**General Guidelines for Creating Non-Visual Maps of K12 Schools, Camps, and Parks**

My name is Shepard Summers. I am a Life Scout and I am working on my Eagle Project, which will take place on August 14th, 2021. I will lead a group of scouts to create non-visual maps for students with visual impairments. In my project the scouts will create maps of schools, scout camps, and parks. This post will include guidelines for creating maps of K12 schools, scout camps, and parks, as well as a self-review checklist to assist in the map making process.

**General Guidelines for creating Maps**

When creating school, camp, or park maps, it is important to follow some general guidelines that will make it easier for students to use your map.

1. **Spell out abbreviations -** The text-to-speech software usually will not pronounce abbreviations correctly, so it is better to spell them out.
2. **Preferably keep point labels no more than 7 words -** Students will likely not want to hear long labels, this is especially true with larger maps.
3. **Include acoustic and tactile Landmarks that may help students navigate the area –** Unique landmarks that you can hear or feel are extremely helpful in navigating an area. Fountains and steep hills are good examples of acoustic and tactile landmarks.
4. **When marking streets try to place a pin on 2 or more intersections -** If you include only one intersection users will not be able to tell which way the street runs**.** Intersections will also help users learn the boundaries of the map.
5. **Include details in labels -** Instead of writing something like “steep incline,” you should include more details about the location. For example, “steep incline to upper field.” This is also applicable for shops. For shops you can include details about its location, a suitable label could look like this: “Gamer’s Armory at Cary Village Square.” You should make sure to keep your labels under 7 words.
6. **If your map contains bus stops, make sure to include details about the direction in the label -** There are often 2 bus stops on either side of a street, make sure to include the direction the bus runs on the label. For example, “Glenwood Avenue at Washington Street Bus Stop - Southbound” is a good label.
7. **Use Layers -** Layers are a way to organize your points into groups of points. Make sure to utilize layers so users can select and deselect groups of points that they want to hear. Most of the time you will at least want to have a points of interest layer and an intersections layer. If your maps contain bus stops, make sure to have another layer for them. Currently, layers are not a feature in SAS Graphics Accelerator, but they are something that will be added in the future, so it is important to still utilize them in our maps. Since layers are not yet a feature in SAS Graphics Accelerator, you should make sure to include enough details in the label so users can tell what the point is without knowing the layer.

**Guidelines for creating a Map of a K12 School**

The purpose of a school map is to help students with visual impairments create a mental map of the buildings and points of interest on a school campus.

Places that you will want to include on your map are:

* **Main Entrance(s)**
* **Buildings -** Academic buildings, cafeterias, and other buildings should be included on your map.
* **Sports facilities -** A football field is a good example of a sports facility.
* **Points of interest -** Areas that students might want to visit should be included on your map.
* **Important landmarks -** Make sure to include acoustic and tactile landmarks that are at the school. These could be a common gathering area, or a small fountain.
* **Bus Stops**
* **Layers -** Some layers you might want to include are Points of Interest and Bus stops (if your school has one close by)

**Guidelines for creating a Map of the area surrounding a K12 School**

The purpose of this map is to put the school in context with the surrounding area. These maps might be as large as a square mile so that they include points that may be of interest to students.

It is important to note that you should only have one pin for the school campus. Including all of the points on the campus will make the map cluttered and difficult to use.

Some places you will want to include on your map are:

* **Major intersections**
* **Places where students might go after school -** Restaurants and shops are often places you will want to include on your map. At my middle school, McDonalds and Dairy Queen were common places for students to go after school.
* **Landmarks –** Things that users could use to navigate; this could be a hill or a loud plaza.
* **Surrounding Bus Stops**
* **Layers -** Some layers you may want to include are Points of Interest and Bus Stops

**Guidelines for creating a Map of a Scout Camp**

The purpose of a scout camp map is to help students with visual impairments create a mental map of the buildings and facilities that are in the camp.

Some important places you will want to include in your map are:

* **Shelters and buildings -** Many camps have shelters at the campsites. Buildings like a dining hall or a bathhouse should be included in your map.
* **Entrances and roads**
* **Landmarks** **-** Some acoustic landmarks could be a flagpole or a river. Other landmarks may include fields or lakes.
* **Activity areas -** This could include a shotgun range or a rifle range
* **Layers -** Some layers you may want to include are Points of Interest and Campsites

**Guidelines for creating a Map of a Park**

The purpose of a park map is to help students with visual impairments create a mental map of the buildings and points of interest that are in the park.

Some places that you will want to include on your map are:

* **Buildings** **-** Common buildings are restrooms and shelters.
* **Intersections of boundary roads**
* **Points of interest -** Fields and playgrounds are common points of interest.
* **Surrounding Bus Stops**
* **Layers -** Some layers you might want to include are Points of Interest, Intersections and Bus Stops

**Self-Review Checklist**

After you have created your map, it is often a good idea to double check your work. Some things you will want to check for are:

* **Location of map in title -** Make sure to include the town and state in the title
* **All labels are correctly spelled**
* **Spelled out abbreviations**
* **Includes at least the nearest intersection**
* **Point labels are 7 words or less**
* **Make sure your points are relevant to the target audience -** If you are creating a map of the area surrounding a school, you probably wouldn’t want to include an animal hospital since students would not be visiting it.
* **Check for details in labels -** Make sure that users can tell what your points are without knowing the names of the layers.