The Interactive Community Services map is a web-based application that presents data in a visually accessible and centralized form. The goal is to provide a standardized and reliable information hub for Newcomers, Community Service Providers, Refugee Sponsor Groups and citizens in the community.

The project is part of the larger Open Guelph initiative, focused on modernizing City services and presenting service information in a format which is accessible and relevant to Guelpth residents.

Introduction and Research Goals

There is a great deal of data available about local services, however it is often only available in decentralized text-based lists of service providers. The lists that are available are often specific to only one area of service specialization. It can also be difficult to find this information if an individual does not know where to start looking.

According to 2011 Census data, the City of Guelph’s immigrant population was 24,338 (20%). As newcomers would by definition not be familiar with local community services, a central and easily accessible location for this data seemed an obvious choice for improving access. Such a map would also be a useful tool for those providing and referring services, refugee sponsor groups, and Guelph residents in general.

The map includes four data sets:
- Public and Private Schools
- Licensed Child Care Services
- Organizations Serving Immigrants
- Health Care Services

Background

The Interactive Community Services Map was a collaborative effort between the Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership’s Access to Services Committee (ASC), which is working towards improving service access for immigrants in Guelph and Wellington County, and the City of Guelph’s Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Department. Funding was also provided through the Elevator Project.

Methods

The ASC worked collaboratively to decide which services would be most relevant to the map’s target audience while also preventing the interactive map from becoming cluttered. The majority of community service data was provided by the Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington via their extensive community services database. A great deal of effort also went into confirming and fine tuning the exact coordinates of service locations for the GIS system.

A GIS Consultant was retained to collect and organize the service provider data, in addition to ensuring that the database would function within the Open Data Guelph system. The GIS department of City Hall provided free digital boundary maps, which would have otherwise been a prohibitive cost for the project. These maps provide geographic points of reference such as streets and buildings for easy orientation. Guidance was also provided to the GIS Consultant by the department, and the map is hosted via their servers through their Open Data Guelph website.

The map is comprised of four data sets which may be viewed simultaneously or individually.

- Base maps include simple outline of buildings / streets and satellite image.
- The map offers a zoom function.
- The map may be exported as a PDF.
- Clicking the mouse on any given icon will provide basic information for that service.
- As of February 2017, the map provides information on:
  - 56 public and private schools
  - 53 licensed childcare centres
  - 43 organizations serving immigrants
  - 48 health care services

The map may be exported as a PDF.

The Interactive Community Services Map can be accessed at:

arcgis/29VTYNx

Or through the Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership or Open Data Guelph websites.

NEXT STEPS

- It is the hope of the participants that the Interactive Community Map will prove a valuable tool for newcomers and service providers.
- Easy and centralized access to service information should make the integration and settlement process for newcomers and refugees much smoother and easier.
- Due to timing and budget constraints, the map only includes services available within the city of Guelph. The next phase of the map will include data sets for services in Wellington County in order to provide a more complete picture of what services are available.
- The Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership will continue to monitor and update service location data to ensure the continued accuracy of the map.

Researchers

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