

**Youth Green Map System (YGMS)
Youth Green Mapping Resource Set
II. Getting Started: Green Map System's Youth Activity Guide**

Created by GREEN MAP SYSTEM

**GreenMap.org
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How Green Is Your Neighborhood?

Green Maps give us a fresh perspective of our cities and towns. They help us locate eco-resources such as bike lanes, farmers markets and wildlife habitats, along with cultural sites that make our hometowns special. Green Maps encourage us to discover new ways to experience the local urban ecology. Every city has many wonderful places where you can get involved creating a more natural and enjoyable lifestyle. Find out ways to put the places and things you like about the local environment "on the map."

With mapmaking as our medium, Green Map System (GMS) promotes sustainability and inclusive citizen participation in communities around the world. Since 1995, we have empowered local project leaders (Mapmakers) to chart local resources that enhance sustainable living. Along with professionally designed city maps, youth are working on Green Maps as well. Each is uniquely designed, yet every one of the resulting Maps uses a selection of the Green Map Icons to describe sites from bird watching areas to toxic hot spots. The shared visual "language" of the Icons makes each site easy to classify, no matter where that Green Map is created. Visit our web site at GreenMap.org, or check out the Greenhouse (launched May, 2007) and see some of the varied and beautiful Green Maps that have already been completed.

Young people, in school or after-school programs, or on intergenerational Mapping teams, can use this Activity Guide. If you have any questions about Green Mapmaking, please check out our website or free to email us at info@greenmap.org.

Explore & Discover Lots of Green Sites, then Make Your Own Neighborhood Green Map

1. Getting Started

Start by choosing an area to explore. Draw or study a map showing landmarks and crossroads of the built environment, including streets, parks and gardens. Check the Icons and see if you already know where some eco-sites are located.

Discuss the target audience: neighbors, city residents, tourists, students, planners & policy makers; and the general outline and goals for your Green Map.

Consider where your map will be displayed and distributed when completed. Should you plan to make more than one map? See #8 for ideas.

2. Survey the Area

Form small Mapmaking teams, then scout around your area and find places described by the Icons. You might want to begin by looking at:

- green businesses
- eco-smart transportation
- recycling and renewable energy sites
- cultural and historic places that make your community special
- special trees
- natural areas
- habitats and gardens
- polluted toxic hot spots
- blight sites that mar your environment

Your Mapmaking team should discuss the green sites you've found and decide which of the

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Icons describe them best (you may use more than one, if necessary). Compare your sites to the descriptions on the Icon sheet. In addition, you can collect notes on noises and smells, as well as share general impressions about the health and physical beauty of area's environment.

3. Recording Green Site Information

While you are in the field, use notebooks or index cards to keep track of the category, name and location of each green site. Some places may be very small, but if they are important for the environment, or just make you feel good about being outdoors with nature, record them for placement on your Map. You can write a few sentences about special features of the landscape, make sketches or take photos to capture the sites' key elements.

Write a short survey to help gather more information from local residents, shopkeepers and other community members about wildlife, significant organizations, public transportation, cherished cultural sites, and other green places in your area. Do different age groups suggest different kinds of sites?

Check the library for books on local tourism, natural and cultural history. Check with community and governmental offices, including Planning Boards and the Parks Department, to find out who is working "behind the scenes" for conservation and a healthier environment. Check bulletin boards for information on eco-events and group meetings that might lead you to find more green information or help discover greening initiatives already under way in your community.

4. About Toxic Hot Spots

Most communities contain threats to the health and safety of the natural environment. As you tour the neighborhood, make note of the category, location and name of each toxic hot spot. You may need to get advice from a local environmental group to identify these polluted places – contact some of the eco-resources and organizations listed on your city's Green Map or other environmental directory. Possible information sources include: newspaper files and web resources, such as the Environmental Defense Fund's Scorecard posted at <http://www.scorecard.org>, where you can check on toxic emissions in your zip code (in the United States).

Decide if your map should include toxic sites and if you need to explain why you included or omitted them on your map. If you want to keep these environmental challenges separate from the beneficial sites you've found, you can write an article about the toxic sites for the school or community newspaper and suggest actions to address pollution in your neighborhood.

Research environmental justice issues, specifically the effects of pollution on poorer residents in your neighborhood. Discuss ways you can use your Green Map as an advocacy tool to identify areas in your neighborhood with special needs for government resources and public attention.

5. Completing Your List of Sites

All members of your Map team should compare their lists of discovered green sites. Share your combined list with your class and community. Are there any categories you missed? Do you need more research? Should more recreational, cultural or historical places be included? Are you ready to compile a final list?

6. Organizing the Green Sites

Once your final list is complete, organize your list of green sites by type of site and also by location. You might also consider ordering by the relative importance and the size of the sites.

If possible, transfer the collected information into a computer. Enter each site's information in a standard format or database to make it easier to use, and to add to it later.

In order to be described accurately, some sites will require two or more Icons. You can even make up a new category and create its icon, if the Icons we've provided don't describe all the places you found. Decide as a group how to design and define Local Icons (consider shape, color and clarity of meaning in the abstract or figurative symbols you create). Please let us know about your new creations. We may include them in our growing list of global icons.

