COMMUNITY MAPPING: Exploring Your Community - Identifying Resources and Needs

ASK
Are there interesting sites or resources in your community that people need to know about? Do you know that you can use GIS to map these locations and share the information with others?

INVESTIGATE
To discover your community’s resources, try looking at your neighborhood or any area of your community with “new” eyes. Look at it as if you were a visitor or someone who just moved to the area. Or maybe you can look at it as if you were a researcher, investigating a particular topic.

To discover your community’s needs, you may want to view it from different perspectives. For example, choose three windows in your community to look through. One window could be the school; another window may be the library or the recreation center. By looking carefully through the window, you may see things that need to be changed.

Identify interesting sites, resources, or needs in your community that may benefit from GIS mapping. For instance, if there is limited access to the internet, GIS can be used to map places where people can go to use the internet (called public access points). Or maybe someone was recently hit by a car while riding a bike. You can use GIS to map all bike paths in your community.

Sometimes data is already collected and other times you must gather the data on your own. Investigate whether you need to collect your own data (primary source) or where you might find data that has already been collected (secondary source). Some places to look for information that has already been collected include US Census Bureau, Department of Natural Resources, police departments, utility companies, county government agencies, park districts, Chamber of Commerce, etc. These places often have GIS databases of information and maps that you might be able to access.

CREATE
Activity 1

Getting Started: For this activity, you will need 5 different colored markers and 5 overhead transparencies. You will use your knowledge of the community. You will not need to be exact.

1. On transparency # 1: Choose a colored marker to draw an outline of your city or community.
2. On transparency # 2: Choose a different colored marker and draw the major roads in your city or community.
3. On transparency # 3: Choose another colored marker and create a symbol to identify the schools in your city or community.
4. On transparency # 4: Choose a different colored marker to outline the major business district(s) and create a symbol to label specific businesses.
5. On transparency # 5: Choose the remaining colored marker to add something else (of your choice) about your city or community. Some ideas include popular youth hangout spots, baseball or soccer fields, playgrounds or parks, churches, or historic landmarks. Create a symbol to identify the item(s).
6. Stack your transparencies together and you will see a layered map or your city or community.
Activity 2

1. Take a “walk about” through your neighborhood or community and make note of anything that you think would be good to put on your map. You may notice something that needs to be improved, interesting landmarks, resources, etc.

2. Look at your list and determine what might benefit from GIS mapping.

DISCUSS

- When you put your map layers together, what kinds of places are closest to major roads? In the center of town vs. on the edge of town? Why is this important?
- What interesting sites, resources, or needs in your community might benefit from GIS mapping?
- If GIS data is already collected, who do you need to contact for the information?

REFLECT

- Who would be interested in your map?
- How will you share your map?
- How do you think your community map would be different if it were drawn 10 years ago?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES