GIS for Real Estate
## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What Is GIS?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIS for Real Estate</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commercial Real Estate</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Pacific Railroad Locates Real Property Assets With GIS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edens &amp; Avant</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIS in Action: Forest City Enterprises, Inc., Successfully Matches Retailers with the Best Properties</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residential Real Estate</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Real Estate Firms Use ESRI RouteMAP IMS to Provide Driving Directions and Easy-to-Use Home Search Engines</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulte Homes, Inc., Launches Web-Based House-Hunting Tool</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Texas, the Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council Helps Businesses Develop Sites, Relocate, and Expand With GIS</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Is GIS?

Making decisions based on geography is basic to human thinking. Where shall we go, what will it be like, and what shall we do when we get there are applied to the simple event of going to the store or to the major event of launching a bathysphere into the ocean's depths. By understanding geography and people's relationship to location, we can make informed decisions about the way we live on our planet. A geographic information system (GIS) is a technological tool for comprehending geography and making intelligent decisions.

GIS organizes geographic data so that a person reading a map can select data necessary for a specific project or task. A thematic map has a table of contents that allows the reader to add layers of information to a basemap of real-world locations. For example, a social analyst might use the basemap of Eugene, Oregon, and select datasets from the U.S. Census Bureau to add data layers to a map that shows residents' education levels, ages, and employment status. With an ability to combine a variety of datasets in an infinite number of ways, GIS is a useful tool for nearly every field of knowledge from archaeology to zoology.

A good GIS program is able to process geographic data from a variety of sources and integrate it into a map project. Many countries have an abundance of geographic data for analysis, and governments often make GIS datasets publicly available. Map file databases often come included with GIS packages; others can be obtained from both commercial vendors and government agencies. Some data is gathered in the field by global positioning units that attach a location coordinate (latitude and longitude) to a feature such as a pump station.

GIS maps are interactive. On the computer screen, map users can scan a GIS map in any direction, zoom in or out, and change the nature of the information contained in the map. They can choose whether to see the roads, how many roads to see, and how roads should be depicted. Then they can select what other items they wish to view alongside these roads such as storm drains, gas lines, rare plants, or hospitals. Some GIS programs are designed to perform sophisticated calculations for tracking storms or predicting erosion patterns. GIS applications can be embedded into common activities such as verifying an address.

From routinely performing work-related tasks to scientifically exploring the complexities of our world, GIS gives people the geographic advantage to become more productive, more aware, and more responsive citizens of planet Earth.
GIS for Real Estate

Whether you work for a commercial real estate agency, multiple listing service (MLS), home builder, or property management department in a corporation, ESRI brings the geographic advantage to you. Location drives the real estate industry. It's not just about finding any site but finding the best site. Real estate companies count on GIS technology to deliver the results they need. By analyzing data around locations—demographics, aerial photographs, traffic counts, shopping center usage, merchandise potential data, and competitive influences—they can find properties to match exacting specifications. GIS helps the real estate industry to analyze, report, map, and model the merits of one site or location over another. From identifying the best fit for new commercial development or matching a homebuyer’s decision criteria to managing a property portfolio, ESRI GIS delivers the answers needed to make the best choice in real estate.
Union Pacific Railroad Locates Real Property Assets With GIS

Founded in 1862, Union Pacific Railroad is the largest landholder west of the Mississippi River. In fact, it is second only to the United States government in overall landholdings within the United States. Many of these properties represent right-of-way parcels that run along active rail lines. Other properties include old rights-of-way along discontinued tracks, timber holdings, and property purchased from other railroads. A large portion of the property was given to the railroad by a land grant from President Abraham Lincoln as an incentive to complete the transcontinental railroad, which was completed in Promontory, Utah, as the last spike was ceremoniously driven into the track on May 10, 1869. Currently, Union Pacific controls 33,000 miles of track throughout the western United States.

