



Introduction to Zoning and Land Use Guidelines

This activity presents the concepts of zoning and building types to students. Each student represents a building and finds a compatible set of neighbors to stand with them on their “block.” This exercise generates discussions about urban centers versus big box, single use and mixed-use zoning, and how to accommodate buildings that could impact the safety of citizens.

Grade Level

Grades 1-4

Subjects

Social Studies

Materials

Building “nametags” and copies of Golden city map

Time

Considerations

Activity: 30-40 minutes

Group Size

One-two classrooms

Related Pages In Box City

Building Restrictions
pg 45-46

Standards

Social Studies Grade 4

Describe and give examples of ways in which people interact with the physical environment, including use of land, location of communities, methods of construction, and design of shelters

Use atlases, databases, grid systems, charts, graphs, and maps to gather information about the local community, Wisconsin, the United States, and the world

Getting Ready

You’ll need a space of about 12 ft x 12 ft or more for the students to move about. Clear an area in the classroom or identify another open space in the school that can be used.

Doing the Activity

1. Before the session starts, write the following vocabulary words on the board: zoning, residential, commercial, public/civic, industrial, and open space.
2. Pass out a nametag to each student. You and the teacher can wear the “mayor” tags 😊
3. Explain that this activity will be about “zoning.” A city plan follows zoning rules that dictate where buildings can be placed.

Define zone: A zone restricts building type, size, or use within a specified area of a community.

4. Our cities are made up of a variety of building types, but how do we decide what goes where?

Inform students that they are each a type of building. Instruct students to form small groups creating neighborhoods. They will need to find 3-4 other student buildings to stand with them “on the block”, and the key is that they must have a compatible relationship.

The mentor should facilitate a brief conversation that explains which building types are good neighbors...

Residential **CAN** be adjacent to residential.

Residential **CAN** be adjacent to schools, churches, parks, hospitals.
Residential **CANNOT** be adjacent to industrial.

Zonina Continued...

Commercial CAN be adjacent to commercial.
Commercial CAN be adjacent to public buildings like City Hall and public spaces like a park.
Commercial CANNOT be adjacent to schools and churches.

Industrial CAN be adjacent to industrial, railroads, highways, and airports.
Industrial CANNOT be adjacent to residential, schools, libraries, and hospitals.

Note: You may need to address big box stores versus smaller stores in your discussion. A student who wears a “pet store” nametag may envision a PetSmart big box instead of a Main Street store and will seek out different neighbors accordingly.

6. When groups have been formed, ask a representative from each to explain their neighborhood. Discuss the benefits and drawbacks.

7. After this exercise, ask the students to look at the colored dot on their nametags. Explain that city planners use color to represent different types of buildings.

Now you can provide some time for the students to organize by color and see what the buildings have in common in each zoning category. At this time, you can also encourage arrangements of mixed-use zoning and talk about the impacts of that layout.

8. Provide each student a copy of the “Golden” map that shows colors. Ask them to look at where the building types have been placed.

What are the advantages of the plan?
What are the disadvantages?

When looking at the map, how easily can you walk from your home to school? Work? A park? The store?

Are there public places where people can gather?