

# The City of Bakersfield Uncovers the Value of GIS



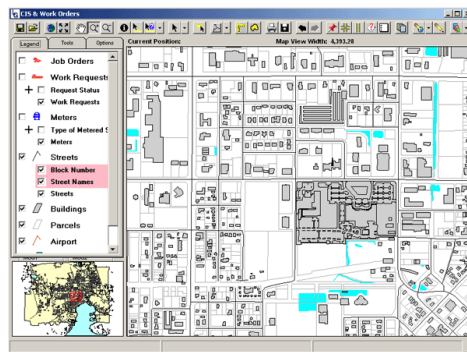
City of Bakersfield, California

Case Study:  
The City of Bakersfield Uncovers the Value of GIS  
City of Bakersfield, California

Throughout history, the citizens of Bakersfield, California have been “roll up your sleeves” kind of people. Whether it was capitalizing on the gold discovered in the Kern River in 1851, mining the oil discovered in the region in 1865, or later, picking up the pieces after earthquakes, the work ethic was as strong in Bakersfield as anywhere in the country.

That commitment to making the community a great place to live is alive and well in the City located on the south end of the San Joaquin Valley, now home to more than 350,000 people. Today, the citizens and city leaders are still rolling up their sleeves, this time to deal with the modern challenges brought by a growth rate among the fastest among America’s large cities.

The City’s street maintenance crews are resurfacing or reconstructing 70 street miles this year and 70 street miles next year.



LGviewer

Like any successful municipality, the City of Bakersfield has turned to technology to help make its community a great place to live and work; one of the most important technologies is GIS.

“I would say Bakersfield is one of the GIS leaders in California’s central valley,” said Matthew Cieri, the City’s GIS supervisor. Cieri oversaw the implementation of Geographic Technologies Group’s LG products, used to make the City’s Sungard-HTE data available in geographic format.

Bakersfield has taken an active role in the Kern GEONET (Kern County’s Geographic Information Network), a consortium of GIS professionals in the 11 cities located in Kern County. The network was formed to coordinate the development of GIS in local government.

The City’s GIS program dates back to the early 1980s when the Developmental Services and Public Works departments jointly developed the first GIS needs assessment. By the turn of the century, the City was ready to launch its GeoWeb online mapping service.

It’s a robust system, offering Internet access to information on current and future development, recreation and park, streets, political subdivisions, code enforcement activities, and public safety services.

“Our city’s growth over the past few years has really put a strain on all of our land-based services,” Cieri said. “So we’ve invested a lot of time updating our core base layers data, such as street centerlines, addresses and parcels. GIS has been well accepted here; we use it in many City departments and divisions such as IT, Development Services Planning and Building, Public Works Traffic, Subdivisions, Solid Waste, Public Safety and others. City management across the board sees the value of GIS and mapping; this makes it relatively easy to sell sensible GIS projects.”

The City is currently going live with LGviewer Work Request Module, which gives users the ability to generate, edit, and query work orders directly from a GIS interface. Staff will be able to manage work orders/task orders and building permits through a GIS interface. They will be able to analyze the spatial distribution of work orders to identify trouble spots and plan preventive maintenance.

“We’ll be able to click on a facility on the map where a problem has been reported, a water pump, for example, and add a work order automatically.”

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One of the City's most pressing challenges is water management. In 1976, the City purchased the water rights and assets of the Kern County Canal Company, which includes levees and the Isabella Dam.

The Water Resources Department promises to be a major user of the work orders module.

The City's Solid Waste Department also uses LGviewer to view address information and find addresses. They plan to use it to manage work orders in the future.

"They are creating a new database for pickup. We have a lot of one-man trucks with automatic arms, and we're putting route information into the database," Cieri said.

The City is currently focused on analyzing and planning routes for the Building Department, improving editing capabilities on their main GIS layers via the Web, and training current and new staff members to get the maximum use out of the City's GIS technology.

"We're also working hard to beef up our documentation. We're developing how-to guides for some of the common GIS procedures and documenting how things are being used," Cieri said.

"We have so many things going on here that I feel everyone can use GIS in their day-to-day processes to assist them in getting the information they need to complete their tasks. We have a ways to go before this happens, but we are moving forward. One day, I hope to see GIS being used to its maximum potential."

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