

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

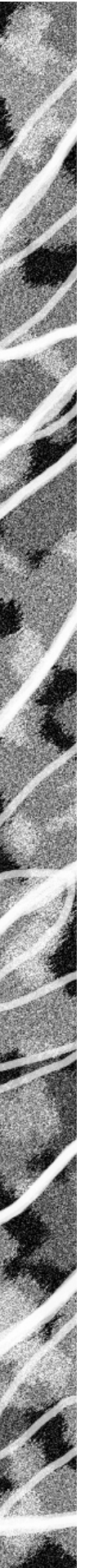
## A. Our Ailing City Hospital: What's the Cure?

Our town's hospital was built near the hustle and bustle of downtown in the late 1940s, not long after World War II ended and all the veterans returned home. It was then a gleaming, modern facility, the best in the region. But today the hospital building is 50 years old, and it shows its age in some places, even with good repairs and maintenance. It is difficult to find room in the hospital for new medical machines that are so important in giving patients the very best care. The City Council must decide what to do with the city hospital to be able to meet the health needs of our community. Here are the points of view of persons closely involved with the issue.

- Dr. Valdez, the hospital director, believes that the hospital will need to have all new electrical wiring within the next five years to be able to keep all the computers and medical equipment running. The roof was replaced just two years ago, but is already leaking in several places. He reports that the hospital has a hard time recruiting doctors and nurses, because they would rather work in a newer, better equipped hospital.
- Ms. Chapman, the director of hospital volunteers, is worried that she is having a hard time recruiting new volunteers. Many volunteers are retired persons who do not want to volunteer downtown, where they have a hard time finding a parking space and have to pay a parking meter. In addition, there have been several break-ins in cars parked downtown.
- Dr. White, the head of radiology, wants the hospital to buy a new scanning machine (like an x-ray) that costs over a million dollars. There is no place in the hospital to put the machine now. But if the hospital does not buy this new scanner, patients will have to travel over 75 miles to have scans made. Dr. White fears that our town hospital will lose money if patients leave to seek better medical care.
- Dr. Cohen, the head of the surgery department, believes the town would be better off building a brand new hospital in the suburbs. He feels people want a newer facility that would be able to offer more kinds of treatment. He believes that a private company will build a hospital if the city does not replace its current old building. This other hospital could draw patients away from the city hospital.

What should the City Council do? As you think about the problem, consider these issues:

1. How would it help our town to fix up the hospital, build a new one, or do nothing? Who would benefit most from each choice?
2. What challenges or problems would we face if we fix up the hospital, build a new hospital, or do nothing? Who would be hurt by this decision?
3. What are the costs of fixing up or expanding the hospital, building a new hospital, and doing nothing?
4. What steps should we go through to make our decision? Whose opinion should we ask? How long do we have to make our decision?
5. If I had to vote as a City Council member today, which way would I vote? WHY?



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## B. Do we need more street lights in our neighborhoods?

For many years our town has had street lights in the downtown area. These lights were installed to help people as they walked to and from downtown offices, stores, movie theaters, and restaurants after dark. Many people, including Mr. Herrera, believe that street lights protect nighttime pedestrians from crimes such as muggings and purse snatchings. Businesses in lighted areas, such as Dr. Miller’s medical office and Ms. Stein’s dress shop, report fewer nighttime break-ins and burglaries since the lights were installed. Also, police department studies have shown that nighttime drivers in lighted areas have fewer accidents than drivers on dark streets.

Because of these advantages of outdoor lighting, many residents of our town want to add street lights to residential neighborhoods. Other residents, like Ms. Hannah, feel that the lights are unnecessary and unpleasant additions to the neighborhood. She and other residents like to take evening walks and complain that they cannot see the stars and moon as well because of street lights. Others, including Mr. Ching and Mr. Stone, are concerned about the expense of buying the street lights and paying for the electric power needed to run them. Some parents and teachers are concerned that young people will gather under the street lights at night when they should be at home.

What should our city do?

1. What are the benefits of adding street lights in the neighborhoods? Think of other ideas besides those mentioned above.
2. What would be the costs — in money and problems— of adding these lights? How could the town pay for the cost?
3. How can the City Council find out what most town residents think about the idea of adding street lights? What would be good and bad about asking for people’s opinions?
4. What could happen when some people do not get their way on this issue? Are the possible results serious problems?
5. If you had to vote on this issue today, which way would you vote and WHY?



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## C. Do we want a new factory in our town?