Valuation map along rail line in Colorado.
Managing all this property over the past 136 years has caused issues for the railroad. Valuation maps were drafted and maintained to help control the purchase and sale of property over the years, but numerous updates and the ravages of time have made these maps fragile and difficult to work with. Since the information contained on these maps must be used for making key financial decisions for the railroad, it is necessary to disseminate this information widely throughout the Real Estate Department and the company as a whole. These issues are compounded by the fact that there are 32,000 real property valuation maps in the railroad archives.

Eventually, the railroad came to the conclusion that it needed an effective way of handling these maps. It was the vision of John Hawkins, a project manager of Information Systems in the Real Estate Department, that GIS was the most viable solution to the problem.

"We came to the conclusion," says Hawkins, "that the best way to solve many of our problems was to digitize and spatially locate our maps. This way we could also relate newer, spatially enabled data with our historic maps."

The railroad basemap data is a highly accurate source created using Union Pacific's Precision Measuring Vehicle (PMV). PMV is a truck or sport utility vehicle equipped with cameras, lasers, and GPS units that can drive directly on the tracks and collect a very precise GIS representation of the rail bed. This was the data with which the maps were to be located.
The railroad submitted a request for proposal that went out to competitive bid to spatially locate 15,000 of the valuation maps. These 15,000 represented the maps that fall along existing railways, which, therefore, would be the easiest to locate. ESRI's Database Services Department, a group within ESRI's Professional Services Division, was awarded the contract based on price; a sound solution presented at an on-site presentation at Union Pacific headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska; and ESRI's reputation as a leader in the GIS industry.

The scope of the project included spatially locating scanned valuation maps of rail lines within 26 states of the western United States. Index polygons were then created around each georeferenced map to provide ease of access. The maps were aligned and indexed in ArcView using the georeferencing and editing tools. GIS Data ReViewer was used to perform quality control.

![Index of georeferenced valuation maps along rail lines in the western United States.](image)
Managing all of these scanned images was challenging on many fronts. First, the maps themselves had names that were not necessarily meaningful to many of the people using them. The original name, which was based on state, railroad, and valuation section number, had to be replaced with a much simpler naming convention. The railroad elected to use a state abbreviation and an index number to support this. A link still had to be maintained to the original naming convention, which is how the engineers who update the maps keep them organized. The index polygons maintained both features, and the images were stored in a directory structure that preserved the state, railroad, and valuation section convention.

Another challenge was keeping delivery data together while ensuring that no image was lost. The images were delivered to ESRI on 30 CDs, then divided by state and delivered to the subcontractors that were to perform the work. The challenge arose when some images passed quality control while others did not. It was necessary to send rejected images back to the subcontractor for repair, but the tight schedule would not allow rework to hold up deliveries. The solution was to divide the data deliveries into groups for the subcontractors, quality control check the images, deconstruct the deliveries, and recompile them as new deliveries containing only accepted images for delivery to Union Pacific.

Verifying the quality of 15,000 images required a creative use of GIS Data ReViewer (an ESRI Production Line Tool Set for ArcGIS component). The way GIS Data ReViewer is traditionally used, the quality control technician reviews a selected sample of features within a new database and identifies features that have errors. The errors are then recorded as new records in an error table. This approach is very effective for most quality control implementations but was not appropriate for performing 100 percent quality control on 15,000 images. Instead, ESRI converted the image inventory for each delivery into a GIS Data ReViewer table. When an image was georeferenced, the technician would place a shape point at or near the center of the georeferenced image. The shape point was given the same object ID as the record in the GIS Data ReViewer table. Then, when the quality control technicians wished to locate an image for verification, they needed only to click on the record in the table and ArcView software's ArcMap application would "drive" the display to the correct location automatically.

Once the project was completed, the railroad began seeing immediate benefits. The Real Estate Department already uses the maps to geolocate encumbrances on its property, establish rights-of-way, and identify excess properties that can be sold off, among other things. According to Hawkins, the georeferenced maps "have saved an immeasurable amount of time doing property research."
"There are many more uses," says Hawkins. "All of the functions we do in the Real Estate Department depend on these maps. We have found even more uses for them than we had originally envisioned. Many entities within the railroad hierarchy are also finding great uses for the newer structure that these maps are in." One group is using the maps in ArcGIS to identify possible locations to build cellular transmission towers. Another group is using the maps to manage properties that can be leased for the installation of new communications trunks that run along Union Pacific corridors.

