

URBANJAM

Version 2.0

DO YOU
KNOW YOUR
CITY?

EARN BADGES WITH **PARSONS URBAN JAM**
ABOUT: geospatial.parsons.edu/urbanjam

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ABOUT URBAN JAM

UrbanJam is a self-guided exploration of the history, ecology, and technological infrastructure of New York City. Students working through **UrbanJam** are actively using New York City as their classroom, library, laboratory, and conference center. They are drawing on their own creativity and resourcefulness to explore and understand urban ecosystems. They see the city as one of many manifestations of nature, with humans playing a central role in the network of relationships that define this particular ecology. They know their own role in that ecology, and they situate some of their day-to-day activities in a broader context of urban and environmental systems.

Students are making their own discoveries and coming to their own open-ended conclusions about the places they live. They are using DIY or “street science” methods for exploring, documenting, and describing urban ecosystems and actively sharing the results of their work with each other and the world at large. They are motivated to learn new online technologies and confident in their ability to gradually learn them.

Students see the potential for enrolling in urban, environmental, or design and technology programs and seriously consider these fields for their futures. They have a small notebook portfolio of accomplishments that can help them toward admission into these types of programs.

BACKGROUND

Learning is no longer relegated to the classroom. Students can no longer wait for teachers to parse and pre-digest all of the content they need to learn success in life. The world is moving too quickly and our problems growing evermore complex and chaotic. Information is more widely available than ever, and the means of investigating and interpreting the world are becoming more affordable and accessible to the general public. Wherever data doesn't already exist, a DIY approach to creating new knowledge seems close at hand. In a world where tactical, resourceful, and creative problem solvers set the pace, learning can no longer be relegated to the classroom. Students must become teachers, teachers must become students, and lessons can never again be greeted with the words, "But when am I going to use this in real life?" Every student of every age needs to be invited to share in the secret that real life starts *right now* and that all of life is about learning.

The most impactful schools find every excuse they can to push students out into the world. These are the schools we celebrate the most and, simultaneously, they are the schools some people pay dearly to access. Field trips, internships, service learning, independent research projects, extracurricular activities: they all form a web of interactions with that world outside the schoolhouse and they invite students to make learning an everyday part of life. Too few young people have access to these kinds of experiences, and that's unlikely to change if the cost of curating and coordinating those experiences remains so high. We need an openly accessible and affordable way to guide students through the process of learning in the day-to-day life of a city.

And what will they learn in the city? In New York City, the options seem endless. What is there *not* to learn in a city like this one? A single street tree can tell a story of environmental injustice in a low-income neighborhood, of the rise and fall of American cities in the 20th century, of disinvestment and neo-liberal economic policies in municipal government, of hope for a cleaner, cooler, more comfortable and prosperous city. Just one grizzled old London Plane Tree can be the starting point for a meandering exploration of all things urban and ecological. Where do we begin and where do we end?

The earth has become a planet of cities, increasingly speckled with densely populated human settlements and carpeted with sprawling suburbs. Places that seem wild and remote are, in reality, managed, exploited, shaped, and changed by the policies and economies at work in far away urban areas. Most humans alive today live in cities, yet the urban experience is barely a subject for consideration in most high school curricula. We therefore believe young people need to know more about the structure, function, and complexity of urban habitats.

It is now common knowledge that we live in a time of accelerating change when it comes to the earth's environmental systems. Over the next few decades, climate change alone may account for some of the most dramatic "changes in the land" (to borrow a phrase from one influential environmental historian) ever seen in a single generation. Life is resilient, but human societies are fragile in the face of massive disruptions in climate. There is a relationship between the urbanization of the planet and the many environmental challenges we face going forward. Yet, at the same time, we no longer look at cities as environmental scourges. We know that the relationship between cities and nature is more complex and nuanced. Cities may end up playing a significant role in saving us from the same problems they once created. In the years ahead, we believe *every* city dweller will need to become an environmentalist of sorts—an *urban* environmentalist that no longer sees an indelible line drawn between cities and nature. We believe young people need to be able to reconcile this contradiction in order to become creative participants in the city's future. In turn, the city needs these young people to become the next generation

of leaders creating and implementing solutions to the urban and environmental problems up ahead. The old “nature versus city” worldview just won’t work for the challenges we’re about to face.

Some young people are comfortable with their ability to hack, tinker, and invent. Others only have the most basic technological literacy—just enough to get by in our networked world but not enough to shape it for themselves. Few are likely to have a complete sense of the new and emerging careers available to them in design and technology. They aren’t likely to know that a job in design and technology doesn’t guarantee a life behind a desk. They aren’t likely to know about the spirit of adventure, exploration, and discovery that fuels so much work in design and technology at the start of the 21st Century. In short, their capacity to *imagine* a personal future in this line of work is limited. Yet those who can fearlessly jump into the world of design and technology will shape our future. Moreover, the urban and environmental challenges outlined above will likely find their solutions in increasingly elegant and parsimonious applications of design and technology. We therefore believe young people need more opportunities to think about technology and design in the context of everyday urban life.

Woven throughout these concerns is the idea that young people have a relatively underdeveloped “sense of place.” Though they may feel as if they know a great deal about their block or their neighborhood, their knowledge is tacit and potentially difficult to pin down and describe. They instinctually know the places where they live, but they’ve never paused to reflect on all the various people, places, and things that make up the complex of “home.” Nor do they typically know how “home” fits into a broader municipal or regional context. Students may have a “sense of place,” but it needs to be challenged, expanded, and given some depth.

