



Sidewalks to Skylines

Empowering the Next Generation of Community Planners

A student engagement toolkit



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Questions about the toolkit may be directed the MSU Center for Community and Economic Development at 517-353-9555.

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The MSU CCED seeks to advance Michigan State University's land-grant mission by creating, applying, and disseminating valued knowledge through responsive engagement, strategic partnerships, and collaborative learning. They are dedicated to empowering communities to create sustainable prosperity and an equitable global knowledge economy. CCED Director, Rex LaMore and Senior Research Assistant, Madison Sorsen provided guidance and instruction for the creation of the toolkit that was created by two student apprentices from MSU.

The MSU Apprenticeship Program is a four week long summer program designed for students entering their last years of high school. The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at MSU sponsors the program, giving students an opportunity to experience life on a college campus and gain exposure to careers in agriculture, food science, natural resources, and other related fields. Our participants, Alondra Lopez and Wyschell Wicker, were the driving force behind the toolkit, providing invaluable input, creating content, and piecing its elements together. The toolkit would not have been possible without the attentiveness or dedication of Ms. Lopez and Ms. Wicker. We are grateful for their contributions.

The Michigan Association of Planning, Social Justice and Equity Committee assisted in conceiving of and editing drafts of the toolkit and provides ongoing support in disseminating the toolkit to planning professionals in Michigan.

The MSU CCED Planning Outreach Advisory Committee was instrumental in designing the way in which we would teach high school students about planning. Teresa Goforth and Denise Blair from the MSU Museum assisted in brainstorming interactive exhibit ideas attractive to adolescent audiences. Other members of the Advisory Committee who gave constructive guidance on the toolkit include Dr. Mark Wilson and Dr. Patricia Machemer of the MSU School of Planning Design and Construction, and Andrea Brown, the Executive Director of the Michigan Association of Planning.

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Executive Summary

This toolkit is designed to serve as a tool that planners can use to engage with high school and middle school students about planning as a profession. This toolkit outlines an easy to follow process designed to introduce students to planning and provide young people with the opportunity to give feedback to professional planners on local planning issues they have identified. Planning is defined as “the process by which we attempt to shape the future” (Brooks, 2002). Public planning professionals in democratic societies help officials anticipate the future, facilitate needed infrastructure and economic development, in addition to brainstorming sustainable strategies to make communities livable (Brooks 2002).

This toolkit has five specific learning outcomes:

1. Expose students to planning as a career, specifically land use planning
2. Expose students to different elements of planning (process, products, and skills)
3. Connect students to local and regional planners and explore planning as a profession
4. Identify planning issues in communities
5. Collect student generated images of “planning” across Michigan communities

This toolkit will take planners through a step by step process articulating how to achieve these learning outcomes. By exposing young students to planning, we hope to raise awareness of planning as a profession and attract prospective planners to any of Michigan’s accredited planning programs.

Instructions: overview

This is an overview of the steps necessary to implement this project. We encourage planners to review the steps and modify as it pertains in the community. Each step will be expanded upon in the proceeding pages.

Step 1: Local planners contact local high school or middle school.

Step 2: Create a Twitter account for the planning department. (see page 7 for setup instructions)

Step 3: Planners visit school and educate students on planning or provide teacher(s) with a planning based lesson plan.

Step 4: Introduce the photographic short assignment with the planning department Twitter handle.

Step 5: Collect the images captured by students from Twitter and assemble them into a collage. Print and/or project the collage during the follow presentation with students.

Step 6: Present to the selected school and discuss the images.

