City Planning With Census Data

Mini Lesson: Student Version

Name _____

1. The table below includes the population data for four state capitals in the United States. In the third column, divide the total population of each capital city by 1,000. Then follow your teacher's instructions to fill in the "Tokens" column.

Note that the data we will be using will represent "per one thousand" people in each city.

Table 1—Population

State Capital	Population	Population Divided by 1,000 (round to the nearest whole number)	Tokens
Montgomery, Alabama	195,300		
Boston, Massachusetts	672,973		
Juneau, Alaska	31,609		
Santa Fe, New Mexico	89,837		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2025 Population Estimates

https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/santafecitynewmexico,juneaucityandboroughalaska,-bostoncitymassachusetts,montgomerycityalabama,US/PST045219

2. Once your teacher assigns a city to your group, you are going to use the data on page 1 to plan what types of community services and businesses will be built in your city.

Write the name of the city your teacher assigns to your group. Then, in the table below, record in column 1 each type of service or business your group wants in your city, in column 2 how many of that service or business are in your city, and in column 3 the number of tokens needed to build it. To find out how many tokens are needed for each service, reference Activity Item: Community Services List. Record the total number of tokens at the bottom of the table.

Table 2—My City: _____

Community Service or Business	Number in My City	Number of Tokens Needed
	Total Tokens Needed:	

3. How did the population of your assigned city compare to the populations of the other cities? How did that affect the number of resources you received for the people living in that city?

4. After what you learned today, why is it so important for everyone in your community to be counted?

Creative Extensions:

Design a Storyboard: A Day in the Life of a Resident. Create a simple comic-style storyboard showing how census-based investments can improve residents' everyday lives. For example, an adult who uses a new transit route to get to work, a teenager visiting a new community center or neighborhood library or a family benefiting from a new school.

Create a Community Investment Brochure. Take your city planning skills to the next level by creating a colorful brochure to pitch how you will spend a set budget in your community. Use census data (population age, income, housing, transportation, etc.) to justify your choices. The brochure could include your top three to five spending priorities, a short explanation of how each priority meets the needs demonstrated by the data, and photos or simple maps to illustrate their points.

Activity Item: Community Services List

Tokens available based on census: 2 tokens per 1,000 people

Cost of community services:

Police Station = 10 tokens

Fire Station = 10 tokens

Hospital = 10 tokens

School = 10 tokens

City Hall = 5 tokens

Library = 5 tokens

Dentist Office = 5 tokens

Zoo = 8 tokens

Grocery Store = 8 tokens

Gas Station = 4 tokens

Pet Store = 3 tokens

Amusement Park = 8 tokens

Toy Store = 3 tokens

Candy Store = 3 tokens

Ice Cream Store = 3 tokens

Fast Food Restaurant = 3 tokens

Park/Sports Court/Field (soccer, basketball, etc.) = 8 tokens