HOW IT WORKS

The **UrbanJam** experience is made up of nine badges and more than forty quests. Complete the quests to earn the badges, working at your own pace and on your own schedule. Be prepared to get outside. You will visit museums, explore green spaces, and investigate some of the hidden corners of New York City. You will also read informative book chapters, articles, and websites to guide you along your way. Some badges come with Bonus Quests that will take your learning further—if you choose to accept the challenge.

We think **UrbanJam** is best experienced with friends. Take on the challenges with one other person or with a whole group of fellow explorers. Share your progress, compare notes, and discuss your findings as you earn badges. Post photos, reflections, and videos to social media and use the #UrbanJam tag to make your progress visible to the world.

Use a notebook to track all of your work. Find a notebook that you love to work with—big and tall or narrow and small, lined pages or blank, plain cover or decorated with the design of your choice—it doesn't matter, so long as you're comfortable making the notebook your main repository for all the work you do toward completing quests and earning badges. Notebooks have long been the most important tool in the urban explorer's toolkit. To learn more about keeping a creative notebook, check out the work of Keri Smith—in particular, her [blog](#) and her inspiring book [Wreck This Journal](#). You may also find inspiration in [The Sketchbook Project](#) and its storefront sketchbook library in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Badge: Urban Observer



Short Description:

Becoming a savvy urbanist involves slowing down and paying attention to the billions of little pulses and beats that play out into the rhythm of urban life.

Description:

City dwellers rely on imaginary maps of their surroundings to get around town. We navigate the city as if on autopilot, following our “mental maps” and failing to pay attention to what’s going on around us. In the process, we miss out on the rich detail and complexity of everyday life in the city. Becoming a savvy urbanist involves slowing down and paying attention to the billions of little pulses and beats that play out into the rhythm of urban life.



Quest #1: The View From Here

Assign To Badge: Urban Observer

Short Description: Photographing and analyzing a view from home.

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have described a view of the city that is familiar to you.

Your Quest:

Look outside from any window in your home. **Take a photograph** or **sketch a drawing** of the view on the street. Print the photograph or cut out the sketch and paste it in a notebook.

Describe the scene in three or four sentences, including a description all those things that can't be seen—the smells, sounds, and even the feelings of the street. **Choose** one word that captures how you feel about this image and use it as the title of your short description.

Quest #2 The City Image

Assign To Badge: Urban Observer

Short Description: Reading and discussing a classic urban design text.

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have read and discussed “The City Image and its Elements” by Kevin Lynch.

Your Quest:

Read the chapter “[The City Image and Its Elements](#)” from the book [The Image of the City](#) by Kevin Lynch. **Underline** or highlight any sections that raise a question. **Discuss** your questions with another explorer. **Write** one paragraph, in your own words, that summarizes the main ideas in the chapter. Use your notebook to track all of your work.



Quest #3: Making Mental Maps

Assign To Badge: Urban Observer

Short Description: Making and analyzing “mental maps” of your neighborhood.

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have sketched and compared mental maps of your neighborhood.

Your Quest:

Drawing inspiration from “The City Image and its Elements,” **sketch** your own “mental map” of your neighborhood with your home at the center. **Label** any paths, boundaries, landmarks, nodes, or districts that appear on the map.

Ask a friend or a member of your family to sketch their own mental map of the same neighborhood, *but don't show them yours!* Compare the two and **list** any similarities and differences. **Hypothesize** at least three reasons why the maps are similar *and* different. Write your hypotheses in your notebook and tape the folded maps near your notes.

Quest #4: Overlooked Oddities



Assign To Badge: Urban Observer

Short Description: Photograph and curate images of overlooked oddities in your neighborhood.

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have photographed and curated images of overlooked oddities in your neighborhood.

Your Quest:

Create a photo or sketchbook tour of your neighborhood, using the mental map you created as a guide. **Choose** five elements on the map and **photograph** or **sketch** them in detail. **Print** your photographs or cut out your sketches and paste them in your notebook. For each image, **find** at least one thing that you had never noticed about each element until you took the time to carefully record it for this project. You may find odd or quirky things or simply things that grab your attention. Use your notebook to track all of your work.

Quest #5: Re:Obsevation



Assign To Badge: Urban Observer

Short Description: Revisit and analyze your first neighborhood image.

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have chosen three things in your view of the city from home that you find interesting and worth pointing out.

Your Quest:

Return to that first photograph or sketch from your window of a scene on the street. Now that you've gotten some practice observing the city, **choose** at least three more things in this scene that you find interesting and worth pointing out. What did you miss that first time around?

Share your observations with other explorers. **Record** your thoughts in your notebook.



Bonus Quest: Neighborhood Rhythm

Assign To Badge: Urban Observer

Short Description: Observe a pattern or “flow” in your neighborhood for a few days.

Completing this badge successfully means...

You have recorded and **described** familiar patterns in your neighborhood

Your Quest:

Observe a pattern or “flow” in your neighborhood during the next five days. Pick a public spot and sit for one hour each day over the course of one week. **Watch** your pattern in action. It may be commuters making their way to the subway, the bodega owner who hoses down the sidewalk in front of his building, or kids playing on the school playground before classes begin. **Record**—using writing, sketches, photographs, audio, or video—the things that *stay the same* AND the *things that change* in the pattern you’ve chosen to observe. **Tell** what you find interesting or odd, using writing, photography, drawing, or other methods to get your ideas across. Use your notebook to track all of your work.