(Reprinted from the Spring 2005 issue of ArcNews magazine)
Edens & Avant

Using GIS to Meet Lessor's Needs

Edens & Avant is one of the nation's leading private retail real estate companies. It focuses on the acquisition, development, leasing, and management of retail centers leased to regional and national retailers such as Fresh Market, Whole Foods, Starbucks, and Target. The company has more than $2.5 billion in assets with its real estate portfolio comprising more than 200 owned and managed shopping centers in 18 states. The company is headquartered in Columbia, South Carolina, and has regional headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C.

With a project pipeline of more than $550 million, Edens & Avant needed to research and market new sites for shopping center developments quickly and efficiently to high-end retailers.

Edens & Avant has been a user of ESRI software since 1998, when it began using ArcView Business Analyst to create custom demographic reports for its property portfolios. It later expanded this use by creating an online property search function that enables retailers to find space matching their specific search criteria. This award-winning Web site is located at www.edensandavant.com.

While Edens & Avant's use of its geographic information system (GIS) served it well with existing clients and clients proactively searching for retail space, it knew GIS could be used to target and market to specific retailers for new shopping center developments. The company needed the ability to research and present shopping center competition, planned and active housing developments, and new road projects.
Abercorn Walk is a Fresh Market chain-anchored development located in Savannah, Georgia.

**Problem**  
Commercial real estate company needed a better way to target market to potential retailers for new shopping center developments.
Goals

- Market new shopping center developments to high-end retailers.
- Create system that provides demographics, maps, pictures, aerial photographs of sites, site plans, copy points, and contact information to retailers over the Internet.
- Give leasing agents access to analysis tools for creating portfolio reviews.

The Solution

The company began by focusing on the needs of its customers—interviewing retail clients at the International Council of Shopping Centers Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, in 1999. The company also interviewed its own leasing representatives to gain their perspective, as this group would be a primary user of the site.

After these interviews, Edens & Avant agreed that continuing to use ESRI's Business Analyst software, a suite of products and services that gives quick and easy access to data and tools for business users, was the right solution. It also incorporated ESRI's RouteMAP IMS, an out-of-the-box solution for adding customized mapping and routing capabilities to Web sites. Using the GIS software along with Microsoft Access, the system provided demographics, maps, pictures, aerial photographs of sites, site plans, and contact information to retailers via an online application.

The data chosen for the solution consists of current-year demographic data included in the Business Analyst software as well as ESRI's Community Tapestry segmentation system, which provides an accurate, detailed description of neighborhoods in the United States. Tele Atlas U.S. Streets via ArcWeb Services is used to display the interactive map and directions. In 2005, TrueMatter LLC, a Web site development company, performed the upgrade to ArcWeb Services as well as additional enhancements to the Web site. Other data includes shopping center information from Edens & Avant's own database geocoded to a location and state and Metropolitan Statistical Area centroids from the National Transportation Atlas Database (NTAD).

This combination of data and software allows Edens & Avant to sell retailers on new locations for shopping centers. By conducting customized portfolio reviews for retailers, leasing representatives identify centers that meet the detailed criteria of an individual retailer. Edens & Avant is able to analyze demographics and market conditions for the retailer to determine what characteristics drive the business. It can then present the centers that best meet the retailer's requirements. Competition maps, aerials, demographics, market research, and site plans are
included in the presentation to give each retailer a complete understanding of each center and the market.

![Edens & Avant's Property Locations and Shopping Center Development Pipeline.](image)

**Results**  
Edens & Avant is now able to quickly analyze and market new shopping center developments to the right mix of retailers. The company is able to provide its clients with important information.
including current and planned housing, competition in the area, accessibility to the site, traffic counts, gravity models, other sites available, and zoning. This is all incorporated into easy-to-understand reports and map presentations. Leasing agents are able to use this data to shorten the sales cycle on new developments.

