

[About Us](#)[STORE](#)[About
Greenhouse](#)[New Space](#)[Support Green
Maps](#)[Board & Advisors](#)[Staff](#)[Partners](#)[Supporters](#)[Guestbook](#)[Our History](#)[What People Say](#)[Credits & Thanks](#)[Copyright Info](#)

Eco-Economics & the Green Map System

This article originally appeared as the cover story for the spring 1999 issue of the International Society for Ecological Economics Bulletin.

Seeing the World Through Green Maps

© 1999 Wendy Brawer and Beatriz Castañeda

Understanding and addressing the ecological status of our planet today is too overwhelming for most people, but the condition of our cities and towns is more readily grasped and changeable. By putting places where nature and the designed environment interconnect on a Green Map, a fresh perspective is created that directly promotes the community's eco-resources. Each of these locally-produced maps tells a different and very accessible story about the elements and value of urban sustainability, using the Green Map System's globally shared GMS Icons to highlight the area's natural places, ECONomic developments, mobility options, greening organizations, and more. Whether printed or web-based, all Green Maps help residents discover wonderful green sites to get involved with every day and encourage the spread of successful greening initiatives across the globe.

Using the Green Maps, communities educate themselves regarding the interaction between the natural and built environments, the relationship between open space and cultural space. Mixing the ancient art of map-making with new, interactive media, citizens of all ages and backgrounds are invited to adapt and employ our collaborative tools as they chart the green spaces, environmental resources and socially-significant sites in their own cities. As experienced through these locally created Green Maps, GMS strengthens community awareness regarding our connection to the urban ecology. GMS is an environmental social project for healthier, more sustainable urban ecologies. Currently, 90 cities of all sizes in 27 countries on 6 continents are adapting the GMS framework as they put their hometowns green sites on the map.

GMS was initiated by Modern World Design in 1995, sparked by public response to the original Green Apple Map of NYC. GMS has been designed as an ecological culture collaboration that uses the Internet to promote sustainable communities. Today, it has been recognized by the **United Nations Centre for Human Settlements** as one of the **"Global Best Practices 100"**, and as a **"Success Story"** by the **UN Commission on Sustainable Development**. GMS has been named an **"EXPO 2000 Project Around The World"** by the upcoming World's Fair in Hannover Germany, and our Icons were given a **Gold** by **NRDC's International ECO Awards**, as well. These awards are due to the contributions of the pioneering Green Mapmakers, sixteen of whom have already published Green Maps.

GMS promotes a new view of the world using strategies and skills that help urban dwellers of all ages exercise creative, responsible leadership and take direct action towards more healthy and thriving environments. GMS invites local design teams to chart environmentally significant places along with the cultural, historical and social sites that make their community special. By adapting our design framework and utilizing our visual language - a shared set of over 100 icons that symbolize the different types of green sites - each team creates a unique, regionally-flavored Green Map that expands local environmental knowledge, encourages exploration and stewardship, and is connected to an expanding global network. Each green site and icon is selected and precisely defined within the local context, based on a generally

agreed-upon global definition. Each community's Green Mapmakers determine their own process, and shape their map to reflect local needs, with our network offering guidance, options and tools for every step along the way.

The process of setting the context for each of the Icons can be an eye-opening task for the community's network of advocates and participants, and cultural differences can be clearly seen when comparing the resulting maps. The Icons denoting green business and services have proven to be some of the more difficult -- and many Mapmakers set a "soft" standard, even considering sites on a case-by-case basis, rather than adopting a firm rule. Three cities in the Bay Area (California) illustrate this point:

- San Francisco left all non-food businesses off the first edition in hopes of developing a wider dialogue about the qualities of sustainable business. Four friends working in publishing and GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping created this map.
- Berkeley included over 60 businesses and services in the first edition, with a particular emphasis on design and construction (created by the Northern California chapter of Architects, Designers & Planners for Social Responsibility).
- Oakland set very strict criteria, which were actually voted on in the City Council. They won't put any businesses on the map that have not been certified. (This Green Map is a City project, and still in an early stage of development, but the criteria are posted at <http://www.greenmap.org/howto/oakland.html>).

