



# Democracy in Action:

## Communities Make Decisions

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## How does location affect communities?

Communities are places where people live together and share resources, like schools, fire stations, libraries, and parks. But people in a community share more than just a common place. They also share traditions, responsibilities, and an identity.

A community's location affects its identity and traditions. The natural resources available to a community are determined by location. So location can affect what people do for fun and what jobs people have. All the things a community shares make a particular community special. These things also give the people who live there a feeling of pride.





SET 1

SLIDE 2

This coastal community is on the ocean, which is a natural resource. The ocean provides jobs in fishing and marine biology. It also provides jobs in tourism and leisure activities, like surfing and boating. ▼



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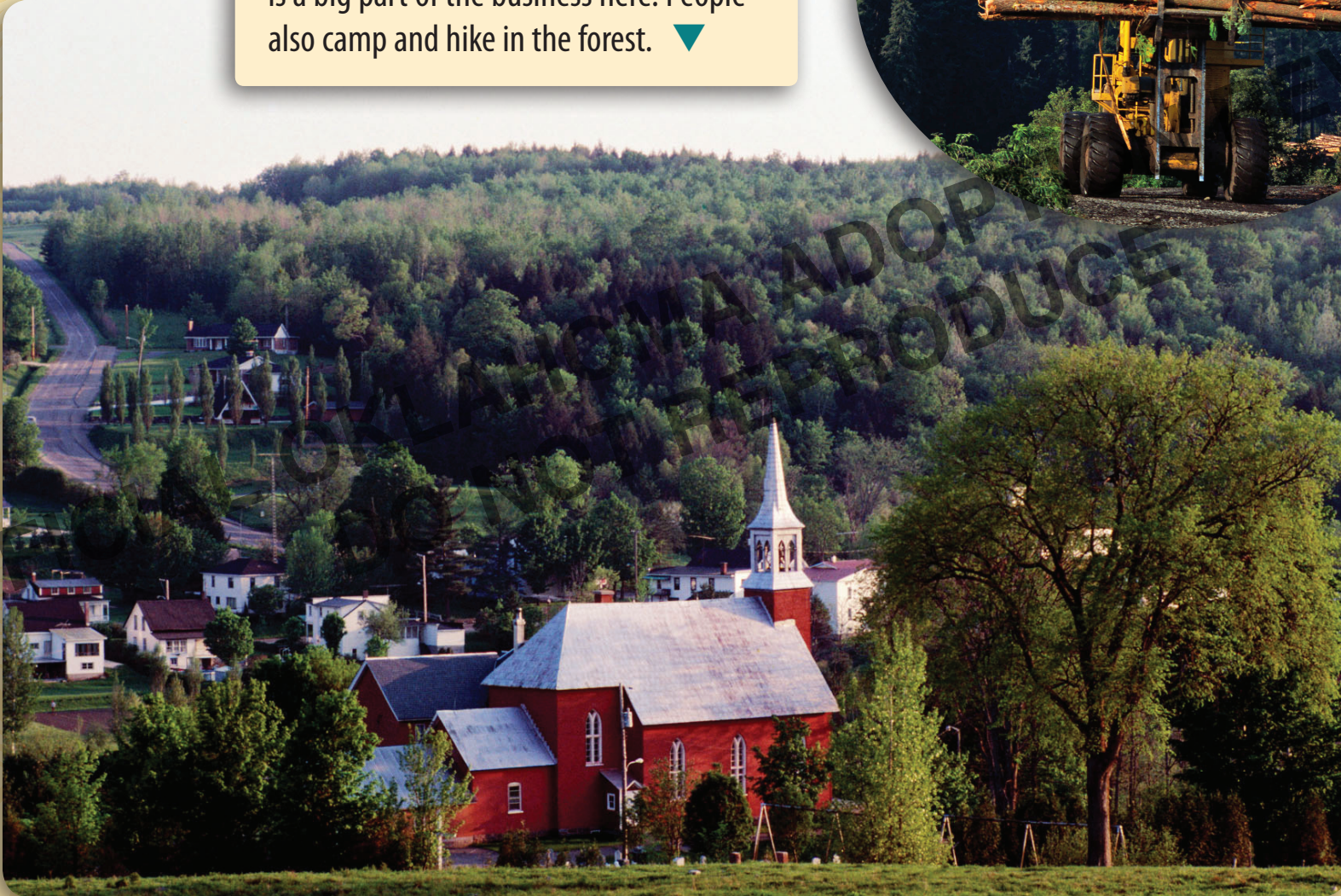




