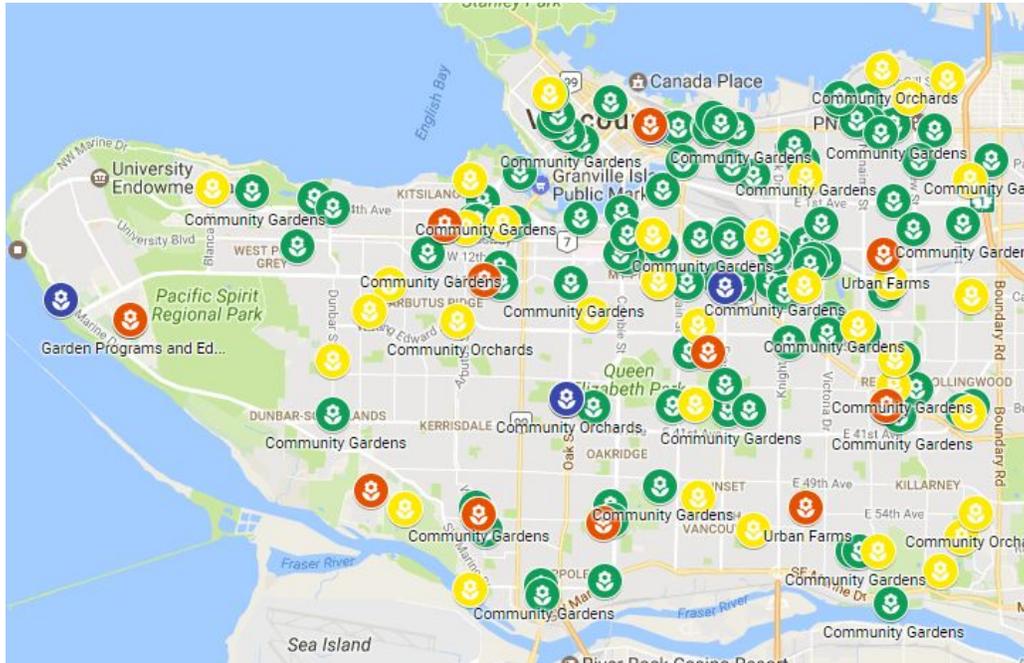


VANCOUVER FOOD ASSET MAP: Food Production

Final Report



Chantel Chizen, Gunique Gill, Carla Hick, Leanne Perrich, Ryah Rondolo & Sarena Sidhu

April 10, 2017

LFS 350

Dr. Will Valley



I. INTRODUCTION

Food insecurity is a worldwide food system problem. In the 20th and 21st centuries we have been faced with consistent rising cost of living, globalization, industrialization and reduced access to locally grown food. In addition to this, fewer and fewer people are unaware of where their food comes from (Garrett and Feenstra, 1999). As a result of these factors it can be very difficult for communities or individuals achieve food security. Food security can be defined as nutritionally adequate and culturally appropriate food being physically and economically accessible at all times to individuals (Mougeot, 2006). The City of Vancouver has a large socioeconomic and demographic distribution, where there is growing income disparity, child poverty, unaffordable housing, and increasing rates of hunger (City of Vancouver D, 2013). Together these attributes contribute to food insecurity within various communities in Vancouver.

A community based and experiential learning (CBEL) project was embarked upon by University of British Columbia (UBC) students in collaboration with Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), to provide a tool for food insecure people in Vancouver. The Vancouver Food Asset Map (VFAM) was developed to provide information about resources and strengths within a community (UCLA Centre for Health Policy Research, n.d). Food asset mapping can be a useful tool to identify available, affordable, nutritious and sufficient food for people within a community. There were many UBC student groups involved in this CBEL project and our group focused on food production assets; these included urban farms, community gardens, community orchards, and garden programs & education. The map currently has over 7000 views and features 785 food assets.

