

Adopt a building

Objective

Students will identify historic buildings in their community that have been adaptively reused. Through "adopting" a building, they will learn that the recycling of buildings is an environmentally and economically sound practice for communities.

Warm-up Activity

Sometimes students hear people talk about a neglected building or area in their city that needs to be changed. Too frequently, old structures are simply torn down to make way for new. Often people say, "why don't 'they' do something about it?" Understanding that "we are they" is an important facet of the ethic of preservation, city beautification programs, and the adaptive reuse of historic structures. An excellent example of this philosophy can be illustrated by the "Adopt a Highway" project--the countrywide roadway beautification project where individuals personally become responsible for cleaning up and keeping "their" roadway litter free and beautifully landscaped. Can this "adoption" philosophy be extended to historic structures? Challenge your class to create a list of buildings, streetscapes, greenbelts, or other features of the community that are in need of "adoption."

Main Lesson

Many structures are saved from demolition by a process known as adaptive reuse--the process of converting a building to a use other than that for which it was originally designed. Take the students on a tour of the historic buildings in your community. Provide each student with a clipboard, worksheet and a pencil. Digital cameras would also be helpful. Children are to select one building as their own for in-depth study as they follow the direction on the worksheet.

Extending Activities

Discuss how the buildings in your community have influenced the lives of the community's residents.

Bring in architects and building contractors to speak on adaptive reuse. Look at blue prints of remodeling.

Use reference materials in the classroom or library to find historic photographs of each building "adopted." Compare the past to the present. How has the façade changed? Could this building be identified if the original owners reappeared?

Grades 4-8