

# NavigateSLC

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Link to repository: <https://github.com/dataviscourse2023/final-project-navigateslc>

## Background and Motivation:

As international students, we face difficulties moving into a new home and a new environment in another country. While numerous sites try to be helpful, there is a glaring gap: there isn't a single, all-inclusive website that can easily provide a comprehensive summary of crucial information.

Our goal is to create a web application that, in addition to filling the information gap, improves the educational experience for students by featuring an interactive map as its main feature. This interactive map will be a thorough resource, arming students with the information they need to choose a residence best suited to their unique needs and preferences.

By creating this website, we aim to:

1. **Simplify Decision-Making:** We have first-hand experience that selecting the ideal residence is a crucial task for us international students. Our website will provide a visual representation of the city, highlighting different areas and housing possibilities and essential information like the area's closeness to facilities like transportation hubs, the university, and other necessities.

2. **Increase Convenience:** We want to make getting important information easier. Our website will provide a one-stop solution for students during their settlement process in place of them having to navigate different sources, saving them time and effort.

In conclusion, we aim to develop a simple website that will ease the transition for international students and give them the power to choose their new home with knowledge and confidence, thereby raising their quality of life in the city.

## Project objectives:

We will be focusing on:

1. **Population Map:** Providing a population map with concentrations of students and student-friendly neighborhoods helps newcomers connect with their peers, fostering a sense of community and making social integration easier.
2. **Local Stores:** For students, access to nearby grocery stores, bookshops, and other essential retail outlets is vital. Including information on the locations of these stores helps students settle into their new surroundings more comfortably.
3. **Public Transport:** Students rely heavily on public transportation. A comprehensive map featuring bus stops, TRAX stations, and their schedules enables them to navigate the city efficiently, especially when commuting to campus or exploring its attractions.
4. **Tourism Highlights:** While students primarily focus on their studies, they also seek opportunities for leisure and exploration. Highlighting local attractions, parks, museums, and entertainment venues allows newcomers to balance their academic pursuits and leisure activities.
5. **Safety and Emergency Services:** It's crucial to provide information on the locations of police stations, medical facilities, and other emergency services. This helps students feel secure and prepared in case of any unforeseen circumstances.
6. **Student Services:** New students require access to university offices, counseling services, and academic support centers. Including these on the map ensures students can easily find the resources they need to excel academically and adjust to campus life.

In essence, tailoring the city map to the needs of new students fosters a smoother transition into city life and university culture. It equips us with the information we require for everyday living, studying, and exploring the city, thereby enhancing our overall experience as students.

## Data:

Datasets that were available online with public access:

- Parks: <https://opendata.utah.gov/Recreation/Map-of-Salt-Lake-City-s-Parks/>
- Public Transport: <https://gis.utah.gov/data/transportation/transit/>
- Topographical map: <https://gis.utah.gov/data/elevation-and-terrain/>
- Trails and Trailheads: <https://gis.utah.gov/data/recreation/trails/>

We have requested facilities@utah.edu to provide us with department-specific data.

We have also requested the geography department to provide access to high-quality topographical maps of SLC, weather data, average block-wise rent data, and population density data.

We will update the list as we acquire them.

## **Data Processing:**

Some of our data sources have overlapping information such as transport routes of TRAX. We aim to pre-process the data and ensure data abstraction.

The multiple datasets that are being integrated have various differing columns and data types which need to be unified by identifying the common data fields to be utilized optimally.

Then, develop a data integration strategy, which may involve merging, deduplicating, or aggregating overlapping data points. Data quality will be prioritized by cleansing and standardizing entries to ensure consistency with an emphasis laid on helping students.

Since the visualization is essentially a map, the additional coordinates from the features must be superimposed and they must be consistent with the underlying map coordinates, making the precise data pre-processing of coordinates a crucial component.