Step 7: Discuss the planning profession and ways to prepare yourself for a career in planning

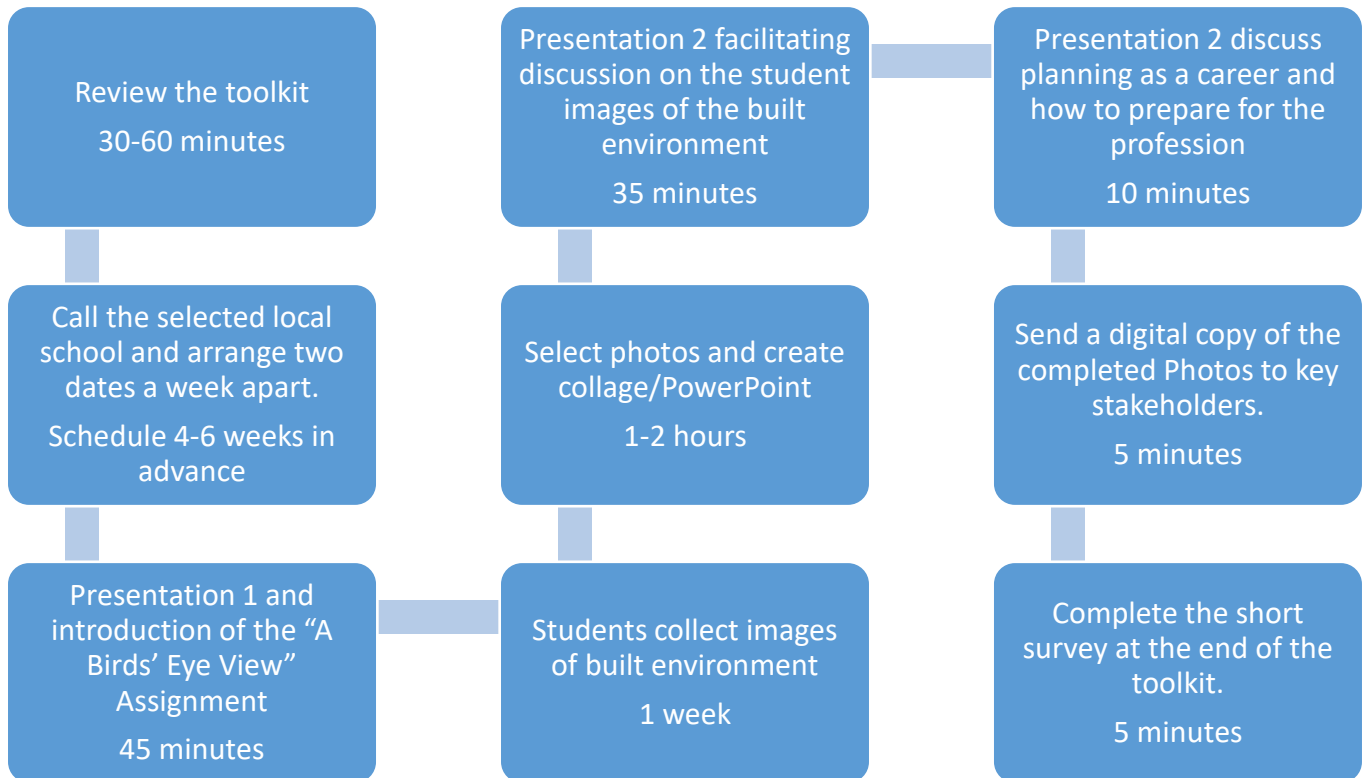
Step 8: Take information from the images to plan community improvement projects.

Step 9: Share your collage with the MSU CCED, Michigan Association of Planning, selected school(s) and other stakeholders.

Step 10: Take the toolkit survey.

This is a collaborative effort between the local planner, high school and/or middle school teachers as well as students. We encourage you to supply the toolkit to your partners.

Timeline



Step1: Contacting your local school

For planners in areas where there are more than one school, we encourage you to start with the school which best represent your region's diversity. You may also consider choosing a school where you believe students will be the most receptive to this topic. If it is not possible to arrange the project with a high school, we recommend getting in touch with its corresponding middle school. Due to the flexibility of middle school curricula compared to high school curricula, getting into a middle school classroom may be easier compared to a high school classroom. The project is simple and well within the capacity of middle school students. This activity would also fit well into an after school program if the middle school and/or high school had one available. If you are not sure what schools are in your region, search for your [Michigan School District](#) using the school district maps.

