

PART 4: CHANGES IN A CITY OVER TIME

Vocabulary

City-Planning	actions taken by the city to set rules for controlling public spaces, streets, and private buildings
Landmark	an important historical building or place
Urban	related to a city or large town
Zoning Laws	laws the city passes to manage planning and growth. In New York City, zoning laws restrict the shape, height, or volume of a building and describe the functions for buildings.

At the turn of the century, Wall Street was the center of business life in New York City. Over time, bigger buildings replaced smaller ones, as more space was needed for banks and businesses. As the value of property in Lower Manhattan grew, skyscrapers created more interior space on less land. These grand buildings represent the wealth of the city's businesses and new places of work.

TUBE *Brainstorm the characteristics of the urban environment.*
to do *What does the city feel like? What does it look like?*

Close Looking Activities

Object 10. Wall Street Postcards.
Historic views, 1895, 1905, 1912.

Postcards are rich historical documents that capture the city at a precise moment and can reveal changes over time. The messages written on a postcard can also give clues about life in that time period. These three views show how the Wall Street neighborhood changed at the turn of the 20th century. Over 17 years, Trinity Church, the brown building with the pointed steeple, is the only **landmark** that remained unchanged, although it became dwarfed by taller buildings.

A good example of this rapid change can be found in these three postcards, comparing the right side of the street. In 1895, the six-story Union Building stood at the corner of Wall and Nassau Street. The next year, the 22-story Gillender Building was built. Seen here around 1905, it was the tallest building on Wall Street and the fourth tallest building in the city. But even that building was destroyed after 13 years to make way for the Bankers Trust Tower.



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TUBE *What evidence is there of different time periods (changes in transportation, taller buildings)? Locate the site of the Union, Gillender, and Bankers Trust Buildings and count the floors in each building. Why were these important banking buildings rebuilt again and again?*

to do

Object 11. Lower Manhattan Photograph, Aerial View, 1976.

This aerial view shows the southern tip of Manhattan, the Hudson River to the west, and the East River, on the right. On the west is the landfill for Battery Park City. It was created from dirt and rocks excavated from the construction of the World Trade Center.

Broadway, one of the oldest streets in New York City, runs up the center of the photograph from Battery Park. In Lower Manhattan, Broadway is nicknamed “the canyon” because the tall skyscrapers in the financial district make the streets below dark.

TUBE *Identify parts of a city including parks, streets, avenues, highways, bridges, and ports. Describe how their location is important to the life of the city. Name familiar buildings and other city landmarks.*

to do

Object 12. Lower Manhattan Photograph, Aerial View, 2004.

Compared with the 1976 photograph, this aerial view shows changes in the development of Lower Manhattan over time. Battery Park City is now a thriving community and the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center are gone. This color photograph also shows the city skyline seen from New York harbor.

TUBE *Compare these two aerial views and discuss what has changed. What skyscrapers are most noticeable? Why?*

to do



Across the Objects: *Why were so many skyscrapers built in Lower Manhattan?*

Additional Web Resource:

www.skyscraper.org/viva

See the Museum’s collection of over 1000 postcards of NYC skyscrapers and street scenes. Compare any three postcards from VIVA and talk about changes in the City over time.



VIVA

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Skylines help give a city its identity and are important to how people think about a city. New York’s unique skyline represents more than a collection of buildings: it symbolizes the city’s wealth and rich history. Skyscrapers are also both places and businesses where people live, work, pay rent, make money, manufacture goods, and myriad other functions.

Close Looking Activities:

Object 13. Lower Manhattan Map (1966)

This map of city streets and blocks can help in understanding the context of tall buildings in Lower Manhattan. The streets below Wall Street, colonial in origin, are more curved and closer together. The streets run through to the rivers, or rather first to the wharves, that used to line the waterfront. This map was created by city planners to study how to set new standards for how to make changes in the historic pattern of streets and blocks and open up the old waterfront for public use.

TUBE *Identify parts of the city including parks, streets, highways, bridges, ports, and terminals. Discuss what happens in each space and what the city would be like without each one. Have students explore concepts behind city-planning by asking them to draw an aerial map of their imagined city.*

to do



Object 14. Lower Manhattan Harbor View Skyline, 1915

This image looks east across the Hudson River to Lower Manhattan. The skyline was transformed during the first decades of the 1900s by an amazing range of new, tall office buildings. This image records three “tallest buildings in the world,” built within thirteen years of each other: The Park Row, The Singer Building, and the Woolworth Building.

TUBE *What details show the time period? (Famous buildings missing from the skyline, steam ships)*

to do



Across the Objects: *What are the forces that shape skylines? What can you learn about a city by looking at its skyline? What different information about Lower Manhattan do you get from the street map and sky view?*

Additional Web Resource:

www.skyscraper.org/viva

Explore an interactive aerial view and skyline of NYC.



VIVA