



Land Plans

Objective: Students will think about the different ways land is used and how sometimes one use conflicts with another.

Summary: Students will map and “develop” to meet their needs. Map pieces are put together and a master map is then evaluated. The project is repeated, this time with consideration for the “neighbor’s” land plan.

Time: 1½ hours

Student Grouping: Three to five students per group

Materials: Butcher paper, crayons and pens.

Background Information: Land use is

a common issue in these times. Whether a person has the right to sell and develop land or must maintain open space for the common good is debated all over the country and indeed the world. Approximately 50 acres every hour of every day are converted to nonagricultural use each year in the U.S. Many communities, valuing the land’s productivity for food and fiber or its open vistas, have begun to do things to slow this transition. Yet it’s hard to tell a farmer who has been offered a bundle of money for his or her property that it may not be sold at that high price for development.

Marin Ag. Facts: “By 1990,” a Marin County official said in 1971, “Tomales Bay will probably look like Malibu.” Though many believed this was inevitable, there was a strong movement to prevent that from happening. Marin’s eastern urban residents decided they liked the open vistas and became very active making laws to preserve them. Unfortunately, there were some people who wanted to sell their land at a large profit and could not. Strong zoning was imposed to prevent rampant development plans which had called for extensive building and dramatic population growth. Urban people had outnumbered the rural people in political clout. Next these urban dwellers began to support the local rural operations to maintain their viability as long as the lands remained undeveloped. The rural residents who had felt they would be forced to sell their property could afford to hold onto family farms and keep them in operation as working farms. Land values in the area are still rising and the pressure to develop still exists, but conservation and agricultural easements help the landowners’ needs as well as maintaining the open vistas everyone has come to value.

Preparation:

1. Draw a river through the long piece of butcher paper. Now divide it into as many map pieces as

groups (see illustration). Make sure some part of the river flows through each section of the map. The river will facilitate the students’ seeing the interrelated uses of land in a given area.

Procedure:

1. Distribute the map pieces to groups, and have each draw their development plan for an ideal communi-



ty on their section of the map. Emphasize the need to consider how their basic needs (water, electricity, food, sewer and trash) are met by their choice of development.

2. Have the class come together and reassemble the master map.
3. Have a class discussion on how each group's plans would work once put together.
4. Start over and see how the groups could build a model community by cooperating with neighboring developers.

Questions for Discussion:

- Does each initial plot fit together to make an ideal community?

- What conflicts occurred, and how did you compromise?
- How did you coordinate the plans when the groups needed to plan together?
- Who plans your community?

Extensions:

- Plan a large community, only this time give students an assigned role as: a conservationist group, politicians, business persons, farmers, ranchers, park planners, road commissioner, minister, developer, teacher, gas station owner, children, wildlife, grocery store owner, car dealer, shopping mall designer, forester, park planner. Have each person/group present a development plan and explain why others should agree with them. Vote.