A quick Google search using the school's name should bring up the school's website. Typically, contact information for the school's staff will be on the left hand side of the screen. Information can also be found with some navigating using the tabs at the top of the site or the search bar. If you have personal professional contacts to help pave the way, use them. Getting in the door, will be the hardest part of the project.

- First, call the building and introduce yourself; then ask to be transferred to the curriculum director and/or school principal.
- Explain the project briefly using the executive summary on page 3. Afterward, ask the curriculum director and/or school principal if a member of the planning department can present to students. The presentation will include a discussion on planning's role in shaping communities and planning as a career. Connecting to the teachers whose class (or classes) you'll speak to is key. Request the contact information of teachers interested in project. This will connect you with them directly.
 - **Tip:** The teachers with the following subjects are most likely to be interested: government, history, economics, business and social science
- Connect with the teachers by arranging **two** dates to give the presentations. Preferably one before the photographic short assignment and one after. Supply the teacher with this guidebook. More detailed suggestions on presentation material will be discuss on pages 11 and 16.
 - Presentation 1: discuss the definition of planning, what a planner does, the importance of planning, how you can become a planner and hand out the photo assignment.
 - Presentation 2: discuss the planning elements in the collage/PowerPoint you created out of the images captured by students, and how to pursue it as a career.

Step 2: Twitter

Some Planners and instructors may find it easier to collect the student images and create a PowerPoint presentation. If that is your preferred method, we suggest 1) Coordinating with the instructor to collect the student photos, 2) Instructor send the student photos to the planner to create a PowerPoint for the second presentation.

Making a Twitter Account

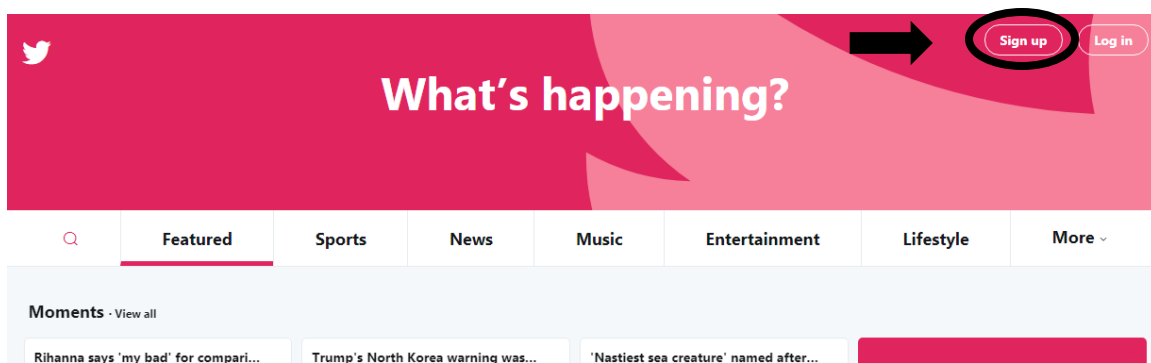
Twitter is a social media platform used to share information, experiences and memories with your followers. High school students use social media platforms—especially twitter—to share things that they are interested in with their friends. As such, this project uses twitter as a data collection tool. Students will engage with planning in their communities by *tweeting* photos of the built environment at a twitter account set up by the planning official. This will allow students to engage through a medium that they are very familiar with. We recognize that not all students will have twitter accounts, but many do. For those that do not have a twitter and would like to participate, provide an email address for additional photos to be sent to.

Twitter is fairly simple to use. Please follow the directions outlined below to create a Twitter account for your planning department. We recommend using a twitter account for the department rather than a personal account to ensure the professionalism of planners is maintained.

The Twitter page is where you will ask the student to send their pictures described in step 4. You must create the Twitter account before you present to the class the first time. When you present to the students, have students *follow* you on twitter and give them the photographic short assignment. The twitter jargon will also be explained on the next page.

