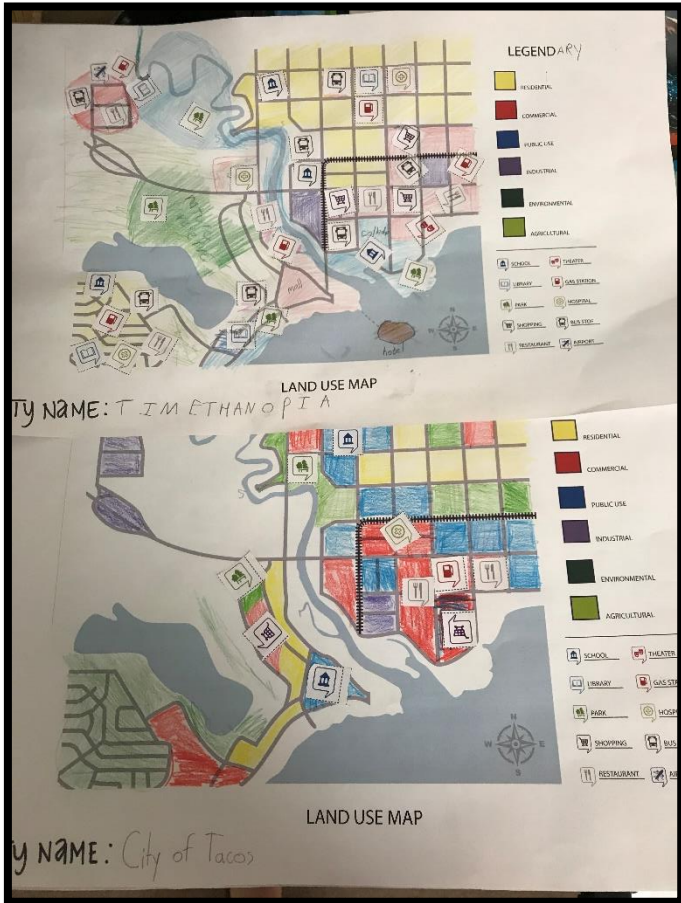
- Where they would live
- Where their school would be located
- How easy it would be to get to get around
- What would be their favorite thing to do
- What's unique in their community



Image: 4th grade students present their Cities to their peers at Mullan Road Elementary

Final Products

The Land Use maps created by the groups were all so unique (especially the city names!). Some groups focused more on the shorelines and preserving open space that they created, while others focused on creating a multimodal transportation city. It was so fun to witness the students presenting their cities and then being critiqued by their peers. It was clear that they all comprehended the importance of why cities need to be well thought out, while also reflecting on what exists in their own community.



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Materials were adapted from the American Planning Association Florida Chapter K-12 Teaching guides found here - <https://florida.planning.org/knowledge-center/k-12-grade-teaching-guides/>

Tags: Include at least one tag for each of the following categories:

- Teachers, Students, Planners, Elementary
- Community Planning, Land Use Planning
- Social Studies
- 3rd grade-6th grade
- Youth In Planning
- Media type
- 60-90 Minutes

Please remember to attach a photo or other graphic and any presentation materials you want to share.