



## A Growing Community

A simulation activity on community development, land use,  
habitat protection, and municipal politics

## Teacher Introduction

Students take on roles within a community in transition. They work to determine whether their community should grow, how much it should grow, and where any new development will occur. At issue is agricultural land reserves, green space, salmon habitat and a watershed.

In this activity, your students will work in groups of 3 to 5 students to prepare for a simulated city council meeting. The goal is for the city council, having heard the presentation of diverse points of view, to make a decision regarding the future development of land in their community. At issue is the zoning of agricultural land, parks land and the private land in northern part of the city which is currently undeveloped but is a watershed and includes salmon habitat. This activity is designed to allow students to experience the many perspectives that surround the issue of community development. The views included here are not necessarily opposed (though some are), they are simply different, reflecting the fact that individuals and groups have different priorities. There is no right or wrong answer, but there is a need to be able to explain the reasons for decisions reached. Because each of the groups is working independently and has little idea of what the other groups are focusing on, there is potential for some very surprising results in the simulation. Your role is to explain the nature of the activity, act as a guide when groups are preparing their presentations, and possibly act as the chair during the city council meeting. How much assistance you provide to the students as they develop their presentations and enact the simulation will be determined by you and your students.

### **Student-directed learning and inquiry**

Educators and governments are increasingly recognizing the benefits of student-directed learning and inquiry. Students are encouraged to explore big ideas and investigate problems, to apply critical thinking processes, to take action, and to engage in communitarianism. The teacher's role is to facilitate students' learning, rather than to convey information.

In a general sense, this resource promotes inquiry-based learning and students will practice:

- critical thinking including questioning, comparing, summarising, drawing conclusions
- effective research skills including accessing information, assessing information, collecting data, evaluating data, organising information, presenting information
- negotiation
- effective presentation skills
- working with complexity and ambiguity.

### **New BC curriculum connections**

Further, the resource has direct application to the learning standards of the BC Ministry of Education's new curriculum in the following areas:

Social Studies – Canadian Issues and Governance Grade 5 curriculum Content areas of:

- levels of government, their main functions, and sources of funding
- participation and representation in Canada's system of government
- resources and economic development in different regions of Canada

English Language Arts 5 curriculum Content areas of:

- Story/text
- Strategies and processes
- Language features, structures, and conventions

Mathematics 5 curriculum Content areas of:

- Decimals to thousandths
- Whole-number, fraction, and decimal benchmarks
- Area measurement of squares and rectangles
- Relationships between area and perimeter
- One-to-one correspondence and many-to-one correspondence, using double bar graphs

Working with this resource will help students develop the following Curricular Competencies:

Social Studies Grade 5 Curricular Competencies:

- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions
- Develop a plan of action to address a selected problem or issue
- Construct arguments defending the significance of individuals/groups, places, events, or developments (significance)
- Sequence objects, images, or events, and recognize the positive and negative aspects of continuities and changes in the past and present (continuity and change)
- Take stakeholders' perspectives on issues, developments, or events by making inferences about their beliefs, values, and motivations (perspective)
- Make ethical judgments about events, decisions, or actions that consider the conditions of a particular time and place, and assess appropriate ways to respond (ethical judgment)

English Language Arts 5 Curricular Competencies:

- Synthesize ideas from a variety of sources to build understanding
- Apply a variety of thinking skills to gain meaning from texts
- Exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding
- Use writing and design processes to plan, develop, and create engaging and meaningful literary and informational texts for a variety of purposes and audiences

Mathematics 5 Curricular Competencies:

- Use reasoning to explore and make connections
- Model mathematics in contextualized experiences
- Develop, demonstrate, and apply mathematical understanding through play, inquiry, and problem solving
- Engage in problem-solving experiences that are connected to place, story, cultural practices, and perspectives relevant to local First Peoples communities, the local community, and other cultures
- Represent mathematical ideas in concrete, pictorial, and symbolic forms

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## Materials

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### ***City Information Card***

The City Information Card gives details of the land distribution in the city. It provides information as to:

- the name of the city (please write the name on the card once it has been chosen)
- the population and size
- the current land use
- the (average) number of people who can live in one square kilometer depending upon whether there are houses or apartment buildings.
- the reason for the Agricultural Land Reserve
- the required streamside setbacks (15 meters)

### ***City Council Role Card***

The City Council has a different task than the other groups. They must decide in advance the criteria by which they will decide their city's future. They must also decide how they will run the council meeting.

### ***Developers' Role Card***

The Developers are focusing on getting as much land to develop as possible. They would also like to develop more houses than apartments as there would be greater profit for them and potentially for the community through increased economic activity. They will probably have to do some mathematics (even if you decide not to do the extension activity) as they will be talking about how much land they would like to develop, how many houses they would like to build, and by how much the city may potentially grow.

