

BEFORE  
THE GRID

THE  
1811 PLAN

BUILDING  
THE GRID

19<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY  
DEVELOPMENT

20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
– NOW

LIVING ON  
THE GRID

OTHER  
GRIDS

## Lesson Plan 7

### Other Grids



Washington, D.C. (Detail) [\[Link\]](#)

### OVERVIEW

Students will compare and contrast the grid plans for New York City, Washington D.C., Savannah, and Philadelphia to understand how street plans provide information about a city's infrastructure as well as a sense of place.

### RESOURCES

**Philadelphia** Thomas Holme, "A portraiture of the city of Philadelphia in the province of Pennsylvania in America," 1683. [\[Link\]](#) The Athenaeum of Philadelphia

**Savannah** "Plan of the City and Harbour of Savannah in Chatham County, State of Georgia," 1818. [\[Link\]](#) Drawn and published by I. Stouff; engraved by Hughes Curzon & Co. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia

**Washington, D.C.** John Reid, "Plan of the City of Washington in the Territory of Columbia ceded by the States of Virginia and Maryland to the United States of America and by them established as the Seat of their Government after the Year 1800," 1795. [\[Link\]](#) Hand-colored engraving. Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps, Inc.

**Other Grids** [\[Link\]](#)

### STUDENT GOALS

- Students will understand the differences in the city plans for four American cities
- Students will be able to compare and contrast images to note differences and similarities
- Students will understand the factors, including but not limited to variations in streets and blocks, that are involved in developing a grid and street views

### COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Grade:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1.1

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Grade:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.2

Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

#### 11<sup>th</sup> Grade:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

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### KEY TERMS/VOCABULARY

- Congested
- Diagonal
- Isthmus
- Monument
- Network
- Orthogonal
- Parallel
- Rectangular
- Replicate
- Subdivide
- Symbolic
- Tything
- Wards

### DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS

### RELATED COLLECTIONS PORTAL IMAGES



#### Philadelphia

Thomas Holme, "A portraiture of the city of Philadelphia in the province of Pennsylvania in America," 1683. [\[Link\]](#)  
The Athenaeum of Philadelphia



#### Savannah

"Plan of the City and Harbour of Savannah in Chatham County, State of Georgia," 1818. [\[Link\]](#)  
Drawn and published by I. Stouff; engraved by Hughes Curzon & Co. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia



#### Washington, D.C.

John Reid, "Plan of the City of Washington in the Territory of Columbia ceded by the States of Virginia and Maryland to the United States of America and by them established as the Seat of their Government after the Year 1800," 1795. [\[Link\]](#)  
Hand-colored engraving. Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps, Inc.



M. (Matthew) Dripps. *Map of the City of Brooklyn (as consolidated January 1st 1855) Incorporated as a Village 1816, as a City 1834, Popln abt 200,000. 1855.* [\[Link\]](#)  
Museum of the City. 50.358.79



Miller & Co. *Map N2. Woodville Centre Property. 1852.* [\[Link\]](#)  
Museum of the City. 29.100.3061



Robert A. Welcke. *Map of Germania Heights. ca. 1900.* [\[Link\]](#)  
Museum of the City. 55.20

- What are the places represented by each map?
- What do you notice is similar about each map's grid?
- What is different about each one?
- What makes each plan unique?
- How does each plan represent a vision for its city?
- Compare each plan to New York's 1811 street plan. What is unique about New York's plan? How is New York's plan in keeping with any of the other plans?

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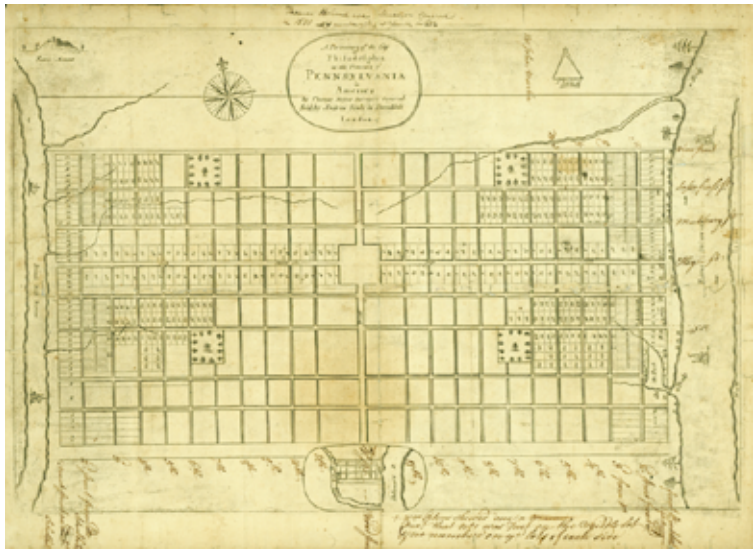
OTHER  
GRIDS

## Lesson Plan 7 Other Grids

### DOCUMENT ACTIVITY

The educator should distribute a copy of the image and corresponding text for each of the three grids discussed above.

In pairs or in small groups, students should use the guiding questions to analyze their maps, followed by a close reading of the corresponding texts for deeper understanding. Once students are able to explain what is unique about each map, students will present their findings to the class. Students will vote on which plan they consider to be the best out of the three before comparing the winning plan with New York City's 1811 plan. Each student will then cast a vote for either New York's or the plan they chose out of the original three.



