



Atlas Overview and Methodology

The Atlas has several uses. First, it is the only publicly accessible compilation of the City's community-based plans. It was originally created to provide local candidates running for office with an overview of the creative planning work already being done by communities and to give them a better understanding of the concept of community-based planning, and has been subsequently updated.

Second, the Atlas is a tool for communities that wish to create a plan, but do not know where to start. By highlighting other communities that have already undertaken similar planning activities, the Atlas can point to groups and individuals with whom they can consult and collaborate. It can also be used to develop background on community-based planning and to elicit ideas from other community-based plans.

Common themes have emerged from the collection of community-based plans in the Atlas. Some of the common themes include: maintaining the contextual character of the neighborhoods; zoning for mixed use areas with residential, light industrial, commercial and/or retail; limiting commercial traffic in residential areas; providing public access to waterfronts; balancing economic development with measures to reduce displacement; and protecting residential areas from noxious uses. As more plans are added to the Atlas, common themes will continue to crystallize. Such themes should provide a solid foundation for citywide planning policies.

The Atlas is a living document that is updated on an ongoing basis as new plans are realized. The plans in the book are the results and records of the hundreds of hours of volunteer time, years of fighting for vision, unprecedented collaborations and partnerships, and an incredible commitment to their communities and the city. In a city with no long term plan or general vision for planning, community-based plans have the potential to play a crucial role in defining common goals and principles of city-wide planning in addition to offering creative solutions for issues in their own neighborhoods.

Criteria for Community Based Plans included in the Atlas:

In order to begin to compile plans from communities around the city, the following criteria for community-based plans were established. This enabled the Community-Based Planning Task Force to clearly focus the scope of the book on plans initiated by geographic communities and broader based communities of interest.

The Atlas includes community-based plans with clear goals and recommendations; an identification of implementation strategies; and community participation. Community participation can be cases in which the community initiated the planning process, to cases in which the initial idea for the plan came from an organization or the public sector and then was further shaped and endorsed by the community. If a plan came from a partnership between a community and an organization, it had to be clear that the community was the "client" of the plan.

Community Outreach:

In developing and circulating this publication, over 600 organizations and all 59 community boards were contacted directly by the Task Force. Submissions did not require a formal plan and did not have to be in written format. Information regarding the plans was obtained from community organizations in several ways:



- Upon request, organizations were sent the template of information that is included in the community-based plan database then returned the completed form to the Task Force to be added to the Atlas.
- Community organizations submitted completed plans in written format and these were summarized but not edited by the Task Force.
- When necessary, interviews were conducted with community groups to obtain all the relevant and updated information about their plan for the Atlas.

Graphics and Maps:

Whenever possible, maps and graphics included in the Atlas have come directly from the community organizations. For plans that did not have supporting visuals, the Task Force prepared maps and graphics describing the major issues outlined in the plan. The boundaries for each plan included in the Atlas were digitized by the Municipal Art Society Planning Center and uploaded onto an internet-based aerial mapping platform.

Plan Summaries:

Each plan in the Atlas was summarized to be concise and easy to read. The summaries were written in the words of each individual community organization and were in no way edited, modified or evaluated by the Municipal Art Society except for the purposes of clarification and brevity. The inclusion of a plan in the Atlas does not assume endorsement by that community group of any other plan in the book. Nor does the Municipal Art Society or the Community-Based Planning Task Force endorse the specific recommendations of plans contained in the Atlas.

Dissemination:

The Atlas is posted on the Municipal Art Society's website (www.mas.org) and the Community-Based Planning Task Force's website (<http://www.communitybasedplanningnyc.org>) where sections can be downloaded. The Atlas is continuously being linked to other community organizations' websites. As a living document, the Atlas will be constantly updated to include new community-based planning initiatives and current information on the status plans already included in the book. Those interested in submitting or updating a plan should contact the Planning Center at the Municipal Art Society at 212.935.3960 or via <http://www.communitybasedplanningnyc.org>.