## **Visualization Design:**

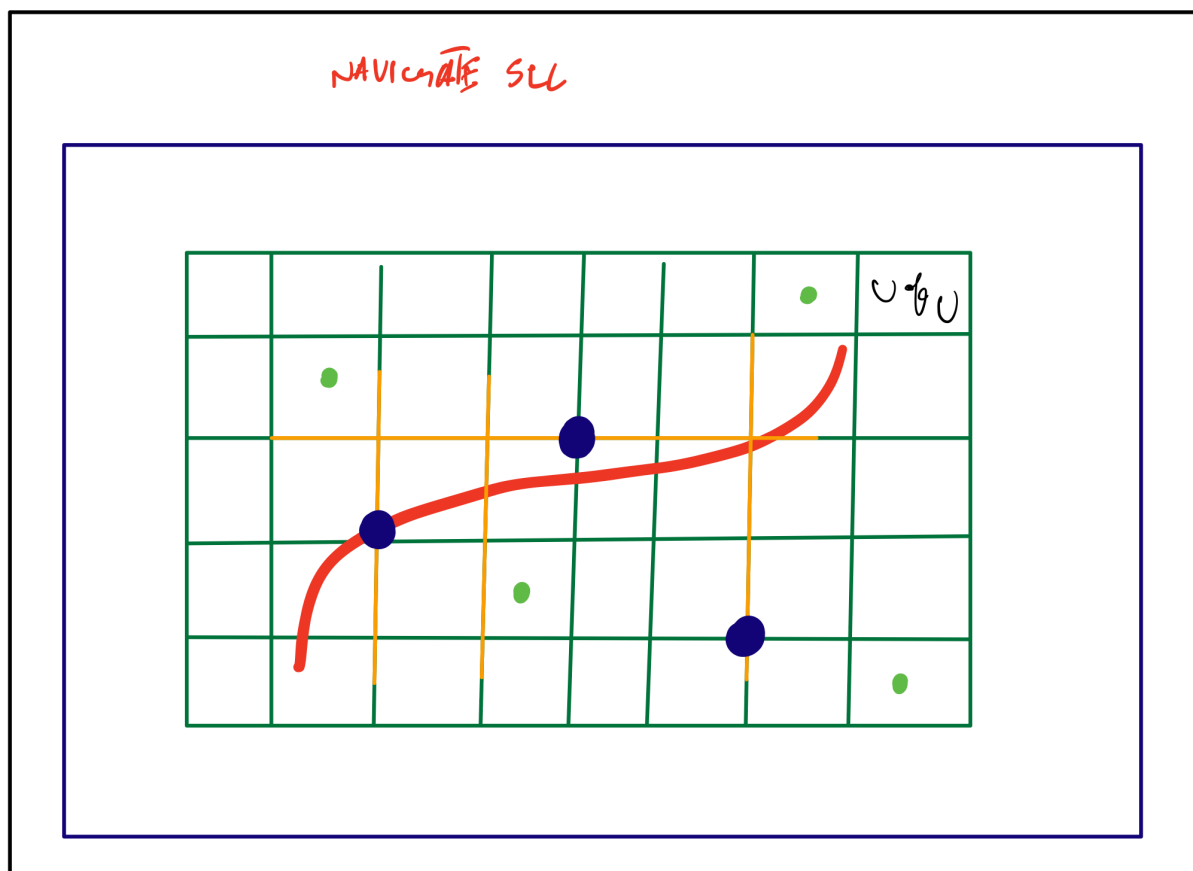
We start with a topological map. Over this, we intend to implement these filters:

1. **Block-wise visualization:** A menu option to select a particular block in SLC, which pops up the population density, average rent, convenience stores, and general recreational activities when the cursor is hovered over it.
2. **Public transport route visualization:** This will explicitly highlight the bus routes. An option will be provided to select a particular bus route, which will be highlighted on the street map.
3. **Trail map:** Similar to the public transport route visualization, an option will be provided to select a particular trail/trailhead, which will be highlighted on the street map.
4. **University of Utah Visualization** - An option to particularly zoom into the campus will be incorporated. This will highlight all the buildings (along with historical information) and other places of significance on the campus.
5. **A macroscopic view:** of the entire city will be provided and users will have the freedom to add and remove filters of their choice manually.

We came up with a few possible layouts for our website.

### Initial Sketch:

- Overlay all the data and map layers onto one street view map with topographical information.
- The data consists of street view of roads, public transport routes, topography overlay, block-wise population density data, average rent prices, and a detailed map of departments in the University of Utah.
- In the sketch:
  - The red line corresponds to the TRAX routes.
  - The green grid corresponds to the city blocks which contain block-wise data.
  - The orange lines are roads with street names.
  - The blue dots are bus stops.
  - The green dots are local landmarks.
  - The University of Utah has been included near the map's northeast as a detailed map overlay with links to departmental-specific data.