### ***Land Owners' (Mountain Slopes and Agricultural Reserve) Role Cards***

The Land Owners' Role Cards can be put together or used separately depending on the number of groups you have. Alternatively, one can be omitted from the simulation.

As well as wanting to see the city grant permission for more residential development, each Land Owners' group has their own agenda in terms of changes they would like to see in City rules: those with land on the mountain slopes would like the Streamside Setbacks reduced, those with agricultural land would like to see the Agricultural Land Reserve reduced.

### ***Environmental Group Role Card***

The Environmental Group is particularly concerned with the protection of salmon habitat. They are not against development, but are concerned about any development near salmon streams (most of the streams in the watershed) and are completely opposed to reducing the streamside setbacks.

It is suggested on the card that this group be prepared to explain the life cycle of the salmon and thus the importance of the stream habitats. They can also include the general importance of salmon for the local, provincial and global community.

### ***Community Group Role Card***

The Community Group is more generally concerned with the quality of life in the community. That might mean lobbying for more recreational land or to protect the ALR. It is up to the group to decide how many people are too many and what kind of things they would like to see (or would not like to see) in their community. They then prepare an effective argument for their position.

If there are several positions and enough students, the blank role card can be used to create two or more community groups.

### ***Blank Role Card***

Because each community has their own issues regarding land development, a blank card has been provided to allow teachers to create groups which are particular to their locality.

### ***Community Map***

The Community Map does not show the whole town or give any kind of scaled detail. It is just a prop to provide a visual idea.

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## Procedure for students

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To begin, you can outline a synopsis of the activity. A suggested synopsis and steps are included below.

### **Step 1**

You are a community, a small city of 50,000 people in British Columbia. The first thing you can do is choose a name for your city. Suggestion: Nominate three names then have a vote.

### **Step 2**

You have a lovely community – many people want to live there. Also, the people who grew up there want to stay and have families and homes of their own. Your community has a decision to make: should they build more houses so that more people can live there? How many houses should they build? What kind of houses? Where should they build them? There are a lot of different things to think about.

At issue is whether or not you want more people in your town and, if you do, what kind of housing you think should be built and where it should be built. This could mean big changes in the town.

In order to make the decision, the City Council decides to listen to presentations from different groups:

- Developers
- Landowners
- Environmental groups
- Community groups

#### *Your Task*

As a member of one of these groups, your job is to prepare a presentation for the city council. If you are on the city council, your job is to prepare for the presentations by planning your future city. Use your group role card to get information and make your plan. Also, check out the city information card.

#### **Step 3**

Hold a city council meeting. Each of the groups will present their position. If the rules permit (determined in advance by City Council) ask different groups questions about their presentations.

#### **Step 4**

The council can discuss their opinions of what the presenters have said. They should refer to their original guidelines and make a decision regarding land use in their city.

*Alternative One:* The council can meet in private and the results and reasons for the decision communicated to the class afterward. The debriefing session which follows allows for an examination of the criteria they chose and their decision-making process.

*Alternative Two:* The council's discussion and voting can happen in front of the class. This does mirror the procedures of city council meetings and can be very informative, but class members may find it difficult not to participate. In this case, the council's discussion may be broken up into timed units, allowing the class to comment on and discuss between sections. For example:

- Council review of land use guidelines – 5 minutes
- Class question and answers – 5 minutes
- Council discussion of presentations – 15 minutes
- Class discussion – 15 minutes
- Council plan suggestions (there will probably be more than one suggestion as to how land should be used) – 10 minutes
- Class discussion – 10 minutes
- Council vote – 2 minutes
- Class discussion – As much time as required. This may also be followed by a class vote.

*Alternative Three:* The class as a whole can take on the role of the council. They can discuss the council members land use guidelines and suggest some of their own. They can also discuss the presentations and the costs and benefits associated with any of the perspectives. Then they can suggest a number of land use plans for the city, and hold a vote to determine which to adopt.

### **Debrief**

Much of the debrief will depend on the procedure followed in Step 4. Many of the questions and discussion may be incorporated into Step 4 or may follow it. Questions which might be considered include: Why did City Council create the land use guidelines that they did? Why did any of the groups use a particular argument? What other factors might they have considered? What are the costs and benefits associated with any of the perspectives? What kind of land distribution would you (all students) choose? Why?

An important component of this activity is looking at the way communities make decisions. Because of this, it may be interesting to examine not only the content but also the process itself. Ideas to consider include:

- What is the process of decision making in this activity?
- How is this decision-making process the same as or different from how individuals or other groups of people make decisions? e.g. Yourself, someone you know, a group of friends, a family, a class, a province, country, different countries?
- What is effective about different types of decision-making processes? What is ineffective?
- Do different types of decisions call for different decision-making processes? E.g. what movie to see? What jobs people do? Whether to follow a rule or law? What rules or laws to make? Who pays taxes? How much they pay?
- How might the decision-making process break down? What can we do about it if it does?

