

Project Proposal Report

Vancouver Food Asset Map - Grocery, Small Retail Stores or Markets

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Introduction

The purpose of this project is to build capacity within the community and provide support for community members to address food related issues through the development of an easy to use food asset map. By assisting Vancouver Coastal health to map specific food “assets”, such as grocery stores, small retail stores, and markets, we aim to provide a current, dynamic, and easy to use map for community members and agencies to effectively locate the available food assets within their community.

This community based reasearch experience addresses food security in Vancouver and its association with the accessibility of grocery stores, small retail stores, and markets, for community members through the development of the food asset map. The provision of a food asset map can help community members and community support agencies easily locate information about the available food outlets within their communities and illustrate the importance of the presence of these food assets in relation to food security within their communities.

Our first objective is to obtain specific information on various grocery stores, small retail stores, and markets in order to represent them on a map to provide a tool that is easy to use with information pertaining to food assets for community members that are vulnerable to food insecurity. Further, we aim to evaluate usability and ease of access of the food asset map through a trial session with community members in the Renfrew-Collingwood area by asking for feedback based on written surveys.

Background and Context

Mapping food assets is a useful method for bringing forth the strengths and weaknesses in the local food system. The advantage of mapping food assets within a community is to provide a visual representation of the complexity of food resources, networks, and systems within the city of Vancouver. The food asset map will also provide insight as to the possible unequal distribution of food assets across the city and address the barriers that communities face while trying to find food programs (Food by ward, 2016).

Since Vancouver has a highly diverse population from different socioeconomic backgrounds, the development of this map can help many community members, especially those who may be at risk for food insecurity, to source food outlets that are appropriate to their needs with information on locations, hours, and contact information. It will also further move the community members toward food sovereignty by allowing them to make an informed choice regarding where they can shop for foods and which kinds of foods are sold at each store. Food security and sovereignty is especially important since certain neighbourhoods in Vancouver are high in socioeconomic indicators relating to food insecurity, which is a result of the gaps in the accessibility to food services and limitations of their effectiveness in the food system (Barbolet et al., 2005). The cost to maintain a certain

standard of living furthers this issue for many poorer neighbourhoods in Vancouver (“Cost of living calculator”, 2016). For instance, retail food outlets are more highly concentrated in low-income areas, where overall food prices tend to be lower than in higher-income areas (Barbolet et al., 2015). However, fresh produce may not be as readily available and food costs consume a much higher percentage of income for families in low-income neighbourhoods, despite the lower prices (Barbolet et al., 2005).

It is important to showcase available food assets in each community in order to move food priorities forward and integrate them into the broader planning for the equal distribution of food assets across the city (Food by ward, 2016). Our project focuses on the mapping of grocery stores, small retail stores and markets, which are among the most widely accessible food assets to the general public, and their presence within the community can greatly address local food security. These food assets are able to provide community members, at all times, physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences (GRACE Communications Foundation, 2016). Furthermore, the trialing of the map for its ease of use and acceptance within the community is also very important. The ability of community members to easily locate food assets can augment asset based community development by allowing community members to identify and mobilize existing food assets within their own communities to drive development and address food security (ABCD Institute, 2015).

Research Question

How do community members of Renfrew-Collingwood report the ease of use of the food asset map?

Methodology

We will map the locations of grocery stores, small retail stores and markets in the Vancouver area in order to ensure accurate and up to date information for the Vancouver Coastal Health food asset map project. We will also trial the food asset map with community members of Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood to assess the ease of use of the map.

Method for objective #1

Methods for locating stores: (fastest to slowest)

1. Use of technology (ie. google maps) to quickly locate and acquire information such as store hours and products available.
2. Update current list by contacting stores through email or direct phone call.
3. Personal transport (Walk/Bike/Bus/Car) to physically find stores

We will record the following information of each food asset into an excel spreadsheet: name, type of store, its targeted demographic, addresses, website, phone number, store hours, neighbourhood, postal code, and whether we have their permission to include them on the map or not. The information on the excel spreadsheet will then be uploaded to google maps to update the food asset map.

Classifying store types according to the following guidelines:

Grocery or Small Retail Stores or Markets	
Grocery Stores	Stores that offer a wide selection of food and non-food household products.
Small Retail Stores	Stores that offer a limited selection of food and non-food household products. May specialize in foods from a geographical location or a type of food, e.g. produce.
Public Markets	Markets that include fresh fruits, vegetables, other products from farms.
Mobile or Seasonal Markets	Non-permanent or seasonal markets that include fresh fruits, vegetables, and other products from farms.

Method for objective #2

A feedback form (Evaluation Questions for Community Members), prepared by Vancouver Coastal Health, will be presented to community members to assess usability at an event with a community facilitator. We will review the map instructions with facilitators to ensure they are comfortable with both navigating the map and going over the instructions with community members. We will also provide copies of a food asset glossary to the facilitators and review definitions of assets (as needed) to ensure facilitators are able to explain asset subcategories to community members. We will then distribute copies of instructions to community members (in English and other translations). The community members will be given a chance to provide feedback after having a chance to use the map at the event, we will review the feedback forms and interpret the data generated to analyze the usability of the map and present the results in a format that is easy to access and read for the community and facilitators.

References:

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