THE FABRIC OF A CITY

OBJECTIVE

This activity begins to explore the concept of infill development, explaining its definition, the meaning and positive impact that infill development has within a neighborhood, and understanding what types of uses (house, store, park, etc.) fit best within an existing block or street.

Conceptually, infill development acts as a fabric quilt, a landscape of many types of development sewn together by streets and trails. When pieces of the built environment is demolished or removed, a new piece may be built to take its place, or “fill in,” sewn into the existing fabric of the city. What is chosen as the replacement matters - to the neighbors and greater community.

The broader goal of this activity is to encourage students to actively observe and be aware of the changes taking place in their communities.

The students will learn more about infill development in a way that they can apply that knowledge and use their creativity to design a layout of a community using key planning components.

PRELIMINARY SET-UP

The PLACE | MAT and Key of city components will need to be downloaded from the YEP! website and printed ahead of the activity.

Immediately prior to the activity, the map needs to be taped to the floor or desks.

The Key can be printed for each student or a few that can be shared amongst the students.

Markers will need to be distributed to the students.
INTRODUCTION: “HOW IS YOUR COMMUNITY BUILT OVER TIME?”

1. Begin the activity by asking the students, “What do you think is Infill Development?”
2. Ask the students where they have seen infill development in their community?
3. Brainstorm types of uses (buildings) that have been used for infill development (houses, stores, parks, etc)?

FILLING IN THE EMPTY SPACES

1. Ask the students to first observe the mat by taking a look at the type of streets and adjacent buildings that are existing on the mat,
2. Next, have each student use the Key to pick three components and draw them on the mat (filling in) the blank areas next to the streets, rivers, lakes, railroads, etc.

DEFINITIONS:

Infill Development: The process of developing vacant or under-used parcels within existing urban areas that are already largely developed.

Mixed-Use Development: A type of urban development that blends residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, or entertainment uses, where those functions are physically and functionally integrated, and that provides pedestrian connections. Mixed-use development can take the form of a single building, a city block, or entire neighbourhoods.

City: A large human settlement. Cities generally have extensive systems for housing, transportation, sanitation, utilities, land use, and communication.

Town: A medium-sized human settlement. Towns are generally larger than villages but smaller than cities.

Downtown: An area within a city that represents its core, city center, or central business district.

Vacant Property: A property that once had a building on it (house, business, etc) but is now empty. The property could be vacant due to a natural disaster (flood, tornado, earthquake, fire), being torn down, or abandoned.

CONCLUSION: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. After each student has drawn their components onto the mat, take a look at the city mat as a whole and discuss what works well in the city and what could be improved.
2. Which three components did you choose and why?
3. Where did you choose to place your components on the mat?
4. Do you think having some components next to others works? Doesn’t work? Are they compatible uses?
5. What did you think was the most important component to add to the city?

WHAT DO PLANNERS DO?

An urban planner is a professional who works to enhance the quality of life. A planner is a person who helps shape the design and form of a city or place, from buildings to roads, and parks and more. Planners manage zoning administration, review site plans for new development, implement the zoning code, and enforce design standards in a community.