Steps to create a twitter account

- Open the browser page you should type <https://twitter.com/> into the search engine.
- This will take you directly the Twitter page. In the upper right hand corner there is a “sign up” icon. This will direct you to the signup page. It will ask for a full name, email or phone number and password.
- After this you will have to create a username or *handle*.



- Once this is completed you will have an activated account. On this account you can add more information to your biography with more details.

Twitter Jargon

- a) **Tweet:** this is the post that will be shared to all your followers. In this box you can share your ideas. This however has to be within 120 characters. See Figure 1 for a tweet by the Michigan Association of Planning (MAP). To tweet, select the tweet icon in the upper right hand corner of the main page. They tweeted their message @APA_planning, to directly communicate with the APA twitter account.



Figure 1

- b) **Thread:** If the 120 characters was not enough to contain the idea that you were holding in you could add another tweet to be added to the one you already tweeted. This is called a thread it will contain your ideas together helping people understand that your idea is longer.



Figure 2

- c) **Retweet:** Sharing another tweet mention by someone you are following. This allows for ideas to spread the more that they get shared. (See figure 2)
- d) **Favorite:** The heart helps to show people that you like what was tweeted. Once you favorite something, the heart turns red. These favorites all stack up and can viewed when you go back to your account page. This will help you keep track of the favorites (likes) you have accumulated.
- e) **Handle:** The handle is your username that is attached to the @sign. The twitter handle of the APA can be seen in Figure 2. It is “@APA_Planning”.

- f) **Mentions:** Other users will tweet @ you using your twitter handle. Twitter will automatically inform you that you have been mentioned. You can also mention other people in your tweet. Just tweet their handle and write your message.
- g) **Newsfeed or home:** This page will be the first thing that pops up when you log onto Twitter's this will contain any recent tweets by people you are following. The "Home" icon on the top of the screen will take you back to this page when you are looking at other pages or tweets. (See figure 4)
- h) **Direct Message:** This is the icon with what looks like an envelope. This is used as a way to message any user on Twitter.
- i) **Notifications:** This will notify you of any retweets, favorites, mentions that you may have. When students tweet their photo assignment at you, the tweets will appear in the notifications. Select the bell to see them.
- j) **Deleting tweets:** Mistakes happen to everyone. If you made a mistake on your tweet, you can delete it. Go to the right hand corner and then click delete tweet. However, nothing can be permanently deleted from the internet.



Figure 3: twitter page of Michigan Association of Planning

Note: Why Twitter? It's easy, young people are familiar with it and it is a virtual place you can gather the photos taken by the students. You can also share this with other community stakeholders like your local commission, boarder and other groups to help them see how young people view your community- both good and maybe areas to focus on.

