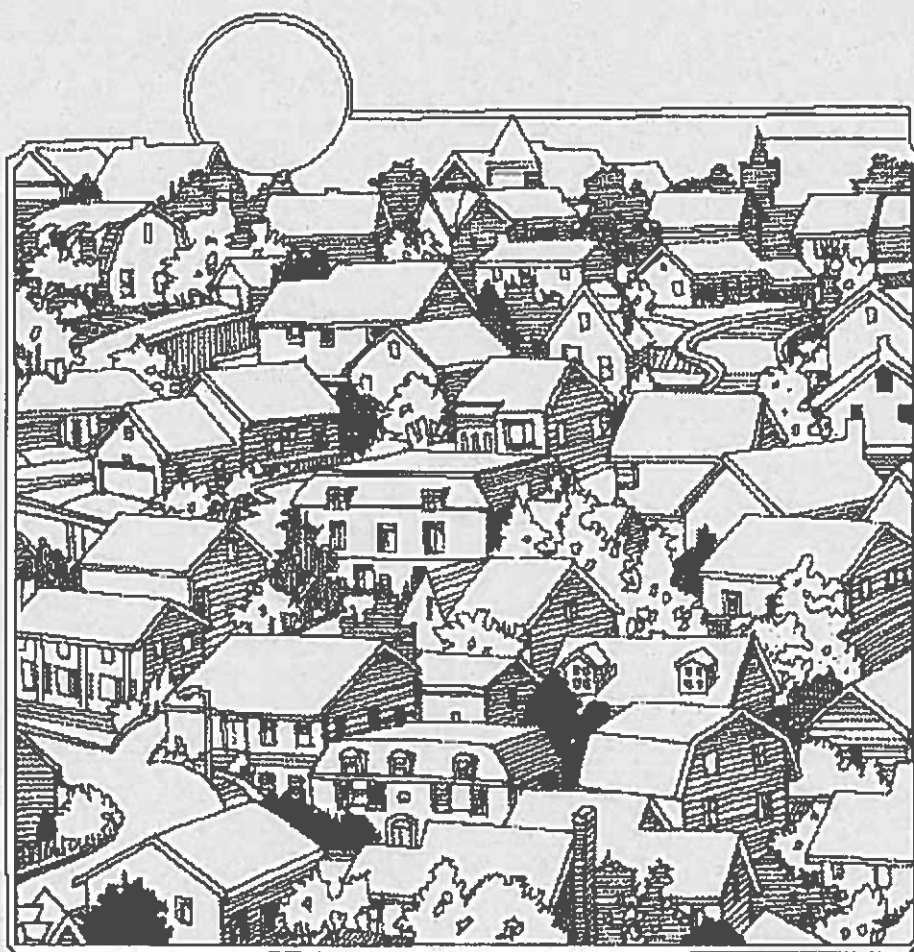


# My Community and Me



Citizenship: Level 3



# My Community and Me

## What I will learn in this project:

- ☐ What a community is
- ☐ What your role as a citizen of a community is
- ☐ What opportunities are available to you as a citizen of your community
- ☐ What you can do to improve your community

This project will help you learn more about you and your community. You will learn about the many functions of your community and how they relate to each other. You will understand the importance of becoming involved in your community.



## What I will do in this project

- ☐ Develop a greater understanding and appreciation of your community.
- ☐ Explain the functions and responsibilities of the various components of your community.
- ☐ Make a plan of action to improve one component of your community and carry out your plan.
- ☐ Find facts, organize ideas and report results.
- ☐ Share what I learn with others

This action project involves real life learning experiences. Your experience in participating more fully in your community will be fun, challenging, and rewarding.

Activities in this project book are in three categories:

- + Activities that require less time and materials.
- ++ Activities that will require thought and planning to complete.
- +++ Activities that allow you to demonstrate your creativity and organization in completing the various aspects. These should prove to be more challenging.

# Part 1: Planning My Community Project

Exploring your community can be exciting. It will help you learn to act with intelligent concern for the good of your whole community, which includes yourself and your friends.

Basically, a community is a group of people who live and work together. They share ideas and feelings about each other, what they do and where they live.

In a way, the community is like a jigsaw puzzle with many different pieces. As long as the pieces of the puzzle are jumbled, it is hard to see what the picture is. Taken individually, each piece has no meaning. Only when the pieces are fitted together can you see the complete picture. And it is this way with the parts or components of a community.