The development of this food asset map is very significant since it is an innovative way to provide community members with relevant information on available food production assets in Vancouver. This is especially valuable for those that are food insecure. The VFAM allows for community members to locate food assets that are most accessible to them based on geographical location, cost or appropriateness. Sourcing food locally within our own communities and cities is beneficial on many levels: it increases social sustainability,

reduces the carbon footprint of the distribution of food and facilitates the resiliency of communities by providing an adequate source of nutritious and affordable food. Many of the food production assets in Vancouver are associated with education programs that build food security, sustainability and community. Food production assets are especially important for increasing food justice because they allow communities to exercise “their right to grow, sell, and eat healthy food” (Just Food, 2010).

A. Project Objectives

- i. To update information on current and new food production assets on the VFAM.
- ii. Establish the efficacy of the VFAM by trialling the map with community members.

B. Research Questions

- i. Are the food production assets on the map up-to-date, relevant and complete?
- ii. Do Vancouver community members find the VFAM useful and easy to use?

II. METHODS

A. Data Collection Approach & Analysis

While this project involved some online research and literature review, the approach we took in our data collection was largely community-based. For example, in updating the VFAM information, we directly contacted community organizations in Vancouver. Furthermore, during the map trailing sessions, we asked community members for feedback on the VFAM resource and discussed ideas to improve the map based on their needs and interests.

a) Updating the Food Production Assets

We updated the VFAM food production asset data primarily by conducting online research and contacting community organizations through phone calls, on-the-ground visits, and emails. The data we collected for each asset included the asset’s address, website (if available), operating hours, cost (if applicable) and contact information. We inputted the data into a Google spreadsheet which will

be submitted to the VCH and compiled into the master Excel spreadsheet that serves as the database for the online VFAM Google map.

b) Map Trialling Session

The VFAM was trialled at three Save-On-Foods locations on March 6th, 2017. At these trialling events, members of our team explained the purpose of the VFAM, provided instructions on how to use the map, and then allowed the community members to trial the map themselves. Afterwards, the participants were asked to complete a survey with questions regarding the ease of use, suggestions for improvement and the likelihood of using the map in the future. The survey data was compiled, summarized, and analyzed to assess the overall community feedback on the VFAM.

B. Ethical Considerations

When including information that was not publically available onto the map, food asset organizations were first contacted to seek permission to allow us to add the organization and corresponding information onto the VFAM.

During the trialling sessions, individuals who agreed to complete the survey were required to fill in a consent form, allowing us to use the information they provided in our data analysis and report.

All group members completed TCPS 2 (Tutorial Course on Research Ethics) prior to conducting our community project work.

III. RESULTS AND KEY FINDINGS

A. Updating the Food Production Assets

Overall, 16 new assets were added to the VFAM database, including three urban farms, four community orchards, four community gardens, and five garden & education programs. The information for the urban farm, community orchards & gardens, and garden & education assets are currently up-to-date and complete;

information for 16 community gardens that are already on the VFAM had to be updated.

B. Map Trialling Sessions

At the trialling sessions, we surveyed 20 community members in total. The majority (60%) of people sampled did not previously know where to find new food assets before learning about the VFAM (Figure 1). Of the people sampled, 95% reported that the map was easy to use (Figure 3) and 60% would use the map in the future; 20% were not sure. Some of the stand out comments on the survey included:

- This is a great tool.
- I don't feel that I need to use this map (I don't consider myself food insecure).
- I don't live in Vancouver, expansion to Burnaby would be good
- Information on wheelchair accessibility would be beneficial
- Having an option to input a location and see which food assets are within a set radius location.