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### **Extension Activities**

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- Students can add to the complexity of the issue by brainstorming all of the issues expanding communities have to deal with which were left out of this simulation: e.g. need to expand services (water, sewer, waste), develop transport (roads, transit), provide more health and education services. They can imagine how all of these factors might impact their decision making.
- Students can make bar graphs showing current and preferred distribution of land use in the city.

- Each group can be asked to use either fractions or decimals to describe both the current land use in the city and their preferred land use. They can also be asked to represent the area using both fractions and decimals.
- Groups can draw an accurate map of the city using grids and show (estimate) the distribution of land use in the city using the figures provided on the City Information Card.
- Groups or individuals can each prepare a plan for land use in the community with an explanation for their choice. They can then write this up as an assignment to be handed in.
- Students can visit a city council meeting or public meeting which is focusing on a land use issue. Information on the topic under discussion can be found on city websites. Other sources of information include: newspapers, community groups, public interest groups, institutes (e.g. Centre for Policy Alternatives, Fraser Institute), Union of British Columbia Municipalities, provincial and federal ministries and departments.
- Students can look at land distribution in their own community – examine the issues around the land distribution, map the distribution, etc.



## A Growing Community: Information Card

### City Information

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Population: (how many people live here?)** 50,000

**Size: (how big is the city?)** 30 square kilometers

#### Land Use:

#### Residential (where people live) ....

- **Houses – 9 square kilometers**
- **Apartments – 3 square kilometers**

Most people in your city live in houses. There are 7,200 houses (28,800 people) and 9,000 apartments (21,000 people) in total. You can build 800 houses (for 3,200 people) or 3,000 apartments (for 7000 people) in one square kilometer.

#### Industrial – 4 square kilometers

The two biggest industries in your city are the railway yard and a food preparation company. Many people living in the city work there.

#### Commercial (shops and businesses) – 2 square kilometers

Most of the shops and businesses are in the middle of the city, although there are a few in other areas.

#### Agricultural (farms) – 2 square kilometers

There is a small Agricultural Land Reserve in the city, next to the river. The Agricultural Land reserve is land protected by the province for farming because it gives people jobs (helps the economy), grows food for people who live here, and provides lots of green space for the people and wildlife to enjoy. This means the city cannot build houses there without permission from the provincial government. But, the city can ask the province for permission.

#### Recreational – 1 square kilometers

The city has 4 small parks and 2 recreation centres. It has many bike and walking trails in the city and along the river. People also hike along some of the streams and in the mountains.

#### Wilderness and isolated homes – 9 square kilometers

The north of the city is mostly mountains. Some of the land (about 3 square kilometers) could be developed for residences. That land is in the lower watershed and has many creeks and streams running through it. Houses cannot be built any closer than 15 meters to those streams in order to protect the salmon.

## A Growing Community: Group Role Cards

### **Group 1: City Council**

#### **Who you are**

You are the leaders of the city. You have been elected to make decisions and in this case, the decision you have to make is about land use.

#### **What you want**

You want a good plan for your city, for everyone. You are thinking about what is good for your city this year and in ten years.

#### **What you can do**

Create guidelines that you will use when you are making decisions about land use. Things to think about are: What kind of city do you want to develop? How many people would you like to see living in your city?

How much space should be used for people to live (population density)? How much land should be reserved for farms? For recreation? For environmental protection? If you have to choose between different sectors (residential, industrial, commercial, agricultural, recreational, environmental) in your city, how will you decide?

#### **Running the city council meeting**

Who will chair the city council meeting? Who will decide who speaks and for how long? Will council members ask questions? Will the audience be allowed to ask questions? How will the final voting take place?

### **Group 2: Environmental Group**

#### **Who you are**

You are residents of the community who are most interested in environmental protection. You are particularly concerned about protecting streams and creeks in which salmon live.

#### **What you want**

You are a little concerned about developing near salmon streams and would prefer that it doesn't happen, but you are willing to accept some development there. However, you would like to ensure that, if the city council decides to allow residential development near creeks and streams where salmon live, they maintain the 30-meter streamside setback in order to protect the habitat.

#### **What you can do**

Prepare a presentation in which you outline the salmon cycle, emphasising the importance of habitat protection and the importance of salmon to your community, your province and the world.

#### **Your Presentation**

What can you use to make a more powerful presentation? What kind of props can you use? Who will speak? What will they say?

## A Growing Community: Group Role Cards

### **Group 3: Land Owners – Mountain Slopes**

#### **Who you are**

You have property on the lower slopes of the mountains and by the river.

