A Geographic Approach to Nonprofit Organizations

Growing Your Nonprofit with GIS

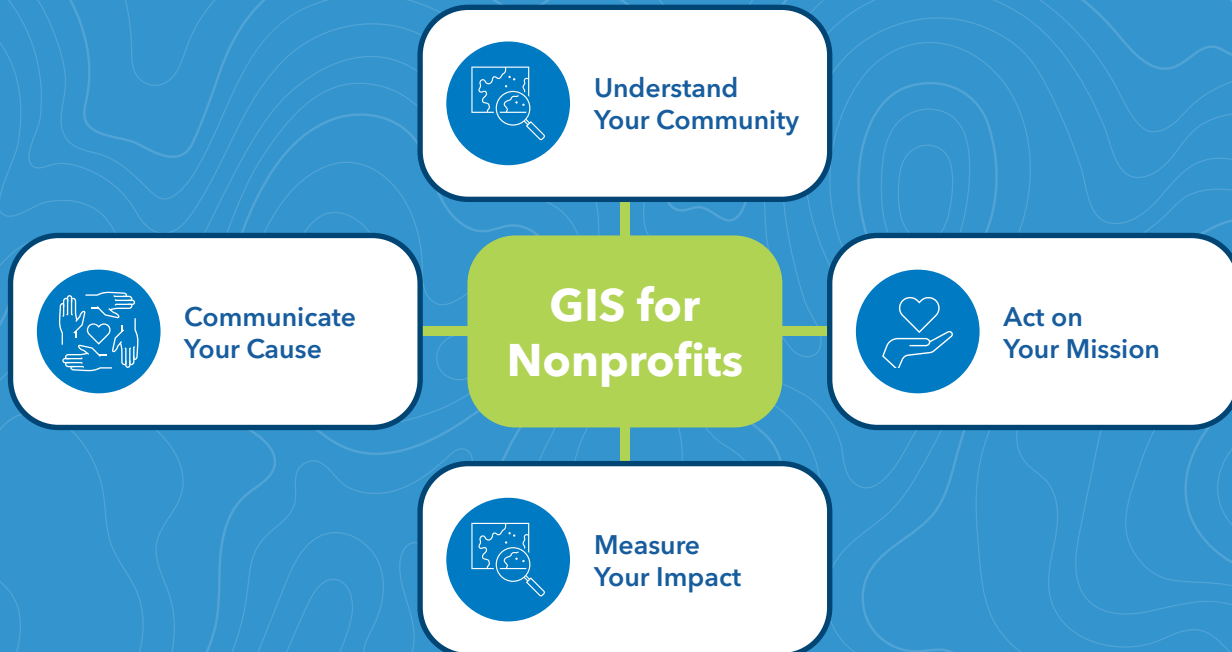# Achieving Your Mission with a Geographic Approach

Thriving nonprofit organizations grow their impact by applying a geographic approach to every branch of their association. The challenges you tackle are inherently linked to location, meaning that harnessing geographic tools enables you to see the communities you serve in relation to the environment around them. Geographic information system (GIS) technology allows you to gain fresh perspectives, organize data effectively, and apply spatial thinking for valuable insights. You'll be able to build and connect data based on geography, giving rise to an operational ecosystem that applies spatial thinking. GIS supports spatial thinking to create, manage, analyze, and map all types of data on donors, fundraising, the volunteer base, resource prioritization, and more.

GIS empowers nonprofit organizations of all sizes to better communicate their cause, understand their community, act on their mission, and measure their impact. It also helps them extend services, attract volunteers, expand their donor network, and shape public policies.

SUCCESSFUL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS USE GIS TO

- Advance and communicate their mission more effectively through engaging storytelling tools.

- Better understand their focus areas, donors, and volunteer networks by accessing the ready-to-use demographic, behavioral, economic, and environmental data.

- Act on their mission more effectively by applying the geographic approach to every business function for improved outcomes.

- Measure their impact by collecting and analyzing data to monitor performance.