For many years our town has been a medium sized town near a large urban area. Some families, like the Serranos, own some land near town on which they farm and keep stock. Other families have stores and small businesses, such as Thornberry’s Market and Olivia’s Tailor Shop. Other families, like the Mikeskas and the Garretts, earn their living working at schools and the field offices of state agencies, such as the highway department and DPS.

Recently officials from the Disposable Dinnerware Corporation came to our town to talk to landowners about selling their pasture land to the company. This company wants to build a factory on land that is now used for farming. They are willing to pay the landowners well for the land, which is less expensive than land in urban areas.

The officials also met with the City Council to discuss their plans for a factory in our town. The factory would make Styrofoam hot drink cups, Styrofoam ice chests, and Styrofoam containers for fast food sandwiches. The company believes our town has the water, workers, and tax rate that would let the company profit from a factory here. The company believes that the highways near our town would make transporting the factory products easy. The company expects to provide jobs for 200 skilled and semi-skilled workers.

What should our City Council do?

1. What are the benefits of having a new factory in our town? Think of as many possible benefits as you can.
2. What would be the costs — in money and problems— of having this factory here? What would be some “hidden” costs that we might not notice at first?
3. How can the City Council find out what most town residents think about the idea of this new factory? What would be good and bad about asking for people’s opinions?
4. What additional information do we need before we can make a decision?
5. If you had to vote on this issue today, which way would you vote and WHY?



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## D. A Halfway House in Our Town?

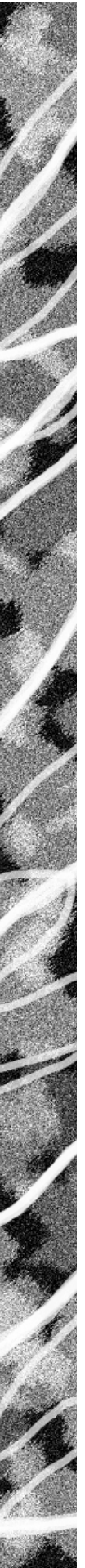
Almost everyone in our town is concerned about the rise in crime in Texas cities. The newspaper has been running a series of stories about prison over-crowding in East Texas prisons. The state is trying out a number of ideas to handle the large number of convicted criminals now crowding the prisons. One of these ideas is to start halfway houses for convicts on parole. These facilities would have space for 10 to 15 convicted felons who have served some part of their prison term with good behavior.

These persons must agree to follow strict rules of parole in order to be admitted to the halfway house program. For example, they must hold a job or be actively looking for one. They must not use alcohol or illegal drugs. If they stay out past curfew or leave the city without permission from their parole officer, they will return to prison. They will also be returned to prison if they are found to have committed another crime.

The community is split in their opinions about the halfway house. Some residents, especially elderly persons who live alone, like Ms. Bell and Ms. Guffy, are afraid of having convicted criminals living in their neighborhoods. Their neighbors, the Lloyds, want to give the convicts a second chance. Others, like the Rodriguez family, think that halfway houses are better than prisons and they do not want to pay for the higher cost of running more prisons.

The state government will soon be deciding where to locate the halfway houses. What position should our town take on the issue?

1. What are the benefits of having convicts in halfway houses instead of prisons? What benefits would come to our town from a halfway house?
2. What would be the costs — in money and problems— of having the halfway house in our town?
3. How can the City Council find out what most town residents think about the idea of starting half-way houses? What would be good and bad about asking for people's opinions?
4. What can our City Council do to help avoid serious problems from arising over this issue?
5. If the City Council had the power to decide this issue today, which way would you vote and WHY?



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## E. Teen Curfew: Will it Help Our Town?

Some people in our town, like Mr. Lambert, are concerned that young teenagers are staying out too late at night. Some teens tend to loiter in small groups outside town businesses, openly consuming alcohol, and then driving their cars too fast. These and other teens have gotten into mischief and criminal activities after dark. Some citizens believe that these young people are at risk for dropping out of school and want all young people to be indoors at night. A group of concerned parents and business owners led by Ms. Richards and Ms. Leopold, has recommended a teen curfew that would be enforced by the city police department. These persons want young people to be off the streets between 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM. They have noticed that graffiti artists seem to do their painting at night, and it is causing their businesses extra expense to clean up the graffiti. Captain Hayes of the police department feels his job will be easier if he does not have to worry as much about teenagers being out on the street after dark.