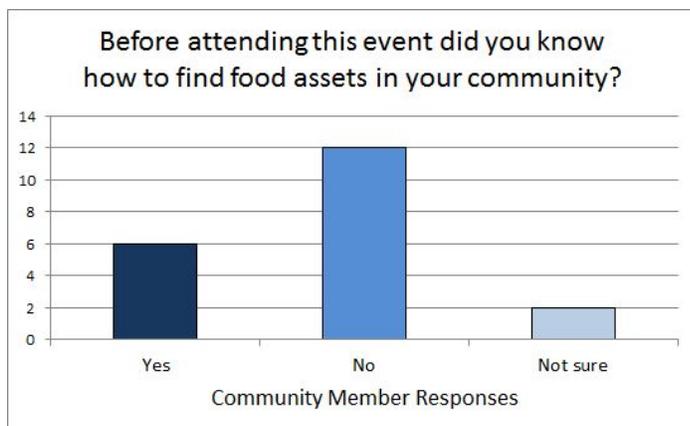


Figure 1

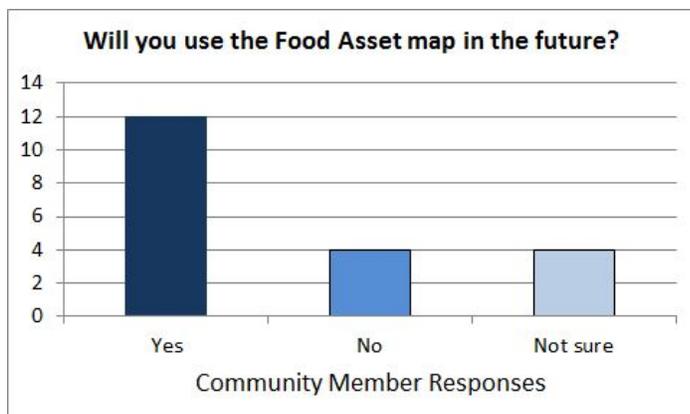


Figure 2

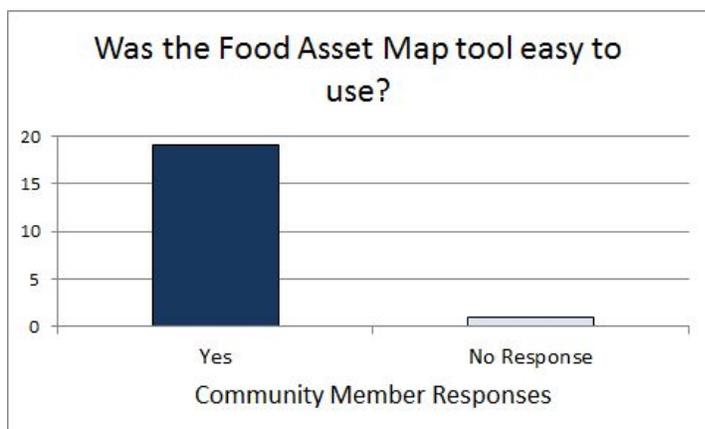


Figure 3

IV. DISCUSSION

We added new food production assets from all four of the sub-categories. The new community gardens that were added are temporary gardens that are being developed in vacant lots across the city. As spring is a prime time for garden programs and education it was easy to find more assets that had previously not been on the map, however these programs offered may vary seasonally.

Our trialling sessions at the Save-On-Foods locations were somewhat a limitation. This was because while there were many people in the grocery stores, many of them were too rushed to participate in the trialling. In addition, since we were at a moderately expensive grocery store many of the shoppers were not facing food insecurity. We believe that a location such as a library or food bank may have be more suitable for the map trialling in order to collect feedback from individuals who have the time to participate and who are more likely to be food insecure. Our data may not be representative of the food insecure

population - there may be differences in opinion on: the ease of use of the VFAM, due to having to connect to the internet to access the map; the value of the assets that are available; and any additions that may be needed. Nonetheless, we did get some great feedback in what we could improve such as adding whether the food assets are wheelchair accessible. Having data on wheelchair accessibility would be beneficial as disability can be a determinant of being food insecure and those with disabilities often experience greater food insecurity (Coleman-Jensen & Nord, 2013). Overall, our survey results indicate that this map could be a useful tool for community members.

V. CONCLUSION

The VFAM is a resource community members can use to find food assets in Vancouver, such as urban farms, community gardens & orchards, and garden & education programs. These assets provide immediate food relief and promote long-term food security by increasing community members' food knowledge and skills. The VFAM helps mitigate food insecurity among individuals by providing a means for accessing food assets and taking steps towards achieving food justice in our community. Through this project we have been able to understand the perspectives of community members in regards to food insecurity and the VFAM.

