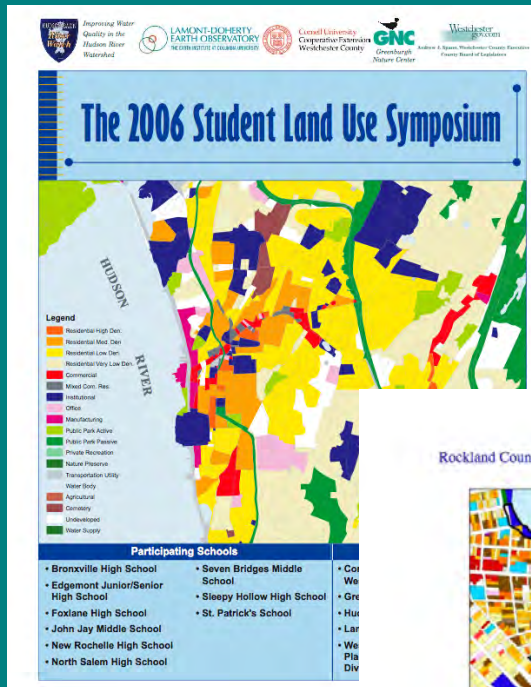


# County Planning Land Use With Students (PLUS) Symposiums

Collaborative Projects



Presenter: Margie Turrin,  
Ed. Coordinator, LDEO

Presented at the Hudson River Environmental Society Meeting 5/07

# Mix of Local & Regional Partners

## Rockland County

Hudson Basin River Watch  
Keep Rockland Beautiful  
Lamont Doherty Earth  
Observatory  
Cornell Cooperative Extension  
of Rockland County  
Rockland County Americorps  
Rockland County Planning  
Department

## Westchester County

Hudson Basin River Watch  
Lamont-Doherty Earth  
Observatory  
Westchester County  
Department of Parks &  
Conservation  
Westchester County Planning  
Department  
Cornell Cooperative Extension  
of Westchester County  
Greenburgh Nature Center

# What is A Land Use Symposium?

- Students from participating schools analyze a land use issue/decision that is:  
CURRENT - ACTIVE - LOCAL  
as a lens for looking at the land planning process
- Meet with mentors from the community & the project
- Debate and discuss site impacts & mitigations
- Work with other students to redesign the project site - minimizing impacts and focus on enhancing the community

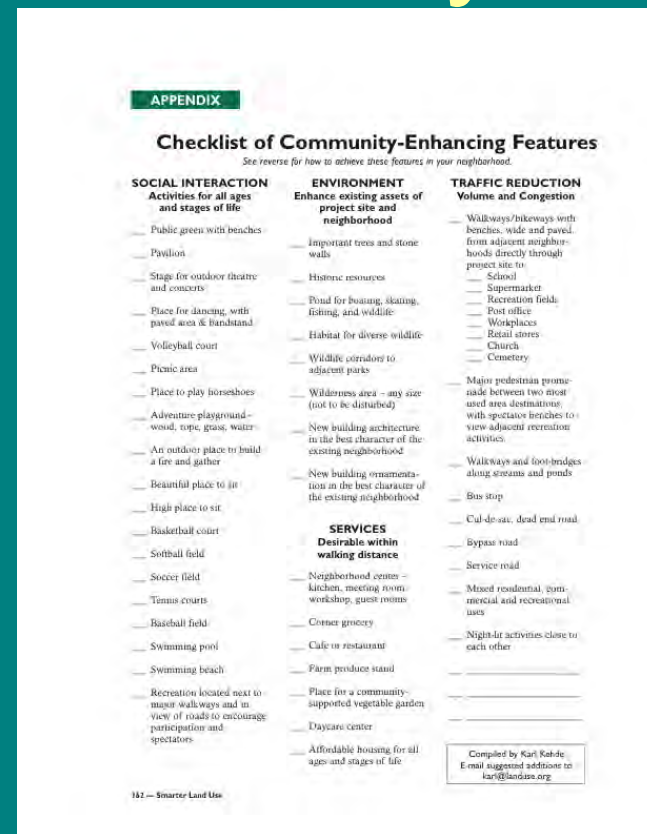
# Land Use Issue



- Current, active or recently active & local
  - Environmental Impact Statement (Draft or Final) available for use in developing Case File Booklet
  - Additional materials readily available
  - Possibly something that is making the press - relevance & 'face' recognition
  - Relevance of activity - feel they are making a difference
  - Connect to student's everyday life through 'Sense of Place' and provide them with an entry point to their local community planning process

