SHOVIN' INTO OVERDRIVE!

Atop a rushing subway car, trapped in a raging apartment fire, crushed beneath the animated oaks of a possessed parkland, superheroes face as much danger from the world around them as they do from their most nefarious villains.

Danger Zones helps you bring your world alive by describing over thirty different urban backdrops for superheroic action, from the classic warehouse to the neighborhood coffee shop to the hospital they'll need to recover in when the adventure is done. Every location includes a map, as well as useful information on how to use that setting's unique features in a cunning plot or superhero slugfest.

To help populate your urban jungle, *Danger Zones* also provides a catalog of colorful characters, ready to come alive in your *Mutants & Masterminds, Third Edition* campaign!

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MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS
- THIRD EDITION -

DANGER ZONES

THRILLING LOCATIONS & CRIMINAL CAPERS FOR MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS 3RD EDITION

PRINTED IN THE USA

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INTRODUCTION

Disaster looms, and heroes face danger from more than just the villains they face! The city is a landscape of deadly locales, urban hazards, and colorful characters who can all turn the tide of battle for—or against—an imperiled hero. *Danger Zones* transforms the background of your super-powered fights into a critical location, whose features contribute to the excitement.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Danger Zones is a collection of urban locations, detailed and mapped out with information to help you bring them to life in your *Mutants & Masterminds* adventures! They might be the settings for creative fights, crime scenes to investigate, or strongholds that stealthy vigilantes must penetrate. Whatever your need, *Danger Zones* aims to take your Mutants & Masterminds scenes out of the generic streets and into exciting set piece action!

This book introduces many new rules appropriate to their given locations, such as the hazards involved in flooding described in **Danger Zone: Aquarium** or running a political campaign described under **Danger Zone: City Hall**. You can use these rules in conjunction with their appropriate location, or simply lift the rules you want as elements in your own adventures. You don't need to have an exciting medical challenge sequence in a hospital, for example; struggling to save an injured teammate or cure a mysterious illness can add an element of danger and excitement to any adventure!

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Danger Zones fleshes out exactly what it means to live and work in a city, and how the everyday features of life can make for exciting adventure elements. It begins with an overview of city life and how the urban landscape based on the city, location, and even time of day, then proceeds to describe specific locations that urban superheroes are likely to face off against villains or explore to unravel mysteries. Finally, the book ends with a look at the varied personalities and creatures heroes might encounter.

- **Chapter 1: Life in the City** looks at how cities are built and what life in the city is like. It describes the various districts common in cities, giving GMs some insight into constructing their own campaign cities or to help adapt and flesh out those Danger Zones described later in the book. It also looks at how time works within the city,

and how the when of superhero battles can matter far more than the where. From there it goes on to describe public transit and the most common vehicles heroes might encounter, from city busses and public ferries to police boats and police helicopters that hard-luck vigilantes might find themselves tangling with. Finally, **Chapter 1** looks at one of the most common urban fixtures that seem to pop up no matter what the location: street vendors, ranging from food trucks to newsstands to shady hustlers pushing goods that are almost certainly stolen.

- **Chapter 2: Danger Zones** describes thirty-three unique locations ideal for superheroic adventures, from junkyards and sewers ideal for monster lairs to hotels and clubs, the respectable façades of a criminal empire. Each Danger Zone talks about the location in details and describes the kinds of security and unique features that may protect it, any special rules that can help GMs flesh out adventures set there, a selection of characters to inhabit the area, befriend the heroes, or cause trouble, and a few suggestions for adventures that revolve around that location. While the quotes to describe each Danger Zone are set loosely in the world of Earth-Prime, each Danger Zone itself is setting agnostic, letting you drop those rules, characters, and map into any city you like, whether on Earth-Prime or in your own creation.