Badge: Street Character



Short Description:

Finding ways to build connections with neighbors can tune you into what is happening in your neighborhood.

Description:

People who live in cities typically get to know a lot of other people, though they may never get to know them well. The shop owner, the delivery person, the fruit vendor, and the folks hanging out on the stoop—even your neighbors next door. You'll find them all on the list of people you know, but don't know very well. Some urbanists believe that good neighborhoods are built on these loose connections between city dwellers. Yet some neighborhoods lack the physical spaces to foster these kinds of casual connections. Finding ways to build those connections—regardless of the physical spaces you're working with—can help tune you into what's happening in your neighborhood.



Quest #1: Who Do You Know?

Assign To Badge: Street Character

Short Description: Reflecting on the people you know in your neighborhood.

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have reflected on a list of loose connections to people in your neighborhood.

Your Quest:

List the people that you see on a regular basis out and about in your neighborhood—aside from your family and close friends. They may be complete strangers, shopkeepers you occasionally speak to, or casual acquaintances. **Review** your list and **choose** the person you feel you know the best. What *three things* are you absolutely confident you know about him or her? **Reflect** on your observations and **hypothesize** some reasons *why* you know these things about the person you chose to describe. Use your notebook to track your work.



Quest #2: "Talk To Me" On The Sidewalk

Assign To Badge: Street Character

Short Description: Exploring and discussing some projects and ideas about how people connect with each other in the city.

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have explored and discussed some projects and ideas about how people connect with each other in the city.

Your Quest:

Watch a [slideshow about the Talk To Me project](#) by Liz Barry and Bill Wetzel and **read** [an article about the project](#). **Read** the chapter "[The Uses Of Sidewalks: Contact](#)" in the book [The Death and Life of Great American Cities](#) by Jane Jacobs. As you read, **note** anything that raises a question or that you would like to research further on your own. Use your notebook to record your work.



Quest #3: Talk To Me – Yes Me!

Assign To Badge: Street Character

Short Description: Creating an interactive art project that introduces you to the people on

the street.

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have created an interactive art project that introduces you to people on the street

Your Quest:

Create your own “Talk To Me” project, becoming what Jane Jacobs called a “Street Character” for a day. **Make** a “Talk To Me” sign and sit somewhere that has a lot of pedestrian activity. **Talk** to anyone who comes by (you may want to do this with a friend). After an hour **write** or **draw** a reaction to your experience, capturing as many memories of your conversations as you can. Use your notebook to track your work.

Badge: Urban Archaeologist



Short Description:

Connecting Old New York to the Modern Metropolis.

Description:

Someone once said, “New York will be a pretty place whenever they get around to finishing it.” It often seems as if nothing stays the same for very long in this city, and it can be difficult to uncover physical evidence of our past. Though New York City is always evolving, that doesn’t mean the past isn’t important. Knowing where we came from can tell us a lot about why the city functions the way it does today.



Quest #1: As Far As I Can Remember...

Assign To Badge: Urban Archaeologist

Short Description: Recalling your early memories of New York City

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have recalled your earliest memories of New York City.

Your Quest:

What is your earliest personal memory of NYC? How far back can you remember something about this place where we live? **Describe** your memory, either in writing or by filming a short video. Use your notebook to track your work.



Quest #2: Lost Histories of NYC

Assign To Badge: Urban Archaeologist

Short Description: Exploring and discussing lost histories of New York City

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have explored and discussed lost histories of New York City.

Your Quest:

Read about [The Welikia Project](#) and **watch** [Eric Sanderson's TED TALK](#) about efforts to recreate Manhattan in 1609. As you read and watch, use your notebook to **track** anything that raises a question.

Watch the short documentary [Undercity](#) about the urban explorations of adventurer Steve Duncan. As you watch, use your notebook to **track** anything that raises a question.

Watch a short documentary on the [African Burial Ground](#) in Lower Manhattan and explore an [interactive website](#) with images, maps, and timelines related to the site. As you read and watch, use your notebook to **track** anything that raises a question.



Quest #3: Modeling Manhattan

Assign To Badge: Urban Archaeologist

Short Description: Mapping and analyzing historical data about the development of Manhattan

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have mapped and analyzed historical data about the development of Manhattan.

Your Quest:

Play with the maps and models of Manhattan at [Transparent New York](#). **Create** your own simple map that includes *at least two* but *no more than four* “layers” of information. **Snap** a “screen shot” of your map, print it, and paste it in your notebook. **Tell three things** someone might learn from seeing this data for the first time in this graphic way. Use your notebook to track your work.

Note: you will need to learn how to create a “screen grab” in Mac OSX or Windows .
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Quest #4: A Little Archaeology

Assign To Badge: Urban Archaeologist

Short Description: Discovering and archiving historical relics in your neighborhood

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have discovered and archived historical relics in your neighborhood.

Your Quest:

Walk outside in your neighborhood. Where do you find leftover physical evidence of NYC’s history in the urban landscape? **Document** and **archive** at least three historical relics in your neighborhood, using photographs, sketches, or even [rubblings](#). **Research** their history and **write** three or four sentences each relic. Be sure to tell what era you think the artifact comes from—or give a specific year, if you can figure it out! Track all of your work in your notebook.