- Create highly targeted portfolio reviews for prospective customers in-house.
- Cut costs and reliance on outside firms for analyzing market data.
- Create more targeted and specialized presentations.

"ESRI's GIS software and data have made it easier for our leasing representatives to provide targeted market analysis for our retail customers."

David Beitz
Edens & Avant

**Software Used**
- ArcView Business Analyst
- RouteMAP IMS
- ArcWeb Services

**Data Used**
- ESRI current-year demographic data
- ESRI Community Tapestry data
- NTAD database

**Other Software Used**
- Microsoft Access Database
- .NET
- XML

GIS in Action: Forest City Enterprises, Inc., Successfully Matches Retailers with the Best Properties

Forest City Enterprises, Inc., a $7.2 billion real estate company headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, operates under three strategic business units: commercial, residential, and land development. Forest City Enterprises is listed on the New York Stock Exchange under the ticker symbols NYSE FCEA and FCEB. Principally engaged in the ownership, development, acquisition, and management of commercial and residential real estate properties, the company’s portfolio includes interests in retail centers, apartment communities, office buildings, and hotels in 20 states and the District of Columbia. Forest City Enterprises has been in business for more than 80 years.

The growth of Forest City Enterprises depends on the continued improvement of its existing properties, the addition of new developments to its portfolio, and the timely acquisition of properties. Selecting retail properties and matching them to the best prospective retailers is a major challenge facing Forest City Enterprises. Much of the company’s success emanates from its strategy to diversify and capitalize on high-growth markets that have distinct competitive advantages. Forest City focuses primarily on large, unique, and complex projects in high-growth urban areas such as Boston, Massachusetts; Denver, Colorado; New York City, New York;
Los Angeles, San Francisco, Redondo Beach, Rancho Cucamonga, Palmdale, Temecula, and San Diego, California; and Washington, D.C. These target markets account for more than half of Forest City's property locations. They are characterized by highly educated populations with above-average per capita incomes and above-average growth in per capita incomes.

To stay abreast of market analysis trends for property acquisitions, Forest City Enterprises had to implement a new system for daily in-house analyses without hiring outside consultants. Forest City Enterprises wanted to improve its mapping solution. Attention focused on reduced operation costs, greater access for multiple users, and better flexibility for the in-house production of demographic reports and maps as part of the retailer assessment packages.

The Solution

Forest City Enterprises asked ESRI to design a solution that met the expanded demographic and mapping analysis requirements yet stayed within a specified, budgeted amount. ESRI suggested ArcGIS Business Analyst desktop analysis software combined with Business Analyst Online, a Web-based reporting and mapping service. This provides Forest City Enterprises, Inc., greater flexibility in how it addresses the analysis needs of different projects and gives it improved control over budgeting and investment risk.

As part of the analysis process, Forest City Enterprises also uses Retail MarketPlace and Community Tapestry. The Retail MarketPlace database measures the leakage/surplus that directly compares the demand (consumer spending by household) to the supply (retail sales by business). Tapestry provides a demographic profile of consumers in the retail area. These two data types provide even more comprehensive detail for the retailer assessment packages.

Diana Parsons, research and design administrator at Forest City Enterprises, said, "Having the ability to convince retailers of a market's value and how they will enhance that value is one of the greatest impacts we have seen from using ESRI products and services. We can use ArcGIS Business Analyst to shade key demographic variables, such as income or the number of households, on thematic maps to highlight a proposed area for a potential retailer."

Results

Using state-of-the-art geographic information system (GIS) software and data from ESRI, Forest City Enterprises has realized dramatic savings of time and money by bringing this capability in-house. "Now we can help retailers explore a market location in finer detail and provide them with much better customer service," said Parsons. "ESRI's Business Analyst Online is one of the..."
best tools we have to perform our marketing analyses. It simply towers over the competition. The quick access, value, and user-friendliness of the service allow us to precisely explore a market to successfully optimize the leasable space in our retail portfolio. At Forest City Enterprises, detailed demographic information from ESRI allows us to analyze prospective areas more accurately and provides a win-win situation: success for our retail centers and for the retailers we position there."

