How does recency of publicly available food maps from Pittsburgh influence residents' awareness and usage of local food resources?

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Oasis Farms Description

Oasis Farms is an urban farm in the Homewood neighborhood of Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. They are part of an economic empowerment arm of the Bible Center Church. The Oasis Farm grows produce which is sold at local farmers markets in Homewood area for a reduced cost, as well as used at various community events, fighting against the food desert Homewood is currently in. Oasis farms also helps educate the next generation about urban farming basics through their youth employment program, Field to Fork. Field to Fork allows local 14-24 year olds learn farming basic with additional enrichment lectures featuring nutrition and other health topics.

Objective

- Learn the food landscape of Homewood neighborhood, and larger Pittsburgh Area
  - Identify how different local farms partner for the betterment of their communities
    - Understand how food mapping and food growing efforts work in conjunction to improve policy for the underserved via mapping efforts

Tasks

- Learned the basics of Urban Farming through hands on experience
- Connected with local community leaders including a City of Pittsburgh Urban Planner to learn about the city's mapping and GIS efforts
- Analyzed publicly available food mapping data and conducted informal interviews with residents to discuss their thoughts

Public food maps may not reflect current community knowledge, resulting in potentially incomplete information about Pittsburgh's local food environment

Figure 1. Farmers Markets in Southwestern PA, last updated 2021

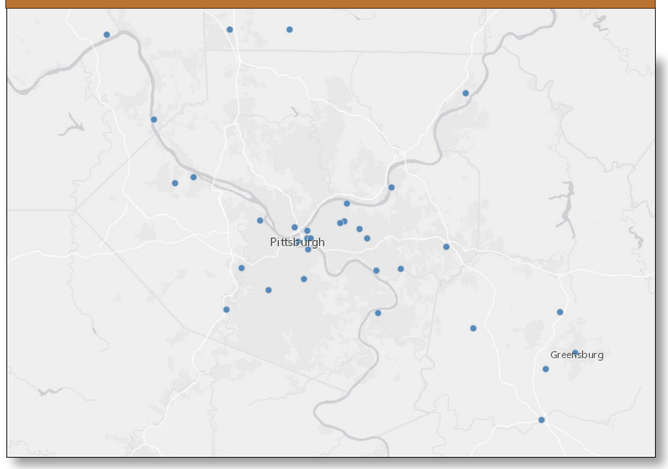


Figure 2. Food and Asset maps made within past 5 years

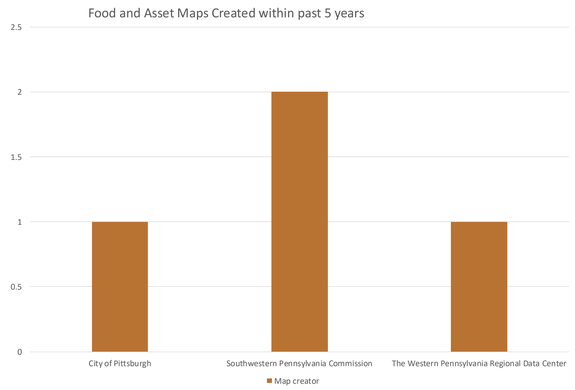
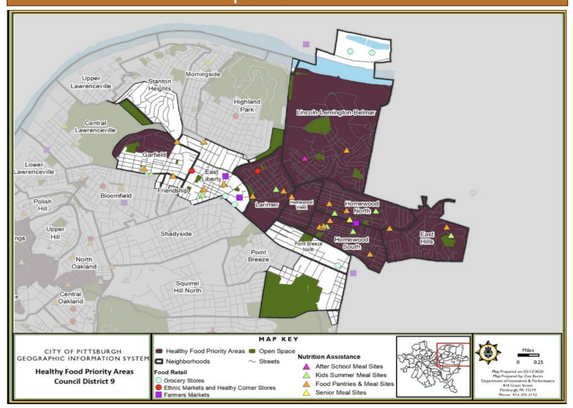


Figure 3. Asset map of Pittsburgh District 9, last updated 2020



Discussion

- There is a lack of effort to keep publicly government created food maps updated

Next Steps/Strengths/Barriers

- Local government geographic information systems (GIS) departments must update food maps annually to best inform local decision makers
- There is possibility for collaboration with local community focused GIS organizations such as "Code for Pittsburgh" to reduce the monetary and time cost for larger government GIS departments

Public Health Significance

- Government created/organized data is one of the primary sources used or decision making
- Out dated data can lead to ill informed decisions and unnecessary duplicated efforts
- This can be especially dangerous when it effects the neighborhood and build environment, one of the Social Determinants of Health

Conclusions

- Pittsburgh residents would benefit more from updated information
  - City GIS department should do a better job of updating information as it disproportionally affects certain residents, like those in Homewood

REFERENCES

Farmers Markets. (2020). [Map]. Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
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