Moving forward, we recommend to trial and promote the VFAM in locations frequented by individuals most vulnerable to food insecurity (e.g. in the Downtown Eastside community, food banks) and in locations that provide computer resources and internet access (e.g. public libraries). VCH and UBC students will continue to update the VFAM and improve it based on the feedback received through the community trialling sessions, such as adding more engaging graphics and wheelchair accessibility information and potentially expanding the map to include assets in areas such as Burnaby and Richmond.

References

- Allen, P. (2008). Mining for justice in the food systems: perceptions, practices, and possibilities. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 31(2), 175-184
- City of Vancouver: A. (2017). Growing Food: community gardens. Retrieved from <http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/community-gardens.aspx>
- City of Vancouver: B. (2017). Growing food: urban farming and growing food to sell. Retrieved from <http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/growing-food-for-sale.aspx>
- City of Vancouver: C. (2017). Educational activities: gardening. Retrieved from <http://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/gardening.aspx>
- City of Vancouver: D. (2013). What feeds us; Vancouver food strategy. Retrieved from, <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/vancouver-food-strategy-final.PDF> Elliot, B., Jayatilaka, D., Brown, C., Varley, L and Corbett, K.K. (2012). “we are not being heard”: aboriginal perspectives on traditional foods access and food security. *Journal of Environmental and Public Health*. Doi: 10.1155/2012/130945
- Coleman-Jensen, A., & Nord, M. (2013). Disability is an important risk factor for food insecurity. *Amber Waves*, 34-39.
- Feenstra, G.W. (1997). Local Food systems and sustainable communities. *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture*. 12(1), pp 28-36. DOI:10.1017/S0889189300007165
- FAO Social and Economic Development Department. (2010). Fighting poverty and hunger - what role for urban agriculture?. Retrieved from http://www.fao.org/economic/es-policybriefs/briefs-detail/en/?no_cache=1&uid=45052
- Garrett, S., and Feenstra, G. (1999) *Growing a community food system*. Retrieved from <http://www.darrolshillingburg.com/GardenSite/Garden%20PDF%20files/Growing%20A%20Community%20Food%20System.pdf>
- Health Canada. (2012). Household Food Insecurity in Canada: Overview. Retrieved from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/surveill/nutrition/commun/insecurit/index-eng.php>
- Just Food. (2010). What Is Food Justice?. Retrieved from <http://justfood.org/advocacy/what-is-food-justice>

- Mougeot, L. J.A. (2006). *Growing better cities*. Ottawa, ON. International Development Research Centre.
- Smit, J., Nasr, J., & Ratta, A. (2001). *Urban agriculture: food, jobs and sustainable cities. Benefits of Urban Agriculture* (4th ed.). New York, USA: The Urban Agriculture Network. VCH: Vancouver Coastal Health. (2014). *Food asset map - Vancouver*. Retrieved from, <http://www.vch.ca/your-health/health-topics/food-asset-map-vancouver/>
- Stephens, T., and Romses, K. (2017). *LFS 350 community project – Vancouver food asset map* [PowerPoint Slides]. Retrieved from, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/OBwLg1dg0boCheDJFzjMwU1JUyzg>
- UBC: University of British Columbia. (2017). *Session 2, asset-based community development + food justice*. Retrieved from <http://lfs350.landfood.ubc.ca/session-notes/term-1-session-notes/session-2/>
- UCLA Centre for Health Policy Research. (n.d.) *Section 1: asset mapping*. Retrieved from http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/programs/health-data/trainings/Documents/tw_cba20.pdf

Appendix - Critical Reflections:

STUDENT 1

Community based experiential learning (CBEL) within this course was a valuable way to learn about Land, Food and Community in an impactful way. University oftentimes involved a lot of theoretical work in the classroom, this CBEL allowed students to connect with real food system issues within the Vancouver community and take steps forward to the solution. Having the groups chosen for us allowed for more interdisciplinary knowledge and a diverse group atmosphere which is beneficial to food system solutions. The blog postings were beneficial to track group progress, since they are on a public platform as will this final report will be is a positive stride towards asset based community development. The LFS 350 community has made additional valuable assets to the Vancouver community and the information and work we have done should be publically available to enrich the education and community work of others. Having flexible learning tutorial sessions were essential to the success of this project as it allowed the group to have scheduled time to work on the project.

