Assignment #10: Reflection

Key Themes and Contributions

Looking at all the class presentations, it's clear that sustainability in Calgary isn't just one notion; it has many interconnected issues. We started with themes like Natural Environment and Safety & Social Wellness, but a bigger idea stood out in the end: the geography of access and equity.

Basically, your experience in the city depends a lot on your neighbourhood. For instance, some areas have greater tree cover, accessible green spaces, and reliable transit, while others lack these features. This pattern of fairness, or a lack of it, came up repeatedly across projects. Therefore, a better way to group our findings might be under simpler themes like "Fair Access to Services" and "Working City Systems," which would make this central point much clearer and ultimately emphasize equity as a lens for all other issues.

Interconnections

My project on streetlight repair is connected to other studies in several ways. First, like the transit and tree coverage projects, I also used city data to map how services are delivered. This shows that the city could apply similar methods to track and improve multiple services simultaneously. Furthermore, the idea of "reliability" linked our work. Just as people need buses to run on time, they need streetlights to work consistently to feel safe. While access to safe, accessible vaccines or social supports is similarly essential. My finding that some communities consistently get slower repairs mirrors the tree coverage project, which found that lower-income areas often have fewer trees. This suggests that some neighbourhoods face multiple, overlapping challenges. Highlighting how social, environmental, and infrastructure issues are deeply interconnected.

Geospatial Connection

The maps we made were the most important part of our research. Without them, we would only have city wide averages that hide the real story. For example, my map of streetlight repairs, along with maps of transit accessibility, water quality impacted by urban runoff, and tree coverage, all show the same pattern: your address in Calgary has a strong influence on your quality of life. As a result, we should stop asking "Is Calgary sustainable?" and start asking "Which parts of Calgary are sustainable, and which are being left behind?" Our maps make these problems visible and show exactly where targeted interventions are needed.

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Broader Implications and Message to Sustainable Calgary

The main takeaway from all our research is that the city must use maps and data to make better, more equitable decisions. We have shown exactly where problems are most severe and which communities are most affected.

For Sustainable Calgary, this means you now have clear evidence that some neighbourhoods are consistently underserved. The city should move away from a uniform approach and instead allocate resources to the areas that our maps highlight. I recommend adopting simple, fair measurements, like my Streetlight Repair Equity Score, to ensure all communities receive consistent and reliable services. By using geospatial evidence, Sustainable Calgary can advocate for solutions that address inequity directly. Creating a city that is truly sustainable for all residents, not just a select few.

Overall Thoughts and Feedback

This project taught me how to manage a real research project from start to finish. More importantly, seeing how my work connected to others showed me that city challenges are deeply intertwined. For example, a neighbourhood with poor transit might also experience slower streetlight repairs, limited green space, or environmental hazards like runoff contamination. Looking ahead, I hope our work can serve as a benchmark to monitor Calgary's progress in equity, sustainability, and service reliability. This project became more than an assignment; it revealed how geospatial tools can help build a Calgary where fairness and sustainability are actually possible.

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