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To: ChicaGoSafe Team

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Subject: History of Chicago Tourism, Analysis of Successful Features of Tourist Apps, and Recommendations for Important Qualities to Include in Current Project

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Foreword

The software development team of ChicaGoSafe is interested in developing a web-based interactive tourist map of Chicago. This product will be the first and only application developed by our team, and it must be successful for the company to profit. To build an interactive map that can help tourists navigate Chicago safely and confidently, we need to be as prepared as possible before the development of the application. Therefore, I have researched the history of Chicago tourism so we can learn from past resources. I have also analyzed current tourism applications on the market to determine the qualities that make a successful tourism application, including the most popular features that led to their success. The purpose of this memo is to provide my research results, a list of the most important qualities of a successful tourism application, and my recommendations for the key features that should be included in our map application.

Summary

Based on my research, I recommend implementing the following key features in our interactive tourist map of Chicago:

- Color-coded neighborhoods based on tourist friendliness
- Information on emergency services and alerts
- User contribution system for locals and visitors to share their Chicago experience
- Responsive interface optimized for on-the-go usage and planning

To include all of these features and complete development before the end of 2025, the software development team will need to leverage existing technologies and APIs, such as Google Maps and the Chicago Police Department's official crime data ClearMap.

Introduction

Tourism is a major contributor to Chicago's economy, attracting over 55 million visitors annually. In the summer travel season of 2025, hotel bookings generated \$949 million in revenue alone, and Lollapalooza generated over \$480 million for Chicago's economy [1]. However, as someone who has resided in Chicago for over 10 years, there are concerns about safety, navigation, and accessibility of information regarding tourism in the City of Chicago. With the growth of technology, visitors are more likely to rely on a mobile or web application to plan and manage their experiences. ChicaGoSafe aims to create a software that will help tourists navigate Chicago safely and confidently by combining real-time safety data and crowdsourced recommendations.

The goal of this memo is to summarize my research findings on Chicago's tourism history, analyze competitor applications, and provide recommendations on the list of features our software should implement.

History of Chicago Tourism

Chicago has always been the place of commerce and conventions since the 19th century, hosting business and industry-specific conventions. The McCormick Place Convention Center was rebuilt in 1967 after it had burned down, covering 2.1 million square feet of exhibit space across four buildings, drawing in businesses from all across the country. While conventioners and businessmen come for a certain purpose, they typically branch out to enjoy the city's sports, shopping, and entertainment.

Chicago continued to draw in more and more visitors through the Gold Coast apartments, the Sears Tower, and other skyscrapers downtown. Despite this, Chicago's tourists had been limited to domestic travelers. It wasn't until the 1980s that Chicago became a world-class destination for tourism. This was fueled by the luxury retail stores lining North Michigan Avenue, now known as the Magnificent Mile, the unique exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago and other museums, fine dining, blues and jazz clubs, and the chance to see the legendary basketball player Michael Jackson in action [4].

As more people settled in Chicago, ethnic neighborhoods and their cultural institutions began to emerge. By 1995, neighborhoods like Pilsen, which had a large Mexican population, began attracting tourists with walking maps and cultural festivals. In the past decade, the Chicago Chinatown also became a popular tourist destination for food and Chinese cultural experience.

Chicago Safety and Tourist Needs

As Chicago attracted more and more tourists, the safety concerns also became increasingly important. Tourists traveling to Chicago want to enjoy the city's iconic attractions and ethnic neighborhoods without having to worry about their personal safety. They need reliable information about which areas are safe to visit, how to access emergency services if needed, and where to find recommendations from fellow visitors and local residents. Addressing these needs calls for a tourism application that combines real-time safety insights, clear emergency resources, and genuine reviews to help tourists navigate the city of Chicago safely and confidently.

Competitor Analysis

To understand the tourism market and determine the qualities that make a successful tourism application, I analyzed several popular applications used by modern tourists, including Google Maps, Citymapper, and TripIt. The goal of this analysis was to identify the features that led to their success, providing user satisfaction, as well as the unique affordances that ChicaGoSafe could provide.

Findings Overview

Across these three applications, several important features include:

- Navigation and route planning using real-time traffic data
- Creating a list of destinations and/or travel plans
- Offline usability

The following table compares and summarizes the key features, strengths, and weaknesses of existing tourism applications.

Table 1*Comparative Overview of Popular Applications used by Tourists*

Application	Key Features	Strengths	Weaknesses/Gaps
Google Maps	● location searching ● route planning for various transportation methods ● making a list of places to visit	● offline map access ● real-time traffic updates ● extensive global coverage ● mass user reviews	● safety information ● emergency alerts
Citymapper	● multi-modal journey planning ● real-time public transport information	● offline account access ● variety of customization options for accessibility	● focused on commuting and not tourist destinations
TripIt	● offline access ● centralized trip management including flight, hotels, and cars ● real-time alerts ● hyperlocal neighborhood safety scores	● offline account access, automatic itinerary creation, safety information and alerts	● safety functionalities require a paid subscription

Market Gaps

The competitor analysis concludes that there are currently no popular apps that combine tourist navigation, local recommendations, and real-time safety visualization for free. While TripIt provides neighborhood safety scores that were calculated from various credible data sources such as the World Health Organization, it is not transparent about the algorithm it uses to calculate the safety scores [3]. Other applications also lack in the ethnic and cultural aspects of tourism, especially for a place like Chicago which is heavily influenced by its ethnic neighborhoods.

By integrating crime data from the Chicago Police Department's ClearMap with local user contributions for destination recommendations and a responsive map design, ChicaGoSafe can fill this unique gap in the tourism market.

Conclusion and Recommendations

After conducting research on Chicago's tourism and analyzing competitor applications, I can conclude that there is a unique market opportunity for ChicaGoSafe to develop an interactive tourist map focused on safety, navigation, and community engagement. Current popular visitor applications such as Google Maps, TripAdvisor, and TripIt excel in navigation and trip organization, but none provide real-time safety data and crowd-sourced local recommendations for free to its users.

Chicago attracts millions of visitors each year, but the reputation of Chicago's safety has been bad. The President of the United States has called Chicago a "violent hellhole", and Choose Chicago is trying to combat this image by promoting tourism [2]. By integrating public crime data from the Chicago Police Department's ClearMap with a color-coded map interface, real-time alerts, and crowd-sourced data, ChicaGoSafe can directly address these gaps and provide travelers with both confidence and convenience on their next trip to Chicago.

Based on my research, I recommend that ChicaGoSafe move forward with the development of the interactive tourist map following these strategic approaches:

- Leverage existing technologies such as the Google Maps API and ClearMap to minimize production cost and time
- Prioritize mobile responsiveness and offline accessibility
- Color-code each neighborhood with its tourist friendliness score
- Prioritize mobile responsiveness and offline accessibility to support on-the-go tourists.

References

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