SET 1

SLIDE 3

This community is in a forested area. One of its natural resources is wood, so lumber is a big part of the business here. People also camp and hike in the forest. ▼







SET 1

SLIDE 4

The flat, fertile land around this community is ideal for farming. Many people here make their living growing crops and raising animals. Businesses, like this farm supply store, provide farmers in the community with the things they need. ▼







1. What are the natural resources in these communities? (*understanding visuals*)
2. How do location and natural resources affect what people do for fun and for work in these communities? (*scanning*)
3. How are these communities alike? How are they different? (*making inferences, comparing and contrasting*)







## How do businesses contribute to a community?

Businesses are an important part of most communities. Some businesses provide goods, such as a grocery store, some provide services, such as a dry cleaner, and some provide both. Some businesses meet needs that everyone has, so these businesses exist in almost every community. For example, people need to eat and to put gas in their cars, so most communities have food stores and gas stations.

What is the difference between a “good” and a “service”? What are some businesses that provide goods? What are some businesses that provide services? (*scanning*)



SET 2

SLIDE 2

All communities have some small family-owned businesses like this one. Family-owned businesses offer a more personal touch to customers in a community. ▼

Other businesses are connected to a community's location or natural resources. For example, a farm community has businesses that meet the needs of farmers. Some businesses become part of the town's history or traditions because they stay in business for a long time. In these ways, businesses are connected to a community's features and identity.

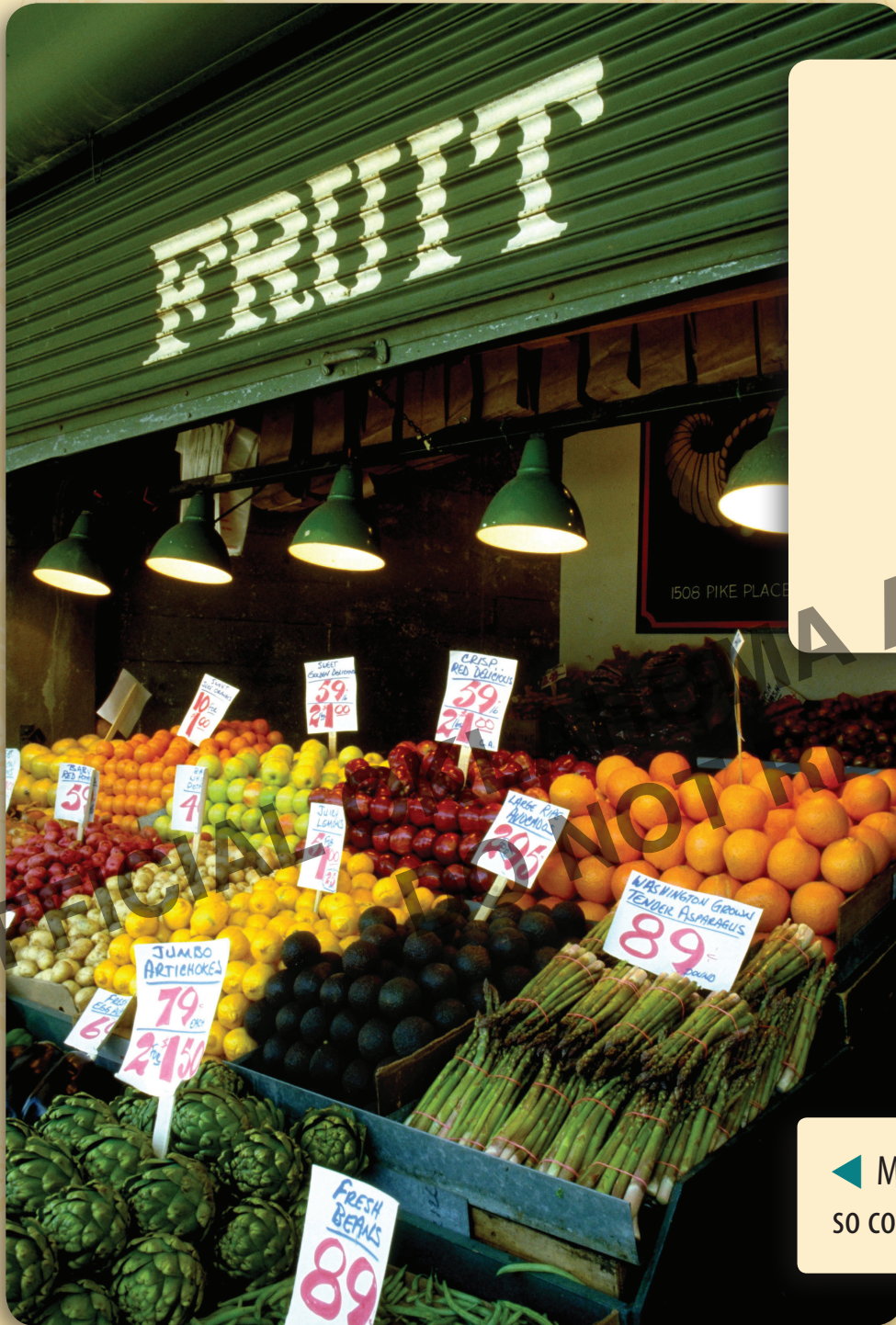
**How are different communities' businesses the same? How are they different?** *(comparing and contrasting)*