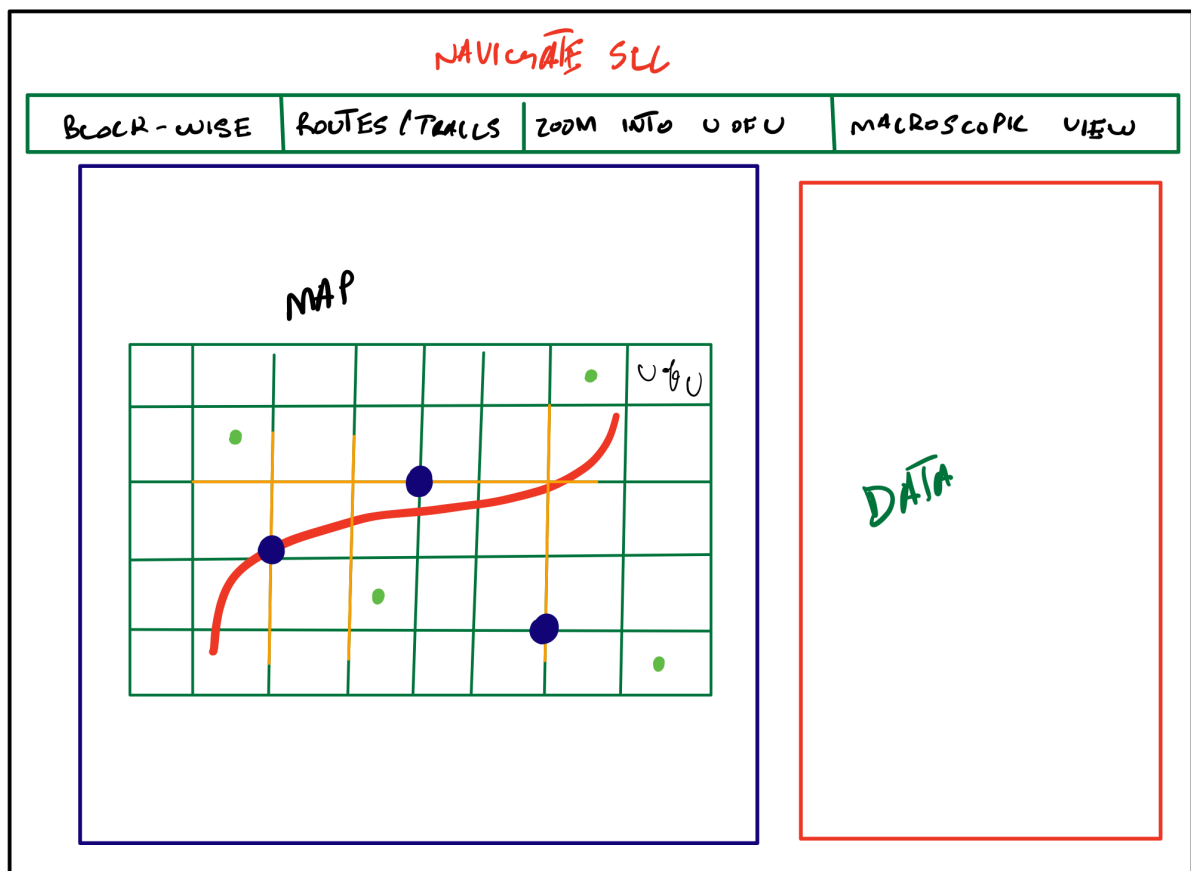


The above design has several issues:

1. There is a heap of information available and understanding details becomes very difficult.
2. The entire visualization is cluttered due to multiple overlays of map layers and data layers.