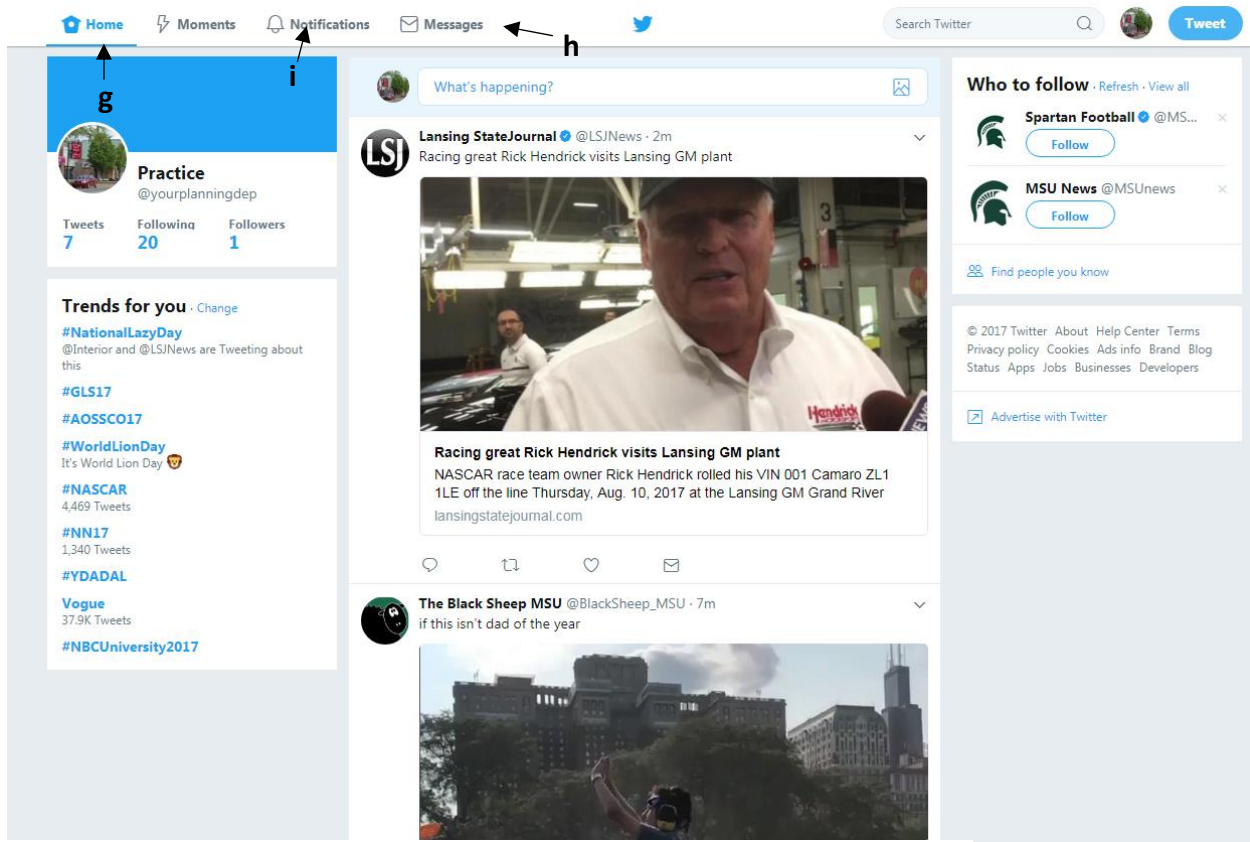


Figure 4: Twitter home or newsfeed

For more information on how to use twitter to create the photo collage, see step 4.

*Note: In the pilot of this toolkit, students expressed a desire to use Instagram for this project. This method is not recommended, however, because it is difficult to retrieve posted or sent items to a desktop or laptop computer from this platform – the technology that is available to most professional planners.

Step 3: Presentation One

The presentation should take 30-45 minutes. Begin by introducing yourself and describe how your interest in planning came about. Educate students on the depth of urban management and your current role within it. It may be helpful to explain planning by relating it to concepts that students are already familiar with. You could ask students about the game *SimCity* and discuss how building cities in the game is an example of urban planning.

When teaching students about planning, using an interactive method to engage them during the presentation is incredibly important. If students are not engaging with the presentation, they are most likely not listening and not interested. To keep the students' attention consider one of the following methods:

1. **Play a planning game:** They are interesting and really help with understanding the topic. If capacity for everyone to play individually isn't feasible have the students team up into groups. The games should be geared toward exploration of city management, poor planning and its community effects, and lack of resources in planning.
 - a) Online urban planning game http://www.maniacworld.com/Urban_Planning.htm
 - b) ElectroCity <http://www.electrocity.co.nz/>
 - c) Blocks and Lots <http://blocksandlots.net/sample-page/>
2. **Slideshow presentation:** Discuss the roles and responsibilities of planners as well as the roles and responsibilities of your agency. Remember to use language that high schoolers are comfortable with and also keep their interest. If you choose this approach, have prompting questions that keep students involved and interactive with the presentation.
3. **Video:** Show a video providing examples of planning. This allows mixed presentation techniques with less lecturing. Avoid videos longer than 4 minutes long because students will get bored. Have prompting questions used to discuss the video. It might be useful to combine the PowerPoint with the video and prompting questions. This "[What is urban planning video](#)" would be a good video to use.
4. **Diorama:** Bring a diorama of sorts implicating what planners do. (See Channel One video) <https://youtu.be/Z7I-f1RZ83c>