Understand Your Community

Communicate Your Cause

GIS for Nonprofits

Act on Your Mission

Measure Your Impact

Communicate Your Cause

Captivating your audience with compelling stories about your cause is the first step to growing support. GIS allows you to craft compelling, data-driven visualizations that communicate complex data in accessible and intuitive ways. Creating an immersive storytelling experience will make you stand out while helping you communicate the challenge, illustrate the consequences, and identify opportunities to intervene. GIS technology provides the tools to elevate your storytelling and rally passionate changemakers around a single destination.

SUCCESSFUL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS USE GIS TO

- Target advocates for their cause to gain support and momentum.

- Connect volunteers to a need and empower them to inspire change.

- Shorten the interval between a need for change and a call to action by communicating their mission.

- Put their mission in the context of where people work, live, and play.

Mapping Hope:
Empowering Children Through Collaborative Care

Partnership with Children (PWC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the emotional, social, and cognitive skills of children in New York City. They achieve this through trauma-informed mental health counseling, community-based programming, and healing-oriented arts education. Recently, PWC partnered with North Arrow, an Esri partner, to utilize spatial analysis capabilities in GIS. By overlaying various data, such as demographic information and socioeconomic indicators, they gain a comprehensive understanding of the context in which they operate.

This visual storytelling not only improves communication with the public, board of directors, donors, and stakeholders, but also aids in decision-making processes by presenting complex information clearly and accessibly. PWC hires, trains, then assigns full-time social workers to 30 core school locations across the city where students and their families are most at risk. While staff use maps to illustrate the impact of their work externally, they also leverage the same analysis internally to prioritize where to extend services and identify potential school partnerships.

It's been a game changer for how we tell our story. I had lunch with a funder and showed them the map on my phone, and they were blown away and wanted to increase their investment. In the nonprofit space, we don't typically use complex data visualization to show need and impact other than reporting on percentages. This interactive impact tour tells it all in such a compelling way.

Wesner Pierre
Chief Executive Officer
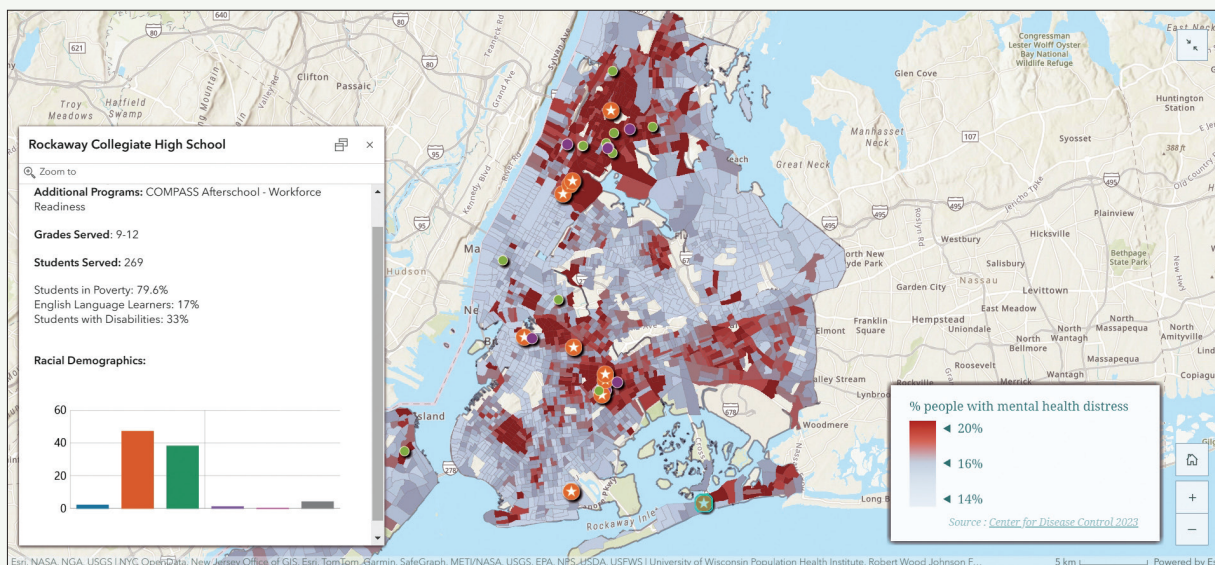
This map is featured on PWC's interactive impact tour and displays where PWC is working with children in areas of New York City with high levels of mental health distress.

