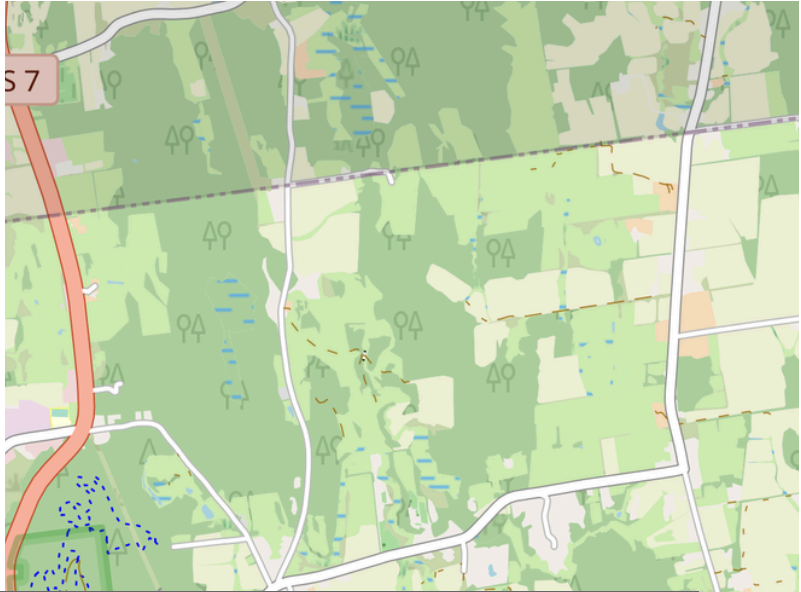




Visualizing Community

a community asset mapping graphic handbook

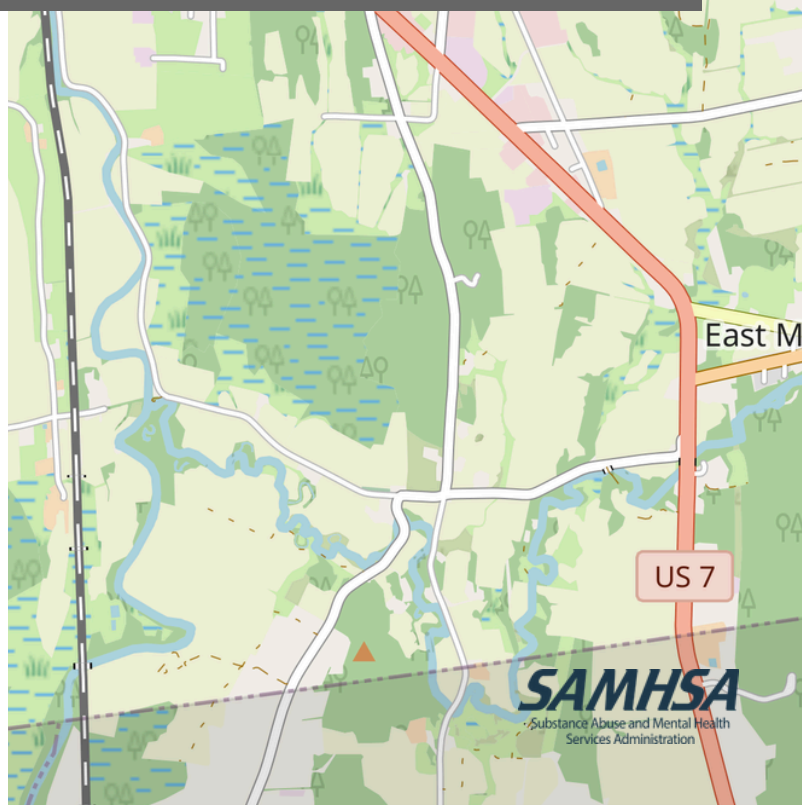
Prepared by Em S Delaney, CPS
pttcnetwork.org/center/new-england-pttc



New England (HHS Region 1)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration



New England PTTC

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The use of affirming language inspires hope.

LANGUAGE MATTERS.

Words have power.

PEOPLE FIRST.

The PTTC Network uses affirming language to promote the application of evidence-based and culturally informed practices.

Land Acknowledgement

The New England PTTC acknowledges that we are all on the traditional lands of native people. In Augusta, Maine, the PTTC works from the ancestral lands of the Abenaki People, part of the Wabanaki Confederacy. We have a responsibility to acknowledge our Indigenous connections and the histories of Indigenous land dispossession. We encourage you to learn more about the stewards of the land you live and work on by working with your native neighbors, and by visiting <https://native-land.ca>

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Map images generated from OpenStreetMap, which is made available at openstreetmap.org under the Open Database License (ODbL).