Now that students have an introduction to planning and how you became a planner, you can introduce the assignment. (For the assignment hand out, see appendix 1) Using their phones students will be asked to take pictures of planning aspects in their communities and tweet them to the twitter account created by the planning office in Step 2. (See step 4 for more details on how to use twitter.) Then have students follow you on Twitter. Remind them you will be back to discuss this with them later.

Finally, leave copies of American Planning Association flyers with the school to pass out to all students that are interested in planning. (For the flyer, see appendix 2)

Step 4: Picture Assignment

Assign “A Bird’s Eye View of Planning”. Students will take photos of the built environment in their community. Photos should capture opportunities and challenges of the built environment. Suggest that each student take 2-4 pictures. For a printable hand out template with directions to give students, see appendix 1. The photos will be tweeted @[yourhandle] (or emailed to the instructor to be sent to the planner), giving you access to the photos which will be used to make a collage/PowerPoint.

If you choose to use a Powerpoint as your preferred method for the second presentation, we recommend students email pictures to their instructor, who can then pass them on to the professional planner.

Remember to insert your twitter handle (or instructor’s email address) and contact information into the hand out. Students will be unable to complete the assignment without the twitter handle.

Step 5: Create the Photo Collage*

*Skip to step 6 if you are using PowerPoint and do not intend to create a collage.

Collected student photos will be combined into a collage of the community. When students tweet their photos, the planner can save the photos to a computer. Select the photo you wish to use by right hand clicking on "save image as." Those photos can be uploaded into a collage maker that will piece the photos together. To have easy access to the photos, retweet pictures you were mentioned in by the students. You can then choose the common, or interesting issues and opportunities highlighted in their community through the photos. When all the photos are downloaded or saved onto the planner's computer, upload selected photos into the collage maker. We have a few suggested collage makers listed below. After the collage is created, present the collage to the students and discuss planning in regards to the pictures.

Options for photo apps:

- [Picture2life](#)

Lansing, MI 2017



- [Be Funky Collage Maker](#)

A Bird's eye view of Lansing, MI 2017



Planning Shapes cities towns and rural areas and helps determine how cities will grow and how they will adjust to change (APA)

Accredited planning schools in Michigan
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



- [Pieced together using a google document](#)

Planning Better Communities

<p>What is planning?</p>			
<p>Why do we plan?</p>			
<p>[Local planning office space]</p>			

Tip

When selecting photos to place in the collage, think about what the students identified are relevant to planning issues in their community. Use the photos to help students learn about planning in regards to the challenges the community faces and steps that may already be in motion to address issues that they have identified.

After importing the selected photos, look for a template with the number of photo spaces you would like to include. We have created sample collages for you to consider. We suggest including contacts to the Accredited Planning Schools in Michigan to make students aware of these professional programs.

Step 6: Presentation 2

Present to the students a second time, discussing the selected photos along with the “issues and opportunities” they presented in their community. **Note:** The collage or PowerPoint may be printed, or projected depending on preference/capacity.

Ask students questions about the pictures in the collage.

- What is this?
- Who took this?
- What’s the message?
- What is your reaction when you see this? (Include the input of planner)
- What inspired you to take the picture?
- Does this image represent good planning or poor planning?

Discuss what the pictures represent and the ability/inability of planning as a solution in relation to the issues those images identified.