Understand Your Focus Area

The issue you're passionate about demands action, but sometimes you need data to validate your understanding to reach and identify potential supporters. Anecdotal examples of your progress may win over your heart, but success comes when you provide validation—the proof is in information supported by accurate data analysis. GIS provides the foundation to discover and leverage authoritative data, collect and analyze your own data, validate your program strategy through analysis, and even understand what compels your audience. Using a geographic lens moves your cause from an instinctive reaction to a call for action.
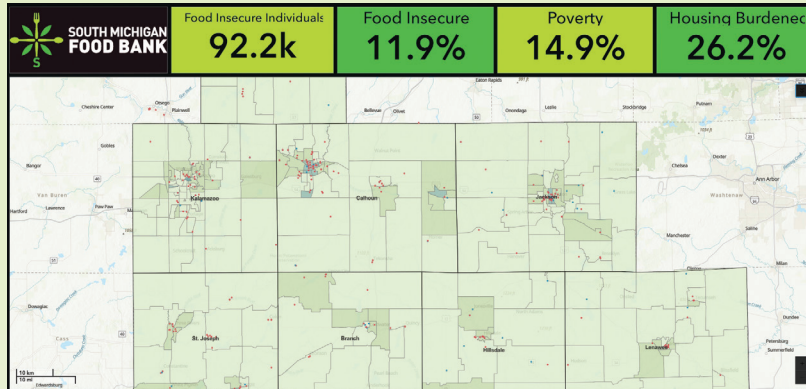
SUCCESSFUL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS USE GIS TO

- Advocate for their cause by analyzing and mapping data to move to action.

- Access ready-to-use data and content to accelerate their momentum.

- Measure program success.

- Improve stakeholder engagement with powerful information and graphics.

- Monitor areas where their efforts are needed as a means for intervention.

	Food Insecure Individuals	Food Insecure	Poverty	Housing Burdened
SOUTH MICHIGAN FOOD BANK	92.2k	11.9%	14.9%	26.2%

A clear visual of food insecurity in the region is crucial to educating residents and potential partner organizations within the communities the food bank serves.
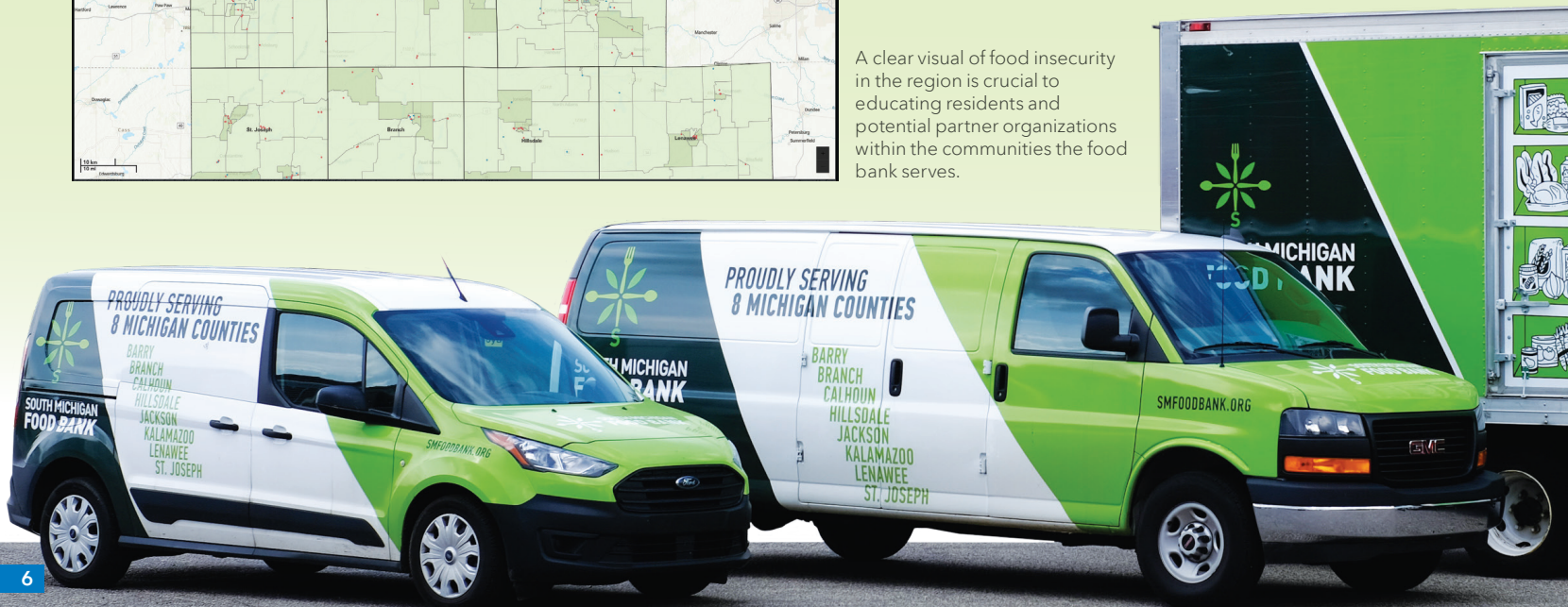
How Data-Driven Insights Transform a Food Bank