Businesses and communities need each other. Businesses need people to work for them and to buy their goods and services. People in communities need businesses for employment and for things that they want or need to buy.



◀ Most people need to shop for food, so communities have grocery stores.



## Businesses and community planning

Planning commissions are part of the local government. They study and make decisions about construction that takes place in their city or town. They review proposals, or plans, for new construction. Some construction is private, like malls or factories, and some is public, like libraries and recreation centers.

What do business owners need to think about when deciding to open a business? *(making inferences)*





Zoning codes are laws made to protect communities and the rights of their citizens.

Zoning codes include:

1. the kinds of buildings that can be built in an area; for example, an area might be zoned only for homes, only for businesses, or both
2. how large and tall buildings may be
3. how many people can live in an area



▲ Businesses have to make sure that their building plans and business practices meet the Planning Commission's requirements.



## How do people contribute to their communities?

There are different communities all over the world, but they all have one thing in common: people. The special interests and ideas of people help to make their community unique. Some people, like real estate developers or medical technicians, serve others through their work. Others shape their communities by getting involved in activities, like sports teams or gardening clubs. Some people volunteer, or give their time, to help others. Volunteers serve the community in many different ways, such as helping in animal shelters, tutoring in schools, or building homes for the elderly. All these ways of contributing to the community make it a better place to live.

**What are some different ways people can contribute to their community?**  
*(main idea/supporting details)*





SET 3

SLIDE 2



▶ This woman is a volunteer. She donates her time to tutor students in a school.





SET 3

SLIDE 3



▲ People can help preserve the environment by participating in their community's recycling program.





SET 3

SLIDE 4



▲ These people are painting a public mural to help make their community more beautiful.





SET 3

SLIDE 5



In what ways can you contribute to your community? *(connecting)*







## A citizen's contributions to his community

Jorge Boada lives in Aurora, Illinois. He is a very active member of his community. Jorge was born in Quito, Ecuador, South America, but became an American citizen in 1981. When he became a citizen, the Citizenship Council of Metropolitan Chicago recognized him as an Outstanding New Citizen. Jorge has made many contributions to the Aurora community. He has served as:

