

ACTIVITY 3

A Community of Choices

Identifying the Connections

Activity Focus

By viewing a video, students learn how planning and design can help prevent a community from becoming Anywhere, USA. They then select and redesign an area or element within their community to better reflect their own community's unique character.



Time

Part 1: 45 minutes

Part 2: 45-60 minutes

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will understand the connections between community character, community appearance, community planning and design processes, and economic development.
2. Students will be able to explain the importance of a community having a sense of place.
3. Students will be able to explain the impact of community growth on the visual appearance of a community.
4. Students will be able to describe the relationship between community planning, design and a community's visual character.

Materials Needed

- ▲ *Community of Choices* Video
- ▲ *Community of Choices* Video Discussion Guide
- ▲ *Community of Choices* Worksheet
- ▲ Materials to make a model such as boxes, empty margarine tubs, small containers, milk cartons, construction paper, etc. or large sheets of drawing paper
- ▲ Colored pencils, crayons or markers, scissors, glue, tape

Teacher Preparation

Note: If you have not already revised the class definition of visual pollution this might be a good time to complete a second worksheet from *Defining Visual Pollution . . .* (page 11)

Part 1:

- ▲ Preview the video *Community of Choices*.

Part 2:

- ▲ Make copies of the *Community of Choices Worksheet*; you will need one copy for each pair of students.
- ▲ Divide the class into teams of 2-3 students each. Layout the craft materials in the front of the room.



Procedures

Procedure Part 1

1. Have students view the video *Community of Choices*.
2. Use the discussion guide on page 51 to review the concepts introduced in the video.

Procedure Part 2

1. Divide the class into teams of 2-3 students.
2. Discuss with the class what makes your community unique:
What do they feel are the special places within your community?
What areas of the community are not so special?
What things about the community would you like to change?
3. Provide each team with a copy of the *Community of Choices* worksheet.
Ask each team to select something they would like to change in your community.
This could be the appearance of a building such as a chain store, restaurant or gas station, a shopping area such as a strip mall, a housing development, a section of a busy road, an area along a busy street or at an intersection, an open area, a vacant lot or other element of the community.
4. Challenge the team to make the area/building/site they selected more visually pleasing.
Invite them to create a model or sketch of their vision using the materials available at the front of the room.
5. Allow the teams time to create their model. They should first complete the worksheet to help guide them through the design process. They should then build their model or develop their drawing.



6. When all of the teams have finished their models or sketches display them around the room.
7. Invite each team to describe their models or sketches to the rest of the class.

Discussion

Discussion (Part 2)

1. What types of areas in your community were selected for retrofitting by the different teams? Were any of the areas selected places you felt made your community unique? Why do you think these areas were chosen?
2. What types of changes were made? Do you think these changes could really take place? Are they small changes or major retrofitting projects?
3. How do you think members of your community could make some of these changes happen?
4. Are there places in your community you would like to see never change? Can you think of any ways these places could be protected?
5. If the changes you proposed took place, how do you think they would affect the community? Do you think they would affect it economically?
6. What do you think are the growth issues that affect your community's visual character right now? What issues do you think it will face in the future?
7. Do you think your community has a sense of place?



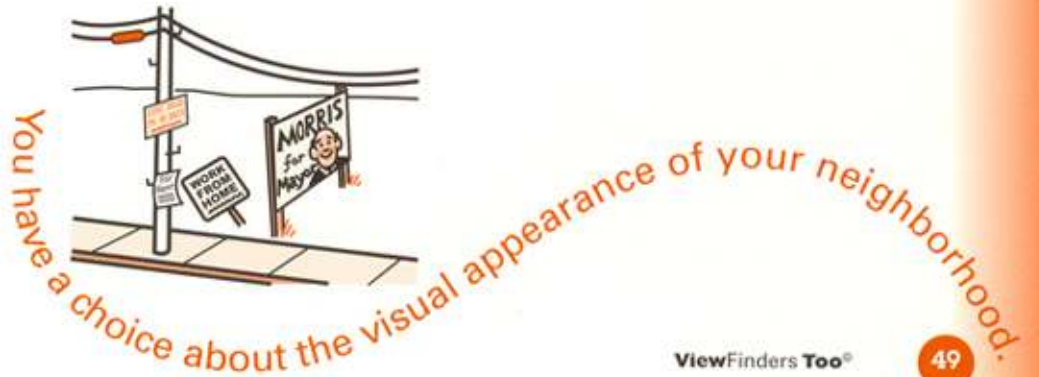
**STUDENT ACTIVITY
WORKSHEET**

COMMUNITY OF CHOICES WORKSHEET

Team Members _____

The area/visual element we want to change is:

What we like about the area/element:



What we dislike about it:

The changes we are going to make are:

signs & wires & poles & billboards & cell towers = visual pollution



Community Choices **Discussion Guide**

TEACHER GUIDE

1. What are some of the connections between community character, community appearance and economic development?
2. Why would a community want to preserve its unique characteristics, landmarks and historic sites?
3. What is "sense of place?"
4. What kind of plans should a community have to help direct the patterns of development?
5. Can growth and development enhance community character? Does it have an impact on visual pollution within a community? How?
6. How would you explain what is meant by development that is good for the environment, good for business and good for the community?
7. What are some of the things about a community that you think people use to make decisions about whether they want to live there? To visit?
8. What did you learn about shopping malls, strip malls and town centers?
9. What do you think Winston Churchill meant when he said "we shape our buildings and then our buildings shape us"?
10. What are some ways a community can keep from looking like every other community in the United States?
11. Does a community have to accept corporate "cookie cutter" architecture to allow national franchises and chains to open businesses in their community?
12. What are some retrofitting techniques a community can use to improve it's visual character?
13. Name six things a successful community does to make the community a good place to live and work in.