The South Michigan Food Bank distributes over 11 million pounds of food yearly, but finding out who needs help the most has been a challenge. Many people struggle with transportation and accessing food, so the food bank needed better data to make more informed decisions.

By creating a dashboard using ArcGIS® with the help of staff and students from Coastal Carolina University, they gathered data on poverty, food insecurity, and transportation issues. This data was sourced from the US Census Bureau, Feeding America, and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). This information was added to the dashboard, and in addition, they created interactive infographics per census tract, making it easy to visualize which areas in south Michigan needed more food support.

So far, one of the most important functions of the dashboard has been helping the food bank scout new locations for food pantries. Existing pantry locations, rather than the areas of highest need, have historically determined how food bank resources are distributed. But being able to visualize data about food insecurity has allowed the South Michigan Food Bank to make more targeted decisions about its distributions, including how frequently they occur.
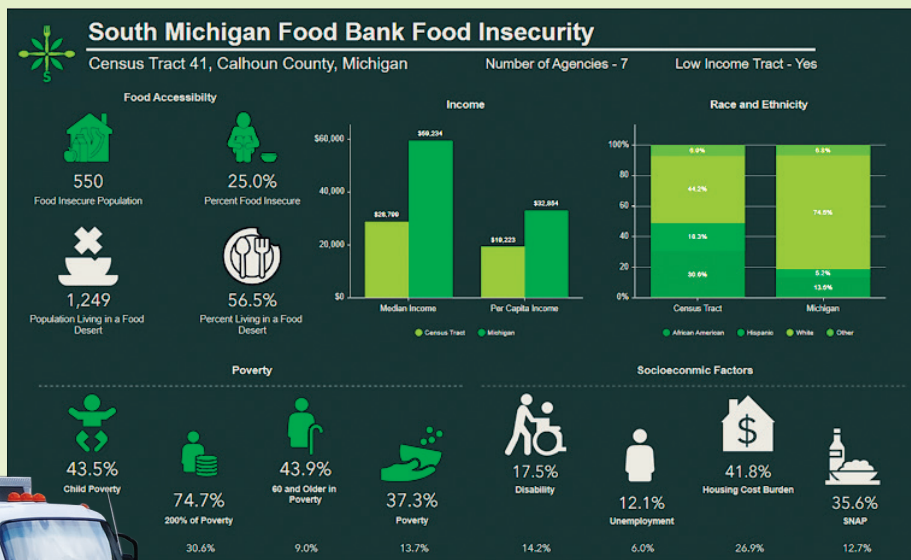
Infographics are vital in displaying the different food insecurity dynamics at play in each census tract.