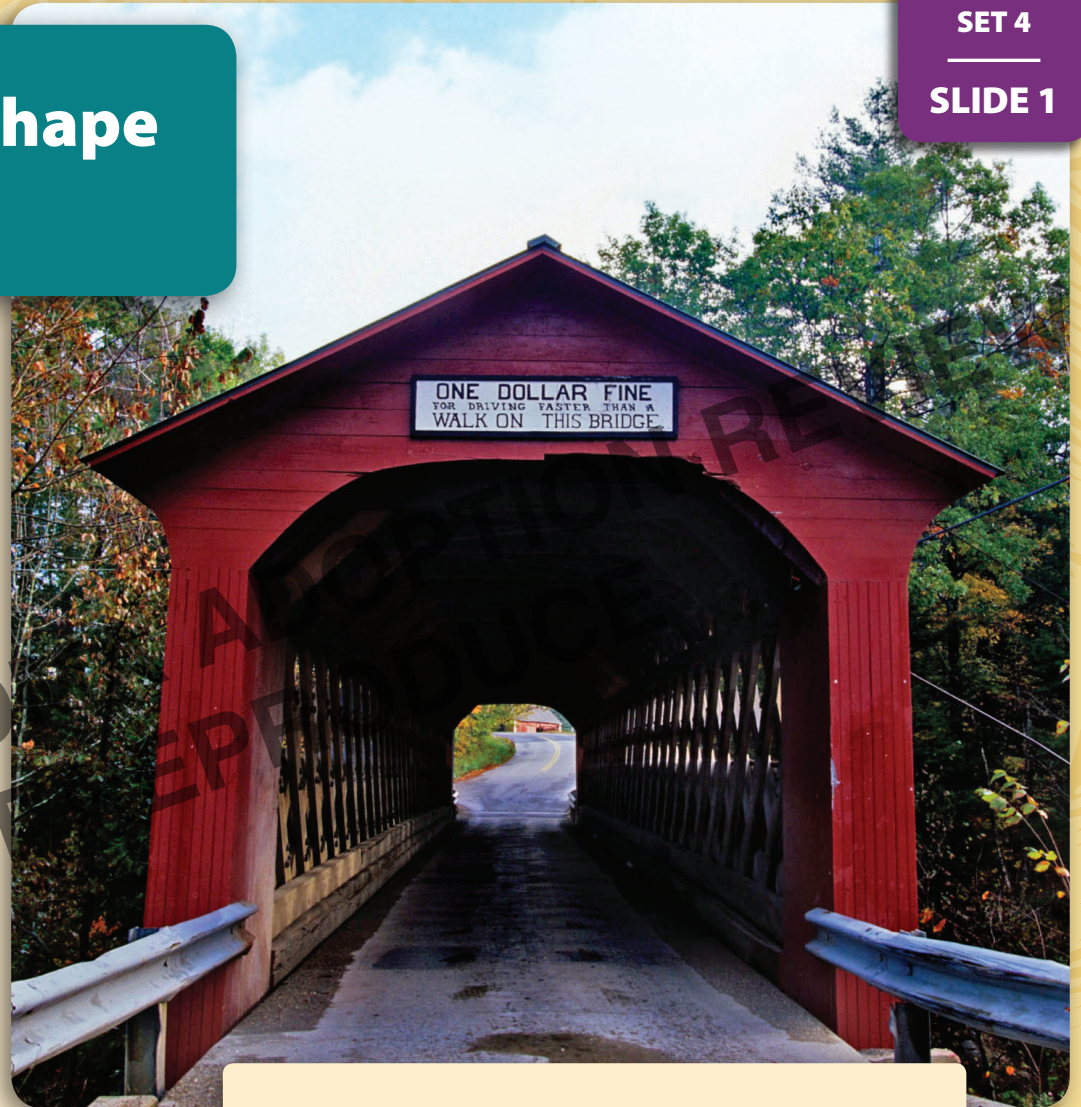
- President of Aurora's Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Member of the Board of Directors for the United Way, a group that supports different charities
- Member of the Board for the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, a group that works for fair housing





## How does the past shape a community?

All communities are shaped by events of the past. These might be major events, like the founding of a hospital. But even smaller events, like tearing down an old building, can impact a community's history. Each event is related to events that came before, and each contributes to the unique history yet to be made in the community. After a community is founded, it grows and changes with the changing needs of its population.



▲ This old covered bridge in Vermont is an important link to the community's early history.