ESRI Retail MarketPlace database measures the leakage/surplus that directly compares the demand (consumer spending by household) to the supply (retail sales by business).

(Reprinted from the Summer 2006 Real Estate edition of BusinessGeoInfoNews)
Residential Real Estate Firms Use ESRI RouteMAP IMS to Provide Driving Directions and Easy-to-Use Home Search Engines

As the Internet continues to grow, so does the sophistication of data that people are seeking. For the residential real estate market, potential home buyers visiting Internet sites that provide easy access to powerful search tools, such as those found at Windermere, www.windermere.com and Pulte Homes, www.pulte.com, can quickly find homes or communities and get driving directions to places that look interesting. The ability to quickly uncover a house and figure out how to get to it are becoming increasingly important features on any competitive real estate company’s Web site.

RouteMAP IMS is an affordable, out-of-the-box Internet map server (IMS) designed to help residential real estate professionals add mapping and routing capabilities to their Web sites. It is an economical solution for any company wanting to customize the look and feel of its Web site instead of relying on third-party hosting services.

RouteMAP IMS can not only serve up geographically based information and driving directions for individual real estate companies but for Multiple Listing Service (MLS) agencies as well. With their investment in MLS information, companies, such as Trend, www.trendmls.com, and Solid Earth, www.solidearth.com, need solutions that provide security for their data as well as complete control of the application in-house. RouteMAP IMS provides this peace of mind.

RouteMAP IMS allows MLS agencies to provide their own application services to other individual real estate firms. By acting as an application service provider, an MLS agency can provide all of its information to others, including mapping data, for the cost of the application. This means that no matter how many prospective home buyers look at the MLS agency’s information through various clients’ Web sites, it only pays for the application, not the cost of every transaction. The MLS agency can budget effectively year after year and know exactly what its costs will be.

At the end of the day, RouteMAP IMS delivers an application that is cost-effective, resides on in-house servers, allows complete control of the application and data, and provides a robust API
to create the look and feel of your Web site. Use RouteMAP IMS to bring potential home buyers to your Web site and keep them there—not at your competition's.

(Reprinted from the Summer 2006 Real Estate edition of BusinessGeoInfoNews)
Pulte Homes, Inc., Launches Web-Based House-Hunting Tool

*Puts Information a Click Away from Its Customers’ Fingertips*

Pulte Homes, Inc., the second-largest builder of homes in the United States, recently revealed its new Web-based tool that assists potential home buyers to quickly locate a new home in a desirable area. The tool allows house seekers to navigate an interactive map, rapidly "drilling down" to an image of the desired home along with relevant information. The tool, built by ESRI business partner and Michigan-based company IDV Solutions, will assist those looking for new houses in more than 45 real estate markets across the United States.

Ian Clemens, chief technology officer of IDV Solutions, views the visual, map-based search tool as the obvious next generation of house-search tools. "In most cases, potential home buyers have a specific geographic area in mind; therefore, a visual, map-driven search tool available via the Web strongly resonates with the user's search process," said Clemens.

IDV used its own Location Feature Server, along with ESRI's RouteMAP IMS software, to build the application. "We decided to use ESRI's RouteMAP IMS software," said Melissa Davis, national e-commerce manager, sales and marketing, Pulte Homes. "We like the ability to add custom layers to the maps."

RouteMAP IMS is ESRI's affordable, out-of-the-box solution for adding customized mapping and routing capabilities to Web sites. Web visitors are able to quickly find locations and calculate routes with driving directions to any location.

Pulte Homes’ Web site allows visitors to drill down to neighborhoods by clicking on a map, making it easy to search areas that may not be familiar.
Now, when customers visit the Pulte Homes Web site, they can select the state they want to search by pointing and clicking on a map. The next page allows them to select a Metropolitan Statistical Area or city with available Pulte Homes communities. By drilling down from a city level to neighborhood or street level, users can find a community with a desirable home in a more intuitive and productive way than traditionally available. Users can click to contact a sales associate and/or get driving directions to the community. Overall, the solution has helped link buyers to agents in the most practical and responsive way, ensuring everyone gets an improved home search experience.