Quest #5: Open House NY

Assign To Badge: Urban Archaeologist

Short Description: Committing to visiting an inaccessible place relevant to NYC’s history

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have committed to visiting an inaccessible place relevant to NYC’s history during the next Open House NY Weekend.

Your Quest:

Read about [Open House New York](#) and **explore** the [map of difficult-to-access sites](#) that will be open during the next Open House New York event. **Choose** at least one site on the map that you’d like to explore and **research** its significance in NYC history. **Share** your chosen site and **tell** two or three interesting facts you find in your research. Track your work in your notebook.



Bonus Quest: Stuff That Connects to the Street

Assign To Badge: Urban Archaeologist

Short Description: Connect artifacts from NYC's past and present

Completing this badge successfully means...

You have shared three images of objects at NY Historical Society and told how the object in each image relates to an artifact in your neighborhood.

Your Quest:

Visit the New York Historical Society and **tour** the [historical artifacts on the fourth floor](#). **Connect** at least three objects to the historical artifacts you found in your neighborhood. For example, you may find an old subway token that connects to the old subway entrance near your apartment.

Photograph or **sketch** each artifact and **imagine** what it was like to use the object as a New Yorker in the past. **Tell** how each object relates to a specific historical artifact you found in your neighborhood and **brainstorm** about how a historical New Yorker would have used the object.

Track your work in your notebook.



Bonus Quest: Natural Systems and the Street

Assign To Badge: Urban Archaeologist

Short Description: Observe a pattern or "flow" in your neighborhood for a few days.

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have shared one image of a natural system and hypothesized how it connects to the artifact you found back home.

Your Quest:

Visit the [American Museum of Natural History](#) and **tour** the [New York State Environment hall](#) on the first floor. **Connect** at least one display of natural systems in New York State to one of the historical artifacts you found in your neighborhood. For example, a cross-section of a tree trunk may be related to the street trees on your block in the city.

Photograph or **sketch** each artifact and **hypothesize** how it connects to the artifact you found back home. Print your photographs and paste them along with your notes in your notebook.

Badge: Urban Arborist



Short Description:

Coming face-to-face with the urban forest in NYC.

Description:

For most people, New York City would seem to be the last place they would expect to find a forest. Yet almost any street in any of the five boroughs is home to at least one tree, and many more are often hiding in yards and gardens behind buildings. That's not to mention the hundreds of thousands of trees you'll find in New York's many parks—[Central Park](#) alone is home to nearly 20,000! Every day, these trees are working hard to make this a more livable city. Knowing more about them – and knowing how to help keep them alive and thriving—is increasingly important for anyone who cares about the future of New York.



Quest #1: Leafy Inventory

Assign To Badge: Urban Arborist

Short Description: Inventorying plants on your block

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have inventoried the plants on your block.

Your Quest:

Go outside and **walk** around your block. **Inventory** all the plants you find on your walk – from big trees in a park all the way down to small weeds in a sidewalk crack. **Photograph** or **sketch** any plants in your inventory that you find particularly interesting or beautiful. Use your notebook to track all of your work.



Quest #2: Seeing Forests and Trees

Assign To Badge: Urban Arborist

Short Description: Exploring and discussing ways New Yorkers are interacting with the urban forest

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have explored and discussed ways New Yorkers are interacting with the urban forest.

Your Quest:

Read about the [benefits that trees create](#) for NYC. **Explore** some of the ways people help urban trees by [watering](#), [weeding](#), and [mulching](#) in their street beds. **Watch** a video about [how volunteers are caring for trees](#) in NYC and how one person [set out to map all the trees in Central Park](#). **Note** any questions or observations that come up. Use your notebook to track all of your work.



Quest #3: Dig In

Assign To Badge: Urban Arborist

Short Description: Caring for a street tree in your neighborhood

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have cared for a street tree in your neighborhood.

Your Quest:

Search for a street tree in your neighborhood that needs some help. **Water**, **weed**, and, if possible, **mulch** the tree bed. **Plant** flowers around the bed or install a homemade “Curb Your Dog” sign to keep the tree looking great. Use your notebook to track all of your work.



Quest #4: Make a Pitch for Trees

Assign To Badge: Urban Arborist

Short Description: Pitching the importance of caring for urban trees

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have pitched the importance of caring for urban trees

Your Quest:

In your own words, **tell** why it is important to care for trees in NYC. **Make** a short video or **write** a short opinion article aimed at convincing a friend or neighbor to help care for the trees on your block. Use your notebook to track all of your work. Upload any videos you make to the Internet.

Badge: Guerilla Gardener



Short Description:

Finding opportunities to green the city in every nook and cranny.

Description:

Gardens have long been an important part of city living in New York. From the earliest Dutch gardens at the southern tip of Manhattan to the hundreds of community gardens scattered across the five boroughs today, New Yorker has always been home to an impressive collection of green thumbs. Though gardens provide fun places to relax and hang out, they also play a key role in improving the ecology of New York City. The number of gardens in NYC is growing, and they'll all rely on New Yorkers to keep them looking great.



Quest #1: Garden Guide

Assign To Badge: Guerrilla Gardener

Short Description: Describing some ideal gardening sites in NYC

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have described some ideal gardening sites in NYC

Your Quest:

Imagine friends or relatives visiting New York City and asking to see a garden filled with beautiful plants. Where would you take them? What would you show them? Where *WOULDN'T* you take them?