Act On Your Mission

An organization's mission is not enough. Having a strategic business plan coupled with efficient management and performance-monitoring tools will ensure that your compass is always pointed towards achieving your mission. Enterprise GIS supports your mission by enabling market research, field operations, analysis, communications, and public engagement. It also improves the effectiveness of staff and the impact of volunteers across the organization.

SUCCESSFUL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS USE GIS TO

- Leverage data and analytics to optimize program delivery.

- Improve accurate data collection and effectiveness in the field.

- Demonstrate the progress and impact of operations through a data-driven approach.

- Share spatially aware data that enhances decision-making, fostering internal and external partnerships.

Engaging Community in a Major Greenway Initiative

The Open Space Institute (OSI) and its partners are revitalizing a former railway corridor to create over 250 miles of interconnected greenways and trails in the Hudson Valley. Involving the community was crucial for OSI's project success. Traditional methods like flyers and open houses weren't enough. Instead, they turned to GIS technology. OSI created maps and surveys using GIS to engage with residents, local communities, and experts across the Hudson Valley.

GIS facilitated the entire process, from public surveys to input on routing alternatives, all displayed on interactive maps. With tools like ArcGIS Survey123, OSI circulated a survey in multiple languages, receiving over 1,100 responses supporting trail revitalization. By leveraging GIS, OSI streamlined community engagement efforts, maintaining open and editable maps for continuous feedback. Looking ahead, GIS will play a key role in sustaining community involvement and fundraising efforts for greenway projects. The innovative use of GIS has empowered OSI to communicate effectively and efficiently with stakeholders, ensuring ongoing success for the Growing Greenways initiative.

OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE

Menu

O&W Corridor Alternatives - Port Jervis

Alternative D

PORT JERVIS

	A	B
Follows Historic Canal or Rail Alignment	✓	
Trail Type	Shared Roadway	Bike Lanes
Community Connections		
Corridor Ownership	Public	Public
Cost	$	$
	C	D
		✓
	Bike Lanes, Shared Roadway, Off-Road Trail	Bike Lanes, Off-Road Trail
	Public/Private	Private
	$$$	$$$