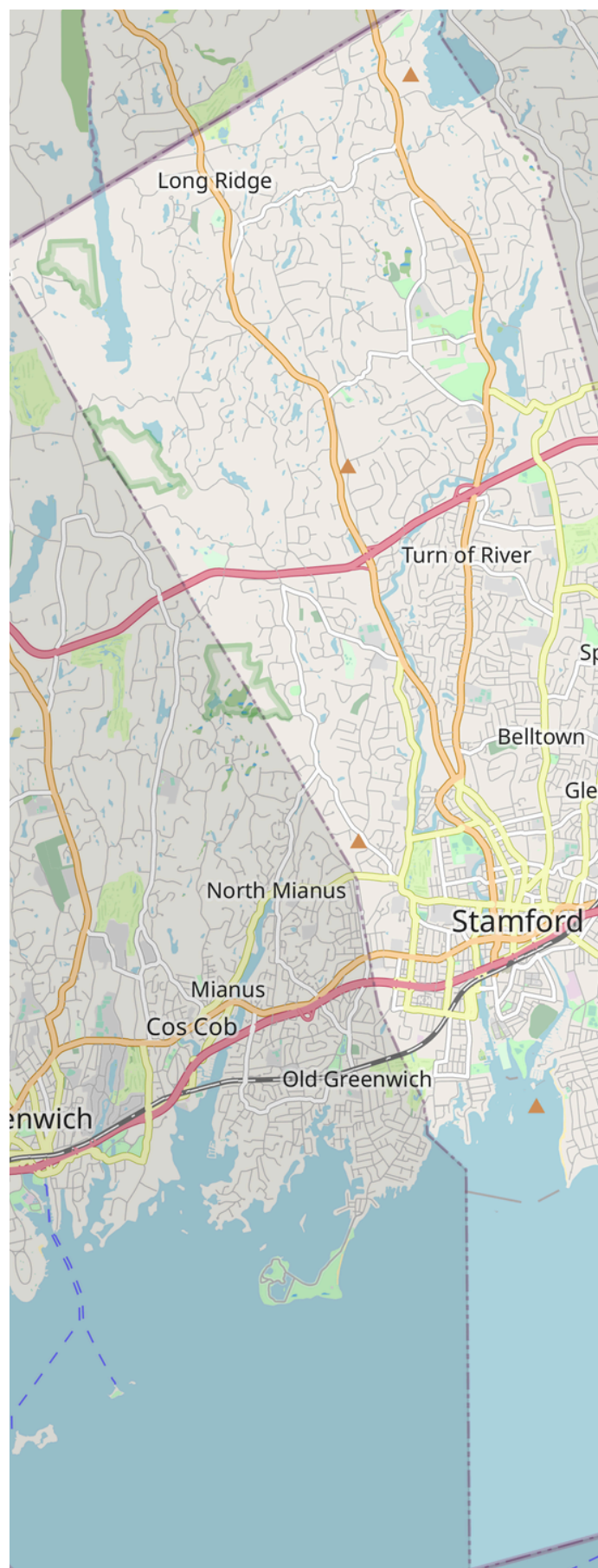


Introduction

About this Handbook

What is Community Asset Mapping?

Behavioral Health and Community Assets



About this Handbook

Visualizing Community is a graphic handbook for organizations and community groups interested in using the process of community asset mapping to identify and navigate existing community assets, to understand the distribution and relationship of assets in their community, and to find potential opportunities for behavioral health collaboration and partnership across their region. The handbook lays out a visual approach for documentation and presentation of assets to increase the accessibility of information, create a sense of community ownership, and ensure the involvement of community voices and experiences.

What is Community Asset Mapping?

Community asset mapping is a method used by community planners and organizers to identify elements within a geographic area of focus which have a positive impact and effect on the community. These assets help to fulfill the needs of the community and can be leveraged to improve the quality of life within the area. This process can be a preliminary step towards focusing around a specific issue by gathering information on the strengths of the community which can then be organized and used to help build support for initiatives.

Behavioral Health and Community Assets

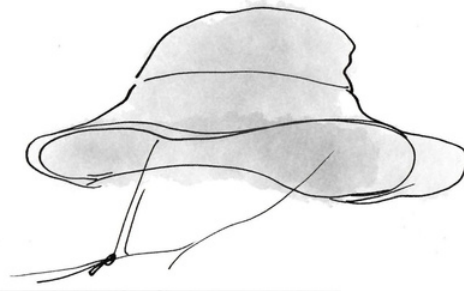
Community partnerships and establishment of community systems can address locally occurring behavioral health issues by leveraging existing resources within the geographical region of focus. These community assets exist in the same areas which intersect within behavioral health: social resources which increase quality of life for the individual and the community, services which provide benefit, and aspects of the built and natural environment which positively impact life within it.

Meet the Community Explorer

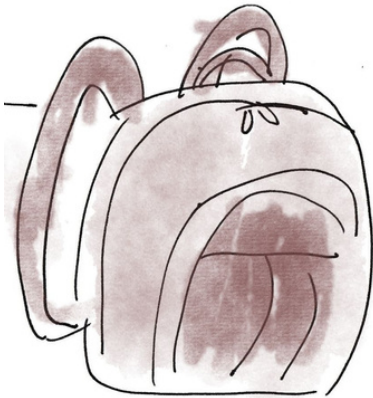


Hi! I'm the Community Explorer,
I'll be your guide today!

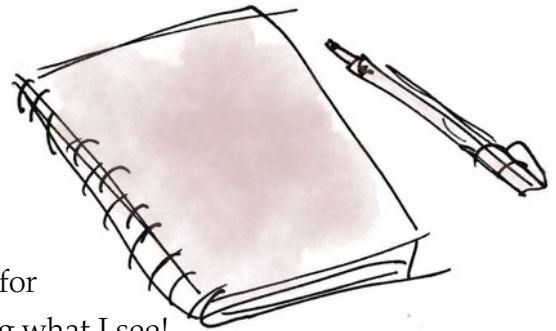
To get started, I'll need some supplies!



A sunhat - for getting out and
about in my community!



Backpack - great for
bringing my skill set!



Notebook - for
documenting what I see!



