City Speeds Outreach, Curbs Homelessness with Mobile App

The City of Rancho Cucamonga's Community Improvement department administers municipal codes to promote a safe and attractive environment. Part of the job includes working with the city's police department, which contracts services with San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, to respond to reports on homeless encampments.

While the city's senior community improvement officer and two police deputies work together to keep these areas clean, they also treat these reports as opportunities to help, rather than displace or arrest, homeless individuals.

But with limited staff and resources—including differing agency systems that made it difficult to share data—they turned to geographic information system (GIS) technology for a better solution.

The three-person team needed a simple yet powerful tool that would streamline communication to help manage cases, connect the city's homeless population with critical resources, and better inform the public.

A Streamlined Solution

In just two hours, the city's GIS staff configured Esri's Collector for ArcGIS app to replace the pen-and-paper field survey. It's no longer an issue that team members
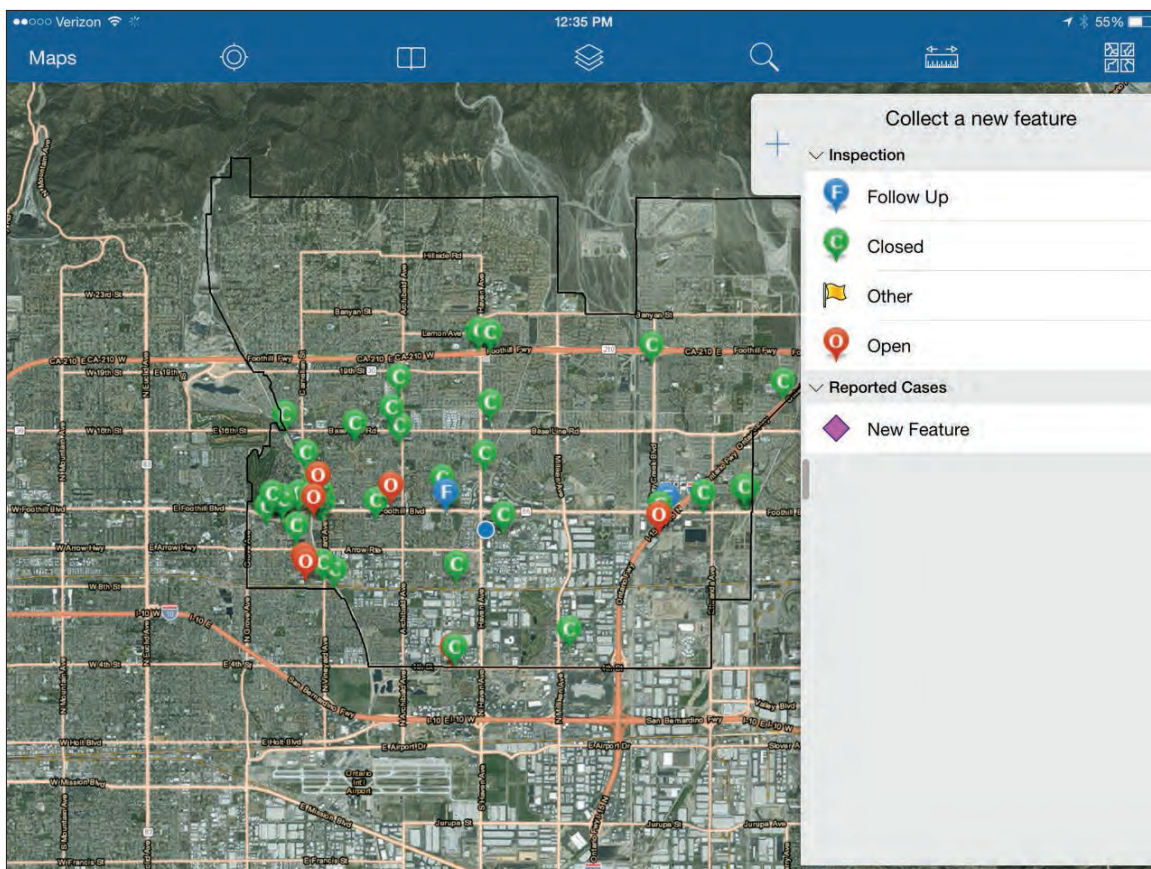
← The GIS team gave volunteers hands-on training on how to use the PIT count survey on mobile devices. The digital survey was powered by GeoForm, an ArcGIS web application template.

have varying schedules and cannot be in the field at the same time. With the mobile app implementation, individual team members drop a pin on a map to create a new case and enter data about the area and homeless person.