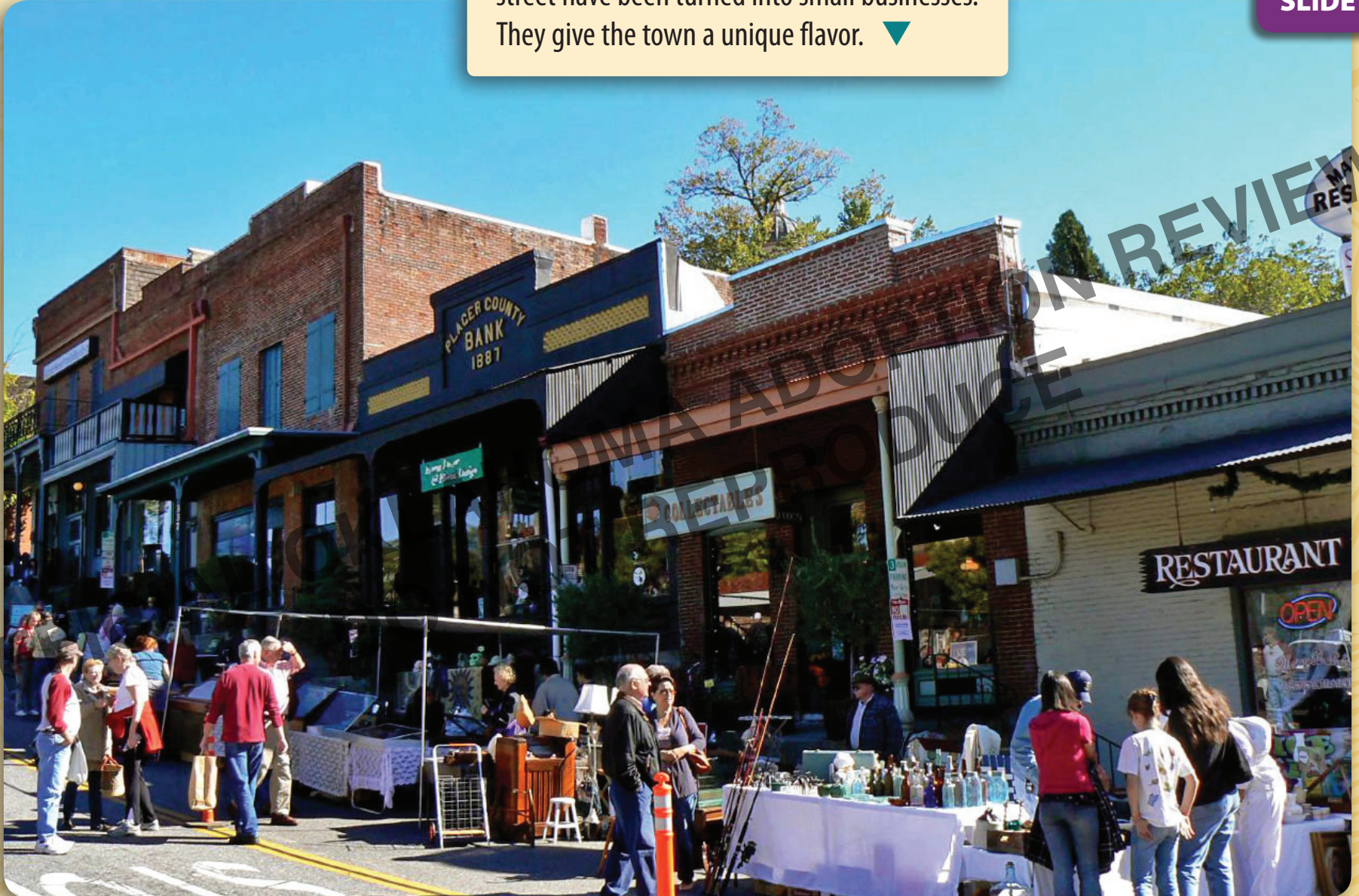




SET 4

SLIDE 2

Many of the old buildings on this California street have been turned into small businesses. They give the town a unique flavor. ▼