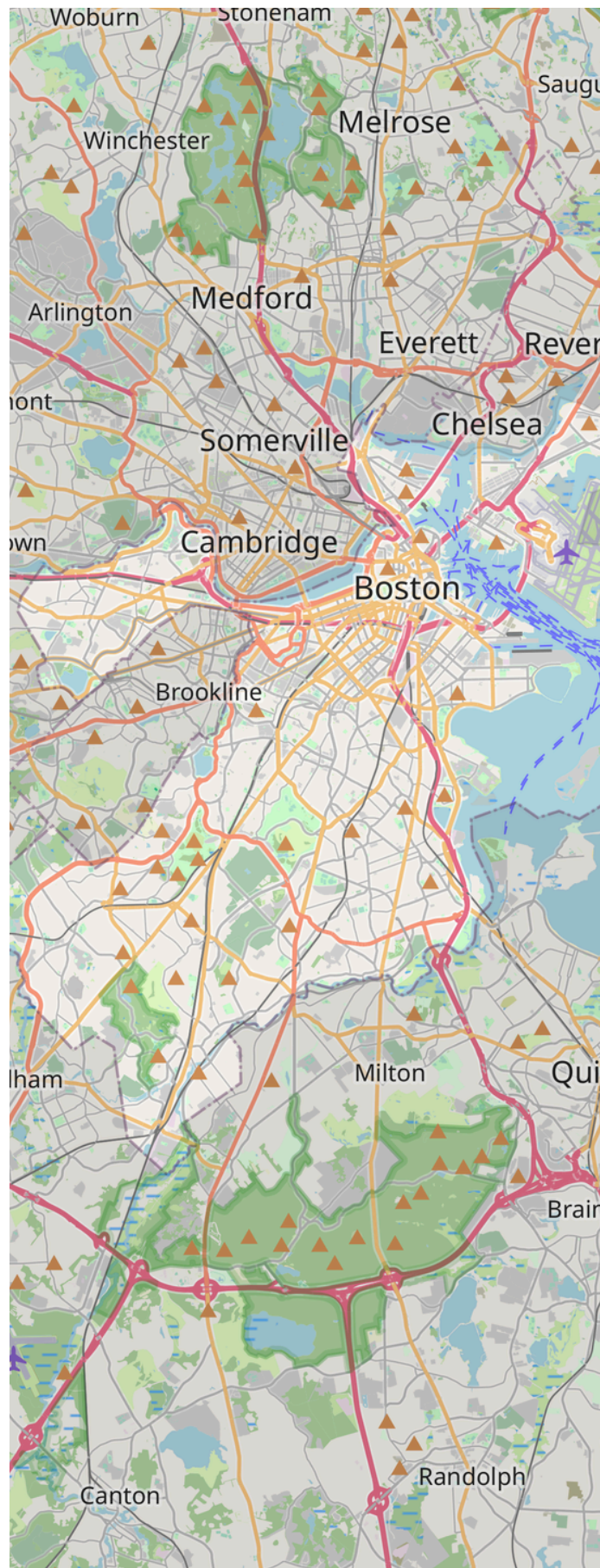
Let's find out how
it all works!

Participatory Community Asset Mapping

Focusing on the Positive

The Built Environment

A Participatory Process



Focusing on the Positive

Asset mapping is the process of walking the grid of a community and marking out where positive things are happening.

Community asset mapping emphasizes the strengths of a community, rather than the deficits.



Instead of focusing on what is missing, doesn't work, or is inadequate, the asset mapping process describes community capacity and potential, creating a place to share experiential knowledge of what the community has and what it can use.

The Built Environment

When we think of a map we are primarily seeing the built environment - stores, service centers, residences, public areas - within a geographic area connected by roads and other access routes.



A built environment is the physical community where people live, made up of spaces designed for human activity. What makes these spaces into assets is what happens for the community in them or as a result of them.



In rural areas, the definition of a built environment expands to include agricultural environments.

We can also include infrastructure such as utilities, highways, and telecommunications.



The Built Environment, continued

A community asset map that contains only assets existing in human-designed spaces might be lacking.



The community itself may also define natural resources such as forests, bodies of water, and other spaces which positively affect their lives, as being assets.

In some communities these spaces might be recreational, in other communities they might be valuable sources of food.

The perspective of people who live in the community is necessary to prevent exclusion of assets or siloing according to the particular interests of those creating the map. Residents of the community know what an asset is, have used the asset, can find the asset.

A Participatory Process



Planners and organizers may have internal descriptive language for categories of assets unknown to the community of asset users. Concepts of what constitutes an asset may not line up with the everyday lived experience of community members.

The result might be a map that reflects only the views and experiences of those outside the community.



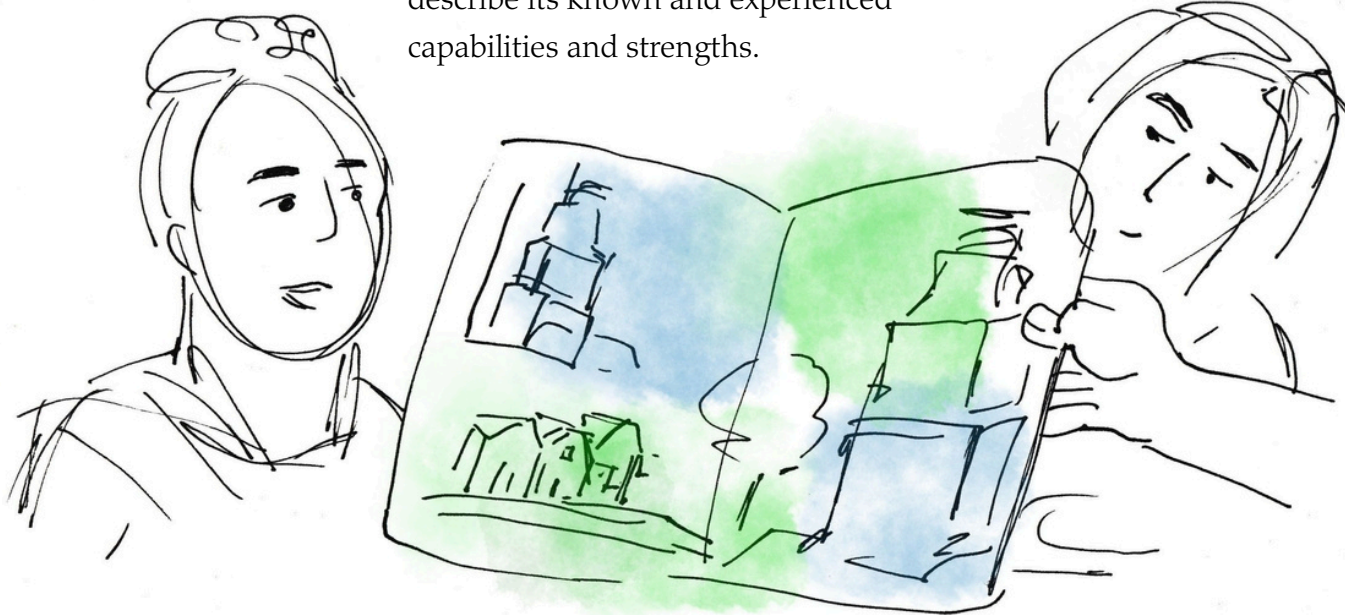
A Participatory Process, continued

A community asset map is most accurate when the community fully participates and feels a sense of ownership of their experience and knowledge.

The act of mapping the neighborhood where you live even has the power to strengthen a sense of civic ownership.