- **Chapter 3: Dangerous Foes** presents dozens of new minor allies and adversaries to populate your adventures. The characters presented run the gamut from crusading journalists who may serve as romantic interests and/or mundane rivals to powerful superhuman threats like kaiju. Many of the threats presented—such as animated machines, cryptids, elementals, minotaurs, and the villainous lieutenant—serve well as minions and pets for more powerful villains, while others—including the banshee, dream demon, kaiju, and transforming robot—are powerful enough to fill the role of supervillains

No matter where you adventures take you, the setting should be more than a backdrop. Every corner of the world hides a story and even the most innocuous doors can conceal hidden threats. Take your heroes out of the streets and into sewers, parklands, cafes, theaters, and even the humble office as they face evil and save lives across the breadth of your world. Villains can run but they can't hide, and when that confrontation finally happens, *Danger Zones* provides you with the tools to make their fate memorable!

CHAPTER 1: LIFE IN THE CITY

Cities tend to be at the center of superheroic life and activity, largely because cities are where a hero can help the most people with the most problems at once. Cities tend to be the biggest targets, both for all kinds of criminals, and for threats like invaders or would-be conquerors. They're also the largest concentrations of people in instances of natural disaster and the like. So even superheroes from the sticks gravitate towards "the big city" sooner or later.

This chapter looks at elements of life in the city as it relates to superheroes and their work. What kinds of things do heroes need to consider and what other things might they take for granted about city life? What elements of life in the city should a Gamemaster consider in a *Mutants & Masterminds* game?

CITY DISTRICTS

Cities aren't homogenous entities, with every street and neighborhood a carbon-copy of the last. They are complex systems where different areas accommodate different people and different industries. This specialization breaks up large cities into distinct neighborhoods and districts, typically based on how that part of the city is used, and who lives or works there. There are residential areas divided up by economic status, along with business districts, industrial areas, neighborhoods built up around colleges and universities, and so forth.

A city's structure isn't static. Cities are living things that evolve over time. Some of these are planned, while others grow organically, or are created by urban renewal or gentrification. What was once a city's industrial district might become low-rent apartments, which eventually become fashionable, gentrifying the neighborhood into something middle- and even upper-class over time. A former residential neighborhood gets swallowed up by the growing business district, buildings converted or simply demolished to make way for new construction, and so forth. Many districts will have old holdouts—an eccentric shop, a stubborn apartment building, an anomalous industrial park—that seems out of character and belongs to what the areas used to be, lending the district more character. This also means that if heroes need an apartment to lay low in while fighting in the middle of the industrial district, it's not unreasonable to throw one in.

Oftentimes, the exact boundaries "the city" can be vague, at least in practical terms. Cities sprawl. Increasing use of cars has accelerated that, allowing for more widespread suburbs and outlying areas to be considered a part of the wider "metropolitan area." So, for example, while Cambridge, Massachusetts, on the north side of the Charles River from Boston, is a separate city, it is also part of the greater Boston metropolitan area, which covers much of eastern Massachusetts and parts of New England.

Bellevue is a separate city in King County, Washington, but it is also part of the Seattle metropolitan area and strongly connected to Seattle proper by roads, public transit, and economic ties. The same is true of other major metropolitan areas in the United States and around the world.

The following are some common types of districts found in major cities and considerations for *Mutants & Masterminds* games.

ARTS DISTRICT

Also called bohemian districts or theater districts, arts districts are defined by the creative works on display: from theaters and music halls to art galleries to coffee shops, displaying the work of local painters and photographers. Some, like New York's Broadway, are high-budget tourist attractions but many are run-down neighborhoods—often reclaimed industrial space—where poor artists congregate thanks to the low rent and lax building codes. Art galleries and community theaters spring up, and eventually entire museums may emerge as the district's reputation attracts tourists, art snobs, and investors.

Arts districts combine the strange architecture of industrial districts with the abundant bystanders of a residential district, coupled with ubiquitous fragile, valuable objects. Fights between heroes and villains risk life but may also destroy irreplaceable treasures. Villains may attack to steal valuable art pieces or kidnap prominent performers, but they are just as likely to be artists, looking to make a statement in the medium of crime.