(Reprinted from the Summer 2006 Real Estate edition of *BusinessGeoInfoNews*)
In Texas, the Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council Helps Businesses Develop Sites, Relocate, and Expand With GIS

*Consultants, Brokers, Developers Can Now Get a Clearer Picture*

For more than 15 years, Fort Bend County, Texas, has been in the top 20 counties in the United States for economic excellence (99th percentile for job and population growth). It's because this county has something to offer everyone—affordable housing, high-quality life, ample recreational opportunities, excellent school districts, and jobs. The highly educated workforce (40 percent of adults have bachelor's degrees or greater educational attainment) has attracted global corporations seeking ethnic diversity. The subtropical climate allows outdoor activities year-round; it's no wonder Fort Bend County hosts 21 golf facilities with 450 holes of golf, making it one of the highest per capita golf areas in the nation.

The DEVELOPRO 72-inch touch screen makes it easy for non-GIS professionals to navigate more than 100 layers of information used in site selection in Fort Bend County, Texas.
The Fort Bend markets are thriving. In less than five years, Fort Bend has added approximately 9.2 million square feet in office, industrial, and retail space. To continue promoting economic vitality and quality development in Fort Bend County, the Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council (EDC), a public–private partnership, was established in 1986. This is the council's mission, and as a result, corporations requiring excellence and diversity in their workforce are finding a home in Fort Bend County. Global corporations, such as Baker Petrolite, Champion Technologies, Fluor Corporation, Frito-Lay, Input/Output, Nalco, Sabic Americas, Schlumberger Technology, Suntron, Tadarin Microwave Networks, Texas Instruments, and Unocal are thriving in this diverse environment.

With 5 to 6 percent annual growth and rapid progress such as this come difficulties in getting information out to those who need it on a timely basis. The council had been using traditional paper process technology to respond to site location, demographic, and available space inquiries. The council needed a better way to assist developers while continuing to plan for quality development, as well as find a better solution for the input, storage, retrieval, and delivery of this information.

The council was intrigued with GIS and saw how the technology could bring it benefits. Along with its business partner LJA Engineering (Austin, Texas), the council created an economic development tool—DEVELOPRO—based on ArcGIS Business Analyst. This tool is a customized application based on an easy-to-use menu system that is outfitted with a 72-inch, touch sensitive "smart" screen connected to a Dell laptop computer system. Using ArcGIS Business Analyst along with DEVELOPRO and the touch screen, GIS is easy to use by people who may not be familiar with the technology. Research time for site identification and development, fatal flaw analysis, and demographic research is greatly reduced. Site
consultants, brokers, corporate real estate executives, and developers can now do site selection and feasibility research with little assistance from council staff.

The data used is based on a digitized aerial photograph of the county with more than 100 layers of additional information, including roads, topography, county mobility plans, municipality utility districts, and demographics. The council has included data layers for retail "big box" and office and industrial buildings availability. Sharing of this data is now more efficient and cost-effective for the government agencies, the County GIS Consortium, and the private sector. ArcGIS
Business Analyst has made it easy for users in these different organizations to share maps and data. New layers of information are added continuously, and cost sharing has reduced the basemap burden on individual participants.

"Without the GIS Consortium and our partner, LJA Engineering, this exceptional project could have never become a reality," says Herb Appel, president of the Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council. "Now, because of this cooperative effort, site consultants, brokers, users, and developers can now identify potential sites, research all infrastructure availability, and narrow their search criteria in one session with a staff member using the GIS system. This has the potential to revolutionize the way the entire economic development industry does business. We believe the process of identifying and utilizing shared information between the units of government, the Fort Bend EDC, and the private sector will lead to increased revenues and decreased expenses for all concerned."