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7. Making Your Map

If you have not already done so, draft your map by tracing a base map or drawing a diagram of your area that fits the size of your paper. You can work freehand, trace an aerial photo or copy an existing map. Be sure to credit the source of the base map, which may be a road map, a lot survey plan, a city planning map, etc.

Use a copy machine or tracing paper and create a "working map". Try to use colors and design elements that will enhance the map but will also reproduce well. You can select colors for the Icons, but make sure they stand out clearly. Identify your map's geographic boundaries so people seeing it for the first time will understand where your neighborhood is situated. Consider how users will navigate the map once it is completed, and how you are drawing attention to the most important features of your map. The overall visual appearance of the map itself is important. Refer to existing examples and our "Communication and Design Elements" sheet for more ideas.

Plot the Icons in the appropriate places on your map. To identify each site by name, either:

- a) Put the site's name right on the map next to the Icon;
- b) Number each Icon on the map, then put a numerical list on the side; or
- c) Number the map, then put both Icon and site name in a list on the side. Include the sites' contact information and coordinates.

What key things can you say about each site? You can include things like the length of a bike path or a list of resources for further information, etc. Make sure you save extra information that won't fit for future use.

Consider different ways to present the information you have gathered. For example, should you type or hand-write the text? You can place text on small pieces of paper right on the working copy so they are easy to re-position. Leave room for a Legend, which is a list that defines each Icon, and explains how to read your Green Map. Create a logo for your map and give it a special name, too.

Please include:

- An arrow pointing North, the scale of the map and the date of creation.
- A list of the members of your mapmaking team and the sources for your information and base map.
- The Green Map System's copyright for the Icons and our logo.
- A title block or logo for your Green Map, as well as your own copyright (if desired) and your contact information.
- Leave a white border (at least 3/8 inch) all the way around the map.

When everything has been placed on your working Map and you are happy with its appearance, copy or trace over it to create a clean finished Green Map. If it is to be printed, special preparation will be needed. A computer-based map can also be created, using graphic design, desktop publishing or GIS (Geographic Information Systems) software.

8. Map Formats

You can print copies on paper to share in the form of a folding map, postcard, or poster -- ask a local printer for help, or simply print on a copy machine (adding color highlights by hand, if you like). Try to be ECONOMICAL (ecologically smart, waste-free and cost-conscious) when selecting the type and size of paper.

You can create a large, colorful copy of your Green Map and post it on a kiosk or bulletin board where many people will see it (you can change its size with the help of a copy machine).

Your Map, regardless of how it was created, can probably be scanned into a computer and posted on the Internet. The Green Map System [tool center](http://www.greenmap.org/greenhouse/en/resources) (www.greenmap.org/greenhouse/en/resources), your school's computer lab, or a community member may be able to help you accomplish this. It will be visible to a large audience, all over the world (especially if you make requests for cyber-links and inform internet search engines about your map)!

9. Telling Your Story

The Green Map should tell the story of your neighborhood's ecology with words and images in a condensed and inviting way. Your map might actually include poems, brief essays, or

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photos and drawings. Be creative about the ways that you encourage people to discover new things about their community.

From the beginning, you might want to consider creating a small team of students to act as reporters, sharing the excitement of the work at all stages in its progress. The group's goals can include publishing project information at the school website or in the school newspaper, or creating an exhibit that shows students, teachers and neighbors the mapmaking process as well as the product.

Once the Green Map is nearing completion, you should consider other strategies for sharing your findings with your school community, other schools nearby, community groups and elected officials. Send or deliver Green Maps, or your web-based Map's address, to friends, relatives, green businesses (and other sites) listed on your Map and newspapers, too. For the press, always include a press release or other background information about your project.

Have an event to publicize your map's completion, such as a tour, presentation, or party. You might consider a slide presentation or poster, or even paint a mural to encourage everyone to visit the green sites you have discovered. Take a large copy to an environmental fair and collect ideas for the next map during the event.

Remember that you are creating a powerful tool for community awareness and advocacy in relation to the natural and built environments. Through the display and distribution of your Map, you will have the opportunity to share knowledge about important relationships in your community -- to teach others the things that you have worked so hard to teach yourselves! We would be grateful to hear from you about the ways that you have found to publicize your findings in our tool center and/or blog.

10. Evaluating Your Map

Draw some conclusions from the work you have done.

*What are some important observations you can make about the relationship between nature and our cultural (built) environment?

*What new things have you learned about the place where you live?

*What was your favorite part about making the Green Map? What surprised you the most?

*What was the strangest thing you learned about your community's environment? What was the most difficult?

*How does the number of green sites in your community compare with toxic hot spots, blight areas, or other problem sites?

*Can you think of ways to tip the balance so you'll have a healthier, greener community? What can you, personally, do to change things for the better?

*How would you like to see your community's environment change for future generations?

*Whose job it is to make sure that it becomes healthier and more sustainable?

11. More Green Maps!

Update your neighborhood Green Map from time to time to get a fresh perspective on how your community might have changed. Plan for updates or new versions that will highlight new Icons or something else that is different from your first map. Many people will have suggestions for new sites to be added and you will continually notice new places to add as well. Could you strengthen the design or display of your Green Map in some way? Keep notes in a safe place until you are ready to begin the new edition.

Green Maps provide a snapshot of a community at a particular point in time. Our surroundings keep changing. Hopefully we can make them change for the greener.

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