#### **What you want**

You would like to sell your property to the developers who want to build homes and apartments. You would like to see the rules around building close to salmon bearing streams changed so that the developers can build on more land. This way, you will get more money for your land. You still want the salmon habitat protected, but you feel that the 30-meter setback is unnecessarily big. You think the salmon can still be protected with a smaller setback.

#### **What you can do**

Prepare a presentation for the city council. Things to think about: Whose property is it? Can others tell you what to do with your property? Should the protection of salmon be more important than the protection of private property rights?

#### **Your Presentation**

Who will speak? What will they say?

### **Group 4: Land Owners – Agricultural Reserve**

#### **Who you are**

You own farmland in the Agricultural Land Reserve (about 1 square kilometer).

#### **What you want**

You would like to sell your property to the developers who want to build homes and apartments. You would like the city to ask the province to change the rules for your land. You do not want it to be part of the Agricultural Land Reserve anymore. You want it to be developed for residential use so you can sell it for a lot of money. You understand the need to protect agricultural land, but you do not make much profit from farming, it is very hard work, and you'd like to give it up. Selling to a new farmer would not give you nearly as much money as selling to a developer if the zoning is changed.

#### **What you can do**

Prepare a presentation for the city council. Things to think about: Whose property is it? Can others tell you what to do with your property? Should the protection of agricultural land be more important than the protection of private property rights?

#### **Your Presentation**

Who will speak? What will they say?

## A Growing Community: Group Role Cards

### **Group 5: Developers**

#### **Who you are**

Your business is building houses and apartments. You make money building both, but you make more building houses than apartments.

#### **What you want**

You would like to build as many houses as possible. So you would like city council to choose the greatest amount of land possible for residential development. You would also like them to allow most of the development to be single family homes. Most people prefer to live in single family homes if they can. You think this will be good for business and good for the city.

#### **What you can do**

Create a plan to present to city council. Things to think about are: Which land would you like to develop? Where? How many houses would you like to build there? How many apartments? How would this development benefit (help) the city?

Think about things like: Who would do the building of the houses? How would the new residents contribute to the city? What good things might they bring and do?

#### **Your Presentation**

To add to your presentation, use the map of the city. Be prepared to show on the map what your idea of the city will look like. Who will speak? What will they say?

### **Group 6: Community Group**

#### **Who you are**

You are residents of the community who are concerned with the livability of your city, or the quality of life. That is, you do not want your city to become too crowded, and you want to make sure there is enough green-space and recreational areas for families to enjoy.

#### **What you want**

You want to make sure that any development that happens does not make your city a less pleasant place to live. You want to make sure the councillors think about this and not just think about the money that new development can bring to the city.

#### **What you can do**

Decide what kind of city you want and what kind of development you would like to see. Prepare a presentation for city council in which you explain what you want. Think about things like: parks, access to trails (can people get to the trails or are they blocked off?), green space and wilderness, traffic, etc.

#### **Your Presentation**

What can you use to make a more powerful presentation? What kind of props can you use? Who will speak? What will they say?

## A Growing Community: Group Role Cards

**Group 7:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who you are**

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**What you want**

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**What you can do**

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**Your Presentation**

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## Sources of and links to information

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**Federal:** Department of Fisheries and Oceans – From here you can search for information on fish habitat protection. You can also check the Pacific Salmon section for the Wild Salmon Policy (2005):

<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/index-eng.htm>

<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/species-especies/salmon-saumon/wsp-pss/index-eng.html>

**Provincial:** Ministry of Environment & Climate Change - the Environmental Protection and Sustainability division includes information on streamside setbacks (the RAR – Riparian Areas Regulation) in the Fish and Fish Habitats section:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/fish/riparian-areas-regulation>

[http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/376\\_2004](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/376_2004)

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/fish-fish-habitat/riparian-areas-regulations/introduction\\_to\\_rar.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/fish-fish-habitat/riparian-areas-regulations/introduction_to_rar.pdf)

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/environment-climate-change>

**Provincial:** Provincial Agricultural Land Commission – For information on the Agricultural Land Reserve see: <http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/>

**Municipal:** Union of British Columbia Municipalities Information about streamside setbacks and the RAR is available at: <http://www.ubcm.ca>

**Municipal:** Greater Vancouver Regional District Information on the Agricultural Land reserve in the GVRD can be found at: <http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/growth/agriculture.htm>

### **Environmental**

The Pacific Streamkeepers Federation has information on streamside setbacks and a guide to the SPR

<http://www.pskf.ca/program/new.html>

**NOTE: All of the information on the websites was available as of 28<sup>th</sup> May 2018. Because information can be removed from websites, please check that these are still available in advance of starting this activity with your class.**

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