

New MapQuest site shows US maps for, by the people

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(AP) -- MapQuest is diving farther into crowdsourcing, with online maps edited by the people, for the people.

The AOL Inc. subsidiary is launching a separate website Thursday where people can chime in with corrections and additions to MapQuest's U.S. maps and label previously unmarked destinations like specific rides at Disneyland or swing sets at their neighborhood parks.

The open-source mapping site lets users report errors, or they can register to be [map](#) contributors to suggest and make changes themselves. Maps at <http://open.mapquest.com> update every 15 minutes, and directions to newly marked spots are available within 24 hours. MapQuest says rogue editors would be policed by the community.

Denver-based MapQuest has been launching similar capabilities since July for maps of specific countries by using OpenStreetMap data and popular open-sourcing mapping software. OpenStreetMap is an editable world map with thousands of contributors. In one of OpenStreetMap's recent, high-profile efforts, volunteers in Haiti after the devastating earthquake in January mapped camps and downed bridges to help aid workers get help where it was needed.

The idea is to create richer mapping data for people who would like to develop location-based applications using MapQuest.

"We would like to 'out-open' Google," MapQuest general manager

Christian Dwyer said.

Google Inc.'s Map Maker lets "citizen cartographers" sign in to draw and edit maps in more than 150 countries and territories, particularly in the developing world, but it hasn't launched those capabilities for the U.S. yet. Community-edited suggestions eventually can make their way onto [Google Maps](#).

Everyday users of Google Maps also can report errors. It can sometimes take about a month for Google to vet suggestions.

Eventually, <http://open.mapquest.com> and MapQuest's main site might merge into one, but that could be at least a few years away, Dwyer said.

MapQuest is hoping to re-establish its relationship in the developer community, allow new applications to be built and attract the best engineers to the company at a time when Facebook, Google and Microsoft Corp. are all going after top talent, Dwyer said.

MapQuest claims about a 45 percent market share in online mapping, making it the No. 2 player behind [Google](#). People visit MapQuest.com about 2.5 times a month, but MapQuest's goal is to become part of people's daily lives, Dwyer said.

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