

Model City Council: Lesson 2

Lesson Topics:

- What makes a city good to live in?
- How can I evaluate my district?
- How do I map my district?

Aim: To gather data about your city and to use it to think critically about the place you live.

Skills to be Addressed:

- Analysis and synthesis of information gained through reading, discussion and observation
- Gathering data from multiple sources and analyzing data from multiple perspectives
- Mapping, using GIS

Objectives:

Students will:

- develop a framework for analyzing issues in their local community.
- gather data about their local community.

Common Core Standards Addressed:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.B

Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., quantitative data, video, multimedia) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Timeframe: One 60 minute period.

Materials:

- A computer that can be displayed on a screen, with access to Internet.

- “The Politics of Happiness”, an article from Yes Magazine, either as a handout or at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/finding-courage/the-politics-of-happiness>.
- District Scorecard, handout.
- FAQs_AGIS (frequently asked questions about AGIS), handout.
- Computers with Internet access or smart phones or tablets with downloaded apps for Geographical Information System (GIS) maps.
- “Have fun: There is never a wrong time to applaud,” an opinion piece from the Albuquerque Journal, by Winthrop Quigley (2013). Also at <http://www.abqjournal.com/214195/have-fun-there-is-never-a-wrong-time-to-applaud.html/upfront-19>
- “Want to See How Governments Are Making Real Progress? Look to the Cities Tackling Our Biggest Problems,” an article from Yes Magazine, 2015. Also available at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/cities-are-now/look-to-the-cities-tackling-our-biggest-problems>

Procedure:

I. City at a Glance Discussion

If you haven’t already, as a class review answers to the City at a Glance Scavenger Hunt (from Lesson 1) The scavenger hunt can lead to discussions about city services, the city budget, and the City Council.

- Questions 1 and 2 refer to the city’s all-purpose 311 phone number and app for answering questions about the city.
- Questions 3 through 16 deal with city services that might interest teenagers.
- Question 17 addresses voter registration.
- Questions 19 through 20 deal with the budget.
- Questions 22 through 25 deal with City Council meetings.

II. Discussion: What Makes a Great City?

Refer to your councilor’s web page and the question, “What does your councilor think is important in your district?”

What do you think is important in a council district? What is needed to make a neighborhood or a district a good place to live? What’s needed to make a city a good place to live?

Lots of people have opinions about this. You can google “What makes a great city?” and you’ll find lots of articles and lots of opinions.

What are your ideas?

If students need prompting, ask, “What about housing? What kind of housing is needed in a great city? Safety? Transportation? Shopping? Recreation?”

Let's look at one person's ideas about what makes a great city, the former mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, Enrique Peñalosa. Hand out "The Politics of Happiness" (<http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/finding-courage/the-politics-of-happiness>) for students to read individually or in groups.

Discuss this articles and Peñalosa's ideas. What does Peñalosa think is the key to a great city?

A few years ago, a man named Charles Landry came up with an idea a lot of people liked. He said a city needs to encourage people to be creative if it wants to be great. He said people need to be able to think, plan, and act with imagination, and that the arts were important for that.

Look at this scorecard for evaluating a district. What do you think of these ideas as measures of a great, that is, vital, dynamic, growing city?

Hand out the District Scorecard. Ask students to look over the criteria for scoring a district. Can they think of others? If so, add those to the scorecard.

Over the next several days, your homework is to drive or bike or walk around your district. Photograph it. Take pictures of streets, bus stops, parks, businesses, schools, whatever you think is important. Look for the good, the bad, the beautiful, the ugly. Focus on areas that are thriving and areas that need improvement.

You'll be able to find many of the features of the district using the city's GIS, Geographical Information System. I'll tell you more about that in a minute.

And you will evaluate your district using this scorecard.

You'll create a slide show or poster or report or rap song or some other form of presentation about your district. If possible, the presentations can be put on the Model City Council Facebook page for other students to view.

Eventually, you'll use these presentations to brainstorm ideas for projects that would benefit your district.

