Background:
Ecology is a branch of biology that studies interactions among living things as well as interactions of living things and their physical environment. In an urban setting people are one of the living things interacting with the environment. People influence the environment and the environment influences people in various ways. Scientists from various disciplines are now coming together to share and collaborate research efforts to understand human actions and their influences on ecosystems, and the ecosystems influence on people. As part of ASU’s Central Arizona—Phoenix Long-Term Ecological Research (CAP LTER) project, scientists are researching topics from people’s landscape and watering practices to their attachment to their neighborhoods. Highlights of CAP LTER research can be found here: https://caplter.asu.edu/research/research-highlights/

Vocabulary:
ecology - branch of biology that studies interactions among living things as well as interactions of living things and their physical environment.

Advanced Preparation:
none

Materials:
• paper, white board, overhead transparencies for recording group answers
• “People and the Environment” handout

Recommended Procedure:
1) Provide students with the “People and the Environment” handout. Allow students plenty of time to respond to the questions individually.

2) Once students have had time to think on their own, have students share in small groups of three to four students. Each group member should share their responses with one another and record their responses on an overhead transparency or a large sheet of butcher paper. Have each group report their responses and have a class discussion based on the responses.

3) Share with students that the picture on the handout is of a neighborhood (Ahwatukee, Arizona) that is part of the CAP LTER research area. It is an interesting area to study because of the clear division between residential and desert land cover. How is this different than studying ecology in a more pristine environment? Students are now ready to start thinking about questions they have about human influences in the area they are studying.

Evaluation:
Participation in discussion and completion of “People and the Environment” handout.

Extensions:
Have students read and report on one of the CAP LTER scientist’s posters at: https://caplter.asu.edu/publications/cap-lter-symposia/
Standards

Arizona Science Standards
Personal & Social Perspective: C1-GRHS-PO1

Arizona Social Studies Standards
Geography: C1-GRHS-PO5

NGSS Core Ideas
ESS2.A: Earth materials and systems
ESS2.E: Biogeology
ESS3.C: Human impacts on Earth systems
LS1.D: Information Processing
LS2.A: Interdependent relationships in ecosystems
LS2.C: Ecosystem dynamics, functioning, and resilience
LS2.D: Social interactions and group behavior
LS4.D: Biodiversity and humans

NGSS Practices
Asking questions
Constructing explanations
Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information

NGSS Crosscutting Concepts
Patterns
Cause and effect
Scale, proportion and quantity
Stability and Change

AZCCRS/ELA Literacy
RST7: Integration of knowledge and Ideas
WHTS1: Write Arguments
Student Worksheet
People and the Environment

Name:________________________________________

Look at this picture of a neighborhood in the Phoenix area and answer the questions below. This is a brainstorming activity, so write about whatever comes to your mind.

How does the environment influence people?

How do people influence the environment?