



MOVING BEYOND
THE AUTOMOBILE

Film Guide for Educators

Changing the Landscape

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Key Concepts

Streets Change Over Time

Streets are designed by people, and continue to be redesigned over time to accommodate future needs. American roadway infrastructure has undergone many changes throughout history. Particularly momentous changes to streets happened in the twentieth century, with the invention of the automobile at the turn of the century, and the mid-century construction of the Interstate Highway System. Today, most streets are designed for cars and trucks, but some are being redesigned to support pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit riders.

Highways Can Be Removed

For many reasons, highways may seem like they are not going away: they are the country's largest and most expensive infrastructure project to date, and a vast network that may seem essential to our landscape. But many cities have torn down sections of highways that run through neighborhoods, to improve air quality and repair community fabric.

Parking Spots Can Be Repurposed

One of the easiest and most affordable ways to redesign a street and give more space to pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders is to get rid of parking spots for privately-owned vehicles.



Communities Can Be Redesigned For Transit

Communities currently designed for cars and trucks can be redesigned to better serve pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders. Through transit-oriented development, people can get around in a way that is fast, easy, affordable, and sustainable.

PRE-SCREENING ACTIVITIES:

Putting the Films in Context

Before you watch the films, here are some discussion strategies and activities that will help create some context for your students.

Street Design and Daily Life

Discuss how street design affects our daily lives. Questions to include:

- What does good street design look like to you?
- How does street design affect our health, safety, and daily lives?
- What can we do to improve the ways we plan our streets?

Built Environment Walk

Activity: Observe the surrounding streets

Worksheet: Built Environment Walk

- Come up with a definition of the “built environment” as a class. You can clarify that it is human-made buildings and structures. These structures provide the setting for human activity, ranging in scale from personal shelter to neighborhoods to the large-scale civic surroundings.
- Explain to the students that you are going outside to observe infrastructure in the area to look at street design and hypothesize about how the built landscape could change. Distribute the “Built Environment Walk” handout. Go outside with clipboards and the handout for approximately 20 minutes.

- After the walk, come back for a discussion. We see our streets every day but usually don’t think about how we could change them. Ask whether they noticed anything new about the area around the school and if they had any ideas for improvements.

Film Synopses and Discussion Questions

These films explore some of the ways to reshape our built landscape, with varying degrees of feasibility and cost. All three films demonstrate that our infrastructure and streets are more easily modified than we always realize.

Highway Removal

Explores the process of removing highways and freeways in order to improve the overall health and quality of life of the population in the area and reconnect the neighborhoods which highways and freeways fracture. Interview: John Norquist, Case Studies: New York, San Francisco, New Orleans.

- Where do highways tend to be built when they pass through cities? Why?
- What are some of the problems caused when highways pass through neighborhoods?
- How does removing highways and freeways improve the overall health in an area?
- How does it improve quality of life for a population?
- Do you think there is a highway that runs through your city that disrupts a neighborhood? Do you think it’s possible to do anything about it?

Parking Reform

The process of removing curb-side and dedicated lot parking and reallocating that space to for pedestrian amenities and other transit and bicycles infrastructure. Interview: Enrique Peñalosa. Case Studies: Portland, San Francisco.

- How is parking reform easier to implement than some other street redesign projects (for example, highway removal, or transit-oriented development)
- What are some potential controversies over the removal of parking spots in a community? How might those concerns be taken into account?
- How would you reallocate the space of a parking spot? Would you use it for pedestrian amenities? Mass transit? Bicycle infrastructure? Something else?
- Do you think that the area around your school could successfully implement parking reforms? Why or why not?

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

Building sustainable communities by locating the places where people live, work, and shop near transit infrastructure. Bringing multiple forms of transportation together is key to successful TOD. Case Study: Jersey City.

- What is transit-oriented development (TOD)?
- What are some examples of transit-oriented development in the film?
- What are the benefits of transit-oriented development?

- Why do suburban areas need more rail and bus connectivity?
- Do you think that transit-oriented development could be successful in suburban locations? What about rural locations?
- How could mass transit be improved in your neighborhood, city, and/or region?

Concluding Questions

- How does each of these three films address a way we could redesign our streets?
- Do you think some would be easier for your community to implement than others?
- How would you change the built environment for the better?

