

# **Vancouver Food Asset Map: Convenience Retail Food Stores**

## **Project Proposal for Evergreen Community Health Center**

Alison Chan, Tina Li, Sophia Liu, Hilary Kuo, Sherman Lee

LFS 350 - Group 13

University of British Columbia

October 8, 2017

## **Introduction**

According to the British Columbia Child Poverty Report Card, one in every five BC children live below the poverty line in 2016, and the statistic has shown no significant differences when compared to the data created twenty years ago (BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, 2016). One of the main challenges faced by those suffering from poverty is food insecurity, which the USDA defines as a limited access to adequate food due to the restrictions on household income or other social conditions (Public Health Report, 2016). While early childhood is a critical period for emotional, social and physical development of young children, it is imperative to address the issue of food insecurity amongst the younger generations. However, previous research indicates the lack of food asset information in Vancouver and question the accuracy of the presented knowledge and advices (Romses, 2017). Hence, a Vancouver Food Asset Map (VFAM) was established by the Vancouver Coastal Health to address the issue of food accessibility.

For this project, we have partnered up with a public health dietitian, Kathy Romses, from Evergreen Community Health Center. The aim is to expand and update a pre-existing VFAM with a focus on convenience stores. According to the VFAM, a convenience store is defined as, “stores that offer a limited choice of food items, often including snacks, soft drinks and other mostly processed products [that] sell a limited assortments of canned goods, produce, bread, egg and dairy products”. We hope to minimize the gaps in regards to food access for the community through the addition of convenience stores into the food asset map.

## **Significance**

The VFAM is a promising approach to address food accessibility because it provides information about where a variety of food services are located to the public. By providing this information instead of holding a fundraiser and donating money, we can put into practice capacity building. As McCullen et al. (2005) mentioned, community capacity building is a key component of asset-based community development because it strengthens the community's ability to sustain themselves. This project focusses on the addition of convenience stores in the VFAM because convenience stores tend to have longer hours and are easier to access in comparison to grocery stores or other food access points.

In addition, the VFAM addresses the importance of community mapping, which is to increase the “benefits of the whole community and the whole food system” through building awareness of the available resources while providing for food needs (Ground, 2001). According to Vancouver Coastal Health News (2017), survey results have shown that “64% did not know how to find food assets” before using the map, which indicates the underlying issues addressing the accessibility and necessity of the VFAM within communities. Our project acknowledges these concerns by promoting the food asset map and collecting its use-value data during our interviews with the community organizations. However, further researches addressing other components of food security including adequacy, acceptability, and advocacy will be required to enhance future “elimination [of] disparities and inequalities” in the local food system (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010). It is also important to note the potential gaps our project could face. One of the most prominent gaps is that the food asset map is only available online on Google Maps, which is not accessible to those without internet or a computer. Another concern is that not many people know about the VFAM. Our group plans

to bring light to these gaps to our community partner to generate ideas on how we can include people who do not have access to a computer.

### **Objectives**

The objective of the VFAM is to provide a strategic tool for community members and partners to locate up-to-date community food assets information. This project will work towards building community support and community capacity for individuals facing food insecurity. For this reason, we intend to increase food accessibility by collecting information on convenience stores to add on to the pre-existing map. In order to further improve the map, we will take a communicative approach, making sure to take note of feedback from users of the VFAM and report to the community partners.

### **Methods**

In order to update the food asset map, we will search up phone numbers of convenience stores that are already on the map and call to ask about the store's hours and whether low-cost meals or free meals are available. In addition, we plan on adding new convenience stores that are not on the food asset map yet. We will search for convenience stores near busy transit routes such as West Broadway in particular. Again, we will ask for information such as hours, availability of low cost meals or free meals, and availability of foods that fall under two food groups of the Canadian Food Guide. If the aforementioned information is difficult to attain through phone calls, we will personally go to the stores to ask. Permission will be gained before putting the convenience store's information on the food asset map.

Interviews will be conducted with partner organizations that have been using the Vancouver food asset map thus far. The contact information of these organizations are provided to us by our community partner, Kathy Romses. Interview questions will focus on finding out what components were helpful and what components of the food asset map needed improvement. Lunch will be provided to the interviewees as an incentive.

### **Outcomes**

By the end of the project, we expect to address the issue of food accessibility in Vancouver through updating the VFAM and to present the results from the interviews with our partner organizations to our community partner, Kathy Romses. Each member of the group will find at least two new convenience stores to add to the map along with updating the current information for at least two of the posted convenience stores. Feedback from the interviews will serve to help community partners to develop further research and community food assets guides. We will reveal our work through a finalized map, which will be delivered on November 29, 2017.

## References

BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition. (2016). *2016 BC child poverty report card* First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition. *Annual Report*. Retrieved from: <http://still1in5.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2016-BC-Child-Poverty-Report-Card.pdf>

Food insecurity: A public health issue. (2016). *Public Health Reports*, 131(5), 655.

Gottlieb, R., & Joshi, A. (2010). *Food Justice*. MIT Press.

Ground, C. (2001). *Mapping Food Matters: A Resource on Place-Based Food System Mapping*. Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: *Common Ground and Victoria Chapter of Oxfam Canada*. Retrieved from [https://foodsecurecanada.org/sites/foodsecurecanada.org/files/Mapping\\_food\\_matters.pdf](https://foodsecurecanada.org/sites/foodsecurecanada.org/files/Mapping_food_matters.pdf)

McCullum, C., Desjardins, E., Kraak, V. I., Ladipo, P., & Costello, H. (2005). Evidence-based strategies to build community food security. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 105(2), 278-283.

Romses, K. (2017). LFS350 - Community Project Vancouver Food Asset Map [PowerPoint presentation].

Vancouver Coastal Health. (2017). Vancouver Food Asset Map Helps Users Locate Food Resources - Vancouver. Retrieved from <http://vchnews.ca/news/2017/01/25/vancouver-food-asset-map-helps-users-locate-food-resources/#.Wdf66HeGMUs>