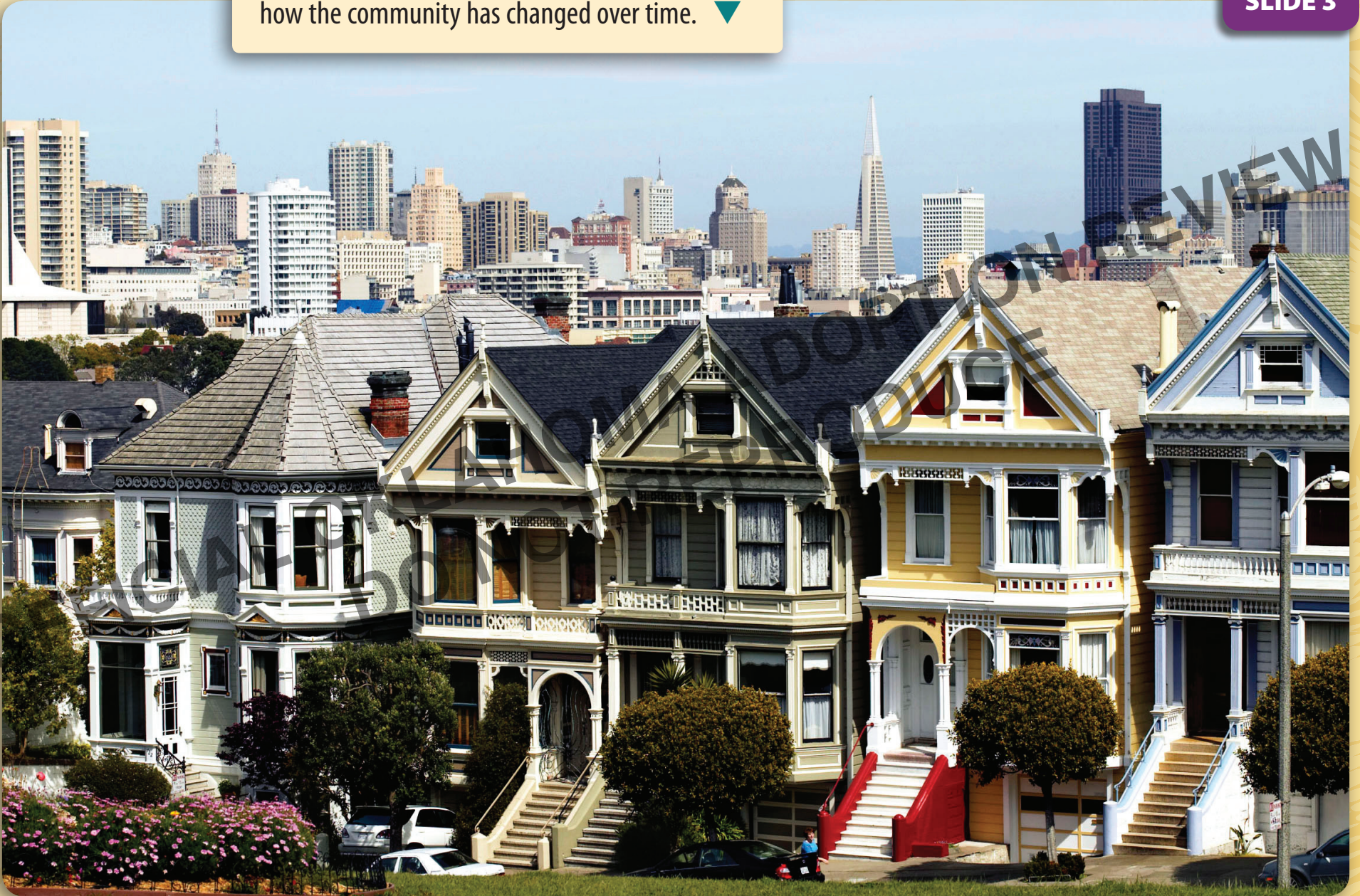




SET 4

SLIDE 3

The mix of old and new buildings in this city show how the community has changed over time. ▼







# Honoring community leaders

The Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s had a powerful effect on the United States. Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the most important people in that movement. He did a lot to change how African Americans were treated in places in the South, such as Alabama and Mississippi. He was committed to changing an unfair system without violence.

Birmingham, Alabama, put up a statue in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. and what he stood for. Though Martin Luther King Jr. lived over forty years ago, the Civil Rights Movement is still important today. The statue reminds Birmingham of its history and the importance of fighting for equality. This sense of history contributes to Birmingham's identity and its residents' pride in their community.







1. What reminders  
of the past do you  
see in these pictures?  
(understanding visuals)

2. How do things from the  
past affect a community?  
(making inferences)





Places to walk, bike, and ►  
play bring people outside  
and promote healthy living.



## What makes a community a community?

In a community, people can share public spaces and feel like they belong. Communities can create public spaces in a way that will encourage community members to use them. Parks encourage people to spend time outdoors. Sidewalks can be made wide and easy to walk on, so that people will want to walk through the neighborhood instead of drive. Outdoor spaces and places to walk and exercise encourage healthy living.

**How does your community encourage healthy living?** *(connecting)*





Neighborhood businesses make a difference to a community, too. When community members use their local shops, they get to know their neighbors and the people who work in their community.

Community members are more active in their community when they use public spaces. At local parks and on community sports teams, neighbors meet each other and play together. Community gardens, where people grow vegetables for their families, bring neighbors together. Places that bring people together help build a sense of community.

1. What are some ways communities develop a sense of belonging? (*main idea/supporting details*)
2. In your community what contributes to a sense of belonging? (*connecting*)





SET 5

SLIDE 3

When people sit out on their porches or front stoops, they can get to know neighbors they might not see otherwise. This contributes to neighbors' feelings of belonging.







◀ Many people come together to share their enjoyment of sports activities.





SET 5

SLIDE 5



## A community garden

The people in this community are using their interest in gardening to benefit their community. They work together to turn an abandoned lot into a community garden.

Now, tomatoes, herbs, peppers, and even flowers will grow where once only weeds thrived. An area that people once avoided will become a place where neighbors can gather to share gardening tips and visit.





## What does a community's government do?

Many things must be done to keep a community running smoothly. Garbage must be picked up, schools kept running, fire stations built, and citizens kept safe. The government takes care of these kinds of services.