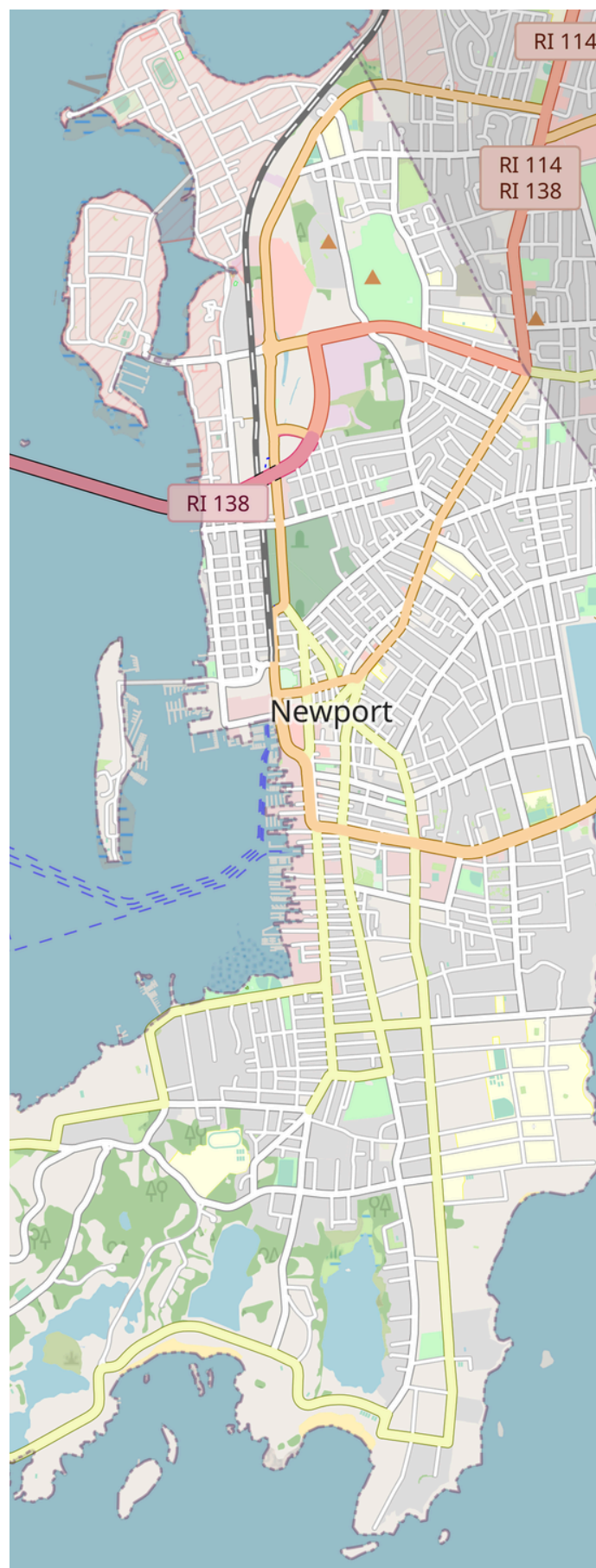
Community asset mapping is a participatory process when community members are asked to map their own environment and describe its known and experienced capabilities and strengths.



“I live here. I know where the assets are and how they can be used. My community, of which I am a part, can utilize this asset.”

The Role of Visualization

Documenting Community
Observing and Recording
Urban Sketching



Documenting Community



During the asset mapping process, participants record observances with a goal of showing them to others.



Documenting Community, continued



Assets emerge from the context of the lived experience of the community. This participatory process can surface previously unspoken experiential knowledge of assets that can identify what is key to supporting the community and what is an asset in name only.

A visual and participatory approach is qualitative, moving beyond secondary data sources to the first-hand experience of what we see and know in our day to day lives.



Observing and Recording

There is a lot we can document in a community. For instance we can observe and record information on places like parks, churches, businesses, town offices, libraries, general stores, post offices.

We can record the location of an asset and the services it provides that are important to the community.

We can even document people who are well known to the local residents in these locations.



Assets can be points of gathering and connection in a community. Some assets are spaces where services are available, some assets are spaces that are themselves services.

Observing and Recording, continued

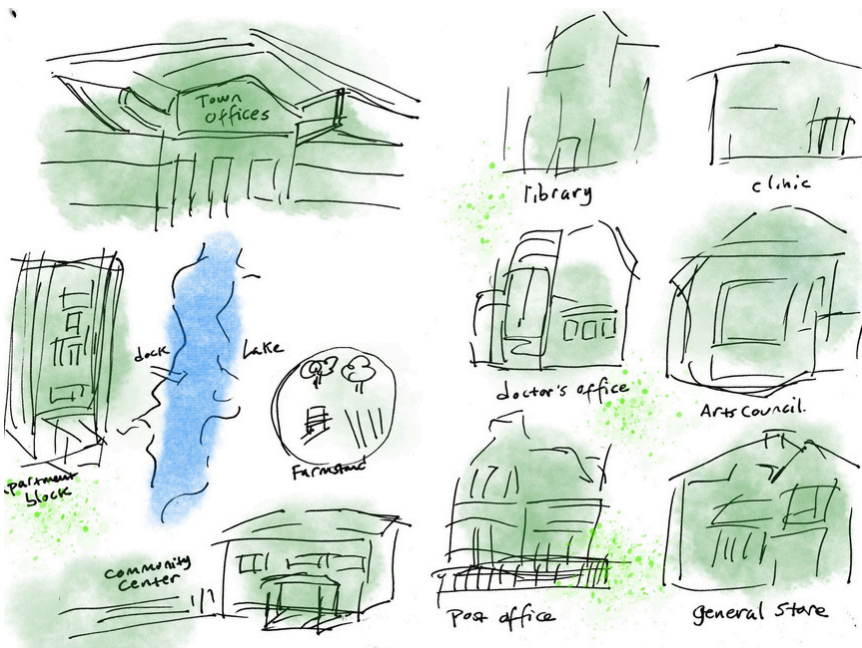


When recording an asset – ask “what do we want to know? What is important information?”

When choosing what to record – ask “what is of interest? What can be observed about this?”

What are the elements that make it an asset that are currently in use, in other words what is observable?