BUSINESS DISTRICT

Modern cities have concentrations of high-rise skyscrapers loaded with office and commercial space available for businesses. These businesses may include corporations with sinister hidden agendas or front companies for criminal organizations or masterminds. They're also often home to media companies from newspapers to television networks and internet companies. Many towers host small shops and cafes on the first floor for office workers, but some dedicated shopping districts use the lower space for expensive boutiques, salons, electronics stores, furniture galleries, jewelry exchanges, and other outlets for conspicuous consumption. Some business districts also overlap with residential space, providing extremely expensive apartments in the same towers that house multibillion-dollar corporations.

In *Mutants & Masterminds*, the business district is the iconic city background, with wide, clean streets and towering glass buildings for heroes to climb up, swing from, or fly obstacle courses around. Much of the endemic crime of the business district is discrete: embezzlers, market manipulation, wage theft, and other white-collar crimes that rarely attract the attention of superheroes. Wealthy, untouchable villains may rule from ivory towers as the heads of major corporations. Supervillains might attack the business district to steal money, as large banks place their local headquarters here, or they might be after corporate secrets and technology. Eco-terrorists and anyone with a grudge might target the corporations themselves to destroy their assets or kidnap leadership.

HISTORIC DISTRICT

Cities look to preserve some of their historic structures and include an "old town" or "historic district" made up buildings from their founding or other significant points in the past. Modern businesses intermingle with museums and "living history" reenactment centers. Historic districts tend to thrive on tourism—with plenty of hotels, restaurants, bars, and gift shops of varying quality—and struggle to maintain a balance between preserving and protecting history and the wear-and-tear of a constant stream of visitors. The French Quarter of New Orleans is a particular example of this sometimes difficult balance.

In a *Mutants & Masterminds* game, historical districts often relate to major events, dangers, and villains from the past or mystically-inclined characters. They may capture the look and dangers of a particular era—such as the colonial gothic history of the northeastern United States, tied as it is with the Revolutionary War and existential horror—or may capture structures and mysteries scattered from the city's founding through the present day.

Villains operating within a historic district are usually looking for lost legacies—ancient spells, buried treasure, and forgotten secrets—but low-class villains might simply attack looking to exploit tourists. Historic districts offer opportunities to connect with the city's history, especially for characters with historical themes, or immortals who may have lived some of that history!

INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

Cities work, and have districts given over to particularly loud, dangerous, or dirty industries, ranging from manufacturing to agriculture to shipping and more. The extent and makeup of a city's industrial district depends heavily on its local economy, and whether industry is particularly prevalent there. Since the goods produced in an industrial district need transportation, such districts are often near either an inland transportation hub, like a rail-yard, or the waterfront. They may have bars and restaurants to accommodate workers, but otherwise lack nods to urban beautification like parks, greenbelts, public art, and in some cases even benches.

People commute to the industrial district to work—housing is either non-existent or low-rent neighborhoods on the decline that the expanding factories are overtaking—it is often semi-abandoned during the night shift, and former industrial districts are ideal places for hidden bases of operations and the like.