Some people, like Mr. Reagan, are not happy with the suggestion of a curfew. They do not want a restriction on all teenagers' activities, which can include working, going to concerts and movies, and being out late with their friends on a weekend night. They feel that it is a mistake to treat all teens as if they are troublemakers. In addition, Captain Martinez of the police department is worried that it will be difficult and expensive to enforce the curfew ordinance.

1. What are the benefits of having a curfew for teenagers?
2. What would be the costs — in money and problems— of having a curfew?
3. How can the City Council find out what most town residents think about the idea of the curfew?  
Should the council get their ideas, or just vote on the proposed curfew?
4. What can our City Council do to help avoid serious problems from arising over this issue?
5. If the City Council had the power to decide this issue today, which way would you vote and WHY?



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## F. Widening Main Street: Great idea or a huge mistake?

There is no doubt about it: traffic is heavy on Main Street. Cars get backed up for blocks sometimes waiting behind a person trying to make a left turn. Parking spaces along the street are scarce, so people block the right lane sometimes while they are waiting for a car to pull out of a parking spot. City buses, too, can slow things down while they wait for passengers to get on or off the bus. Even without a traffic accident slowing up traffic, it can really be a slow drive down Main Street some days. The problem is especially bad at evening rush hour.

Citizens are divided about what to do. One group of commuters, headed up by Mr. Chote are fed up with all the traffic jams. They want parking spaces removed from the street so that there is always at least one extra lane of traffic. They also believe that a middle left turn lane needs to be added to cut down on waiting time.

Other citizens led by Mr. and Mrs. Chavez want to use part of the wide sidewalks on Main Street to make another lane of traffic. They argue that no one really uses the park benches along Main Street anymore and the space would be better used to ease the traffic problems.

Ms. Greenstein represents the environmental group that is against the loss of trees along Main Street. If the sidewalk is made narrow, 12 lovely old trees will have to be cut down. Also, the small grassy areas for park benches in each of the ten main blocks will have to be removed and paved over. The environmentalists believe that the loss of plants along the street will result in more air and noise pollution and will raise the downtown temperature in the summer.

Main Street merchants are not sure they want the street to have more lanes for traffic. Mr. Groves who owns a store on the street, says stores will lose business because there will be no space to park near the store. Customers will have to park at least two blocks away, and in the heat of the summer or on a rainy day, customers just won't stand for that. At all times of the year, it will be more convenient and pleasant for people to drive right past Main Street stores and on to the mall.

1. What are the benefits of making Main Street wider?
2. What would be the disadvantages of widening the street?
3. How can the City Council find out what most town residents think about the idea? Should the council get their ideas, or just vote on the proposed widening?
4. What can our City Council do to help avoid serious problems from arising over this issue?
5. If the City Council had the power to decide this issue today, which way would you vote and WHY?



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## G. Pasture Land, Greenbelt, or Meadowlake Village: What does our town need?

Several home builders in our town have approached the city zoning commission to get permission to build housing developments on 300 acres of land three miles west of downtown. They have chosen the name Meadowlake Village for their planned development. This land was once the Barnes family farm. After Mr. Barnes died, the land passed to his daughter who lives out of town. She leases the pastures to two families who graze cattle on the land. Ms. Barnes has never liked the area and says she will never live on the land herself. Taxes on the land have recently gone up, so that she really is not making much money from renting out the land. Ms. Barnes is now considering selling the land to developers.

Her tenants, Mr. Frank and Mr. Escobedo, are not excited about the possibility of losing the pasture land they now rent. They know that it can be difficult and expensive to find good quality land. They have seen too many good pastures become suburban developments, and are afraid their grazing land will soon be covered with homes.

The developers, headed up by Mr. Carpenter, are very interested in her offer to sell. Good land close in to town is getting harder to find. To have a tract of land large enough for a good-sized housing development is very attractive to the developers. If their project is approved, the development will provide jobs for many construction workers and bring business to the building supply companies in town.

The Ecology Society is not in favor of the development being approved. Their president, Mr. Preston, states that the development will endanger the species of black throated song bird that inhabits the farm. The society is also afraid that the wastewater from the proposed development will harm fish in Williams Creek. Also, they are against the installation of driveways and sidewalks that they say will increase runoff into the creek after rains.

1. What are the benefits of having a new housing development in our town?
2. What would be the costs of building the new development?
3. How should the potential environmental impact of the development be measured?
4. What can the zoning commission do to be sure that it does not make a decision it will regret at some time in the future?
5. If you served on the zoning commission and the commission was going to vote on the issue today, which way would you vote and WHY?

