



# Let's Connect Our Community

Discover the importance of a well-connected transportation network and learn about designs that can create safe crossings for people walking. Creating and improving neighborhood networks with street and trail crossings will show students how we can be intentional about improving access to destinations for all people.



**Format: Workshop style activity (1-2 hours) with a relatively small group (8-20 students).**



**Audience: Suitable for all ages**

## Supplies

- ▶ Markers, pencils, colored pencils (including white)
- ▶ Construction paper
- ▶ Envelopes (multiple sizes/colors if possible - students can lift the flap to create the outline of a building with a roof, then decorate)
- ▶ Kraft tape (easiest option for trails)
- ▶ Materials that students will build their neighborhood upon (i.e., neighborhood foundation) (choose one):
  - ▶ Paper grocery bags
  - ▶ Shoe boxes (reach out to a local shoe retailer for extras)
- ▶ Glue sticks
- ▶ Scissors
- ▶ Packing tape
- ▶ Bag/basket/box
- ▶ Optional: Simple stickers (stars, dots, etc.)
- ▶ Optional: toy people, toy cars/buses/bicycles (different sizes/styles are fine—this reminds students that streets are for people and interactions).

## Supplemental Materials Provided

- ▶ Handout: building permit.
- ▶ Visual aid: PowerPoint file with 5-10 images of pedestrian crossing treatments.
- ▶ Visual aid: PowerPoint file with 4 sample street network layouts. Option to print/laminate. (reference item for Activity Parts 1 and 5).
- ▶ Handout: neighborhood checklist prompts (2 per sheet).
- ▶ Handout: cut-outs for road segment, refuge island, 4-way intersection, T-intersection, crosswalks, and roundabout.





## To Do in Advance

- ✓ Visit and access the space where the activity will be taking place and ensure that necessary furniture will be in place. Decide if you will/can use computer projection.
- ✓ Confirm expected number of students to determine how to structure the activity:
  - Expecting 8-10: start Activity Part 1 individually (each will choose an intersection, a few street segments, and 1-2 “community destinations”).
  - Expecting 10+: students start Activity Part 1 in groups of 2-3.
- ✓ Compile and print images (clip art/stock photo) of important “community destinations” relevant to the students. Examples: school for each age group, daycare, grocery store, library, regional park, neighborhood park, museum, and bus station.
- ✓ Print handouts (checklist could be printed on stock paper).
- ✓ If not using computer projection:
  - Print PowerPoint slides with images of crosswalks at different types of crossings.
  - Print a few copies of the PowerPoint slides with street networks as a reference for student groups.
- ✓ Deconstruct/cut the paper grocery bags or shoe boxes to make similarly sized cross-shaped bases (i.e., crossroads that mimic intersections with streets extending on each side).
- ✓ Divide materials up into correct amount for each student group and organize each group’s materials into a separate box or bag.
- ✓ Review “The Why and How Behind the Concepts” in the Primer.
- ✓ Before event starts:
  - Make sure space is clear and set up for activity.
  - Set up each table with supplies for each group (specific materials for the activity including “neighborhood foundation,” markers, construction paper, envelopes).

## Introduction to Concept and Activity

**These concepts should be reinforced by the lesson leader the during activities.**

- ▶ It is easier to get around a community when streets, sidewalks, and trails are connected to each other and make a complete network.
- ▶ The road network doesn’t have to be the same as the walking network (trails!), but people walking and bicycling need to have safe, convenient place to travel along and cross streets.
- ▶ The quality, type, and number of connections and crossings greatly affect how well we can move through the community by car, bike, bus, train, or on foot. Missing or poor connections can make it difficult for people to reach places they need to go, or want to go, throughout the community. Missing connections can also create safety problems.

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### Greetings and Icebreaker (5 minutes)

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**Activity Part 1 (15 minutes):** Depending on the size of the group, each individual student or small group picks an important community destination(s) from the bag/basket/box and chooses an intersection and at least one road segment (or multiple) to work with. Students then receive a “neighborhood foundation” and are issued their building permit.

**Sample discussion:**

Today we are gathered to create a connected neighborhood where people can get around easily and safely. There will be lots of important places like homes, a school, a library, and more. It is your job to make sure people have a way to travel between these places. Keep in mind the different ways that people travel (walking, biking, driving, or taking the bus). Before we get started, the city wants to make sure you have a plan for your part of the neighborhood. Use your building permit to draw what you plan to build.

Remind students that they need to incorporate their important community destination, but should add other elements like homes, shops, green spaces with trees, street signs, bus stops, sidewalks, and fun places like a swimming pool or a skate park. Encourage them to choose street names or a name for their neighborhood. This is just a simple drawing; they will have time next to build!

**Activity Part 2 (20-25 minutes):** Students bring up their drawing to have it inspected and have their building permit “approved” then get to work drawing and building on their “neighborhood foundation.” Students should start by gluing or taping down their intersection and/or street(s).

**Optional:** Assign the role of “building inspector” to a student volunteer. Or invite a special guest for the role of mayor (i.e., principal, parent, local elected official). Students could present their ideas to the mayor or the mayor could simply sign/stamp/use stickers to approve the permits.

**Activity Part 3 (15 minutes):** Call the student groups together and ask them each to spend a minute explaining how they designed their street and what is around it, including a name for their piece of the neighborhood.

Next, ask the students to “lay out” their pieces of neighborhood to create a connected community. Encourage students to assess the layout and talk about which destinations might need to be closer together before making the final decision to tape the segments together (using packing tape).

**Activity Part 4 (5-10 minutes):** Pick a few pairs of destinations and ask students how the trip might be different for someone walking versus for someone traveling in a car (Optional: use toy people and cars as props to create scenarios). Ask questions: What could make the trip shorter/easier for someone walking? What about someone using wheelchair? Use PowerPoint slides to show how crosswalks can be used at intersections or between intersections.

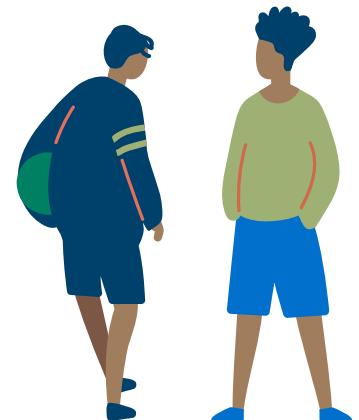
**Sample discussion:**

Refuge islands can give people a place to rest/look again before completing their crossing. Some communities use trails/paths to provide a network for people walking. This can shorten the distance they have to travel between certain destinations.

**Optional:** Ask students to measure the distance between a few key pairs of destinations. Ask them to measure again after Part 5 and then calculate the ratio.

**Activity Part 5 (15-25 minutes):** Make available a limited number of crosswalks and trail segments (ideally, Kraft tape, but you could use a wide ribbon, masking tape, strips of paper, etc.) to improve the network for people walking. Students must work together to decide how to place these items in a way that will benefit the most residents. Students may refer to their checklist to assess how equitably improvements are distributed throughout the community.

**Activity Part 6 (5 minutes):** Debrief and guided discussion. Revisit the relevant concepts and consider asking students if there are places where the shortest distance might not be the safest distance and why.





# Student Handout: Activity 1 - Building Permit

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Neighborhood Checklist

Does my neighborhood have:

- Sidewalks
- Crosswalks
- Trails

Can I walk from my part of the neighborhood to everywhere else?

Do I have crosswalks to cross the streets to get everywhere else?

Are there different routes to walk to places?

Are there places for people using wheelchairs to cross the street?

What is missing from this community?

**Remember:**

Look for different routes to get to the same place!

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