Step 7: The Planning Profession

Discuss your path to the planning profession, training and how students can prepare themselves to become professional planners. Mention the programs at accredited planning schools in Michigan. To give students other avenues to explore planning, planners could offer students a chance to attend or visit a planning event or meeting in the community. Try to encourage students to ask questions about planning, your experience, and the accredited programs. Lastly, remember to thank the teachers, students, and principal.

Step 8: After the Process

Keeping the Twitter page active

If you established a Twitter profile, Tweet or Retweet material that has to do with planning. This will result in students constantly being reminded of planning. Tweet polls. Polls can be done by asking questions on planning or promoting ideas of structural change in their community. For example, “if you could change something in your community, what would you choose?” Social media pages always need to be kept active in order to remind your followers of the type of information you want them to know. Being a planner is a challenging job because you need to constantly be interacting with your community. Social media helps to build a relationship that will always be connected due the amount of people that now use social media as a way to communicate. Social media would also help inform people in your community of future plans for the community. Make sure to post a thank you tweet stating your gratitude towards the students, teachers, and principals of the selected school.

What now?

Choose a group of students who you believe contributed to the activity or are very interested in the career of planning, and invite them to present their collage or PowerPoint to your planning commission.

With this collage/PowerPoint you could: reach out to your other key stakeholders such as public advisory/city council or other interested people.

Should the student(s) wish to learn more about planning as a profession, here are relevant links to opportunities in Michigan:

List of universities in Michigan with accredited planning programs:

- [Michigan State University](#)
- [Eastern Michigan University](#)
- [Wayne State University](#)
- [University of Michigan](#)

Other related institutions

- [Central Michigan University](#)
- [Western Michigan University](#)

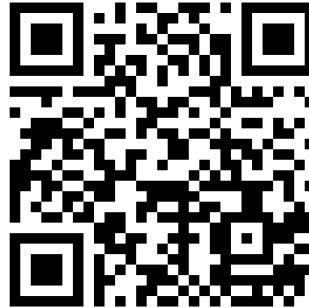
Step 9:

To help build a broad understanding of the interest and concerns of young people in planning, please consider sending a digital copy of the completed photo collage/PowerPoint to the teacher you engaged with, Ms. Andrea Brown at the Michigan Association of Planning (abrown@planningmi.org), the MSU Center for Community and Economic Development (ced@msu.edu) and Ms. Denice Blair at the MSU Museum (dblair@msu.edu). Explain where and when the event was held with highlights of what was discussed.

Step 10: Toolkit Survey

Please click the hyperlink or scan the QR code below to take our 5-10 minute survey. Thank you for your invaluable feedback.

<https://goo.gl/forms/xNy74f7VfwwKBK2m1>



Conclusion

As professionals in the planning community we recognize that creating viable sustainable communities in the 21st century will require an informed and engaged citizenry representing a broad cross section of residents. It is our hope, that increasing the exposure of young adults to planning that we can improve the quality of life in our communities and perhaps attract students, from diverse geographical and racial backgrounds into the planning profession.

Thank you for using this toolkit and helping us reach out to the leaders of tomorrow!

Appendix 1

A Bird's Eye View of Our Community

After learning about the built environment, think about the built environment *you* live in.

Examples of these are

- Local restaurants
- Main streets
- Schools
- Parks
- Nature centers
- Outdoor art
- Highways dangerous intersections
- Abandoned buildings
- Buildings of architectural significance
- Bus systems.

Instructions

Use your cell phone to take 2-4 pictures of the different parts of the built environment you come into contact with frequently. After you have the photos, tweet the photos to @

The planner will use your photos to create a photo collage of your community.

For questions, please contact:

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Appendix 2



American Planning Association
Making Great Communities Happen



WHAT IS... **PLANNING?**

The American Planning Association is an organization of planners and those interested in planning.

APA defines the purposes of planning as:

1. Helping to create communities of lasting value
2. Offering better choices for where and how people work and live
3. Engaging citizens, businesses, and civic leaders to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives.