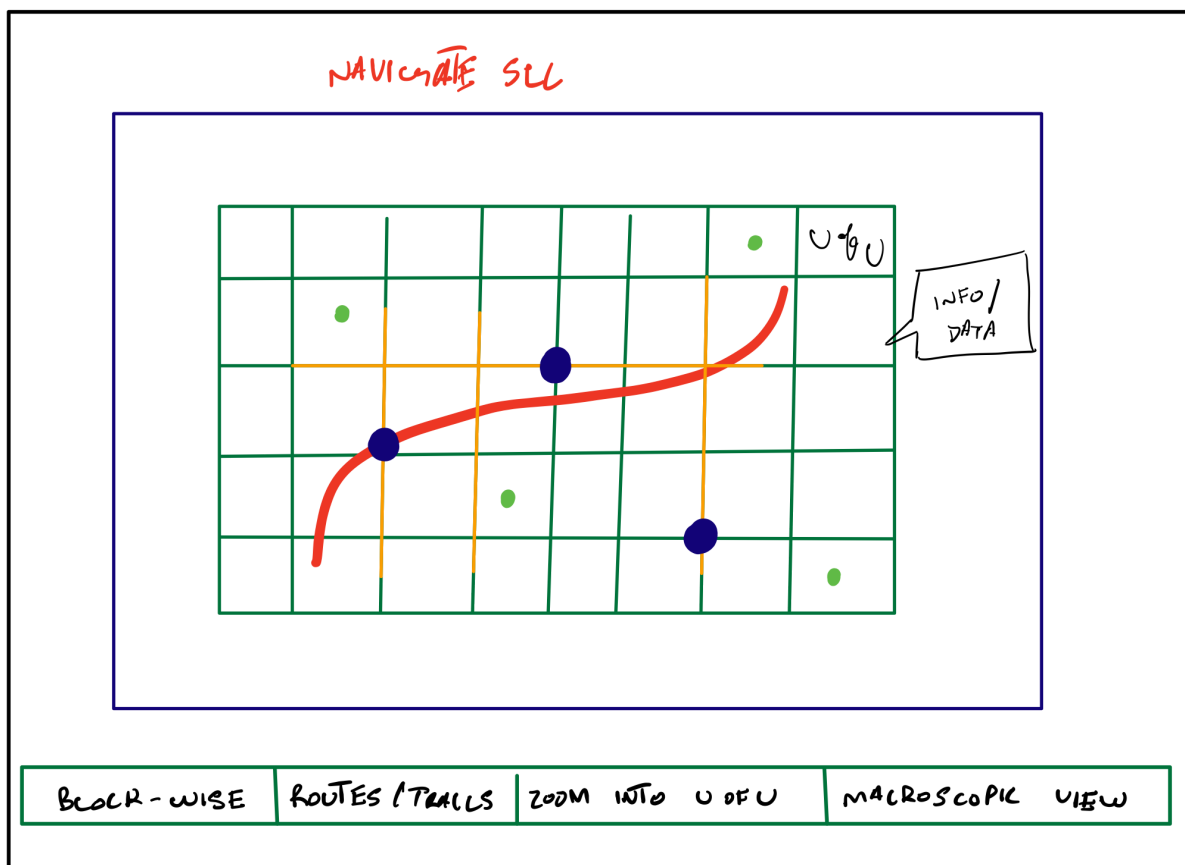
### Improved Sketch:

- By utilizing filters for separating the overlays of different map layers.
- The data layer has been separated into a window that shows specific information about the selected filter.
- Filters: A block of buttons is present on the top of the page and selecting the filter makes only data from that topic appear on the map section.
- Data Window: Selecting a particular element on the map will provide more information about that selection on the data window.



## Final sketch:

- Since the data section is empty when there is no selection on the map, the size of the map on the screen can be maximized.
- The filters have been moved to the bottom of the page to provide more importance to the map.
- The design we have come up with is as follows:
  - A selection of the filter will overlay the map layer which is filter specific onto the street view map.
  - Each filter will have a drop-up, which provides a selection of features.
  - Upon selecting a feature, the map will be overlaid with a heat map (as applicable).
  - By hovering over a particular section with the cursor, a pop-up gets populated with the information related to the feature selected.



**Must-Have Features:**

- Topographical and street map
- UoU department and student services buildings with general and historical information.
- Population density with emphasis on student-friendly neighborhoods.
- The average rent across areas.
- Public transportation with stops, routes, and timings.
- Convenience Stores - with emphasis on cuisines
- Recreational Activities - including parks, theaters, tourism highlights, etc

**Optional Features:**

- Trails map overlay
- Live events notice board with information about local and state-level events.
- Past weather map overlay

**Project Schedule:**

Sep 15 - Submit the proposal

Sep 22 - Complete data collection and processing

Sep 29 - Have a primitive working visualization model - trying to incorporate all the collected data on the must-have features

Oct 6 - Collect feedback based on the primitive model - and incorporate suggestions in the visualization

Oct 13 - Improve on the primitive model and make a version dealing with the addressed issues

Oct 20 - Collect feedback based on the improved model - and incorporate suggestions in the visualization

Oct 27 - Improve on the final model and make a version dealing with the addressed issues

Nov 3 - If everything goes according to schedule, we can include our optional features in the remaining time.