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Geographic Information Systems Facilitate Youth, Youth Workers and Community Stakeholder Efforts

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Geographic Information Systems Facilitate Youth, Youth Workers and Community Stakeholder Efforts

Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD)
South Boston Action Center (SBAC)
South Boston Association of Non Profits (SBANP)

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Summary/Abstract

A large population of underserved students and residents in the City of Boston suffer from behavioral and/or discipline problems, as well as substance and/or alcohol abuse. A side effect of this behavior is the increasing instance of trash such as cigarette butts, condoms, syringes and packaging being discarded in public areas.

The South Boston Youth Action Center (SBYAC) is tackling this problem by making the community aware of the locations and probable sources of this problem. The SBYAC is implementing an effort to rid South Boston parks, playgrounds and areas frequented by children of refuse associated with substance abuse.
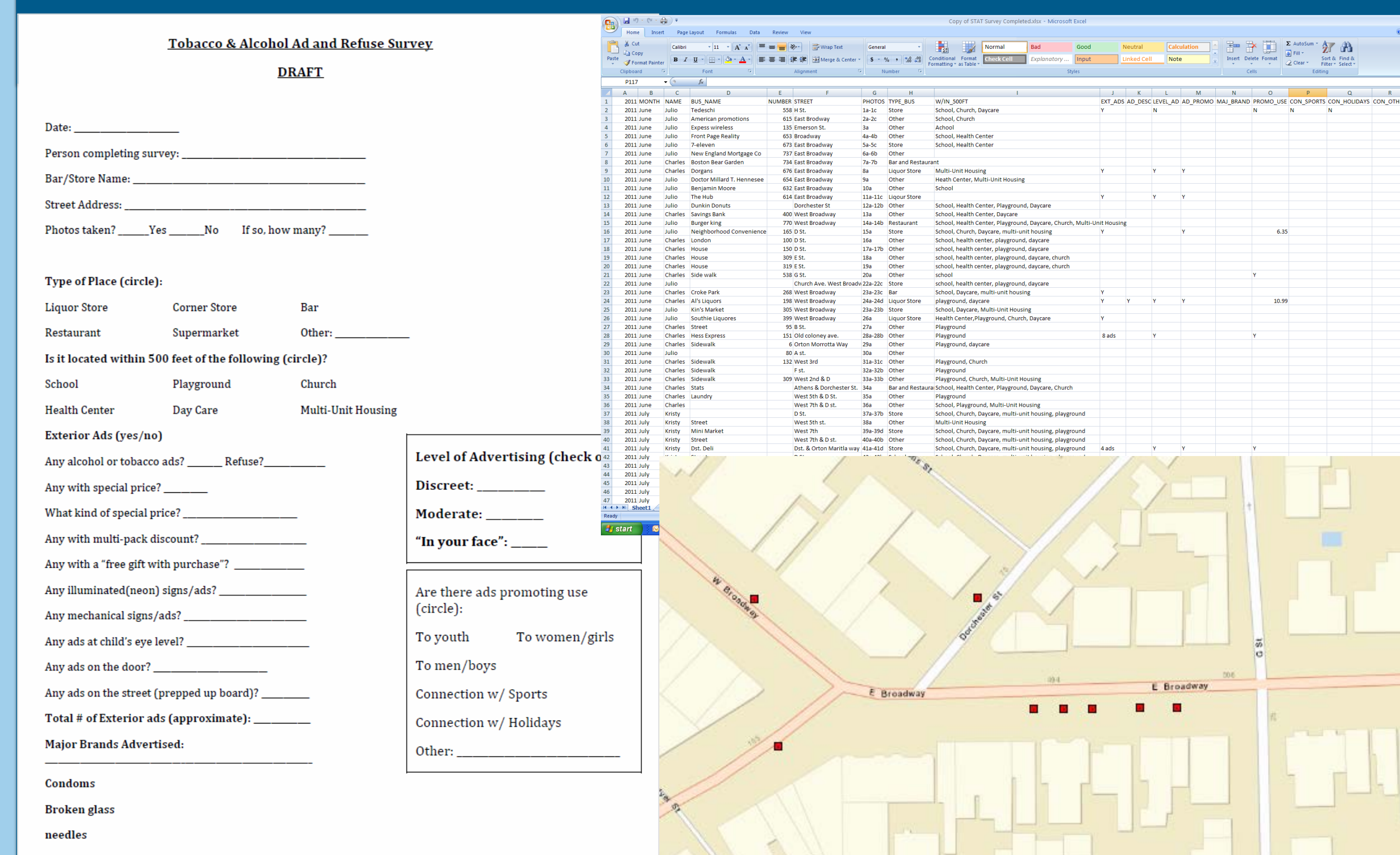
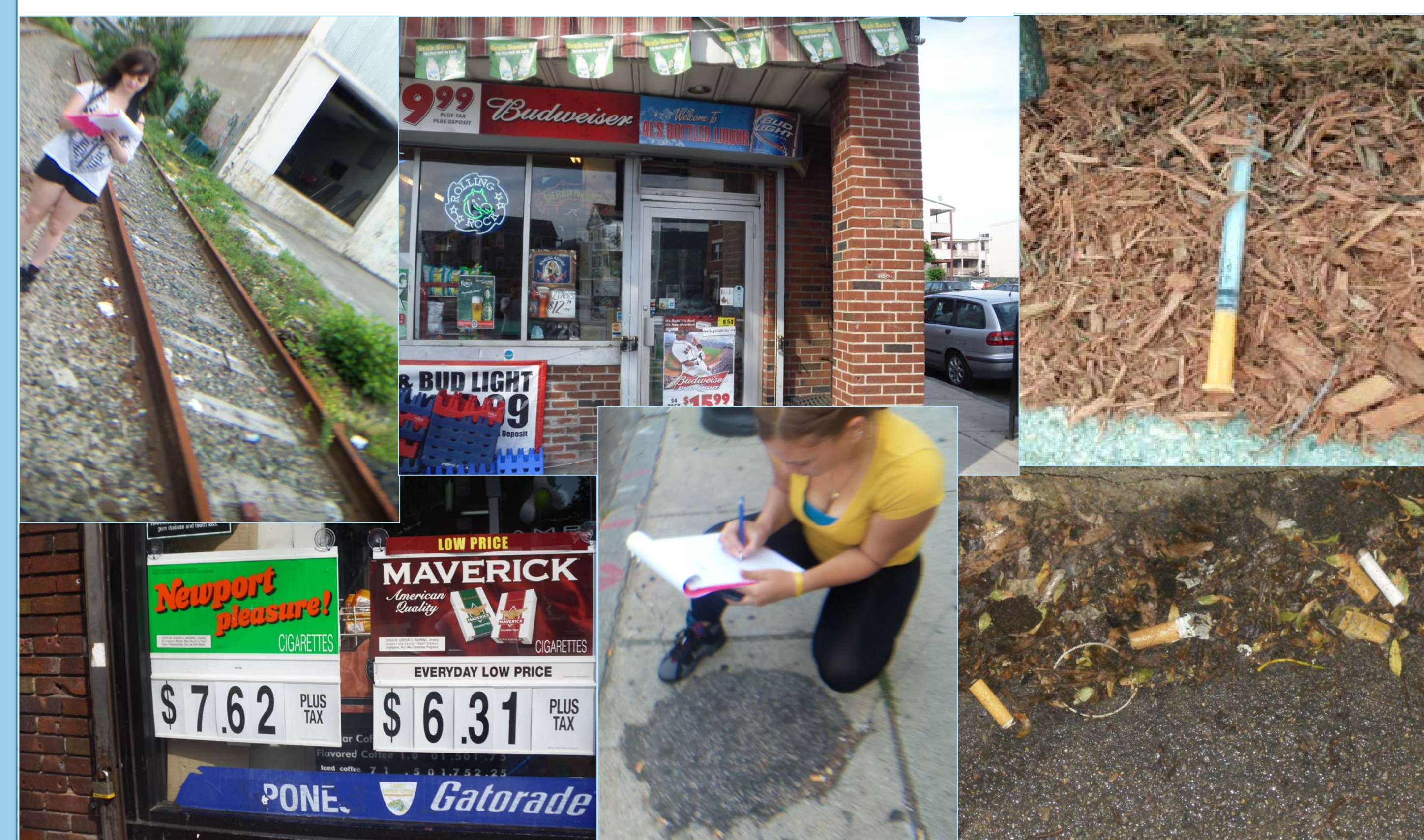And, they are using GIS to do it!

