

A vision for city planning

Design is a medium through which we can transform a city over time by graphically representing a vision that captivates the public imagination and inspires authorities to move initiatives forward.

As Principal of Two Twelve – my design firm in New York City – I have the unique opportunity to use images and information to transform and reshape the path that a city can take. Projects like creating the NYC 2012 Candidature File for New York City's bid to host the 2012 summer Olympic Games, and branding and communications design for PlaNYC – Mayor Bloomberg's vision for a "greater, greener New York" by 2030 – opened up new doors for my firm in graphic and environmental design.

For NYC 2012, we were given the exciting challenge to show how the Olympic Games could happen in New York City. We represented NYC as "The World's Second Home", a city of diverse neighborhoods, crowds and opportunities, and a natural, photogenic and exciting venue for the 2012 Olympic Games. While New York ultimately lost the contest to London, the exercise of putting the NYC proposal together revealed many overlooked sites around the five boroughs that needed reinvention and investment. We created imagery that showed the possibilities for transforming these sites into facilities for recreation and residences, and in many instances, the dream of revitalization actually did come true. From Citi Field in Queens to the High Line in Manhattan, many economic development initiatives received real boosts due to the public exposure and public-private cooperation that the bid process fostered. As designers we had a unique perspective of the entirety of the ambitious NYC2012 plan, and we were proud to be part of it.

A few years later, some of this groundwork revealed itself in Mayor Michael Bloomberg's campaign and vision for a more sustainable New York by 2030. Recognizing that the city could expect one million more residents by that time, he called for a comprehensive civic vision encompassing more than 120 initiatives across the fields of transportation, land use, water resources and more. Two Twelve realized this for PlaNYC in a document including charts, diagrams, photography and information design that made complex proposals easy to grasp.

As graphic designers we took on an intermediary role, helping to frame and disseminate government and business proposals, plans and concepts. By providing the public with visual tools that aid in the understanding of a city and its opportunities, we can bring a vision for city planning and development into focus.

Ann Harakawa

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