POST-SCREENING ACTIVITIES:

Making the Connection

How can we redesign streets for improved transit in our area?

Activity: Redesign Your Street

- Divide the class into teams of 3-4 students. Explain to the students that they will be making designs that use a bird's-eye view of the area around the school. Some suggested goals: improve transit, reallocate street space to pedestrians and cyclists, and mitigate the effects of nearby highways. Students should feel free to come up with their own goals too.
- Distribute copies of a Google Map satellite view of



the area around the school to each team. Students should use this satellite image as a guide for drawing and labeling a large outline map of streets, key buildings and landmarks in the neighborhood on a poster board. We recommend using 2' x 3' poster board or foam core.

- Students should place the school in the center of the poster, and brainstorm ideas for changes that improve transit, safety, health, and more. They can sketch their designs for the street in pencil.
- Once they have finished sketching the street with their new plans, they can begin to draw street-level changes with markers or colored pencils. Remind students not to focus on buildings, but the street itself.
- When groups have finished their posters, they should also create a color-coded/numbered key on a separate sheet of paper explaining the changes they decided to make to their streets. This will help people follow their ideas more carefully.
- Students should take around 10 minutes to practice presentations about what they will say about their designs. Each group should evenly divide up the content to present. Questions for them to cover in their preparation: What do they think the community currently lacks in terms of transit-oriented streets? Why did they make the changes they did? What do their designs do to improve transit and reallocate space in the area?
- Groups should present their designs to the rest of the class. You could consider scheduling a separate time for them to present to the larger community, reaching out to parents and community leaders to ask them to attend.

Case Study: Highway Removal in Portland, OR

Activity: Watch a Film on Highway removal In Portland, Oregon

The Mt. Hood Freeway highway was supposed to run through Portland, OR, but instead the city brought down the Harbor Drive highway that ran along the waterfront. They never built the freeway and instead invested the money into transit-oriented development.

Watch the film online, then discuss the following questions:

- What was the Mt. Hood Freeway?
- How was the freeway defeated?
- What happened to Harbor Drive, the highway that ran along the waterfront?
- How were citizen groups critical to defeating the freeway?
- What did the city build instead?

Case Study: Highway Removal in New Haven, CT

Activity: Conduct research about Route 34 in New Haven, CT

- Explain that the class is going to conduct web research on the recent US Department of Transportation TIGER II grant that was awarded for the removal of Route 34 in downtown New Haven, CT.
- You can choose to divide up the class into teams to look into different aspects of this story.
- Explore the history of the Interstate Highway System in Connecticut, Route 34, and the current situation. Look into the ways that this space will be redeveloped. Who will the project employ? How much will it cost?
- Look at the websites of the following organizations for information: New Haven Urban Design League, Tri-State Transportation Campaign, New Haven Register, US Department of Transportation, Streetsblog, Planetizen, Congress for New Urbanism.
- Challenge your class to find aerial photographs, maps, and other primary visual evidence.
- Present your class' findings in an exhibit and invite the rest of the school to view it.

Further Resources

- “*Making Sense of Place – Portland: Quest for the Livable City*” (DVD) A documentary film and educational outreach project that explores highway removal and transit-oriented development in Portland. Lincoln Institute and Northern Light Productions, May 2009
- “Appendix A: The Traditional Neighborhood Development Checklist” in Andres Duany, Elizabeth Platter-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*. North Point Press, 2001, pp. 245-252.

WORKSHEETS

Built Environment Walk

Category	Observations	How could it be Improved?
<p>Plantings and Beautification Measures <i>(tree pits, flowers, plantings, etc)</i></p>		
<p>For Pedestrians <i>(crosswalks, signage, air quality, crossing guards, lighting)</i></p>		
<p>Car Traffic <i>(highways in the area, noise pollution, traffic signs, speed bumps, parking spaces)</i></p>		
<p>Public Transportation <i>(bus stops, subway entrances, how close are these to the school, and are they hybrid?)</i></p>		
<p>For Cyclists <i>(bike lanes, bike parking, protection from car traffic)</i></p>		
<p>Other <i>(who is able to use the streets? how could they be redesigned to benefit more people?)</i></p>		