The resulting maps are fresh, powerful images--resource efficient and beautiful reference guides that help cities to be understood in a new light. More people become aware of natural places they never knew were available in their communities. Moreover, they see how particular environmental challenges are being addressed in the next town, or in cities across the globe. Together, all our "fresh views of home" are presenting an interwoven network of cities progressing toward sustainability.

With 90 teams active in 11 world capital cities and nearly a dozen larger politically or biologically defined regions, as well as numerous small towns, a remarkably diverse network has been formed. Green Maps are being made by:

Governmental agencies (such as Rhode Island's Greenways Council, which published the first statewide Green Map in Autumn 1998).

- Environmental organizations (Urban Ecology Australia's Adelaide Green Map was the first publicly launched by the city's Mayor in June 1998).
- NGOs (Kyoto's Tennen (Nature) Design Forum prepared a workshop, tour and exhibit in addition to debuting their Green Map at the UN Climate Change Conference in December 1997).
- Designers (architect Tor Fossom is introducing the second edition of Malmo Sweden's Green Map this spring).
- University students (botany students in Argentina have created a website for their Mapas Verdes, covering parts of Buenos Aires and more rural towns).
- Younger students (North Brooklyn middle schools children have published a bicycle touring map of the area's community gardens as 1999 began).
- Even ecological economists (Cesar Levy Franca of Economia Socio Ambiental in Araxa, Brazil, is working with Boy Scouts on this Local Agenda 21 project).

Each of these maps and its mapmakers are linked to our website, www.greenmap.org. We recommend touring Eco-Montreal's website to see how the interdependence of the city and the bioregion is illustrated. Powered by GIS and utilizing layered images, their map uses water as the defining resource, zooming from a continental view right down to the street level. There's more to come, as McGill University has adopted the Eco-Montreal Map as an ongoing part of the Urban Planning curriculum (http://www.mcgill.ca/sup/Eco_Montreal.html).

Modern World Design directs the global GMS and has produced four editions of NYC's Green Apple Map since 1992. We know from experience that being put on the map is a very positive boost for sustainable businesses. Direct patronage is increased and the

ability to exchange ideas and globally transfer technologies is enhanced. Terra Verde, the first eco-store in NYC, so much appreciates the Green Apple Map that they have given GMS access to the store's entryway for a prominent, semi-permanent Green Map exhibit! You can also pick up a free copy of the printed Green Apple Map at Terra Verde, 120 Wooster, in Soho. [ed. note: Terra Verde is no longer open in New York.]

In addition to leading the process and building the local capacity for exchange, our map team leaders support one another, sharing methodology, lessons learned and positive accomplishments on a continual basis via email and our website. Creative adaptations abound, such as the youth-led Green Map tours beginning in downtown Philadelphia this Spring (organized by Sea Change). Thanks to Mapmakers, our materials have been translated into eight languages, and outreach has been strengthened by the numerous presentations and exhibits created in community and professional venues across the globe. The design of GMS was based upon an ecosystematic model and has benefitted greatly by this continual reciprocity.

Recently, we have begun developing GMS's Activity Guide for neighborhood-scale Green Mapmaking, which will become available for school and youth group projects in late 1999, supplemented by youth-made maps and other materials on our website. As we have so much to learn from young peoples' view of the world, we have already posted the introduction to the Youth Green Mapping as well as a Spanish language web page to encourage adoption of this project by our neighbors throughout the Americas. With a total re-design of the website slated for 1999, and re-organization of GMS as a not-for-profit organization, expansion of our global network, and more culturally rich Green Maps coming into use around the world, we're excited about the future.

GMS demonstrates how wonderfully useful the info-web is when put to work in service of the web-of-life. Even though working online is new to many, the web has expedited efficient global connectedness and helped a multitude of voices communicate the diverse nature of home. We encourage you to visit our website and link over to the online Green Maps and colorful websites maintained by our partners around the world.



greenmap.org © 1999-2005 Green Map System
Green Map Icons Copyright 2005 Green Map System, Inc.
[Donate](#) | [STORE](#) | email: info@greenmap.org