Name at least once place you would take your guests AND one place you *wouldn't* take your guests. **Search** for a photo of each place on the Internet. **Describe**, in a few short sentences, why you chose those examples. **Print** the photos and paste them into your notebook alongside your written work.



Quest #2: Guerrilla Gardening!

Assign To Badge: Guerrilla Gardener

Short Description: Exploring and discussing "Guerrilla Gardening" and "Community Gardening"

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have explored and discussed "Guerrilla Gardening" and "Community Gardening"

Your Quest:

Watch two short videos about "Guerrilla Gardening [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). **Watch** a short video about NYC's community gardens [HERE](#). As you watch, **note** anything that raises a question or that you would like to research further on your own. Use your notebook to track all of your work.



Quest #3: Garden Tour

Assign To Badge: Guerrilla Gardener

Short Description: Touring community gardens on the Lower East Side

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have toured community gardens on the Lower East Side

Your Quest:

Tour some of the community gardens on the Lower East Side of Manhattan (choose from one of three tours [HERE](#), [HERE](#), or [HERE](#)). It's best to take your tour on the weekend, as that's when most of the gardens will be open. **Photograph** or **sketch** anything that catches your eye as you tour the gardens.

Interview any gardeners you meet. **Ask** them to describe their motivations for gardening in the city. **Record** your conversation or **take notes** and summarize your findings in writing or by filming a short video. Use your notebook to track all of your work. Upload any videos you make to the Internet.



Quest #4: Garden Opportunities

Assign To Badge: Guerrilla Gardener

Short Description: Searching for and identifying a new site for an urban garden

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have searched for and identified a new site for an urban garden

Your Quest:

Search for opportunities to create a community garden or do some guerrilla gardening in your neighborhood. You may be able to search for opportunities at www.596acres.com. You may also need to wander the neighborhood until you find a suitable spot for a new garden, big or small.

Photograph what you find. Use your notebook to track all of your work.



Bonus Quest: Make Moss Graffiti

Assign To Badge: Guerrilla Gardener

Short Description: Making and painting moss graffiti on a wall in the city

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have taken a photograph of your moss graffiti installation, along with a short description of the site and the design.

Your Quest:

Read [instructions on how to make moss graffiti](#) and **watch** two videos [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) on how moss graffiti is used. **Create** your own moss graffiti and install it somewhere in your neighborhood.

After about a week of growth (remember to keep it moist!), **photograph** the results and share the image here. **Tell** why you chose that site to install your moss graffiti and **describe** the design you created. Use your notebook to track all of your work.



Bonus Quest: Make Seed Bombs

Assign To Badge: Guerrilla Gardener

Short Description: Making and launching seed bombs into an empty lot.

Completing this badge successfully means...

You have launched seed bombs, photographed the process, and told what kinds of flowers will grow.

Your Quest:

Read [instructions on how to make a seed bomb](#) and **watch** a [video](#) that further explains the process. **Create** your own seed bombs and toss them in a vacant lot or run-down park somewhere in the city.

Photograph the process and **tell** what kinds of flowers will grow based on the seeds you bought. Use your notebook to track all of your work.

Badge: Street Art Curator



Short Description:

Discovering and interpreting street art in New York City

Description:

Hate it or love it, graffiti has played a significant role in the culture of New York City. More than a hundred years ago, immigrants flowing through Ellis Island [left their mark](#) on the corridor walls. Beginning in the 1960's and reaching a peak in the 1980's, graffiti became an unavoidable part of the city's identity, covering subway cars, delivery trucks, public phone booths, and just about any other surface left unguarded for even a brief moment. Today, graffiti may be harder to find, but street art is still a living and vibrant experience in New York City. And, like any art form, it continues to evolve and serve different purposes as newer artists come on the scene.



Quest #1: Gut Feelings and Graffiti

Assign To Badge: Street Art Curator

Short Description: Analyzing your own feelings about graffiti

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have analyzed your own feelings about graffiti.

Your Quest:

List all of the different words that come to mind when you hear the word "graffiti." **Analyze** your list and **categorize** all of the words that have a negative feeling and all of the words that have a positive feeling. **Compare** your findings: **write** a short paragraph or **make** a short video that describes what you've discovered about your own impressions of graffiti. Use your notebook to track all of your work. Upload any videos you make to the Internet.



Quest #2: Street Art

Assign To Badge: Street Art Curator

Short Description: Exploring and discussing different forms of street art

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have explored and discussed different forms of street art.

Your Quest:

Watch the following videos online:

- [Style Wars](#), a film about street art and graffiti in NYC in the 1980's.
- [Street Art / Off Book](#), a short video about contemporary street artists in the United States.
- [I Wish This Was A _____](#), a short video of a talk by street artist Candy Chang

As you watch, **note** anything that raises a question. Use your notebook to track all of your work.



Quest #3: Finding Layers of Graffiti

Assign To Badge: Street Art Curator

Short Description: Touring famous street art sites in New York City

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have toured famous street art sites in New York City.

Your Quest:

Visit any of the one (or more) of the following concentrations of street art in NYC:

- The [Graffiti Hall of Fame](#) in Harlem
- The streets of [SoHo in Lower Manhattan](#)
- The [Gowanus Canal](#) in Central Brooklyn
- Throughout the Bronx (following the [Bronx Graffiti Map](#) for [Hunts Point and Longwood](#))

Photograph or **video record** some of the graffiti you find on the building. **Imagine** a story behind the images you find and **tell** that story through writing, drawing, music, or any other medium that appeals to you. Use your notebook to track all of your work. Upload any videos you make to the Internet.

