

GIS: A Focus on Innovation and Citizen Expectations

City of Folsom, California



Case Study:
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In many communities, city government operates quietly in the background and citizens interact with it only in cases of emergency or to complete mundane, routine transactions.

Not so in Folsom, California, a City whose energy, innovation and focus on the future bear no resemblance to the prison town Johnny Cash made famous -.

Today Folsom is brimming with initiatives that encourage and thrive upon citizen involvement, like Get Fit in Folsom, the Folsom Line Light Rail System, Smart Cart Recycling and the groundbreaking for a new library which will be marked with a community celebration.

Folsom residents look to their government to continually improve the quality of life, and City officials welcome their interest.

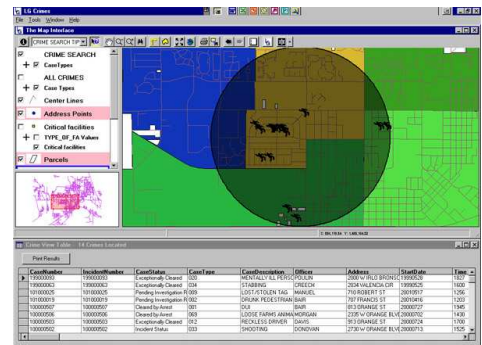
“Our citizens are extremely well educated and technically savvy, and they have high expectations for exceptional city service,” said Ramona Navarrete, Folsom’s GIS Analyst. “There’s sort of a general feeling among city employees that we will do anything for our citizens, so we are always looking for things that will impress them and help us respond to their needs.”

Folsom’s most recent operational enhancement is GIS technology, which allows leaders to overcome some of the challenges brought on by the City’s explosive growth: a 70% increase in population in the past ten years.

“We’re about 14 months into our implementation plan, which was developed by Geographic Technologies Group,” Navarrete said. “Our goals for the first year were to build basic infrastructure, to build our database, and to geocode our files. The City had historically managed its own map files, which were created in AutoCAD by an outside vendor. The Community Development department managed the address assignments, and the two databases were not consistent, so that was a problem.”

One of the initial tasks was to convert the AutoCAD drawings into GIS format.

“Fortunately, the vendor we were using had already registered the files in real world coordinates, so the conversion went smoothly. We have met all of our first year goals.”



Folsom supplements its own efforts by participating in the Sacramento Area GIS Cooperative, which includes the City of Sacramento, the City of Citrus Heights and the Sacramento Municipal Utilities District, among others. The Co-op produces a monthly parcel file, which contains information from the county assessor’s office, and street centerline files. Those files help Folsom verify the accuracy of its own GIS files and addresses.

“We were able to map 96% of our address information, which is excellent,” Navarrete said.

Now, in year two, Folsom is busy developing applications and products and making the data accessible to City Departments through GTG’s LG products.

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"We've produced a few products, like a simple interactive map and a Fire Emergency Response Map Book. These map books are everyday references to locations and routing for emergency incidents; right down to the address for a residence or business. In addition, fire hydrants are included and expedite the location of a water source on fire incidents. We've re-routed most of the City's Solid Waste Customers for more efficient service. This is especially important as our new recycling and green waste programs are just starting." City officials had found inefficiencies in the routes, which cover the City's 22 square miles.

"We mapped the customer data, exported the information to ArcGIS and were able to balance the loads and create more logical routes. We'll use GIS technology to go back and evaluate what kind of impact the rerouting has had," she said.

Using GIS to enhance public safety is high on Folsom's priority list.

The Folsom Police Department is currently updating its software, SunGard HTE CRIMES and Dispatch. When those are updated, LGcrimes and LGdispatch will be put into use to add a mapping functionality to the applications.

"We will use the technology to try to improve some of our traffic problems," Navarrete said.

Two years ago, - it was determined that the road crossing the Folsom Dam was a security risk, and it was closed to traffic. City officials estimate more than 18,000 vehicles per day were diverted into downtown Folsom, overwhelming its streets. (note: City would like this in passive voice and to not point at who made the decision.)

"That has been a big problem for us, but most of our traffic problems are just due to our unbelievable growth," she said. "We're going to run queries through LG to model traffic patterns and accident incidents to help us plan future capital improvements."

Another operation challenged by the City's growth is the address management system.

"We're assigning new addresses, splitting parcels and issuing building permits at an amazing rate. Without high-level GIS capabilities, we could never keep up with everything. With growth concentrated in the east area of the city and the annexation of 3,500 acres to the city there will be a need to locate as many as two or three new Fire Stations. A GIS mapping solution will permit the City to calculate travel times and distances for the most efficient locations for service delivery. We will use LG products to assist in this effort," Navarrete said.

Not surprisingly, as Folsom gets ready to enter year three of its GIS implementation plan, giving citizens access to data is at the top of the priority list.

"We'll continue to refine and add to the GIS processes we put in place in the first two years, but we'll really begin to focus on using the Web to make information easily available to the public. They will love it, and it will help keep all of our operations more efficient."

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Geographic Technologies Group
1202 Parkway Drive
Goldsboro, NC 27534
Phone: 1.888.757.4222
Fax: 919.759.0410
E-mail: info@geotg.com