Goals and Objectives

To fulfill the obligations of the Healey Public Service grant by introducing South Boston youth workers to GIS by organizing a GIS training initiative to:

- Teach data collection methods
- Integration of data to GIS
- Basic geocoding skills
- Basic mapping skills
- To empower the youth by giving them tools to improve their community
- To use the web to share information for community action

Implementation and Methods

- South Boston youth volunteers developed a survey to produce data for geocoding sites of refuse , and stores associated with selling cigarettes, and alcohol
- Pictures taken at each site surveyed for website
- Survey data entered into an Excel database
- Database integrated to GIS for geocoding
- Geocoded results mapped at accurate locations
- ESRI ArcGIS Online provides base layer for web application

Results and Impacts

- A collaboration was established:
  - Nicole Young UMB/SBANP, community organizer and project concept
  - Keleigh Loan ABCD-SBAC, Assistant Project Coordinator for Substance Abuse Prevention
  - UMass Boston GIS Lab & IT Ed Tech
- Interactive website developed and deployed to assist community in locating, removing and preventing substance abuse litter from South Boston parks and streets
- Conveyed awareness of role that stores play via product and advertising placement
- Showed effectiveness of GIS spatial analysis in community mapping context

Future of Project

The project is "open ended." GIS training and skills given to youth and community members will sustain discussion and facilitate community wide change. The website is interactive and can be updated and edited by the community via the internet.

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- ESRI – Software and online maps