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East Harlem's Green Map Project

All Saints Parish Maps Their Community

written by Dr. Robert Zuber

[Click to see the Green Map!](#)



Imagine an urban neighborhood featuring brightly colored school buildings and people offering melons and boiled peanuts for sale. Imagine a place that combines wonderful historical monuments and sites, green markets, riverfront parks, well-kept community gardens tucked away on side streets, architecturally and spiritually significant churches, and a large park where squirrels breed, birds pass through on their way to feeding grounds, and the laughter of children is absolutely contagious.

It sounds like a wonderful place to live, doesn't it? Well, those of us who work with the Center of International Learning (CIL) and worship at All Saints Church think so! We understand all too well that East Harlem is known in the broader U.S. public for its toxic hotspots, abandoned buildings, rat-infested lots and troubled schools. Even so, there is a wealth of positive, healthful resources in these neighborhoods, resources that are completely unknown to disinterested outsiders, but also to many of the people who call East Harlem home. As CIL and All Saints do their part for healthier, more sustainable neighborhoods, we realize that residents must come to know much more than they do know about their own community -- what we have, what we don't have, what we need. Realizing this, we decided to create a Green Map, a visual representation of the resources in our geographic parish.



Our East Harlem Parish Green Map was directed by Sr. Virginia Dorgan with the help of the Boys and Girls Scouts of All Saints. Under supervision, young people have walked the streets of our neighborhoods, making notes and taking photographs of important ecological and cultural sites. Young people were not only encouraged to

locate sites, but to narrate them. What takes place here? Why is this place important? How does it contribute to the general health and well-being of the community? Is this something we want more of? By posing questions and making judgments, our young people are learning about important resources close to home, but also about their responsibilities for making communities healthier, more sustainable places to live.

Once the investigations had been completed, we set out to make a map of our parish using the Green Map System's global green site icons and a large "base map" furnished by the NYC Metropolitan Transportation Authority. The completed map, along with a photo album, will be sent to Ghana as part of CIL's "sustainable communities" initiative. The map will also be displayed at All Saints Church and presented to members of the local Community Board to help inform them about ecological resources and problems in our neighborhoods. Copies of the map will hopefully be made available to neighborhood residents and tourists. With help from Green Map System, our youth have a chance to show people around the world just how good life in our community can be. Our map joins others made by young people in communities from Brooklyn to Buenos Aires!

[Click to see the completed Green Map!](#)



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