The American Planning Association and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, help planners, officials, and citizens by providing research, educational resources, practical advice and tools, and up-to-date information on planning.

Planning shapes cities, towns, regions, and even rural areas. Some communities are completely designed by planners, such as Greenbelt, Maryland. In other communities, planning helps determine how communities will grow and how they will adjust to change. Planning creates the vision for the community, identifies current problems, analyzes trends, engages community members in dialogue about goals and issues, and sets the framework for growth and change.

By using lots of data, good planning practices, and balancing the needs of citizens, businesses, and civic leaders, planners make great communities. Sometimes planning is called urban planning, city planning, or regional planning.

Planners may determine that the community needs more public transit or needs to encourage retail businesses in certain neighborhoods. Planners may help decide where a new water pumping plant is located and determine what the impact of that plant will be on the environment.

Planning is not an isolated activity; it involves all segments of the community. Planners help bring residents, businesses, politicians, and advocates together to create a vision for the community and how the community can achieve their goals. For example, possible goals would be to create affordable housing for more residents or to create parks with more features for children in neighborhoods.

While a city and private developers provide many things for the community without the help of planners—housing for high-income residents, movie theaters, retail shops, and many services—planning identifies any gaps in the needs of the community and helps coordinate them so that the city grows efficiently. Planners also work with builders to add improvements to construction projects. For example, planning may encourage building developers to provide park space when constructing a new group of houses.

Planners have the legal power to shape cities since planning influences the health, safety, and well-being of citizens. Therefore, planners will work with legal tools such as ordinances to ensure the buildings or developments are good for the community—for example, by allowing for new innovations such as solar panels, home businesses, and community gardens. Planning is done in many arenas—transportation, housing,

health, neighborhood development, urban design, environment, disaster prevention—the list goes on and on! Planners work in every state and around the world. They work in rural areas, suburban areas, and large cities. Planners also work for nonprofit organizations and multidisciplinary companies.

Some of the tools used by planners include geographical mapping systems, community meetings and workshops, and graphic designs of sites or buildings. Planners must be familiar with a range of information, such as population, health, jobs, and economic trends. With so many elements to planning, planners usually pick a topic that interests them the most. Some of these topics can be transportation, the environment, and even the physical design of the city. Planning is a HUGE subject with lots of elements to consider, so there is something for everyone with an interest in urban planning.

MEET A PLANNER



Jill Sutherland is a planner in Glenwood Springs, Colorado.

1. What is a planner?

A planner partners with communities to help them become wonderful places to live, work, grow up, and play. They help decide what kinds of buildings should go where, where new parks might be needed, and what areas in the community are in need of changes to make them better places to be.

2. What exactly does a planner do?

A planner can do anything from interpreting a community's zoning code, determining what kinds of buildings are allowed in what places, and helping a community create a vision for what it wants to become, to reaching out to and educating community leaders on what can make their community better. They often get to do something different and exciting every day.

3. Why did you decide to be a planner?

I decided to become a planner because I believe that the environment a person grows up in shapes who they are. I wanted to help shape the built environment to become a place that fosters community interaction, pride, and open-mindedness.

4. What is craziest or funniest thing you've seen on the job?

The funniest thing I've seen on the job happened when I was helping a group of kids through a design workshop to get their ideas on how the area around their school could be better. They unanimously decided that ziplines had to be a part of their plan for their school. Because ziplines rule!

5. How can a student get involved with planning?

A student can get involved with planning by making sure his or her voice is heard when decisions are being made about new buildings or subdivisions in their community. Grown-ups often forget that a kid's only way of traveling is by walking or biking, so we have to remember that it's not all about the car! Sidewalks are important, and so are bike lanes. Kids have to get around safely too!

For more information about engaging youth in planning, visit the American Planning Association's website at planning.org/kidsandcommunity and the APA Ambassador program at planning.org/diversity/ambassadors.

American Planning Association, 205 N. Michigan Avenue, Ste. 1200, Chicago, IL 60601-5927, planning.org

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