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The Green Apple Map

Wendy E. Brawer

It was December 1991. I was sitting in a conference room crowded with a hundred ecology-minded people planning activities to complement five weeks of intensive meetings at the United Nations, which was preparing for the Earth Summit. I wondered how the participants, who would be coming from all over the world, could be encouraged to witness personally New York City's environmental progress and challenges. I decided to make a map — a direct, universally understood, resource-efficient tool that could make the city's ecological sites, human resources and activities more accessible not only to visitors but also to residents.

The Green Apple Map, which I created with the help of Hal Drellich, a cartographically-inclined graphic designer, showcases the city's most interesting and refreshing ecological features. They range from places of ecological significance (such as wildlife habitats) to examples of sustainable urban design, technology and practices — greenmarkets, environmental centers and museums, bike paths and pedestrian accessible bridges. The map even details the city's waste infrastructure and toxic hot spots.

The map encourages people to explore and understand our city — helping expand the community of environmental stewards, people who

understand the interconnections between the natural and built environments. It can help build a network of links among people of different ages and backgrounds by highlighting places that are important to our common future. It promotes and fosters replication of successful projects. Moreover, it challenges the assumption that this intensely urban setting has little redeeming ecological value.

Because of this project, I've come to appreciate maps as communication devices. Despite their modest appearance, they are powerful tools for describing places. The designer creates a view and through it, the user experiences a place anew. Maps are economical and compact — they are portable and postable — so their vision spreads rapidly. The Green Apple Map empowers quietly, leading each person to her own discoveries, helping us balance our priorities about our mobility, our destinations and, most importantly, where and how we wish to live.

One of my goals is to create a system for developing community-based Green Maps in other cities. The process of creating such a map can be democratic and inclusive, a method of fostering education, involvement and sustainability at the local level.

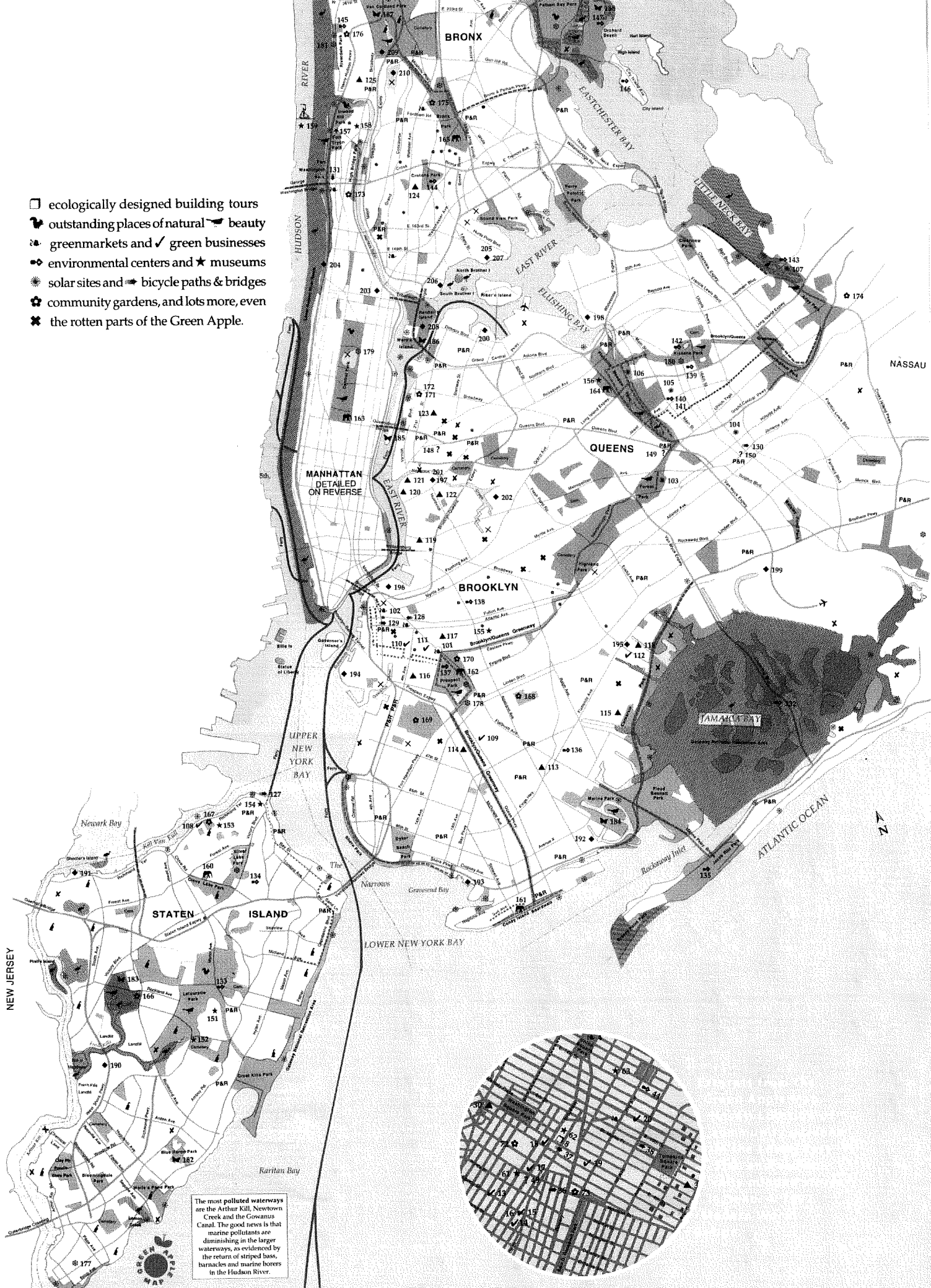
Note

My firm, Modern World Design, produced the first edition of the map with the support of the Municipal Art Society and its printer, Gramercy Offset. It was distributed at the United Nations and at urban ecology events in Spring 1992.

Later we produced an expanded, more colorful and friendlier second edition, which was distributed nationally. There are so many new ecotourism destinations in New York City and so much interest in the project that we are planning a third edition.

The Green Apple Map and Green Maps are trademarks of Modern World Design.

- ecologically designed building tours
- 🏞️ outstanding places of natural beauty
- 🌿 greenmarkets and ✓ green businesses
- 🏠 environmental centers and ★ museums
- ☀️ solar sites and 🚲 bicycle paths & bridges
- 🌱 community gardens, and lots more, even
- ✖️ the rotten parts of the Green Apple.



The most polluted waterways are the Arthur Kill, Newtowns Creek and the Gowanus Canal. The good news is that marine pollutants are diminishing in the larger waterways, as evidenced by the return of striped bass, barnacles and marine borers in the Hudson River.