# Alignment with Environmental Science & Public Policy

- Important to view the environment within the context of human influences - examining the economic, culture, political structure, & social equity AS WELL AS the environment -the natural processes & systems. Planning for sustainable communities.



Issues are often short term answers with long term effects

# Meet with Mentors

- Exposure to actual individuals who are involved in this process
  - Environmental Attorney's
  - Brownfield Clean Up Engineers
  - Local Planning Board members
  - Local Housing authority members
  - Community business owners
  - Residents
  - Youth from the community



# Meet with Mentors



- Deconstruct the players' roles in the process
- Exposure to fields of employment
  - 'I never knew there was such a thing as a watershed specialist'
- Recognize the role of citizens in the process
- Interviewing and information gathering - looking for positions and counter arguments
- Assuming a single perspective for further discussion

# Debate

- Land Planning 'charrette' representing a specific community role
- Formulating a position and representing it
- Learning to think not only of your position but how to sell it to others
- Thinking ahead to counter arguments



• There are students for whom this is not a comfortable role. Some benefit from observing the process rather than jumping into the debate.



# Land Planning Activity

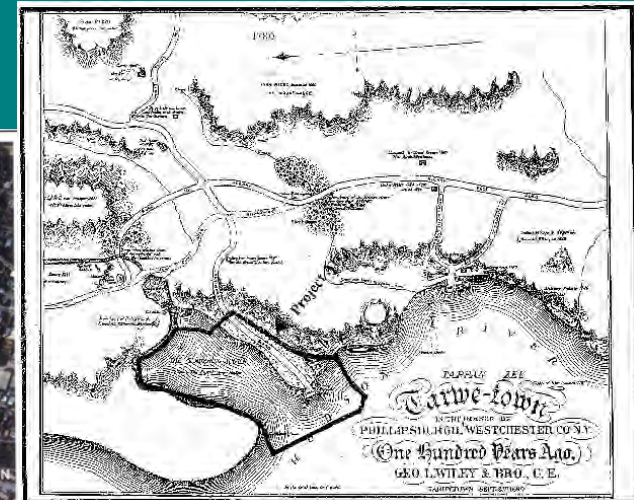
- Students work 'hands on' with a site map
- Focus is on synthesizing the information and discussion