Quest #4: I Wish This Was A...



Assign To Badge: Street Art Curator

Short Description: Creating your own street art project

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have created your own street art project.

Your Quest:

Drawing inspiration from Candy Chang, **create** your own “[I Wish This Was A _____](#)” project. Using washable sidewalk chalk, **tag** the sidewalk in front of four or five places in your neighborhood that you wish would transform into something different, using the phrase “I Wish This Were A _____.” **Photograph** your “installations,” print them, and paste them in your notebook with a short description for each image.

Quest #5: Street Art On My Mind



Assign To Badge: Street Art Curator

Short Description: Cataloguing favorite examples of newly observed street art throughout the city

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have catalogued your favorite examples of newly observed street art throughout the city.

Your Quest:

During the next week, **observe**, **document**, and **catalogue** examples of street art around the city that you find to be interesting, beautiful, or just plain weird. **Write a** short description of where they are located and why they grabbed your attention. Use your notebook to track all of your work.

Badge: Urban Hydrologist



Short Description:

Mapping and making sense of water flows in NYC.

Description:

Imagine what would happen if water suddenly stopped coming out of the tap in your apartment. Now imagine what would happen if the same thing happened for all of New York City. How long could New York survive without fresh drinking water? Every city relies on a clean and reliable water supply, and New York has gone to great lengths to guarantee that the water will continue to flow uninterrupted for years to come. Yet a steady water supply was not a common part of New York life for much of the city's history. Once the water started to flow, the city started to seriously grow. Today, New York continues to struggle with water issues, though in the 21st Century the main problem is *too much* water. Heavy rains flush pollution into local waterways, making them unsafe to swim in and noxious for urban wildlife. Despite great advances, water continues to be a big issue for anyone concerned about the future of the city.



Quest #1: Water Everywhere

Assign To Badge: Urban Hydrologist

Short Description: Imagining a day without water in New York City

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have imagined and described a day without water in NYC.

Your Quest:

How many different ways do you use clean water in one day? **Recall** and **list** all of the ways you used water yesterday, from the biggest use (taking a shower) to the smallest (drinking a glass of water). Once you've made your list, **imagine** a day without water in NYC. In two or three sentences, **describe** what your waterless day would be like. Use your notebook to track all of your work.



Quest #2: Finding the Flow

Assign To Badge: Urban Hydrologist

Short Description: Exploring and discussing NYC's water and sewer system.

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have explored and discussed NYC's water and sewer system.

Your Quest:

Explore a [map of NYC's water supply system](#) and **read** about the [history of the water system's development](#). **Explore** a [map of NYC's sewage treatment system](#) **read** about the [sewage treatment](#) process. **Watch** a short [video about "combined sewage overflows."](#) As you read, **note** anything that raises a question or that you would like to research further. Use your notebook to track all of your work.



Quest #3: Mapping My Habitat

Assign To Badge: Urban Hydrologist

Short Description: Mapping the flow of sewage in your area and documenting your sewage treatment plant.

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have mapped the flow of sewage in your area and documented your sewage treatment plant.

Your Quest:

Using the [Habitat Map of NYC's sewer system](#), **find** the sewage treatment plant that serves your neighborhood. **Visit** the treatment plant and **document** some of the infrastructure from outside, using photographs, sketches, or video. **Note** the sounds and smells you experience. Use your notebook to track all of your work.



Quest #4: Don't Flush Me!

Assign To Badge: Urban Hydrologist

Short Description: Determined whether sewage is flowing in a local waterway

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have determined whether sewage is flowing in a local waterway at a particular date and time.

Your Quest:

Explore [dontflush.me](#) and use the [dontflush.me map](#) to determine whether it is safe to flush your toilet today, based on the current weather. **Photograph** or **make a short video** of the weather outside, print it, and paste it in your notebook. **Determine** whether or not a combined sewage overflow is happening, based on your research and observations. Use your notebook to track all of your work.



Bonus Quest: Sewer Tour

Short Description: Touring the Newtown Creek Sewage Treatment Facility (one of the largest in NYC)

Completing this badge successfully means...

You have toured Newtown Creek and taken photographs and notes from your experience.

Your Quest:

Tour the Newtown Creek Sewage Treatment Facility visitor center and, if possible, **book a tour** of the facility (only available once a month; visit the facility [Events Calendar](#) to learn more). **Photograph** of some of the infrastructure and **note** the sounds and smells you experience. Print any photographs you create and paste them in your notebook along with descriptions.



Bonus Quest: The Local Infrastructure

Short Description: Observe a pattern or “flow” in your neighborhood for a few days.

Completing this badge successfully means...

You have photographed and described examples of water infrastructure and the role it plays in NYC’s water systems.

Your Quest:

Visit the NY Public Library “Science, Industry, and Labor” branch and **visit** the reference desk to **view** *The Works: Anatomy of a City* by Kate Asher. **Read** the chapter on sewage infrastructure and **photocopy** or **photograph** any images you find interesting.

Drawing in your research from *The Works*, **search** for evidence of NYC’s drinking water and sewage infrastructure in your neighborhood. **Photograph** at least three examples of water infrastructure and describe the role they play in the city’s water systems. Print your photographs and paste them into your notebook along with your written work.

Badge: Balloon Mapper



Short Description:

Seeing the city from up above – with your two feet planted on the ground.