What are the major components that make up your community? Here is a list of community components that affect your life almost every day. Are there others that you can add?

Government  
Courts and Laws  
Business and Industry (economic system)  
Transportation, Communication & Utilities  
Culture and Heritage  
Natural Resources and Environment  
Education  
Organizations  
Tourism (Recreation and Hobbies)  
Support

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Some of these could be broken down further and some could be combined, but the list provides a starting point for you to explore your community.

You may take this project for one or more years depending on how much you want to learn. Each year in the project, you will want to study different components of your community.

Some things you can do in this project

- ☐ Write your project goals. Your goals should reflect what you plan to do and what you want to learn from this project.
- ☐ Make a plan of action for your study activities and interviews. Keep a record of what you do, what you learn and how you share this knowledge with others.
- ☐ Become more familiar with your family history and tradition.
- ☐ Learn more about your ancestors and gain a greater appreciation for them.
- ☐ Get involved in the discovery, restoration and preservation of valuable things from the past.
- ☐ Become aware of some of the career opportunities related to history and heritage.
- ☐ See the need to become involved in improving the quality of life now to pass on to future generations.

Your community may or may not have all the components listed previously. You may choose to study some of the ones listed, or select your own community component.

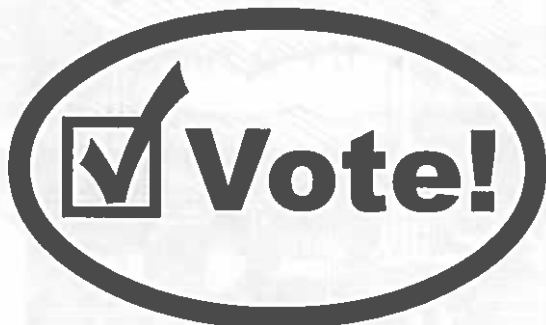
# Part 2: Government

Leaders are elected by the people. This means that "we the people" are responsible for what happens in our community. To exercise that responsibility with "justice for all" requires people to be informed. Individuals need to be interested in and to know what their elected representatives are doing.

There are three basic forms of government: council form, the commission form and the village or city manager form. Which type of government does my town have?

Some things you can do:

- + Tour village or city hall, and/or the courthouse. Find out the names of your township, village, city or county officials. What are the duties of each office?
- + Attend a township, village, city and/or county council meeting.
- + Make posters encouraging people to register to vote.
- ++ Select a specific issue and become informed about it. Compile a scrapbook of newspaper articles and pictures on this issue. Share your scrapbook with your helper.
- ++ Write an explanation of how your township, village, city or county government functions and how it is financed.



## Courts and Law

Although we live in a democracy, we need a certain amount of rules and regulations. These rules and regulations are laws that help the community run smoothly and protect the lives, property and rights of the citizens. It is the responsibility of the court to make sure the laws are justly applied. The court must not only punish those who break laws, but must also protect good citizens.

Some things you can do:

- + Attend several of your city or county court trials.
- + Contact local attorneys and offer to assist in publicizing "Law Day".
- ++ Find out how many different courts there are in your county and list the different responsibilities of each court.
- ++ Interview a lawyer to learn what he or she does to help people with legal problems or needs.
- +++ Conduct a mock trial complete with judge, jury, defendant and witnesses.



## Business and Industry

People depend upon each other for their needs. This interdependence makes trading necessary, and has led to a complicated production and marketing system in America.

Industry has the responsibility for turning raw materials such as iron ore, coal, sand or wood into products people can use. These products include cars, appliances, furniture, food, clothing and electricity, just to name a few. Business in turn sells the products that industry makes. Business also includes the selling of services such as laundries, dry cleaners, restaurants, auto repair shops and banks.

Private businesses depend upon profits from the sale of goods and services for stability and expansion. Successful, progressive businesses benefit the community by providing jobs and increasing family incomes.

The United States economy is sometimes called a "mixed economy" since both private enterprise (individual, partnerships, corporations and cooperatives), as well as the government own and operate businesses.

The economic system of the U.S., based on specialized jobs and goods produced all over the world, requires that people trade with each other since no person can produce all that he needs himself. Most goods must be sold before they are used.

The consumer has a part in what kind and quality of goods will be produced through what he chooses to buy. His choices influence producers, processors, the middleman and the retailer.

