

Category: Sustainability

Project: Monroe Green Maps

What was the challenge?

Located on the edge of Lake Erie, within the Great Lakes—the largest fresh water system in the world—Monroe, Michigan is an agricultural community that suffers a surprising disconnect between its local residents and fresh local food. Food deserts—limited access to fresh foods that constitute a healthy diet—exist for many low-income residents. Local non-profit organizations were searching for ways to inform the public of local food resources, while simultaneously educating them on green living practices (which directly impact the Great Lakes).

What was the solution?

A partnership between Kelly Salchow MacArthur and the River Raisin Institute (RRI) led to the Resilient Monroe Green Map System. It introduced green mapping—the practice of locating and plotting often overlooked green living, natural and cultural resources in an area—to the local community by focusing on fresh, local food resources. The system is interactive on both a personal and public level, designed to engage young and old. The success of the initial green map system led to additional partnership with the Monroe County Opportunity Program, and subsequent development of the Fresh Opportunity Green Map, which identifies food deserts, food pantries, and other resources. The maps utilize the international resource (and database) of the Green Map® icon system, which as

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greenmap.org notes, “has engaged over 950 communities in 65 countries.” Each piece was produced as environmentally-responsibly as possible. Maps were printed locally with soy-based ink on 100% post-consumer recycled stock (milled locally with hydro-power). Wooden medallions were lasercut locally. Woodless pencils were provided with children’s mapmaking passport booklets. Rubber stamps were created (instead of stickers) to acknowledge mapmaking milestones. And 800 reusable grocery bags, made of 100% recycled plastic water bottles, were handed out.

What was the effect?

The system was developed towards impacting and fitting appropriately within the community, from a grassroots approach. The initiative was launched on Earth Day 2018, and has been distributed through local schools and organizations, teaching residents about green mapping and local healthy food, and inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards as part of RRI’s Climate Literacy Program. The system instigates active participation, pride, health, inclusivity, learning, and connection in the community and natural environment.