Villains may maintain a secret hideout in the dark corners of an industrial district, where no one is around at night to ask questions, or they might raid industrial facilities to get the raw materials needed for their next scheme. Different industries can complicate a superhero battle, with heroes swinging construction beams as weapons or villains shoving enemies into vats of industrial chemicals or molten metal.
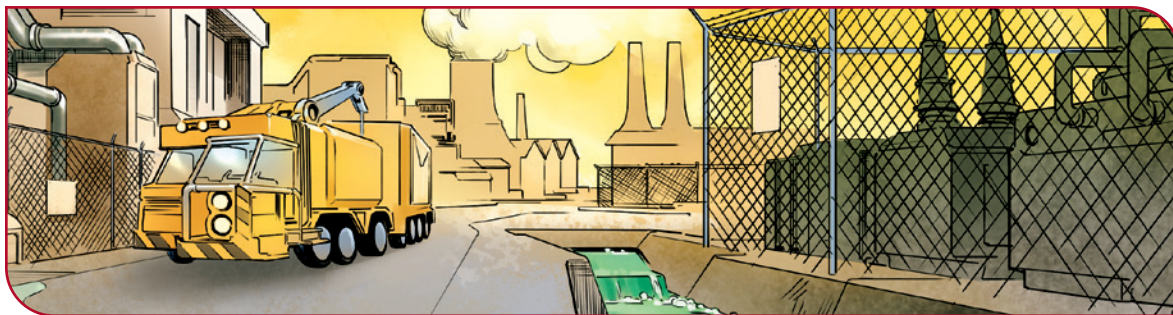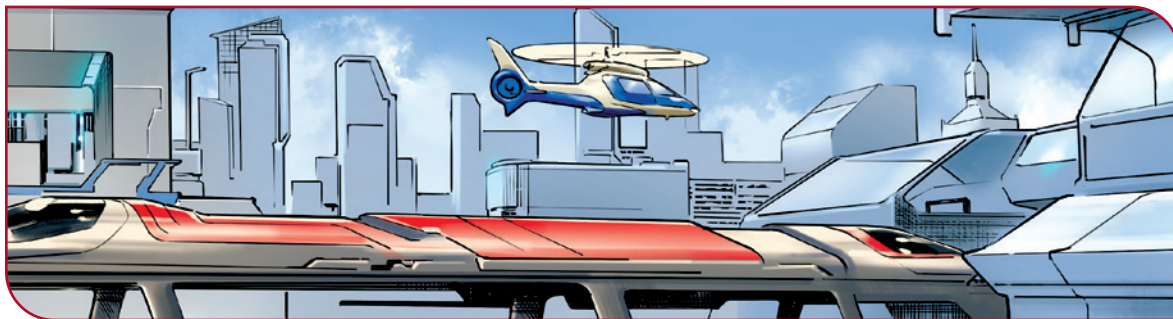
MINORITY ENCLAVE

Different minority communities often settle together in part of a city, particularly during an influx of immigration, creating a Little Italy, Chinatown, black neighborhood, or local "gayborhood," who trust locals and neighborhood institutions far more than they trust the city at large. Bound by a common struggle and often a common language or slang, they offer haven that can feel strange or unwelcoming to visitors. These enclaves have their own subcultures and often their own problems separate from the rest of the city, and local figures like city council members, religious leaders, or longtime business owners may be better known and more respected than national celebrities. While minority enclaves aren't inherently mistrustful of outsiders, many residents have survived enough racism, homophobia, police profiling, and other institutional cruelty to be wary; creating challenges for heroes trying to operate there if they are not from there.

Most minority enclaves are residential districts with light business and carry the same narrative roles. Often poorer neighborhoods, they have smaller buildings and shoddier streets that the city doesn't invest as much energy into maintaining; locals may take responsibility for maintaining shared resources, like gardens and parks, giving local heroes a way to pitch in that doesn't require a cape or superpowers. Villains who target a minority neighborhood have motivations driven by their bigotry and often do so to spread fear or harm that specific group, while others might be locals who feel a need to control their home.

PARKS AND GREEN DISTRICTS

Most cities need green spaces and places set aside for recreation and relaxation. While small neighborhood parks may exist as part of other districts, some of these spaces are large enough to constitute districts unto themselves, such as New York City's Central Park or San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. Enjoying the pleasures of a green district from one's window is usually a privilege reserved for those who can afford the prices of adjacent real estate, putting high-class residential and business neighborhoods alongside.

Green districts are a touch of nature and wilderness in the urban environment, ideal places for nature-themed heroes and villains to operate. They provide a change-up in terrain for *Mutants & Masterminds* conflicts, like the thick cover of a forest or underwater battles in a reservoir lake. They also sometimes serve as havens for the displaced or homeless, and for criminals who prey on anyone in the area after dark, unless the local heroes intervene.

RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

Cities have residential neighborhoods, given over to housing citizens in buildings ranging from high-rise apartments and condominiums to row-houses and brownstones or even standalone houses on separate lots, from modest to mansion. Residential districts also have various businesses catering to residents, such as restaurants, grocers, laundromats, clothing stores, home goods, and the like. Residential districts outside the city center are more suburban, with tree-lined streets and houses with yards. These districts are often where characters in the city live, including heroes in their secret identities. Residential districts, more than almost any other, tend to be stratified by social class, with wealthier districts often "gated" or closed communities with their own security and amenities, down through upper-middle and middle-class districts to the lower-class districts. Buildings can range from single-story homes to high-rise apartments, but most urban residential neighborhoods feature shorter buildings—two to four stories—that often contain businesses and stores on the ground floor. Mixed-use buildings might combine office space with apartments.