### Philadelphia

Thomas Holme, "A portraiture of the city of Philadelphia in the province of Pennsylvania in America," 1683. [ [Link](#) ]  
The Athenaeum of Philadelphia

In 1681 King Charles II granted William Penn a huge tract of land fronting on the Delaware River. A year later, Penn arrived in his new colony and devised a plan for the main settlement of the colony, Philadelphia. Over the two-mile-wide isthmus between the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers, Penn laid a grid of streets, an idea unprecedented in English America at the time. The blocks bounded by these streets, some as big as 400 by 500 feet, were larger than

the city blocks Penn would have known in London. Penn intended that his town would never get as congested as central London: he wanted the houses of his "green country town" to stand among generous kitchen gardens. To further "ventilate" this town of gardens, two 100-foot-wide streets (now Market and Broad Streets) split the grid, and at their crossing he envisioned a great civic square. To complete the plan, each of the quadrants was given its own park, carved out of the grid of blocks.

Almost from the beginning, though, Philadelphians chose to live in row houses, and that presented a problem: getting light from only the front and back, a row-house can only be about three rooms deep; if you line all sides of a 400-foot-thick block with row-houses you get a big, blank empty space in the middle. And so, early on, people began to subdivide the big blocks, sometimes horizontally, sometimes vertically, often in both directions. The result is today's complex pattern of minor streets laid into the simpler pattern of main streets.

As the city grew outward, it extended the existing north-south streets; but Philadelphians made the blocks between those streets much like Manhattan blocks—long and thin, ideal for parallel lines of back-to-back row-houses.



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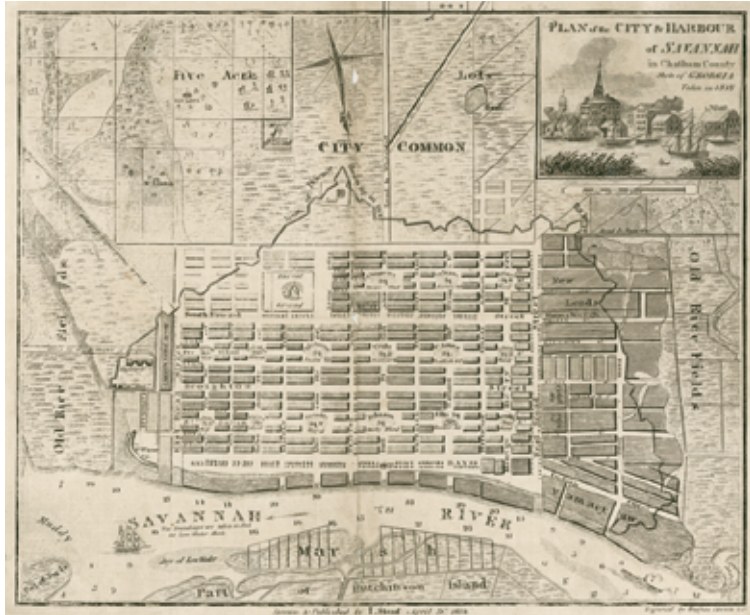
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### Savannah

"Plan of the City and Harbour of Savannah in Chatham County, State of Georgia," 1818. [[Link](#)]

Drawn and published by I. Stouf; engraved by Hughes Curzon & Co.  
Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia

King George II granted a new colony to The Trustees of Georgia in 1732. The chief trustee, James Oglethorpe, chose the site of the first settlement and devised a complex plan for apportioning the town. Following the usual practice for port cities, he laid out Savannah parallel to the riverfront, but his unique idea was to divide the town into wards, each centered on its own small park. Straight streets, up from the waterfront, would penetrate the wards, but in a particular manner: half of the streets would pass by the wards, bordering them, but the other streets would be interrupted by the parks. If Penn's Philadelphia plan presented the problem of too-large blocks that needed to be subdivided, Oglethorpe's Savannah plan has had the opposite effect: the street pattern has made it difficult to assemble large parcels by combining blocks.

The wards were further divided into two kinds of blocks. Long, thin blocks, called tything blocks, were divided into small house lots backing up onto a shared alley. Facing the park on either side were four large trust blocks, left undivided and intended for grand homes and institutions. Only a few wards were built before the trustees lost possession of the colony, but the people of Savannah were so pleased with the ways of life allowed by Oglethorpe's grid that they continued to lay out new wards until the end of the 19th century. The Stouf plan shows the city in 1818, with 15 wards.

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Hand-colored engraving.  
Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps, Inc.

In evaluating options in New York City, the commissioners naturally considered the nation's new capital. Only 20 years earlier, in 1791, architect-engineer Pierre Charles L'Enfant established the plan of Washington, D.C., and it is striking that the commissioners purposefully rejected it as a model. While their "Remarks" refer explicitly only to Paris and London, there was an implied contrast between their vision of New York with rectangular house lots, and the capital city, designed for government and the representation of power.

In L'Enfant's plan an orthogonal grid is overlaid with a larger-scale grid of diagonal streets punctuated by frequent squares. The intersections of the two grids produced non-rectangular lots that added to the cost and complexity of construction, complications the commissioners wished to avoid. But an advantage of the plan of Washington is that it creates opportunities for buildings to call attention to themselves in the urban fabric. Monuments could be sited at the end of a vista, such as the Capitol, or face a square, such as the White House, whereas in New York individual structures were submerged in the overall unity of the street and block. The scale of Washington was also monumental: L'Enfant's avenues had an 80-foot carriageway with 40 feet on each side for a tree-covered walk, or 160 feet in total, compared to 100 feet for New York's avenues.

Washington and New York now stand for two different approaches to city planning, and it is clear that the commissioners saw it this way in 1811.