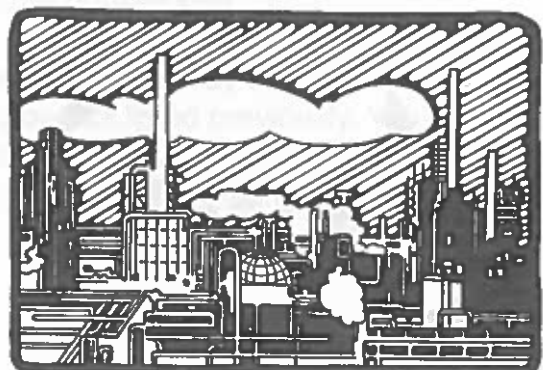
People all wish for more things than they can afford and this means that they have to make choices. Acquiring the ability to make good choices is part of the whole business of growing up. Young people need to learn how to make intelligent choices.

Some things you can do:

- + Make a list of the main industries in your community.
- ++ Visit one of the main industries and discuss with a company official why the industry operates the way it does.
- ++ Make a map locating where you and your family get various goods and services in your community.
- ++ Discuss with a member of the Chamber of Commerce the future plans for business and industry in your community.
- +++ Visit a producer's cooperative. Discuss members' roles and responsibilities; how the business is managed and principles on which the cooperative operates.
- +++ Visit a labor union office. See the building and office procedures. Talk with a union official about labor's relationships with industry, business and government. Discuss the philosophy of labor organization.

Questions to ponder:

- ☐ Do your industries get the raw materials for their products from within the community or from somewhere else?
- ☐ Are the products from community industries sold in local stores or are they shipped to other places?
- ☐ Are the shopping areas mainly downtown or are they spread out?
- ☐ Do the people in your community do most of their shopping in the community or do they go to another town?
- ☐ Do people from other towns come to your community to do their shopping?



## Transportation

Transportation is used to move people and merchandise around in the community and from one community to another. Most often when we think of transportation we think of cars, buses, trucks, trains, ships and airplanes. However, there are other forms as well, such as bicycles, mopeds, motorcycles and rapid transit systems.

It is important to remember the things that are necessary for transportation such as roads, bridges, airports, railroad tracks, warehouses, bus terminals, harbors and bike paths.

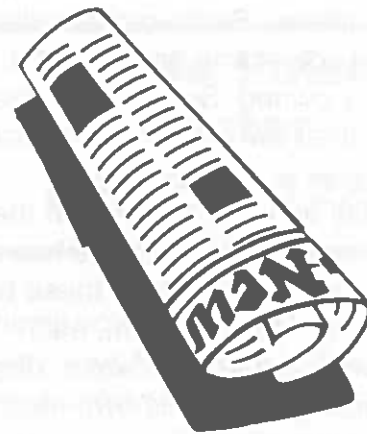
Some things you can do:

- + Make a list of all the different types of transportation found in your community.
- + On a map, draw the transportation route that you take to go to school.
- + If your community doesn't have air, bus or train service, find the nearest places you would go to secure these services.
- + List the ways in which transportation is important to you during a normal day in your life.
- ++ Research the different ways of sending a 10-pound gift package to a relative in Atlanta, Georgia, from your hometown. Include the time involved and compare the cost of mail, parcel post, bus, etc.



## Communications

Can you imagine what life would be like if you did not have a telephone, television or radio, received no newspaper or magazines, had no postman, mail delivery or electronic mail (instant messaging?)? How would you know what was going on in the world? In the U.S. we are very fortunate to have all these forms of communication available to us at a price most of us can afford. Take a little time to learn more about how these types of communication work.



Things you can do:

- + Tour your local newspaper office, television station, telephone company, post office and/or radio station.
- + Learn how to use electronic mail or teach someone else how to use it.
- + Read the "Letters to the Editor" in your local newspaper for one week. Compile a list of issues mentioned in this section.
- ++ Participate in a radio or TV program. Your local Youth Development Educator or 4-H Community Worker can help you with this.
- ++ Watch local news on television for a week. Keep track of the main issues mentioned.
- ++ Write a report on four of your club's activities and submit them to your county 4-H newsletter.
- +++ Determine how one of the communication systems functions and how it is financed.
- +++ Write a letter to the editor of your newspaper in support of something important to you.