



# Community Asset Mapping

10 Points

Community Asset Mapping provides a collective inventory of the positive and valued aspects of a community, including places, institutions, programs, and people. In doing so, it also provides the foundation for assessing gaps and making improvements. Asset mapping is a positive (and enjoyable) approach to learning about a community. It begins to answer the question “Where are we now?” and helps community members to think positively about the place in which they live and work. It also challenges residents to recognize how other people see and experience the same community. This process fosters civic participation and can be a great way to engage students in their community. By identifying community assets, communities can better understand how to build on these important community resources to sustain and enhance future generations.

## Who should lead and be involved with this action?

Community Asset Mapping is most successful when all parts of the community are engaged in organizing and leading the process. The community Green Team should reach out to elected officials, municipal staff, board and commission members, as well as schools, civic and faith-based organizations, nonprofit groups, and business associations for representatives to serve on the Asset Mapping Committee.

## Timeframe

Community Asset Mapping projects can be done in less than a month but could also take up to 12 months to complete, depending on the technology level and methods used to conduct the project. Communities also can choose to view the Asset Mapping program as an ongoing project that is updated on an annual basis to recognize and celebrate new community resources and programs that are supporting community sustainability.

## Project Costs and Resource needs

Community Asset Mapping projects (sometimes called Green Maps) can range from simple and low-cost efforts using interview techniques and paper maps to technology enhanced programs that use cameras and global positioning programs and interactive mapping programs to help gather and record sustainability resources and activities. Volunteer time and some limited municipal staff time are required for the simplest initiatives. Municipal Green Teams should consider partnering with municipal boards and commissions as well as schools, civic groups, and nonprofit partners to identify, locate, and map community assets. Great technology is available for free or at low cost to develop web-based and print versions of “Green Maps.” These programs also allow the public at large to use web-based maps to locate and to nominate programs, organizations, businesses, and projects that support a more sustainable community.

## Why is it important?

Community asset mapping provides a critical element of community sustainability planning – the engagement of people in the shaping of their community. The process of identifying community assets helps members of the community understand what resources they currently have that are supporting a sustainable economy, supporting the environment, or promoting social equity in the community. By reflecting back on this starting point, communities can identify gaps as well as understand opportunities to link, leverage, expand, or create new programs, organizations, activities, and businesses that support a sustainable future. The Community Tool Box (see “Resources” section) defines community assets as anything that can be used to improve the quality of community life.

These can include:

- **Physical structures or places**, including parks, schools, hospitals, places of worship, recreational resources, libraries, special places, neighborhoods within communities, clinics, and social/fraternal organizations. Natural assets, like wetlands, trails, and open space, or informal gathering places where youth or elderly gather are also part of the community's assets.
- **Community resources** such as health clinics, social services organizations, faith-based organizations, recreational groups (both organized sports and informal recreational activities), civic and fraternal organizations, economic development or business associations, and job training programs.
- **Businesses** that provide local jobs and work to build a strong local economy.
- **People** are also community assets. Understanding and identifying people who routinely volunteer, mentor, and share their expertise and organizational skills to strengthen our communities can be a force for community improvement.

## What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

Below we have listed the requirements for earning points for this action.

In order to earn Sustainable Jersey points for your Community Asset Mapping Project, it must include a variety of the assets in your community. Points will not be awarded for a map of only one area, such as a park or hiking trail. Your asset mapping project can take a variety of forms – interactive maps, a paper listing of assets, etc. but it should reflect the diversity of your community, not just one specific project.

You should also establish a process to share community asset information with the Green Team and others who participated in the data collection process, and celebrate existing resources, programs, organizations, places, and people that are contributing to a sustainable community.

The mapping project should be **from within 3.5 years of the June submission deadline**.

We have provided extensive guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. You do not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as your final product meets the requirements.

Asset mapping can be done at community meetings, via interviews and small group work meetings, and can be documented in databases or paper maps or displayed using free computer-based mapping tools such as *Green Maps* software. Some communities may opt to use simple internet-based applications that they may qualify to use for free, such as *OPENMaps*, rather than purchase any software. Examples of asset mapping projects/work products, links to map-based asset projects, sample questionnaires, and survey products can be found in the "Resources" section. Generally all community asset mapping projects follow the same organizational process.

