A Small Town's Journey to Get on the Map

York, Maine, is a small coastal town with about 13,500 year-round residents, but its population swells over 400 percent during the height of the summer tourist season. One of the town's largest touristic management challenges has been to enable people to find York. In the past, a simple online search of "York, Maine" led to a strawberry patch 28 miles away, and the resultant confusion was beginning to adversely affect local business. Although efforts were made to flood search engines with correction requests, the amendments were lost after each update cycle. Brett Horr, manager of York's one-man GIS operation, turned to Esri's Community Maps Program to get York on the map for good.

Cloud-Hosted Data Helps during a Crisis

Prior to joining the Community Maps Program, when a large power outage or natural disaster would cause York's online maps to go down, Horr would work late into the night while his phone rang off the hook. Since the outage would cause the local server hosting York's map data to crash, the data would become inaccessible.

The reason to join the Community Maps Program quickly evolved from getting the town on the map into having an integral disaster management tool, when Hurricane Irene hit the East Coast in 2011. Since York's content was integrated

> "It's hard to be a tourist town when people cannot find you in an Internet search. Joining Esri's Community Maps Program was one of our attempts to become an authoritative source for our data and raise awareness of our existence."
>
> **Brett Horr**
> GIS Manager
> Town of York

For more information, visit
esri.com/communitymaps.

into Esri's World Topographic Map, Horr was able to create a data collection application for disasters. Having a ready-to-go basemap eliminated the time-consuming process of copying multiple shapefiles onto various devices. The disaster response crews were able to get their mobile devices prepped and ready for field operations within a few hours rather than a day or two. "The community basemap gave us everything we needed, and we didn't have to worry [about] who had what version of centerlines, parcels, and buildings because it was already available," said Horr.

The Man with Many Hats

In addition to managing York's GIS and several other aspects of the town's technical infrastructure, Horr is also a part-time police officer and a crime mapping and analysis instructor at York County Community College.

Horr saw the chance to join the Community Maps Program as not only a positive step for his town but also an opportunity for personal growth. Since the program requires participants to submit data in the standardized Local Government Information Model, he gained GIS experience while converting his community's local GIS data into a standard format. He also enhanced his community's

data by adding features that were previously ignored, such as landmarks and points of interest.

Throughout the entire data contribution process, Horr received close workflow guidance from Esri. As a Community Maps Program participant, he was provided with an extended evaluation copy of and training for the ArcGIS® Data Interoperability extension, Esri's software solution for converting large datasets. Horr was also able to take advantage of the cartographic expertise of professionals at Esri.

The Road Ahead

York recently invested in iPad tablet computers for its public works crews and police department. The mobile devices are being utilized for field data collection operations such as road sign checking, catch basin inventory, and streetlight maintenance. So far, Horr has received positive feedback from workers. "They really understand the spatial relationships that the World Topographic Map provides," he said.

Horr envisions that the reach of the Community Maps Program will expand beyond the private sector out to the public in the form of more web/mobile applications geared toward tourism. As a historic town, York has building restrictions that prevent the placement of cellular towers except in only a few parts of town, such as near the police station, resulting in weak cellular coverage. A new police station, currently in the works, will be closer to the beach, and cellular coverage will improve greatly. When this is complete, Horr plans to launch map-based web and mobile applications that will provide tourists and residents with weather information, daily safety announcements, the current UV index, and community events. He concluded, "Joining the Community Maps Program has really revolutionized how we deliver our information."
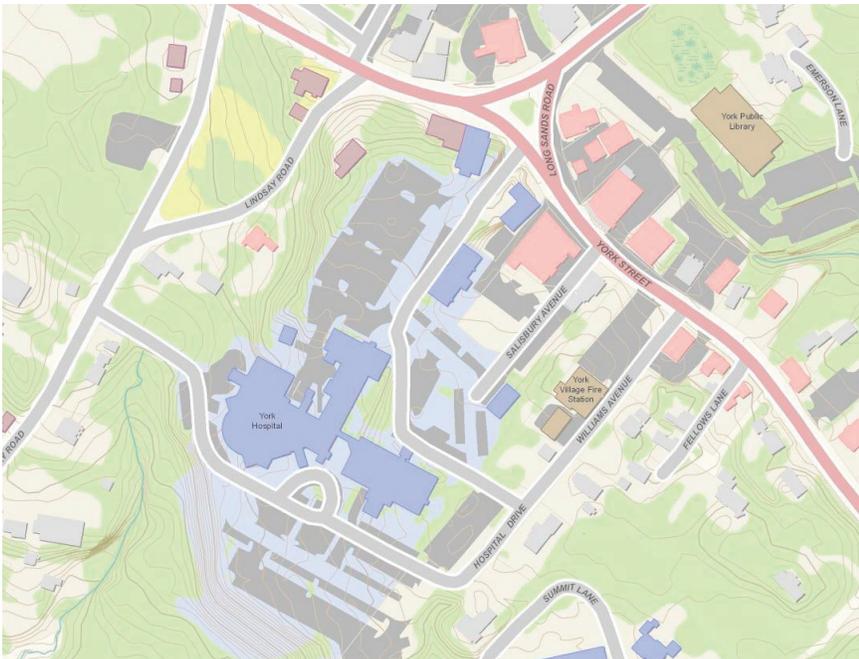
Town of York on the World Topographic Basemap

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