Description:

Urban designers, planners, and landscape architects often rely on images of the city taken from up above. For centuries, people have tried different ways to represent cities from a distance, struggling to see how all the bits and pieces fit together into a cohesive whole. In the beginning, mapmakers stood on nearby hills or cliffs to get an overall view for their sketches. When a high point wasn't available, they simply used their imaginations. Today we rely on airplanes and satellites to snap high-resolution photographs that we then use to interpret and understand the city on a grand scale. Yet for neighborhood-based advocates trying to participate in the urban planning process, flying a plane or launching a satellite to snap detailed photos will never be an affordable option. Some groups are increasingly using do-it-yourself ("DIY") methods to create their own detailed aerial images, and the results are transforming how citizens participate in the process of managing and planning for the places where they live.



Quest #1: Bird's Eye View of Home

Assign To Badge: Balloon Mapper

Short Description: Finding something interesting about your neighborhood from the sky

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have found something interesting about your neighborhood from the sky. ____

Your Quest:

Search for your home in Google Maps and **grab** a satellite image at lowest possible scale. **Find** at least two things that are visible and interesting from this view that *could not be seen by standing on the street*. Print your screen grabs and paste them into your notebook.

Note: you will need to learn how to create a "screen grab" in [Mac OSX](#) or [Windows](#).



Quest #2: Plotting PLOTS

Assign To Badge: Balloon Mapper

Short Description: Exploring and discussing balloon aerial mapping and Google Maps

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have found something interesting about your neighborhood from the sky.

Your Quest:

Read about the [Public Laboratory for Open Technology and Science](#) and its [Balloon Aerial Mapping](#) initiatives. As you read through these web pages, **consider** the benefits and drawbacks of do-it-yourself aerial imagery – especially compared to the images you find on Google Maps. As you read, **note** anything that raises a question or that you would like to research further. Use your notebook to track your work.



Quest #3: Aerial Mapping For Others

Assign To Badge: Balloon Mapper

Short Description: Brainstorming some other uses for aerial mapping

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have brainstormed some other uses for aerial mapping.

Your Quest:

Brainstorm some useful applications for balloon aerial mapping. **Name** and **describe** one or two grassroots urban or environmental initiatives that could benefit from this technology and approach to capturing aerial imagery. **Tell** how you think those initiatives would go about using this approach. Use your notebook to track your work.



Bonus Quest: Balloon Workshop

Short Description: Attend a POTS mapping event and create an aerial image of a place in NYC

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have attended a PLOTS event, created an aerial image, and shared observations about the experience.

Your Quest:

Review the Public Laboratory for Open Technology and Science community calendar and find an upcoming mapping event in your area. **Register** and **attend** the mapping event to learn how to participate in balloon aerial mapping initiatives and create your own initiatives in the future. **Ask** the workshop leader to email you some images taken during the mapping event. **Write** one or two observations about the experience, either in writing or by filming a short video. Print and paste any photos you produce in your notebook along with your written work. Upload any videos you create to the Internet.



Bonus Quest: DIY Balloons

Short Description: Purchasing your own balloon mapping kit and creating your own map in your neighborhood

Completing this quest successfully means...

Purchasing your own Balloon Aerial Mapping kit, using it, and sharing your observations on the experience.

Your Quest:

Order your own [Balloon Aerial Mapping Kit](#) and use it to create aerial imagery of your neighborhood. Print and paste any images you create in your notebook along with some written descriptions of your work. **Point out** at least three new things you learned about your neighborhood through the images you captured. Use your notebook to track your work.

Badge: Tactical Urbanist



Short Description:

Finding ways to quickly intervene in the structure of the city

Description:

Government used to be responsible for most of the day-to-day tasks involved in running a city. Yet in the past few years, it seems as if people outside government—just the average residents of any city neighborhood—are increasingly involved in doing the things that government used to do. Planting trees, maintaining parks, installing sidewalk benches, even reengineering streets; these are just some of the kinds of projects we've seen volunteers take on with or without the help of government. Though there's still plenty for government to do (volunteers aren't going to paint the Brooklyn Bridge or repair the subway tracks anytime soon), there's also a growing list of "tactical" projects that amateur urbanists can take on that will make cities more livable.



Quest #1: Re:Purpose

Assign To Badge: Tactical Urbanist

Short Description: Wandering and finding an example of DIY urbanism

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have wandered your neighborhood and found an example of DIY urbanism.

Your Quest:

Wander your neighborhood and **search** for something that is being used in a way that is *different* than the use for which it was designed. For example, a street lamp may double as a place to post flyers, or a milk crate may double as a place to sit or stack newspapers. **Write** a short description of what you find in your notebook.



Quest #2: Tactical Urbanism

Assign To Badge: Tactical Urbanist

Short Description: Exploring and discussing concepts of tactical urbanism

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have explored and discussed concepts of tactical urbanism.

Your Quest:

Skim the [Tactical Urbanism Reader](#) and **highlight** any projects that grab your interest. **Note** any projects that involve creating "street furniture" – objects where people can rest, sit, and relax on a sidewalk.

Skim the [City Softwalks](#) website for more ideas and examples of tactical street furniture.

As you **skim** both sources, **note** anything that raises a question. Use your notebook to track your work.



Quest #3: Defining Tactical Urbanism

Assign To Badge: Tactical Urbanist

Short Description: Defining tactical urbanism for yourself

Completing this quest successfully means...

