What went well during this Sprint?

During this sprint, we felt like everyone was able to find a specific role for themselves and work well with the team, whether that was designing the UI for our website, working on implementing Google Maps API, or researching to find solutions to task-specific problems. As it was our first time working on such a big group project, we initially took a couple of days to become familiar with the new platforms. But, by the end of the sprint, we were able to adapt to the new technology and became well-versed in using Google’s different APIs and testing the app/website design with VS Code. Overall, we effectively delegated the tasks amongst our group members, with one person working on the front-end design and the rest of us working on the map implementation and user-input functions. We also utilized our standup meetings and planning meetings very well – we used this time to regroup and assess our performance as a team, making changes to our product backlog and overall plan if necessary. This week, we were also introduced to our mentor, who helped us tremendously with both general advice and the specifics about our project. We know that our team is committed to the work and is enthusiastic about seeing our product develop over time!

What problems were encountered?

1) We realized we had to readapt to a new task execution workflow for the days that Anjali was absent for Research at WA DC. It took us a while to reassign roles/tasks, and this slowed our work progression down by quite a bit (around two days). However, we believe our quick, temporary reorganization for those days was the best given that this was our first Sprint.

2) This might sound silly, but processing user input via HTML input was a genuine struggle! We had to quickly learn about Event Listeners and integrate JS into our code, which really added a new dimension to our program. This taught us the significance of modular code design, and this extra layer of complexity required that we really gave each other a line-by-line run through of our updates (kind of like our DS project plans!)

3) Anusha faced an unpredictable laptop issue that cost her using multiple different loaner devices for the Sprint. At the beginning, we had issues installing VSCode onto her device, along with cloning GitHub repositories, and the problems seemed to create even more rabbit holes. With the new device, she had to set up her workspace (along with a whole new laptop), and this took away time.

4) Displaying the Maps API was a mixture of inexperience and banging our heads against our laptops. We initially had our roadblock pre-Sprint of how we could get our hands on Google Maps API—and once we internally figured that out, we had to learn what authentication meant and what the Google Maps API Key does. This took days of research that we had underestimated. On top of this, we then had issues displaying the map on our program, as we had no idea how to implement an API (it wasn’t like the import statements we were used to). We solved the issue...but we were somewhat tardy relative to our timeline!

5) We have slowly realized that we need a database for our app to be responsive and upscaled to multiple user personas, as we defined pre-Sprint. We are exploring new solutions like Firebase, CosmosDB, and Azure, but these seem like far-fetched technologies for our understanding. We have gotten a lot of mentor advice on this though, so things are looking promising for the future.

6) As enthusiastic and passionate computer scientists, we continually made the mistake of setting high bars for our sprint goals, whether that was for making a fully functional HTML website design, or overestimating our intellect as we navigated Application Programming Interfaces :). We realized that our learning curve and scrum model were “too aggressive,” especially during the initial stages of our project. This resulted in us not meeting most of our goals by the end of the sprint and having to reassign/change tasks at the last minute.

Were these problems solved? If so, how, if not, why?

We’re at the point in life where we can number our problems! Problems 1-4 and 6 have been solved in the sense that we have either fully solved them (i.e., Anusha’s laptop roadblock has been fixed), or we have plans that accommodate our solving-journey (i.e., displaying the Maps API more thoroughly). However, Problem 5 has not been solved. This is because databases weren’t initially part of our Sprint, but we realize that we need a lot of preemptive planning to host our website on a database—planning that requires us to think outside the box right now! Learning about these new dependencies and databases will be a learning for future Sprints.

What are the most helpful changes you can make to improve your effectiveness as a Team in the next Sprint?

1) Devoting time to learning curve, self-learning, and debugging – we need to remember that this is a long process and that there is a huge learning aspect to this project 😊

2) For our next sprint, we would like to delegate tasks to people based on their strengths in that area. This way, our sprint goals can be checked off much faster, and we can devote some of our remaining time to helping other members with their problems or working on the next tasks.

3) Our Definition of Done was a bit too romanticized given the apps we currently have, like Yelp and Sound Transit Itinerary. We realized quickly that these apps were made by huge development teams, and that we shouldn’t get too giddy about what we are making, that too, in one sprint. For our future sprints, we are planning to break down our project goals into smaller, more feasible objectives that we are more likely to achieve.