May need facilitation to encourage full participation by all students

# Case File Booklet

## Student & Teacher Background Information

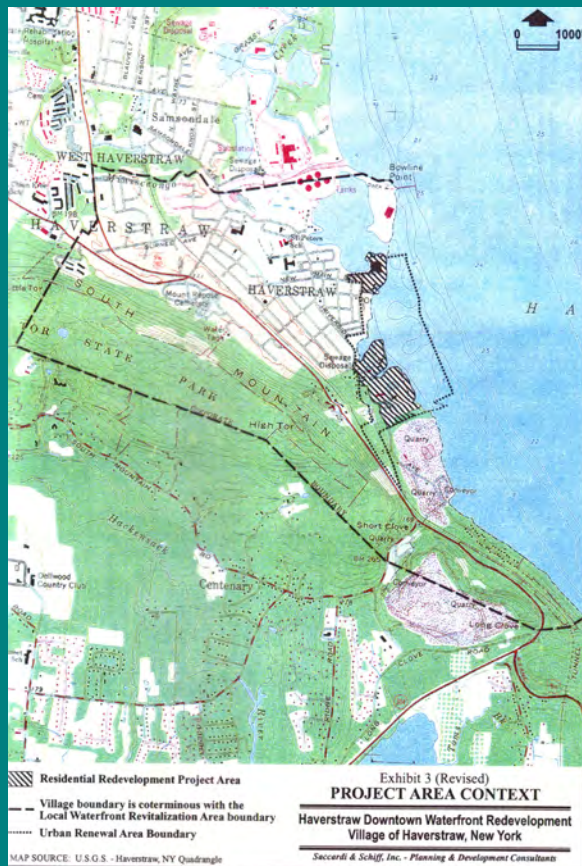


# Case File Booklet

- Community Information - historic & current
- Prior site history
  - Some sites have multiple prior uses
- Proposed Development Plan
- Environmental Impacts & Proposed Mitigations
- Community Benefits & Impacts
- Economic Issues
- Introduction to the Land Planning Process -
  - SEQRA
  - Participating Groups



# Case File Booklet

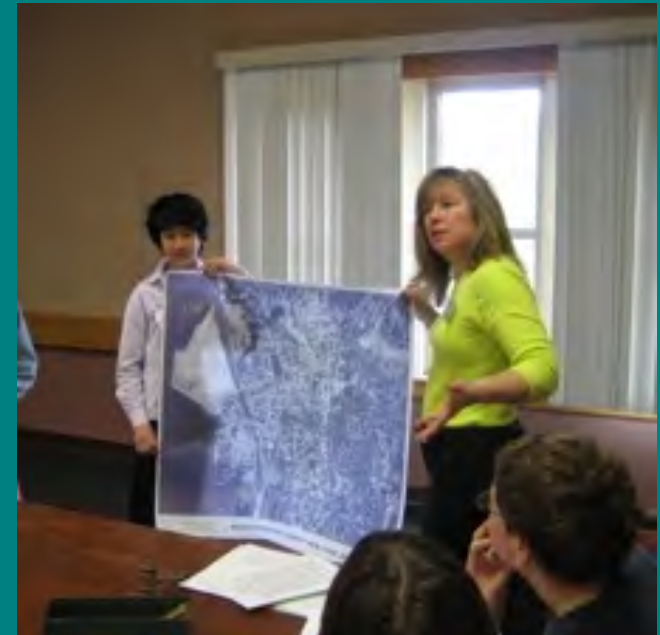


- Generated from Original Documents
- Peppared with questions to open discussion for in class debate OR to encourage thinking
- Present multiple perspectives - pros and cons of varied actions
- Study Guide

# Pre-event Classroom Visits

- Goals -
  - Introduction to maps & other tools available as part of the Land Use Process
  - Explanation of SEQRA
  - Introduction to concept of land use as a means of enhancing existing community
    - What does the community need?
    - How can this use benefit the entire community?

Each of these activities has an Environmental, an Economic a Community, and a Political Science Component



# Results

- Help them develop a sense of self-efficacy -
  - “I felt empowered!”
- School Group respond by tackling local land use decisions
  - Pearl River students attended local hearing & stopped a rezoning
  - Spring Valley students energized to tackle a ‘big box’ installation



Develop confidence in their ability to affect change in their surroundings

# Overarching Goals of the Event

- Connect Students to local Land Use Issues/Decisions
- Review environmental, economic and community impacts and examine both pro & con perspectives



- Deconstruct the Land Planning Process for accessibility
- Establish a pathway for involvement (current or future)

# Process Goals

- Analyze materials from a variety of mediums and synthesize the information (maps, graphs, charts, presentations, mentors, EIS)
- Establish critical thinking
- Debate with students from other schools
- Collaborate and compromise to reach a decision





