

Mission Possible: A Neighborhood Atlas

Introduction

Mission Possible: A Neighborhood Atlas is the product of a collaboration with Mission Loc@I and a project of experiential learning by students in the Cartography and GIS Education (CAGE) Lab at UC Berkeley's Geography Department. Students examined and mapped phenomena of the Mission in an effort to look at the neighborhood from different viewpoints and to offer users useful information. The maps in this atlas are products of students' work and imagination.

Mission Possible employs a cartographic style that is a hybrid of traditional cartography, poster art, infographic, and map as narrative. The map is conceived as a narrative of place, using data visualization techniques, cartographic symbology, and graphic art and design to tell different stories.

Interested students were invited to create maps based on a theme they found compelling or simply worthy of investigation. All the cartographers visited the Mission for ground-truthing and data collection, and all gained new understandings of the Mission during the course of the project.

On orientation:

The direction at the top of a map is its orientation. It is a common, generally strictly observed, convention to orient maps to north or nearly north. This has served to reinforce northern hemisphere centrism, placing north "up" in a superior or dominant position. But north is not up, because Earth does not have a particular upright orientation in space. North is over there or in a certain direction. Up may be considered out, into the atmosphere or space. Up, on a map, is elevation.

To see our world with new perspective, it is important to break this convention by considering other orientations. The maps in *Mission Possible* are oriented westward for several reasons (none of which is to render east inferior). As products of a project in experiential learning, the maps reflect the cartographers' view of the Mission District, as west of UC Berkeley.

A westward orientation for the Mission also holds the power of manifest destiny and embraces memories of seeking the western shore, which lies just four and a half miles beyond our maps' borders. As well, a west orientation brings south and north into equilibrium as left and right, rather than above and below. This may be important to a map of a neighborhood that is living the histories of a region in which the dynamic relationship between South and North would shape the future.

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