**CASE STUDY #1 -  Is there such a thing as a park that pleases everybody?**

There is a picturesque state park with a small lake, wooded areas with hiking trails, and sport fields. Some of the people who go to the park like that it is quiet and peaceful. In the summer, they go swimming and play sports, and in the winter, they like to walk through the woods. Other people who enjoy the park want the park management to allow more activities. In the summer, they want to use motor boats and jet skis, while in the winter, they would like to be able to use snowmobiles.

The park allows festivals and parties for up to 100 people. Anyone who has an event with more than 25 people must get a permit and pay a fee. Income from the permits helps to support the park’s maintenance, but it has also caused problems. There are several neighborhoods that abut the park, and the neighbors have expressed concern about noise coming from parties. Some of the neighbors have complained about garbage that ends up in their yards.

1. Who are the stakeholders in this case study?
2. (scaffolded cognitive organizer) Fill out the pros and cons of the following activities:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| PRO/CON CHART | **Advantage** | **Disadvantage** | **What else did you learn?** |
| **Jet skis** | Very popular so increases use of park  # of accidents is not that large | Noisy, environmental concerns, accidents | 600-700 jet ski accidents per year |
| **Motor boats** | Allow for more activities like water skiing, popular with large groups, people can use for transportation, revenue for park if the park issues motorboat permits | Environmental concerns, noise, accidents | I learned about the rules for boats at nearby lakes. Boat owners have to pay fees to moor their boats, even if on their own waterfront property |
| **Snowmobiles** | Great winter exercise! New models are electric, can pack snow to make trails for walkers, fun | Environmental concerns, accidents, noise | I was surprised to find out there are many more accidents with a snowmobile than with a jetski! (about 14,000/year) |
| **Large events and parties** | brings communities and families together, great use of park facilities, permits lead to revenue | Noisy, overuse of facilities, trash and cleanup | Parties could be for school groups, weddings, birthdays - joyous celebrations! |

**Who decides?**

How does a community make a decision about open space or a park? Who is affected by those decisions?

**Here are some options to discuss:**

**Public meeting/Public process:** The park management committee could hold a public meeting. Everyone is invited and everyone has the opportunity to speak. Or there could be a survey or online comments form, as part of a public process.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Why this idea might work | Why this idea might not work |
| Everyone can share their concerns, open discussion.  There is a long tradition of local town meetings in the United States. Every resident of the town has a right to attend meetings and pay attention to decisions, large and small, that affect the town. | Not everyone affected will be able to attend because of work or family obligations. Or some people may not receive notifications about meetings or may not be accustomed to attending neighborhood meetings; some may be shy about speaking up. |

**Majority rules:** There is a vote on different proposals to use the park. The proposal that receives a majority of the vote wins.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Why this idea might work | Why this idea might not work |
| Every vote is counted equally and the outcome is clear for the community. Neighbors appreciate the fact that a decision was voted on. For example, a rule is more likely to be respected if it is clear that a majority of residents voted for the rule. | Majority rule sometimes leads to fewer compromises because the minority does not have much power. In local decisions, it can be important to decide which neighbors are most affected by a decision and who gets to vote on a decision. In this case study, do nearby residents have a greater stake in the decision than park visitors? |

**All of the stakeholders reach a compromise**: Nobody gets exactly what they want, but each side gets some of what they want

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Why this idea might work | Why this idea might not work |
| All groups get some part of what they want. For example, some lakes or parks restrict louder and faster vehicles (like snowmobiles or jet-skis) on certain days or at certain hours. Once a compromise is agreed on, the group can vote to affirm the agreement. | Some groups may not want to compromise; some groups might “fight” harder than others; and a compromise might leave everyone dissatisfied with the outcome. |

Is there a way to build consensus so that all of the stakeholders feel satisfied? Explain your response.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Case Study #2:   We have some land. Now, what do we do?**

There is land near some railroad tracks that had been used by the railroad but now is not being used at all.  Different groups have come up with ideas for using the land. A neighborhood group would like to build a park with a playground that is accessible and inclusive, with no barriers.  They believe that every child in the neighborhood would benefit from an accessible playground.  Another group would like to build affordable housing. This group’s position is that the price of housing in the community makes it hard for many people to afford their own home. A group of business owners would like to buy the land to use it for a parking lot to encourage people to shop at the nearby retail stores and enjoy the local restaurants. Currently parking near the retail stores is very difficult and they believe they are losing business to shopping malls and online merchants.

In small groups, discuss the pros and cons of each option.  Or:  On your own, write a dialog between three neighbors who disagree about these choices.

(PRO/CON Chart - Possible Answers)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **PRO/CON Chart** | **How it would help the community** | **How it might disadvantage the community** |
| **Accessible playground** | provide a place for all children to play, encourages healthy youth | a playground doesn’t help adults, doesn’t bring in revenue to the community |
| **Affordable housing** | provides a way for people to buy their own homes, creates more equity in the community | takes away open space, increases population in schools |
| **New parking lot** | More shoppers for local businesses, this means more tax revenue for community | more parking means more cars, more traffic and pollution, no green space |

Questions to think about:

1. How should these decisions be made? (majority, compromise, consensus)
2. Should the city have a citywide plan to decide how much land should be dedicated to parks, housing and parking?

**Case Study #3: Design a section of a park!**

You have an opportunity to design a new section of a park. You only have enough money and space to include 4 possible park features.

1. How would you decide what to include?
2. How would you design a section of a park?
3. What factors would you consider when designing this space?

Possible features:

1. playground equipment
2. community gardens
3. sports fields (baseball, soccer/football)
4. sports courts (tennis, basketball)
5. picnic tables and benches
6. skateboard equipment
7. gazebos, covered spaces
8. track
9. fitness course
10. garden
11. OTHER

**Closing**: Review - why is it so important, and difficult, to make decisions in a community? Students can answer via discussion or in their journals.