Now, a client or broker looking for office space in the county sets up an appointment with the council and sits down with a technician to search office space. ArcGIS Business Analyst is queried with the specified project parameters through the customized menus that make up DEVELOPRO. Information, such as address, name of building, rental rate, size, available space, amenities, and broker information, is instantly accessible. All the office buildings that fit these parameters are shown on the aerial photo. By touching one of the location symbols on the touch screen, the building specifics will appear along with a link to a photograph of the building. In less than one hour, the broker or client can leave the council's office with a color printout or digital file of each building that meets its needs, as well as complete demographic and tax information for the site. This analysis can be used for the county's retail, industrial, and raw land. The client or broker can identify potential sites, research infrastructure availability, and narrow its site search.

"Throughout the years, we have gathered every piece of information that we could get hold of," says George Culver, GIS specialist, Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council, "essentially creating a comprehensive library of Fort Bend County. Data creation and sources ranged from previously formatted GIS data and hard-copy maps to mapping personal knowledge of county activities and resources. Working with the people within the county (county officials, brokers, developers, and special interest groups), we have created a central data location that will answer any question that may arise about Fort Bend County."
In an effort to strategically plan for future development of the remaining commercial property in the cities of Sugar Land and Missouri City, the council and the cities retained Angelou Economics (Austin, Texas) to perform a market and economic study, a target industry analysis, and site assessments for seven developable sites. Angelou Economics’ engineering and architectural partner M+W Zander (Stuttgart, Germany) used the council's staff and DEVELOPRO to analyze each site in order to determine site development alternatives.

The study led the council to focus on one of the sites analyzed for a recommended “future energy” research and development park. Following the analysis, the council and Cullen School of Engineering at the University of Houston, Texas, initiated an effort to create the Texas Energy Center (TxEC), a cluster of research organizations, educational institutions, and energy companies assembling to find solutions to U.S. energy concerns. The council used DEVELOPRO to present the site of the TxEC future home to the developers and the Gas Technology Institute. This presentation was also given to the Research Partnership to Secure Energy for America (RPSEA), which focuses on ultra deepwater petroleum development and unconventional resources for energy. This effort was successful, and RPSEA and the Texas Energy Center are located in Fort Bend County today.

The council is now more efficient and effective in attracting new business, industry, and development to Fort Bend County. The council believes this innovation has the potential to revolutionize the way the economic development practitioner does business.

Says Appel, “We now know that the process of identifying and utilizing shared information between the units of government, the economic developer, and the private sector will lead to reduced time and effort, increased revenues, and decreased expenses for all concerned.” Site specific research work that used to take up to three weeks to complete can now be accomplished in a matter of minutes. The system provides them with a more extensive understanding of a site’s attributes than they have ever received from economic development groups. Appel continues, “The next generation system now under development will be Web-based and will also employ ArcGIS Business Analyst software to incorporate instant site specific demographics.”

The Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council has assisted in more than 110 business relocations and expansions into Fort Bend County. This has resulted in increased tax valuations of more than 10 percent in each of the last three years and 14,700 new jobs.
Based on this project, the council was selected as the recipient of the 2003 Global Innovator's Award given each year by CoreNet Global, the world's premier professional association for corporate real estate leaders. From the finalists, five winners were chosen: Ford Land, the Fort Bend Economic Development Council, Sprint, Toyota, and the U.S. Army. The council won in the Innovations by Communities/Economic Development Organizations category with DEVELOPRO.

(Reprinted from the Spring 2005 issue of ArcNews magazine)
Since 1969, ESRI has been giving customers around the world the power to think and plan geographically. The market leader in geographic information system (GIS) solutions, ESRI software is used in more than 300,000 organizations worldwide including each of the 200 largest cities in the United States, most national governments, more than two-thirds of Fortune 500 companies, and more than 5,000 colleges and universities. ESRI applications, running on more than one million desktops and thousands of Web and enterprise servers, provide the backbone for the world’s mapping and spatial analysis. ESRI is the only vendor that provides complete technical solutions for desktop, mobile, server, and Internet platforms. Visit us at www.esri.com.