STUDENT 2

Overall I found that our CBEL project was an excellent experience to engage in the community while finding solutions to food system issues within Vancouver. With the group members coming from different academic backgrounds and each having their own strengths we were able to come up with innovative ideas that contributed to our project over the course of the term. In addition to this I found that our group was able to work effectively together to meet deadlines and complete each aspect of the project to the best of our ability. The flexible learning experiences were crucial in staying on track for completing the project and maintaining effective group work. Having the time to meet with our community partner at the start of the term was extremely beneficial in understanding the goals of our project. The e-lectures were interesting as they tended to complement the part of the project that we were completing at the time, such as developing the project proposal. I really enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on our project and its relationship back to the learning objectives of the course as we completed the four blog posts. In the flexible learning sessions I thought that they were also helpful

because they gave us the necessary time to meet as a group, since we all were available, and work on parts of the project together.

STUDENT 3

Coming into LFS 350 I was quite apprehensive about doing a class that was based on completing a community project but it ended up being a great learning experience. Working with Vancouver Coastal Health and the other members of the group to work on the Food Asset was a valuable learning experience in teamwork and learning about food insecurity and food justice within Vancouver. I really liked the idea of a food asset map, being new to Vancouver I hadn't known what was available and to a food insecure individual I believe it could be a useful tool. The flexible learning experiences were great as it gave us time to meet with the community partner, work on our project, have a trialling date, and be able to meet with our group at a time that worked for all of our schedules. I liked that the required 'readings' were not all academic papers, the videos and podcasts made it more interesting to learn the material. I also thought that having the four blog posts throughout the term was very helpful as it gave us as a group a chance to reflect on how much we had accomplished and how much still needed to be done. The final infographic day was great, it was a positive change from the normal power point presentations and it was interesting going around and looking at what everyone else had accomplished this term.

STUDENT 4

Being able to work directly with community partners was very beneficial in this course, I really felt like I was making a difference. So often we sit in classrooms learning about real life issues and not actually doing anything to help. LFS 350 was different and our group had a chance to make a positive difference in the Vancouver community regarding food insecurity. We had a really good group dynamic and the blog posts were beneficial for everyone to keep on track and view our progress. Also, having the flexible learning sessions were paramount in our success for the project, they allowed for times when everyone was available to focus on LFS 350. This project specifically allowed me to learn more about the effectiveness of asset based community

development. I am more conscious of assets within my own community and think about how I can improve the effectiveness, awareness and value of these assets.

STUDENT 5

Initially, the project seemed like busywork; I felt that hiring one or two people to work on the VFAM full-time for a week would be more efficient than having thirty students work on it for three months. Nonetheless, I've come to realize and appreciate the underlying value of this project. Through it, VCH has provided an opportunity for students to get experience contributing to community initiatives in a meaningful way. Even though it may not be the most efficient set-up, this CBEL project has definitely made me feel better prepared for working in the community. For example, through the map-trialing session, I was able to practice how to deal with people who were uninterested in the resources we were developing, encourage them to try the resource and develop an interest in it, and better understand the needs and interests of the community members through meaningful conversations with them, implementing their suggestions in our project. I'm sure these skills will come in handy in the future.

I enjoyed working with my group and the flexible learning sessions were effective; however, as is often the case with working in groups of five or more, it was challenging to ensure that the amount of work done was distributed equally among members and that effective communication was maintained throughout the term. Nevertheless, the CBEL project was a rewarding experience. I appreciated the opportunity to interact with community members and work alongside fellow LFS students.

STUDENT 6

I was quite confused with the project in the beginning but our group came together really well and helped each other understand. It was a new experience to be involved in a community project that was actually making progress on food system related issues within the community (CBEL). It was great to have the blog posts to refer to progress of the group. Additionally, the flexible learning sessions were really beneficial for the group to get work done. We had already scheduled class times to work on LFS 350, so it was a good time when we knew everyone would be available.