The app includes features for photos and notes, and a simple form for entering all necessary case information. Using a Python script with Windows Task Scheduler, each user is notified when a new case is added in the system—whether it's from the field or a resident's call. They now view where each case is located on the map and see each case status.

Collaborating for the Community

The entire team saves time by having location and case information readily available. They're able to dispatch cleanup crews and outreach specialists faster. Collector for ArcGIS has also better equipped all city staff and management with the latest information on the city's homeless populations, helping them address residents' concerns and offer assistance to those in need.

Within one year of implementing Collector for ArcGIS, the city collected data on 58 encampments and closed 49 of them. The app also proved to be an effective tool for helping the county sheriff's Homeless Outreach and Proactive Enforcement (HOPE) team to connect homeless individuals with housing resources. As a result, the city developed a similar GIS tool for HOPE. The organization uses the app to track homeless populations and outreach efforts throughout San Bernardino County's 20,000-mile jurisdiction.

For more information on GIS for human services, visit esri.com/humanservices.

Do I need this? If your organization needs a proven solution to strengthen and simplify collaboration among your departments to enhance outreach efforts, look to the Esri® platform. Esri solutions support both connected and disconnected fieldwork. You can easily enter your data and share it across your organization and with the public in a secure environment. This helps connect your community's homeless populations with available services while telling the story of what your agency is doing to build a safe and healthy community.
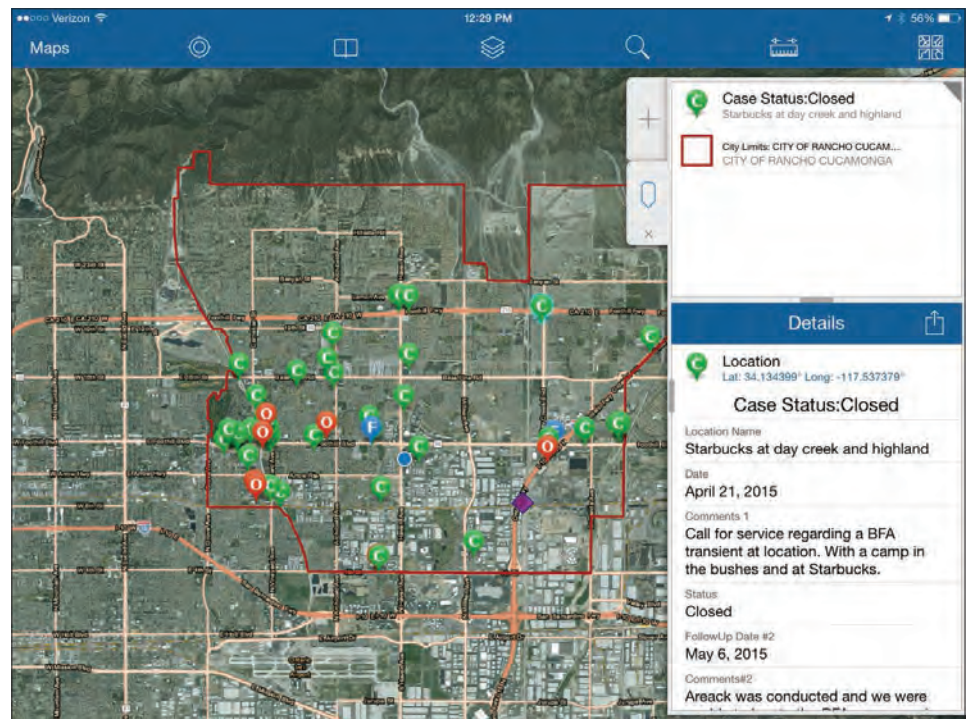
↑ With Collector for ArcGIS, city staff and sheriff deputies share notes on each homeless encampment and update the status of cases from their mobile devices.

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