

# Lesson Plan 2: The great outdoors: Protecting open space

**SUBJECT(S):** English, Math, Science

**GRADE LEVEL:** 7 - 10

**DURATION:** two class periods

## Objectives

Students will understand that:

- land use decisions usually represent a trade-off among different choices

Students will be able to:

- present a persuasive argument in writing
- demonstrate the proper form for business letters
- format documents in final form for submission for publication

## Warm-up/Discussion

### Period 1

Some people think it's important to protect enough land from development so that everyone has access to places where they can walk, bike, fish and enjoy outdoor activities.

Ask students to think of an example of a favorite place outdoors. This can be a backyard, park, forest preserve, farm, or somewhere they have visited on vacation. Ask them to be as specific as possible in describing what appeals to them about this particular place. What made it special? How did they feel when they were in this place? Do students think that having places like this is a good thing for individuals and for the region as a whole? Why or why not?

Imagine that there were no parks or forest preserves. How would people's lives be different?

## Materials Included:

- None

## Additional Materials Needed:

- None

## Learning Activities

Ask students to consider the following scenario:

A group has approached the city council asking for a new park in the community. The land where the park would be constructed is vacant and owned by the city, and the group argues that a park would provide a place for people to walk their dogs, where children could play and where soccer and baseball teams could practice.

Another group is opposed to this idea and wants to see a job-training center built on the land instead. They agree that a park would be nice, but say that it's more important to help people prepare to get good jobs.

Students should decide which point of view to support and write a letter to the city council explaining why their option would be best for the community.

### Homework

Students write a rough draft of their letter.

### Period 2

Help students revise their letters. Use business letter formatting and have students find and use the address of their alderman or the mayor in their community.

### Assessment

Evaluate letters to the city council for content and clarity.

### Wrap-up/Reflection

Have students who represent opposing views read their letters to the class.

As an example of compromise, ask students whether they can think of a solution that both groups might approve, such as the creation of a job training center that includes a “pocket park” (a mini park that includes trees, benches and other amenities).

### Ideas for Additional Activities

Choose a local park or forest preserve and have students do a history of the place using documents from local historical societies, newspaper archives, and other resources. What's the origin of the name of the place? When did it become a park or forest preserve? Who led the effort to protect it?

#### Activity based on Terry Evans photographs for the Revealing Chicago Exhibition included in the back of the binder:

RYERSON WOODS. NEAR DEERFIELD IN LAKE COUNTY. APRIL 25, 2003. Forest preserves and other conservation districts in the counties of the Chicago region have protected thousands of acres from urban development. What value do places like this have? The monetary value of these places (in terms of what the land could be sold for) has risen over the past hundred years since counties began to create forest preserves. But places have other kinds of values besides economic value. For example, what value might the place in the photo have for a child? An elderly person? A dog? A squirrel? A scientist? List as many different types of value for the place in the photo as you can.