Residential districts make for high-stakes fights in *Mutants & Masterminds*, as they're crowded with innocent bystanders who can be injured if the heroes aren't careful, or the villain needs a distraction. Villains may attack because they want to terrorize the largest possible number of people or to kidnap hostages or test subjects for an experiment, but other villains may be products of the local environment more than overt evildoers, like the scared young mutant whose powers are emerging out of their control or the bullied nerd who gives themselves super powers to take revenge. They may also be simple residents, maintaining a secret identity just like some superheroes do and living an otherwise ordinary life on an ordinary street—an ordinary life they want to protect at any cost. Either way, antagonists tied to a residential neighborhood often have deeply personal motivations.

SLUMS

Some of the districts of a city may be in decline, making them inexpensive to live in but lacking on nearly all fronts: dilapidated and unsafe buildings, crumbling infrastructure, unreliable utilities, no emergency services, few businesses, and criminals—often outsiders hiring or menacing locals in equal measure—preying upon residents and visitors alike. The few thriving enterprises in a slum district are likely to be criminal gangs and syndicates that deal drugs and other vices, offer their "protection" to residents in exchange for tribute, and use the cheap real estate and lack of police interest as front for illegal services. Slums are natural districts for crime-fighters, although "cleaning up" a slum district created by economic inequality and urban neglect is more involved than just busting a few criminals.

Almost any district can end up a slum if its economy fails—a mainstay employer goes under, an industry moves overseas, transit lines close—and so can provide different backdrops and hazards depending on what it used to be. The defining features of slums are instead the

neglects. Police and fire services are slow to respond if the arrive at all, while walls, streets, powerlines, and other urban staples are in bad shape and easier to destroy.

UNIVERSITY DISTRICT

A city boasts one or more institutions of higher learning. Some cities have a dozen or more! College and university campuses often form their own neighborhoods, built up around the quadrangle and dorms, with businesses catering to students. Sometimes multiple institutions sit close to one another, or the city may have multiple university districts focused on the largest schools. In addition to the school itself, university districts specialize in affordable apartments, as well as libraries, hospitals, laboratories, bookstores, museums, and suppliers for specialty skills and studies like art supplies, medical instruments, and computers, all of whom take advantage of the students as a source of cheap but knowledgeable labor.

The landscape of a university district varies across the campus, with different architectural styles and design philosophies—many produced by students—crammed into a small location. Along with the younger, more vibrant crowd, university districts are often the sites of action focused around scientific and technical research (and all the associated accidents and thefts) and archaeology, history, and the associated occult and mysterious phenomenon (and accidents, and thefts). College labs and libraries have a long tradition in comic books for accidentally spawning all sorts of superheroes and villains.

WATERFRONT

People have situated cities alongside bodies of water since they first started settling in large groups, and even today most urban areas sit alongside an ocean, river, bay, or lake. The city's waterfront becomes an important port-of-entry (the prime one before the development of trains or airplanes) and remains a key place where goods ship into and out of the city. Huge shipyards create mazes of containers, warehouses, and cargo cranes, with relatively few bystanders compared to the city's streets. Drydocks repair and manufacture new vessels, with welders and dockhands laboring around the clock to keep the wheels of commerce turning, while away from the docks themselves, rows of warehouses store and ship everything from lettuce to game consoles.

Waterfronts are generally defined by low buildings, towering cranes, and massive container ships that carry commodities across the globe. Things are built to be durable—especially exposed to the ocean elements—and aesthetics are rarely considered. As an industrial sector, it's an ideal hideout for villains looking to lay low—especially those tied to smuggling or international criminal networks—and an equally low-key location for superhero hideouts crammed in among the forgotten warehouses. Things moved into and out of the waterfront include illegal and smuggled goods, making the district a site for criminals. If an aquatic menace or disaster threatens the city, the waterfront is the first place it will hit.