- 1) Appoint a committee to lead the asset mapping effort. Consider inviting schools, civic groups, and community organizations to be part of the planning and implementation team.
- 2) Review and select the asset mapping approach that will work best in your community. Choose an approach that takes into account the amount of time your committee members are willing to volunteer, as well as the technical or organizational needs of your inventory method. Determine the level of staff support available from your municipal government to support the project. Approaches can include:
  - a. Using **interviews** to "identify" community resources. Assets then can be put in a database and/or marked on a community map.
  - b. Organizing **community meetings and events** to gather asset information. Information is gathered at meetings specifically organized for community members to share their ideas on community assets – or as an activity added to regularly organized community meetings and events.
  - c. **Web based asset mapping** initiatives – this type of effort could rely on community members identifying assets using a web-based asset mapping program. This can be done all via the web or combined with information gathered via "field

work” or community meetings and then placed on the web-based asset map.

3) Complete data collection and produce a final list or map of resources by grouped category.

4) Share community asset information with the Green Team and others who participated in the data collection process, and celebrate existing resources, programs, organizations, places, and people that are contributing to a sustainable community. Through this process, your community will gain a better appreciation of the collective knowledge and expertise it has to draw upon – as well as an understanding of how past activities have influenced the types of programs and solutions that the community might view as possible and desirable in the future. Once community members understand their community’s assets, they can collectively strategize about how to build on the assets in order to sustain and enhance the assets for future generations.

## What to submit to get credit/points

In order to earn points, your submission must meet the following standards:

Submit the following documentation to verify the action was completed to the above standards. (Log in to the password protected webpage where you submit your online application for certification to write in the text box and upload documents).

1) In the text box, please provide a short narrative (300 word max) to summarize what was accomplished and the general steps taken to accomplish it.

- Upload: Copy of the final Community Asset Mapping project **from within 3.5 years of the June submission deadline.**
- Upload: Describe the challenges and opportunities encountered while completing the Asset Mapping project and provide a short description of how you have shared your Community Asset Mapping and explain how the community is using the information.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:** You can upload up to six separate documents for each action. Please excerpt relevant information from large documents. Please remember that your submissions will be viewable by the public as part of your certified report.

## Spotlight: What NJ towns are doing

### ENVISION FLEMINGTON INTERACTIVE WEBSITE.

This website has been developed as a tool for the public to participate and help shape the future of Flemington. Community visioning is a three part participatory process that engages local residents in developing a consensus on what they want their community to be, where the community seems to be heading, and what has to be done to achieve the desired common vision. The website allows residents, the business community, and civic organizations to express their vision of Flemington by identifying community assets. The map also includes some basic map data layers including historic district, parking, retail locations, and community

resources that can be turned on and off with the check mark. Comment markers on the map represent comments, pictures, or videos that other users have left, and others are encouraged to read them and be inspired.

[www.mappler.com/flemingtonvision](http://www.mappler.com/flemingtonvision)

## Resources

### COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING APPROACHES

**The Asset-Based Community Development Institute’s Discovering Community Power: A Guide to Mobilizing Local Assets and Your Organization’s Capacity** – contains community mapping worksheets, partnership worksheets, and asset inventory worksheets

<http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/images/kelloggabcd.pdf>

## Canadian Rural Partnership Asset Mapping

The handbook is about asset mapping. It outlines three practical approaches that community leaders can use to engage people in shaping the future of their community.

<http://www.rural.gc.ca/RURAL/display-afficher.do?id=1238609114220&lang=eng>

**The Community Sustainable Development Action and Knowledge Inventory:** aimed to guide communities towards identifying sustainable orientation, climate change impacts, concerns, history, knowledge, programs, and responsibility and capacity. It has a valuation system and matrix to calculate the community's overall score relating to these topics.

[http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2005/communities\\_c4\\_inventory.pdf](http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2005/communities_c4_inventory.pdf)

**The Community Tool Box** – contains tools useful for compiling an inventory of local organizations/institutions/private sector businesses/populations and for conducting interviews among these populations.

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/dothework/index.aspx>

## Mapping the Assets of Your Community: A Key Component for Building Local Capacity

Published by the Southern Rural Development Center in Mississippi

[http://srdc.msstate.edu/trainings/educurricula/asset\\_mapping/](http://srdc.msstate.edu/trainings/educurricula/asset_mapping/)

**Taking Action for Sustainability: The EarthCAT Guide to Community Development** is a guide to developing and implementing a community sustainability plan. Using EarthCAT, you will be able to learn from the experiences of other communities as you set goals and targets, develop strategies to achieve them, and select indicators for monitoring your progress towards a more sustainable future. “Establishing Goals – Chapter 3” of the workbook provides a community asset mapping process for communities to use.