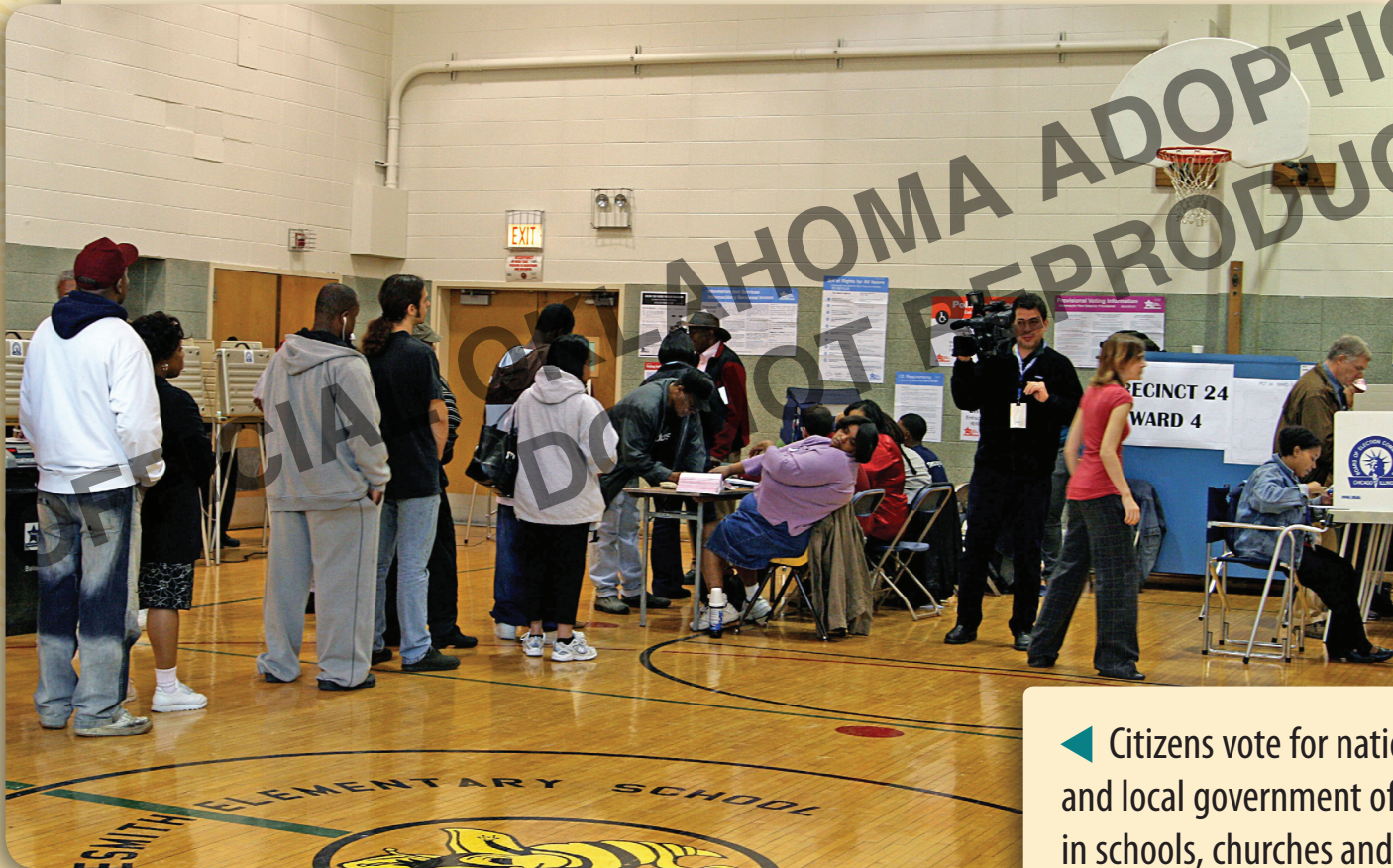
Garbage collectors and other people who work for the local government keep communities clean and safe. ►







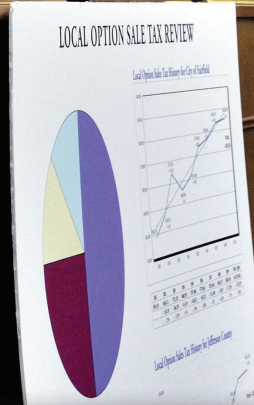
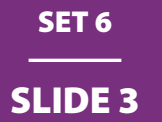
Government agencies are also good sources of information. Community members can find solutions to problems through various government agencies. Community members can also express their opinions and preferences to the government. They can write letters, attend council meetings, or sign petitions. Another way community members express their preferences is by voting for the elected officials who run the local government.



How do citizens have a voice in the local government?  
*(making inferences)*

◀ Citizens vote for national and local government officials in schools, churches and other community buildings.





▲ Most city council meetings are open to the public, like this meeting in Fairfield, Iowa.





SET 6

SLIDE 4

Judges in local courts make sure state laws are applied correctly. ▼

Local government is in charge of many of the decisions that affect a community, from how schools are funded, to the planting of trees in parks and the location of new buildings. A community and its government must be prepared to meet new needs as the community grows and changes.







SET 6

SLIDE 5



Look at the pictures on this slide. What services are being provided by the local government? (*understanding visuals*)





# The three branches of government

The American government is made up of three different branches. These branches share power, but have different responsibilities.