Aim to record detail that will make the asset recognizable to the community.



How do these assets stand in the community? Big? Small? Is it hard to see them? Easy to find them?

Are there places to stand where you get a good view of a range of assets?

Urban Sketching



Urban sketching is a global practice devoted to drawing on location, documenting from direct observation using the sketcher's preferred techniques and supplies and their individual abilities, trained or untrained, loose or architecturally detailed in style.

Urban sketching is primarily a group activity with sketchers observing and sketching in small or large groups and sharing their documentation afterwards side by side to present a full picture of the area under observation. This can be extended into reportage, adding additional research and first-hand knowledge.

Like urban sketching, community asset mapping has the most potential for growth and development when it is a group activity aimed at collective documentation, and when unique perspectives and methods are valued and utilized.

In both community asset mapping and urban sketching, those involved seek to describe the important aspects of their subject, to make it recognizable, to capture a first-hand experience and communicate it to others.

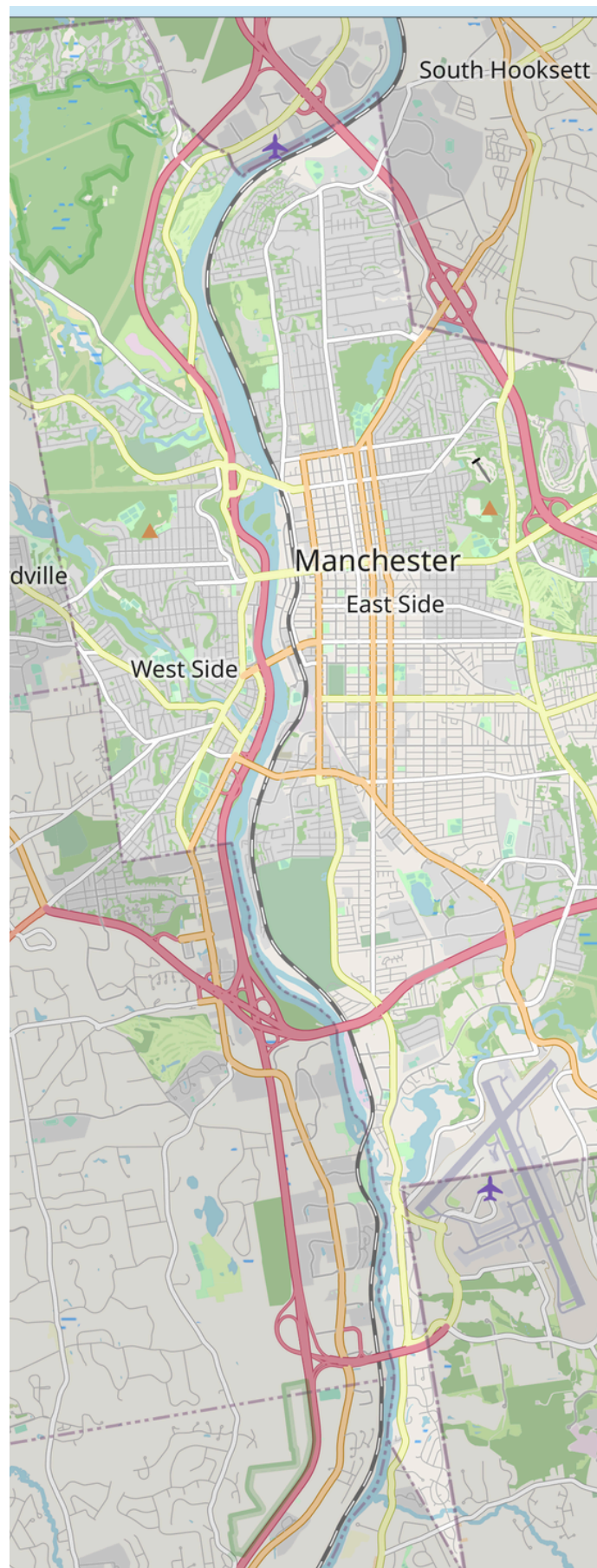


Creating the Map

Information Visualization

Wayfinding

Web-based Mapping Programs



Information Visualization

Mapping assets in a community begins with a process of collection. Whether gathered by the community itself or by planners and organizers, the collection will result in a directory of assets grouped by category, much like the yellow pages of a phone book.



Visualizing assets means seeing them in the environment and in relationship to other assets.

Any piece of information can assist in grouping the assets by category, depending on what is most important to the community and to the aims of associated projects and initiatives.

However, a community asset map does not stay put as a directory of useful places to visit. Asset mapping is a means to accomplishing larger goals – it shows what is available to use for these larger projects.



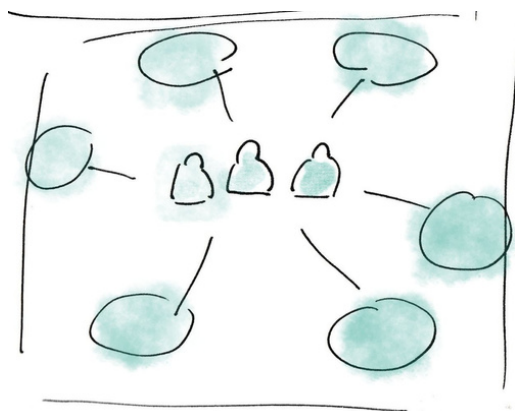
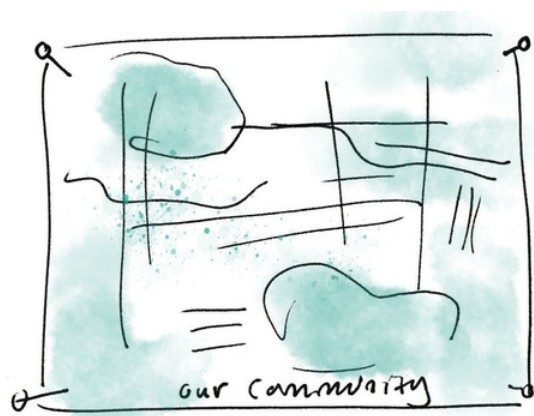
Information Visualization, continued

Collected documentation can be visualized in many different ways, such as:



a spreadsheet or other document, organized by type

a paper map displayed in some way, for instance on a table or a wall



a chart or other infographic

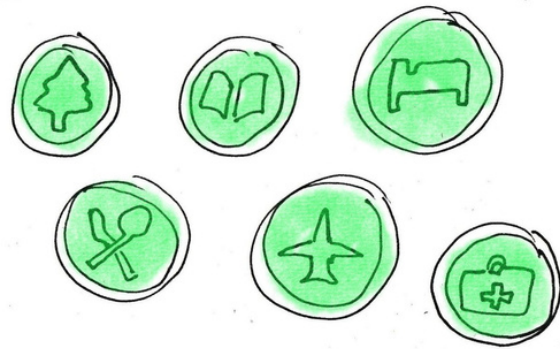


the information joined with some kind of online map

Information Visualization, continued

Information visualization involves taking complex information and reducing it down to graphical elements.