<http://www.globalecovillages.org/page/taking-action-for-sustainability-the-earthcat-guide-to-community->

**Whole Measures: Transforming Our Vision of Success**, Center for Whole Communities.

This toolkit focuses on helping those working with the land to transform the vision of success. The guide, DVD, and interactive website tool help communities explore the relationship between land and fostering healthy people, land, and communities. The toolkit contains a practical community engagement process that can help communities evaluate community assets; link community and program visions, values, and practice; and develop stronger collaborations to build healthier, more vital communities. <http://measuresofhealth.net/>

## WEB-BASED COMMUNITY ASSET MAP EXAMPLES

### Bay Localize *Localization Asset Map*:

Maps green businesses related to food, energy, and materials reuse within the San Francisco, CA, Bay Area

<http://www.baylocalize.org/?q=node/26>

### Green Maps Around the World–

The “Green Map” System energizes a diverse global movement of local mapmaking teams charting their community's natural, cultural, and green living resources with award-winning universal icons and adaptable multi-lingual resources.

<http://www.greenmap.org/>

- Green map of Santa Monica, Ballona Watershed, and La Ballona Creek Corridor lists bike lanes and paths, greenways, rivers and creeks, street trees, native habitat, parks, beaches, community gardens, native species gardens, storm water percolation sites, dog parks, alternative vehicle stations, farmers markets, green shops and services, green buildings, sustainable businesses, etc. The map can be found at

<http://www.lagreenmap.org/>

- Fort Green/ Clinton Hill, Wallabout Green Map

<http://www.greenmap.org/greenhouse/files/Hill.pdf>

- Meadowlands Green Map

<http://www.greenmap.org/greenhouse/files/njmeadowlands.pdf>

- University of Victoria Community Green Map

<http://www.mapping.uvic.ca/geobrowser>

### **New Jersey Points of Interest (NJPOI)**

This resource is an example of a statewide version of an asset map. NJPOI.com is an initiative of Celebrate NJ! (<http://www.celebratenj.org/>) a non-profit organization committed to promoting and preserving the best of New Jersey. NJPOI.com can help residents and visitors find their way when they know what they are looking for, and especially when they don't. Searching the map by town turns up all kinds of fun and exciting ways to spend a day, a weekend, or a lifetime in the Garden State. Or narrow the search by category and find arts and culture, history, educational activities, outdoor recreation, sports and entertainment, shopping, food, lodging, and more – all in one place!

### **WEB-BASED COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING PROGRAMS**

**CommunityWalk** is a website dedicated to providing a powerful yet simple and easy-to-use interface for creating informational, interactive, and engaging maps. With the ability to show photos, add comments, display interactive media, hide and show categories of locations, this free software can help communities create maps using volunteer and community input.

<http://www.communitywalk.com>

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<http://www.greenmap.org/>

**Greenopolis** is a social networking site that develops online relations between everyday people, communities, organizations, schools and businesses. As an environmentally-focused social networking site, Greenopolis was created to engage users on green issues so that they might learn, explore, and participate in an open dialogue about the present and future of our environment. While Greenopolis shares some features with other environmental Web sites, such as sustainability resource guides, green job sites, social networking, educational organizations, and grant-making institutions, Greenopolis is unique in that it combines all of these opportunities in a single community.

<http://greenopolis.com>

**OPENMaps** and the new **OPENMaps Middle School Challenge** is an exciting web-based mapping project that is created and maintained by middle school students and their teachers as an after-school extracurricular project. Students and teachers are supported by the Fund for an OPEN Society and Celebrate New Jersey, two non-profit organizations partnering to recognize and share local community assets. Some communities may qualify for OPENMaps at no cost. See

<http://openmaps.wordpress.com/>

for more information including how to get started.

**Platial Maps** website is known as **The People's Guide to Who and What's Nearby**, a free resource where hundreds of

thousands of people around the world share and discover all kinds of places. Anyone can map just about anything, including their towns, lives, travels, feeds, files, photos, video, and stories in one simple interface. Maps give Website owners and visitors an easy and unique way to visualize and interact with each other. Visitors can add their name, photo, and message directly on a Web page embedded with Frappr! Maps, and the Web site owner gets real-time stats on where visitors are coming from and how often they visit.

<http://www.platial.com>