1. The legislative branch makes laws and policies.
2. The executive branch carries out laws and policies.
3. The judicial branch decides how laws should be applied to solve problems.

Branch	National level	State level	Local level
Legislative	Congress: Senate and House of Representatives	State Senate State House of Representatives	City council Aldermen Selectman Commissioners
Executive	President President's Cabinet	Governor	Mayor
Judicial	Supreme Court	State Court	County Court





## Checks and balances

Each branch of the government can check the other branches to make sure everyone is doing what they are supposed to do. They also make sure there is a balance of power, so no branch will have more power than another. American government is based on this system of checks and balances.

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## How do communities solve problems?

Because community members have many different points of view, communities often face controversies. A controversy is a situation in which people have different opinions, and they disagree about what should be done.

When a community faces controversy, it has to make difficult decisions. It needs to consider the costs and benefits for the community and its members. Costs and benefits can be economic, which means they involve money and jobs. But they can also be about the community's quality of life or identity.

Ideally, a community can reach a compromise. A compromise is when people on each side of an issue give up some of their demands in order to reach an agreement.





SET 7

SLIDE 2

## Environmental Issues

### TAKE ACTION!

#### WETLANDS IN CRISIS



Half of the original wetland areas in Wisconsin have been lost to new housing developments. Once the wetlands are gone, they're gone forever!

**How can you help?  
Come to the meeting!**

Town Hall  
Thursday  
August 10 7:00 P.M.





# Environmental Issues

## Wetlands Fact Sheet

**At Risk:** The wetlands of northern Wisconsin. Wetlands are low, wet areas, like swamp.

**Cause for Concern:** The fast growth of new construction is overtaking wetlands and farmland.

**Benefits of Wetlands:** They help to prevent floods in surrounding areas. They provide shelter for a wide variety of wildlife. Wetlands plants absorb pollutants and help keep water clean.

**Benefits of New Housing Developments:** They encourage growth, which often leads to economic improvements in a community.

**Action Taken:** A group of concerned people formed a coalition called *1,000 Friends of Wisconsin*. (A coalition is a group of people working for a common cause.) Its goals are to educate the public on the importance of wetlands and limit the number and size of new housing developments.

Source: *Chicago Tribune*, October 6, 1996.

1. Do you think the community in Wisconsin should build houses on wetlands? Why or why not? *(making inferences)*
2. What compromise would you suggest? Explain. *(making inferences)*





# Development Issues



## Resident Petition

We, the undersigned, believe it is in the best interests of the people of Mt. Vernon to keep Memorial Field as a community park. Memorial Field is one of the few places where people can come together. The proposed baseball stadium would limit our use of the field. We protest these changes to Memorial Park.

*Beth Allen*  
*Hector Cuadra*  
*Lynette Berent*  
*Cassi Briggs*  
*Julie Hynduk*





# Development Issues

## Public Park Fact Sheet

**Land Under Dispute:** Memorial Field in Mount Vernon, New York

**Suggested Use:** Turn the public park, Memorial Field, into a stadium for a minor league baseball team.

**Benefits:** The stadium would beautify the area and bring in money. The park would be made safer.

**Costs:** The public would have less access to the park. Mt. Vernon would lose a part of its history that the old park building represents.

**Voices Against:** Residents who use the field regularly for its running track and handball and tennis courts are against the proposal.

**Voices For:** The mayor says the city doesn't have the money to renovate, or restore, the park without funds from the baseball team.

**Action Taken:** A public meeting was held on the field. Over 300 people attended, and more than 20 people spoke out against the plans for the stadium. The mayor and city council must decide what to do.

Source: *New York Times*, July 7, 1994.





# Why do community members celebrate together?

Communities celebrate for many different reasons. Community members can come together to celebrate holidays and their heritage or traditions. Communities also celebrate when a controversy has been resolved.

The 4th of July is celebrated in ►  
communities across the country.







SET 8

SLIDE 2



▲ This ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrates the completion of a community mural.

To celebrate, a community might hold a festival, a ground-breaking ceremony, the opening of a new building or park, or a block party.





This Chinese New Year celebration reflects the community's heritage. ▼



It is important to celebrate the things that make our community a good place to live. Celebrations give community members a greater sense of belonging.





SET 8

SLIDE 4

Celebrations also make a community  
a better place to live!



▲ At this dedication ceremony, Habitat for  
Humanity is giving a new house to a family.





1. Look at the photos. How might these different celebrations bring community members together? *(understanding visuals)*
2. What are some ways your community celebrates? *(connecting)*