In a map, these graphic elements can be placed in a spatial relationship indicated by position and other relational indicators such as a boundary shaping the outline of a neighborhood to indicate where assets are placed locally.



Visualizing the asset takes it from being an abstract concept to a real entity impacting the people who interact with it.

For example, we can use maps to find out whether an asset is located where most members of the community can access it.

A community asset map can go further than a directory and show how people actually use the assets.

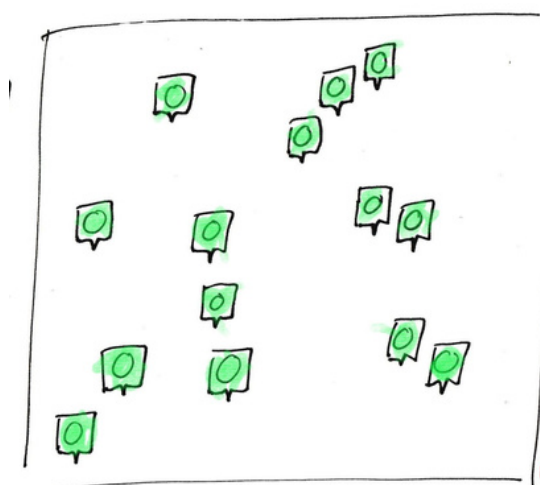
This visual approach can help planners and organizers know what it looks like when people exist within the space of interaction with the assets.



Wayfinding

Wayfinding is the way in which people are able to use information in an environment to navigate through the area and find specific locations.

Wayfinding may be unintentional as in a set of familiar landmarks which can be memorized as reference points, or intentional as in a system of signage in an urban setting using an agreed upon visual language of symbols, colors, and other directional information.



A map can use icons to clearly mark the location of assets within an environment. Like any standard map, these icons allow map users to quickly find particular assets.

Wayfinding can also be utilized when adding descriptive information to assets, assisting map users in finding particular types of information such as access points, connections with other assets, or examples of services provided.

Additionally, viewing the spread of icons tells us where there are high concentrations of assets whose capacity can be leveraged, and where assets are more dispersed and therefore potentially more valuable to community members within that location.



Web-based Mapping Programs

An increase in access to web-based mapping products has made accurate asset mapping easier – digital maps can be used anywhere and connect with advanced technology and real world data.

The benefit of web-based mapping is that anyone, youth, city planners, community organizers, citizen groups, local organizations, can create detailed maps tied into a database of cartographic information and make them generally available to the public and to planning and decision-making bodies.



Web-based Mapping Programs, continued

Using web-based mapping programs, community asset maps can be fully participatory after their creation with users able to keep the map updated with first-hand information on the community assets they know and use.



OpenStreetMap is an example of open-source web-based mapping, similar to Wikipedia. Users can create maps using existing map data or add their own to create a detailed map of a neighborhood, town, or small city using local knowledge.

OpenStreetMap is run by volunteers and free to use under the Open Database License. There are also many open-source programs that make it easy to produce and distribute maps using OpenStreetMap data.



Web-based Mapping Programs, continued

Web-based maps can hold multimedia content including descriptive text, hyperlinks, images, and other information about each asset depending on the platform used.

Users can add any special information needed to understand accessibility, active use, and connection to other assets and to the community.



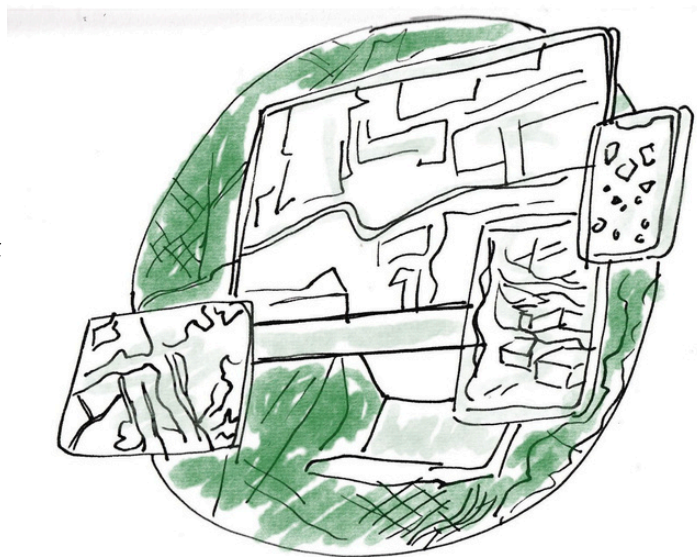
Some programs allow map makers and users to tap into a larger pool of knowledge using a geographic information system (GIS).

ArcGIS Online is a comprehensive GIS that lets users manage, analyze, and visualize geographic data. ArcGIS has tools that are applicable to detailed community asset mapping including a multimedia story map tool. It is also one of the most expensive options available.



Google My Maps is possibly the easiest to use and most accessible web-based mapping program available for community asset maps.

Map makers can design their own custom maps using Google Maps for free. Users can search for locations, and add markers, shapes, categories, and additional material to define their map.