Remember, as you look at your district, consider all the people who live there: the young, the old, men, women, people from various cultures, employees, business owners, consumers, and all education and income levels. But ... you might especially see your district from the point of view of a young person, since you understand that best.

If students will evaluate and photograph their district in groups, they can meet with those groups now to plan and to determine the boundaries of their district (below).

If you want to break this assignment down, consider assigning groups to look at different areas or different features of the district, rather than the district as a whole.

IV. Get to know the boundaries of your district.

- At <http://www.cabq.gov/gis/map-views/city-council-map>, use the + feature to locate the street boundaries of your district.

- Using a printout of [this map](http://tr.sandia.gov/Maps/Albuquerque%20Street%20Map.pdf) (<http://tr.sandia.gov/Maps/Albuquerque%20Street%20Map.pdf>) or [this map](http://www.cabq.gov/parksandrecreation/documents/2016-abq-bike-map-side-1.pdf) (<http://www.cabq.gov/parksandrecreation/documents/2016-abq-bike-map-side-1.pdf>), mark the boundaries of your district as best you can.
- Explore the Maps for Mobile at <https://www.cabq.gov/gis/maps-for-mobile> to see which maps you can access through your phone.
- Students in class or at home can use the Albuquerque Geographic Information System map viewers to explore their neighborhood or district. The viewer can be set to display features like libraries, parks, sports facilities, cultural centers, bike paths – all kinds of information. The document FAQs_AGIS (frequently asked questions about AGIS) can help.

Map programs on a computer or apps on a tablet or smartphone can tell you a lot about the area around your current location or most other places you might want to research. More than the “where,” Google Maps will give the “when” — hours that a business is open. It will autodial if you’re using a smartphone. It will seamlessly open the store’s website in a browser so you can find out availability and price of what you’re looking for. Bunches of information that used to be scattered around telephone books, catalogs and other paper records are now conveniently pinned to a virtual map accessible anywhere you can get an Internet or cell connection.

In the same way, the city and other governments have pinned tons and tons of information on virtual maps, making it far more accessible to citizens. You can find out a lot about your neighborhood or district at <http://www.cabq.gov/gis> — GIS stands for Geographic Information Systems.

Explore some of the options on the left side of that web page. “Map Views and Searches” is a good place to start. The “Advanced Map Viewer” can stack up layers of different categories of data. The information may overwhelm certain web browsers or computers. Best bet is a computer with an ethernet wired connection running Internet Explorer. A WiFi-connected computer or wireless mobile device may seem slow. If so, scroll down the “Advance Map Viewer” page to find the “Simple Viewer.” Either map viewer can be manipulated to show the locations of parks and pools, libraries, bus and bike routes, and athletic facilities, helping with the queries on the District Report Card of Lesson 2.

For location-based crime data, visit abqjournal.com/crime. The page opens with every category of crime selected in the panel in the upper right hand corner — pretty dense. Hit “clear all,” and you can choose one type of crime, like DWI, and see all the arrests with the date range specified at the bottom of the panel. This may be a good place to get a handle on the District Report Card’s safety rating.

If you have fun with this, check out http://www.esri.com/products/maps-we-love#relatedmaps_section. There are some incredible maps.

Playing around with Geographical Information System maps can give a headstart in gathering information about your neighborhood and council district. As you do so, keep in mind that learning GIS skills can put you a step ahead along more and more career paths.

V. Homework

Begin exploring the district with the District Score Card.

VI. Optional assignments:

Read Quigley, "Have Fun: There is Never a Wrong Time to Applaud," in the Albuquerque Journal, either as a handout or at <http://www.abqjournal.com/214195/have-fun-there-is-never-a-wrong-time-to-applaud.html>.

This is a short column that looks at culture, creativity and connectedness in a city.

and/or

Van Gelder, "Want to See How Governments are Making Real Progress? Look to the Cities Tackling Our Biggest Problems" in Yes Magazine, as a handout or at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/cities-are-now/look-to-the-cities-tackling-our-biggest-problems>.

This is a longer, more scholarly article about how cities often lead the way in solving problems.

and/or

Interview an older person from your district to find out what changes have occurred in the last twenty, thirty or more years. Report on what you learned.