

FoodMaps

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Problem

Food insecurity has always been an area for concern in New York City, especially in the less-affluent neighborhoods where many communities continue to struggle to find the means to feed their families. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity has only increased. Many residents are still experiencing the effects of unemployment and are having a difficult time finding the resources to feed their children a balanced and nutritious diet. The problem we are facing is two-fold.

- On one side, many families that are suffering from food insecurity are comprised of older generation members that are not technologically-inclined, and as a result, are not able to easily or quickly find resources like food banks and food pantries for assistance.
- The other side of the problem is that even if the families are able to find these resources, the availability of these resources may be scarce in terms of food supply or number of locations in their local community.

Solution

P1 - Incorporating technology into the households of struggling families

- Design and develop a simple and streamlined website that collects food resources in one location and displays it in an easy to navigate format. Gaining experience with a simple website will give older generation providers the ability to keep up with ongoing food programs and online services. The focus will be on:
 - Appearance → Readable text / tables / intuitive layouts
 - Simplicity → Reduce user's need to think about how to navigate the website
 - Website performance → loading time / responsive components

P2 – Aggregating food resources into a list for neighborhoods that are considered to be “food deserts”

- Construct a list of all known food stores and food organizations in a targeted neighborhood. Have the users contribute to the list so that the store's produce availability and pricing are up-to-date. Some members of a community may have knowledge of ways to acquire affordable food that may not be known to other members, including local bodegas and stores that have no internet presence.
 - Interactive Map → location markers for food resources / links to food store tables
 - Food Resource List → services / location / name / produce items / produce prices / images
 - User Contributions → users will be able to add to and modify the resource list

Website Purpose

FoodMaps is a website that was created to assist low-income individuals and families in underserved communities, to find ways to obtain healthy and nutritious food. The website will act as a central hub that users can go through to find relevant health and food-related resources. FoodMaps includes the use of an interactive and modifiable food map. The map will display the locations and details of food stores, and will have links to redirect users to a table containing the store's available produce along with their pricing. The purpose of these constructs is for the users to easily locate affordable food and to better plan their food shopping expenditures. FoodMaps will rely on user contributions to fill out a large portion of the food map and corresponding tables. This reliance on user contributions is important to build a community support network, that will encourage members to maintain the food map and food table so that the information is accurate and does not remain stale. While the main purpose of the website is to provide a comprehensive list of food resources for families in underserved neighborhoods, another goal of the website is to help older generation parents/adults learn how use technology to navigate the web. By teaching these skills, community members can go on to learn how to navigate other websites and find resources independently. This approach was implemented so that families can self-sustain without having to rely heavily on external assistance to find food resources.

Resources

- Links to external sites that contain food and health resources
- Links and charts for nutrition-related resources
- Data on food insecurity collected from external sources

Technologies

HTML/CSS