# Learning or Instructional Techniques

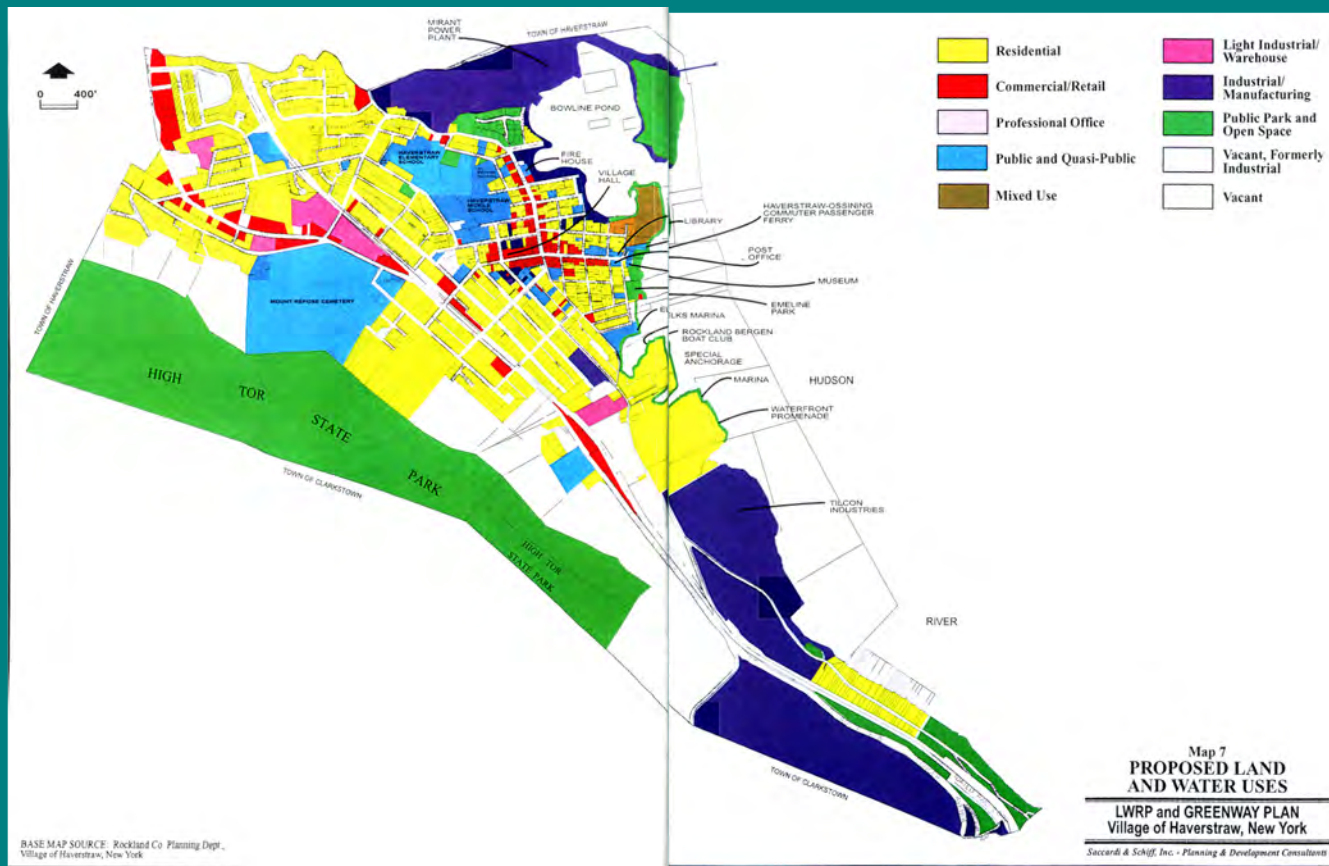
- Learner centered instruction
- Close to home - forges connections to immediate surrounding -
  - Strong Imprint connection
- Moves learning beyond the walls of the classroom
- Different methods of learning involved
- Issues encompass large geographic scale (water and air move across boundaries) & temporal scale (long-term impacts)
- Interdisciplinary

# Challenges

- For each environmental issue there is not just one right answer or solution.
  - Uncertainty
  - Many perspectives
- Requires higher order thinking & processing to
  - Recognize uncertainty
  - Envision alternative scenarios
  - Adopt to changing conditions & information

**Includes both critical and creative thinking**

# Education or Advocacy?



# Education

- **Education -**
  - Gives students access to information, opinions, interpretations, individuals & poses questions so they can reach their OWN conclusions
  - Specific land issue is used as a lens to examine the land planning process, not for a call to action
  - Presents different viewpoints - balanced representation, not biased
  - Provides the tools for future involvement

# Thank you