You have defined tactical urbanism for yourself

Your Quest:

Create your own personal definition of “Tactical Urbanism,” based on what you’ve seen and read so far. Your definition should be no more than two or three sentences long. Include any relevant examples from your reading to help illustrate your definition. Use your notebook to track your work.

Quest #4: DIY Street Furniture

Assign To Badge: Tactical Urbanist

Short Description: Building and installing your own DIY piece of street furniture



Completing this quest successfully means...

You have built and installed your own piece of DIY street furniture.

Your Quest:

Drawing inspiration from what you’ve read, **design** and **build** your own simple piece of street furniture. **Install** your piece on the street in a place with regular pedestrian traffic and **demonstrate** its use. **Invite** pedestrians to try it out and **document** the results with photographs or audio recordings. Use your notebook to track your work. Upload any audio or video you create to the Internet.

Quest #5: Plans For The Future

Assign To Badge: Tactical Urbanist

Short Description: Brainstorming possibilities for future Tactical Urbanism projects



Completing this quest successfully means...

You have brainstormed possibilities for future Tactical Urbanism projects

Your Quest:

What other elements of the street would benefit from the tinkering of a tactical urbanist? List three things you typically find on a street that you would like to change through simple design. **Choose** one and **brainstorm** how you would go about starting your tactical urbanism project. Use your notebook to track your work.

Urban Jam: Online Badge Options

When Urban Jam was originally designed and tested, the complete set of badges was made available online through the Badgestack platform developed by [LearningTimes](#), who created Badgestack as a Wordpress/BuddyPress-based system compliant with the Mozilla Open Badges Initiative. An archive of this work is available at : <http://geospatial.parsons.edu/urbanjam/>

The document you're reading was written to re-implement the UrbanJam curriculum for offline, notebook based use. However, we hope and assume that many teachers will be interested in pursuing an online implementation of the project. To that end, we've included the complete set of UrbanJam badges in a package that any user can revise, extend and modify: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BxeiMVMQITUAZ3hyTmVCdUIXN28&authuser=1> .

Looking forward, we imagine the Urban Jam curriculum adapted by other organizations and users, who can both use the badges we developed, as well as develop new badges using emerging platforms.

The badging platform which 'Urban Jam' was piloted on, 'Badgestack', will be increasingly outdated after 2015, and other more current and user friendly platforms [[cred.ly](#) and [badgeOS](#) , also created by Learning Times, the developers of Badgestack] make porting the badges a very simple task.

Cred.ly is an elegant web based interface, with an iOS client, that makes badging [with broad core functionality] extremely easy. Cred.ly has a badge creation tool ready in the browser, which makes importing of badges as easy as uploading the existing badge images, or running the creation tool, redesigning the badge, and copying/pasting the badge criteria: <https://credly.com/badge-builder>

BadgeOS is a powerful extension suite of Wordpress plugins, geared towards users maintaining a dedicated site[s] for their project.
<http://badgeos.org/badgestack/>

To learn more about the capabilities of these two tools, visit the sites.

IN MY CITY...

You can remix, remake, and repurpose **UrbanJam** to create an exploratory learning guide for your own city. Just be sure to cite the original **UrbanJam** project and freely share your work with others by posting what you create online. Here are three tips for tweaking **UrbanJam** to meet your local needs.

Inventory both the Obvious and the Oddities

Every big city is home to obvious landmarks and tourist destinations. Some of these spots offer excellent opportunities for learning more about the ecology, history, and technology of the city. Consider the Museum of London, the Museum of the City of New York, the Amsterdam Museum, the Carnavalet Museum in Paris, the Lisbon Story Centre—all of them focused on telling the nuanced stories of the cities that surround them. Inventory all of the obvious landmarks as you develop content for your local version of UrbanJam. But don't forget the oddities—the sites, sounds, and smells that are found off the beaten path, hidden from most tourists and even most citizens of the city. These quirky sites help to fill in the gaps in stories told by those bigger, better known landmarks. Search for art walk guides, locally produced [Greenmaps](#), and ephemeral indexes to local lore stashed in used bookshops and kiosks throughout your city. Leave no stone unturned in your quest to find the places and spaces that help reveal the hidden magic of the place you call home.

Create Accomplishable Quests

Quests should be challenging, and the process of completing a quest should lead to new insights and attitudes about the city. However, no quest should be so difficult that the average participant can't satisfactorily complete the task after a few hours of effort. Each quest should set the stage for exploration and discovery, with open-ended possibilities rather than singular "right answers" as an end goal. Ask yourself if *you* would be excited to complete the quests you've designed for others. If the answer is "yes!" then you're on the right track. If it seems cumbersome to *you*, then it's going to be even less appealing to someone else using your version of **UrbanJam**. Have fun, keep it flexible, and use direct and observable verbs to guide your explorers on a clear path toward completing their quests.

Use All Five Senses and Keep People Moving

We all experience our cities through our five senses. Reading is a great way to explore new content about the history, ecology, and technology of a city, but written words are just the beginning. Pair a chapter reading with a curated walk. Pair a website with a food tasting event at the local market. Find ways to engage all five senses in your local version of **UrbanJam** and make the city come alive at every level for your explorers. Keep them moving, notebook in hand and ready to experience the unexpected.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bonus Tip!

If you're looking for more inspiration, check out some of the following books at your local library or bookshop. They inspired a lot of the thinking behind **UrbanJam** and you're sure to find them useful references as you work on a version for your own city. Enjoy!

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