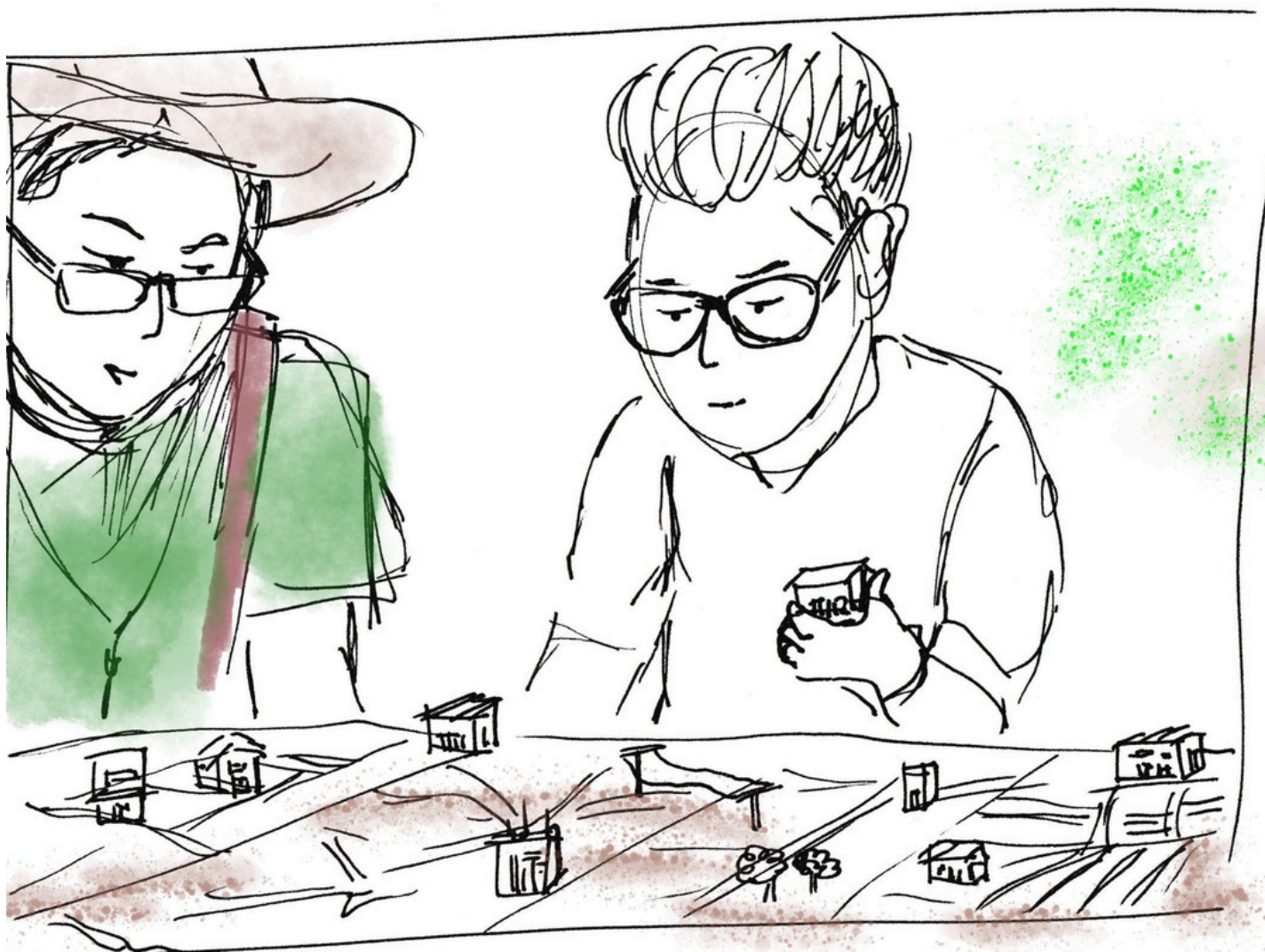


Web-based Mapping Programs, continued

The asset map is a way of the community defining its assets and giving a way for each community member to locate them, increasing the capacity for partnership.

Although community members may have interest in initiatives, they will still face challenges understanding where assets are placed in their community and region, and how to utilize them.

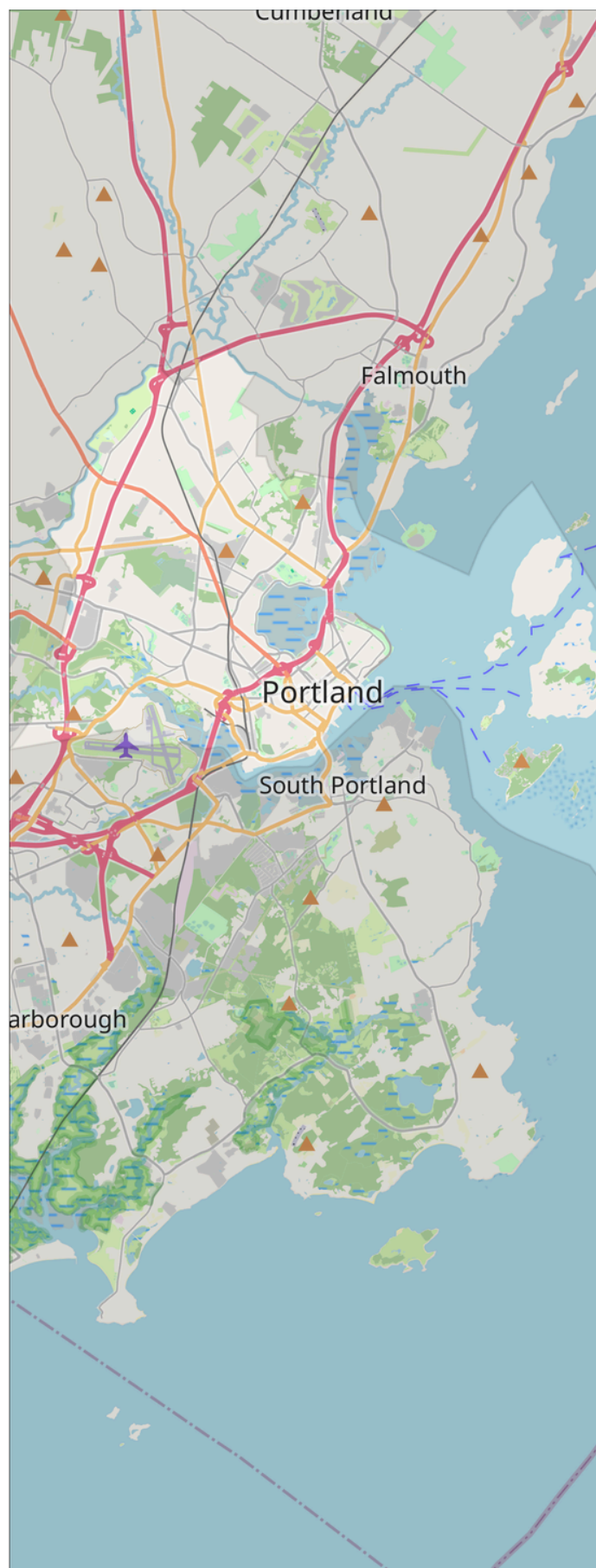
The availability of web-based community asset maps, accessed with little more than an available internet connection, can help overcome the challenge of disseminating knowledge after the process of collection is complete and makes it easier for users to develop collaborations and partnerships with local entities who share their focus.



