



## ACE MENTOR PROGRAM

ARCHITECTURE • CONSTRUCTION • ENGINEERING

# URBAN PLANNING ACTIVITIES

## LAND USE

DEVELOPED BY:

THE ACE MENTOR PROGRAM OF GREATER NEW YORK

**Educational Goals** Team work is a benefit; as students get worked up about the multitude of uses to which land can be put, the suggestions fly! The activity promotes awareness of our surroundings and often results in new ideas for land use. The lesson can be taught in a social studies context, as well as a preliminary to map-making and model-building.

**Description** Most people rarely think about how land is used. We normally go about our daily lives in blissful ignorance of what goes on behind the doors of buildings we have never had the opportunity to visit. This lesson is a great introduction to the various ways in which real estate is used. The urban environment is a virtual melting pot of land use.

**Time** 1.5 – 2 hours

**Materials** Land use maps, if available, preferably of the neighborhoods in which the students live. A preliminary list of land uses prepared by the mentor in advance in order to start the lesson off and keep it moving.

**Additional Resources** Affiliates in the New York region can consult the Zoning Resolution of the City of New York which includes lists of various land uses. Go to [www.tenant.net](http://www.tenant.net) and scroll down to the bottom of the page to find the link to the “NYC Zoning Handbook.” Somewhat similar resources are available for many other large metropolitan areas.

Lead the class in a discussion of the various ways in which land is used. Refer to the actual zoning maps and ask students whether land in their neighborhoods is being used lawfully, or in accordance with the zoning indicated on the map. Start a running list of land uses on the board and add students’ suggestions. You will probably run out of board space once the lesson gets going. You may have to ask a student to help writing the suggestions on the board.

Another alternative would be to break the class up into groups and have them develop lists on their own. Lists could then be compared to see which uses are common to everyone’s lists. ▽

## Land Use

created by Clifford Marvin,  
with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, for  
the Greater New York affiliate





### **THINK GREEN!**

Have the students look at the current community and land use maps. Students can compare the current land use choices with some of the alternatives on the board. Use discussion questions below to spur dialog. Have the students think about the environmental implications of the past choices and what would be ideal planning for both the environment and the community.

#### **Discussion questions:**

1. How could the land be used differently?
2. What are the benefits of some of the alternatives?
3. What impact have past choices had on the environment and city planning?
4. Could the area be more pedestrian or bike friendly?
5. How has green space been utilized or ignored?
6. How accessible are basic needs and resources?
  - a. Grocery stores
  - b. Schools
  - c. Post offices
  - d. Etc.
7. Why do you think the current choices were made?
  - a. Financial
  - b. City planning
  - c. Community need
  - d. Etc.

As a next step, have the students re-work planning maps with their ideas and suggestions. For supplemental information students can review the *LEED for Neighborhood Developments Rating System* found at [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org).

*Developed by U.S. Green Building Council*