Resources

Mapping Programs

Further Reading



Mapping Programs

OpenStreetMap - Free

About OpenStreetMap

<https://www.openstreetmap.org/about>

Beginner's Guide

https://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/Beginners%27_guide

Example: Wheelmap

"Mark and find wheelchair accessible places - worldwide and for free."

<https://wheelmap.org>

Google My Maps - Free

About Google My Maps

<https://www.google.com/maps/about/mymaps>

Create a Community Asset Map

<https://case.edu/socialwork/communityinnovation/sites/default/files/2020-07/Asset%20Map%20Toolkit%20%281%29.pdf>

Add Custom Icons

<https://www.wikihow.com/Add-Icons-to-Google-Maps>

Example: Vancouver Food Asset Maps

"Food asset maps help the community locate food assets, build community capacity and help community partners use food assets strategically."

<https://www.vch.ca/en/service/food-asset-maps>

ArcGIS Online - \$700/yr +

About ArcGIS Online

<https://www.esri.com/en-us/arcgis/products/arcgis-online/overview>

About ArcGIS Online StoryMaps

<https://www.esri.com/en-us/arcgis/products/arcgis-storymaps/overview>

Build a Community Asset Map

<https://learn.arcgis.com/en/projects/build-a-community-asset-map>

Example: Chicago's Riverdale Community Area Asset Map

Community asset map for residents of the Riverdale Community neighborhoods.

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/deb85465fd204dd7b1da20d0b762cbb7>

Further Reading

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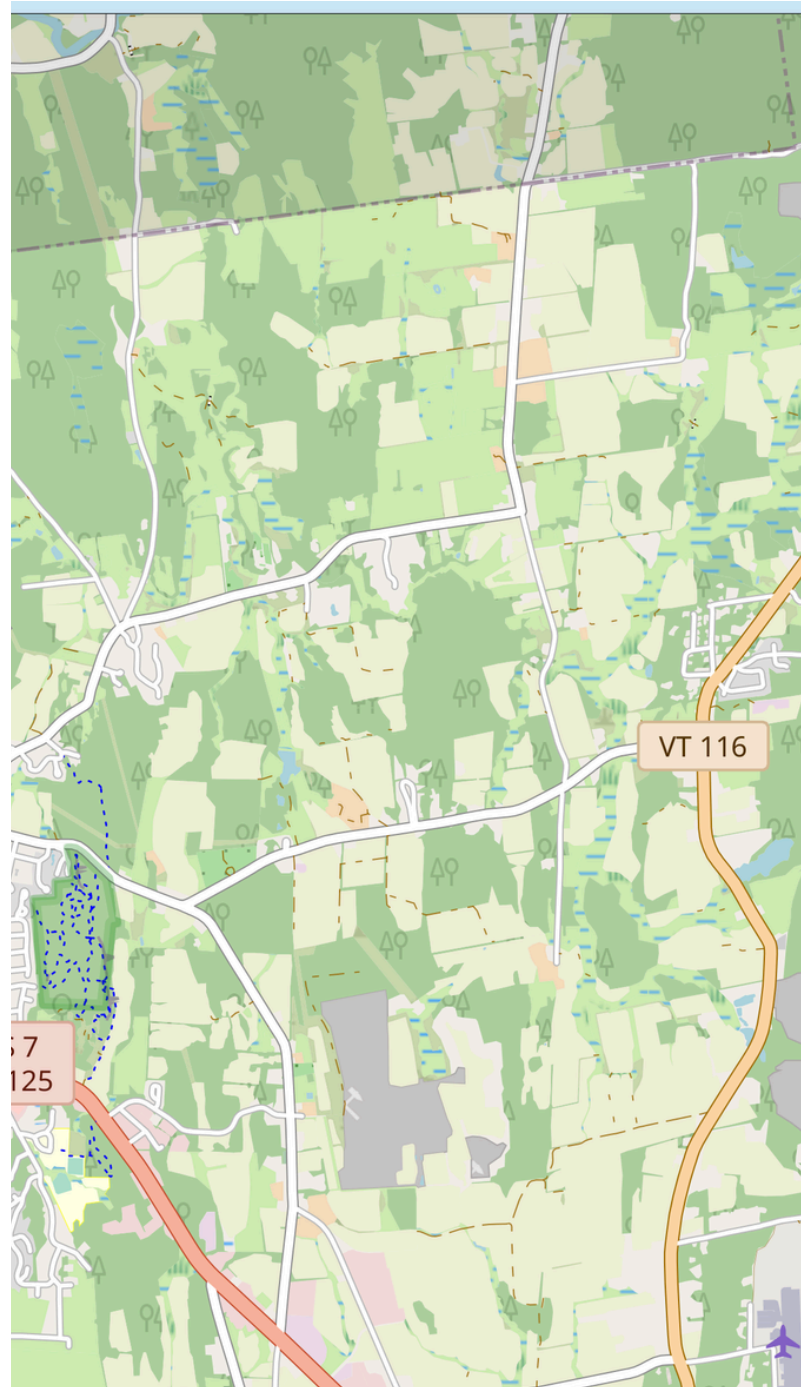
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