Find address or place
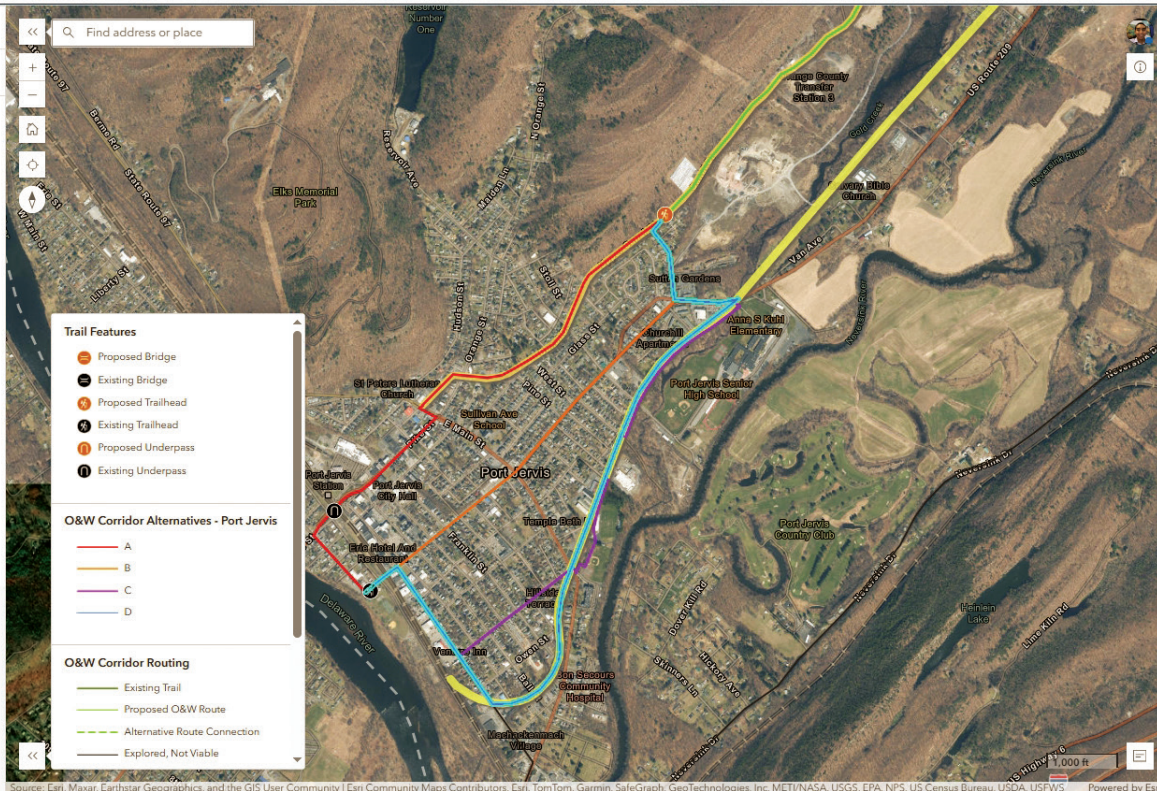
Trail Features

- Proposed Bridge
- Existing Bridge
- Proposed Trailhead
- Existing Trailhead
- Proposed Underpass
- Existing Underpass

O&W Corridor Alternatives - Port Jervis

- A
- B
- C
- D

O&W Corridor Routing

- Existing Trail
- Proposed O&W Route
- Alternative Route Connection
- Explored, Not Viable

Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community | Esri Community Maps Contributors, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, US Census Bureau, USDA, USFWS

A public input map, built in ArcGIS Instant Apps and integrated directly into ArcGIS Experience Builder, allows the public to engage with trail routing alternatives by entering a thumbs-up or thumbs-down.

Measure Your Impact

As a nonprofit, every dollar counts, so it's critical that you always know whether your tactics and approach are making an impact—and pivot quickly if they're not. Use GIS to develop indexes and models that set a benchmark, giving you milestones to reach. GIS allows you to model alternative approaches and adjust them as you monitor their success. Leverage tools to better communicate to your network, use authoritative data, collect and analyze your own data, validate your program strategy through analytics, and report confidently on your success to donors and stakeholders.

SUCCESSFUL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS USE GIS TO

- Communicate their impact to current and prospective changemakers.

- Collect and analyze information in real time.

- Develop impactful models to weigh alternative approaches.

- Develop dynamic reporting to share with management, staff, and stakeholders.

Innovating the Arbor Day Foundation's Reporting Operations

Traditionally, compiling year-end reports involved manual data collection from various departments, leading to delays and inaccuracies. With the help of Innovate! Inc., an Esri partner, the Arbor Day Foundation automated workflows to consolidate data from disparate systems into a centralized GIS platform. This transition streamlined the reporting process, which enabled spatial visualization of their tree-planting footprint, enhancing data interpretation and presentation.

The implementation of GIS not only expedited reporting timelines but also improved data accuracy and cleanliness. By creating interactive dashboards, the foundation empowered stakeholders to access real-time data insights and visualize the impact of their programs spatially. This transformation enhanced internal operations and also strengthened donor relations by showcasing transparent and compelling evidence of their reforestation efforts.

The Arbor Day Foundation's success in leveraging GIS serves as a catalyst for operational efficiency across departments. By demonstrating the practical applications of GIS beyond mapping, the organization has inspired other teams to explore its potential in streamlining processes and enhancing data-driven storytelling. The GIS implementation has not only saved time but also fostered a culture of data-driven decision-making and increased organizational agility.
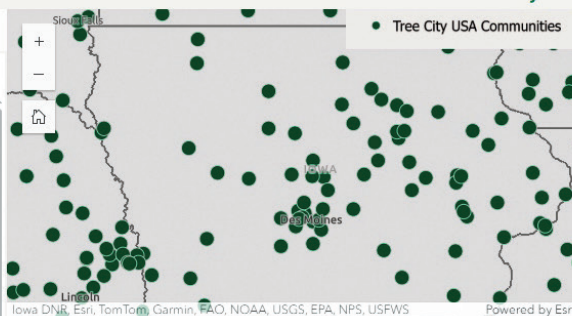
REPORTING DASHBOARD

Arbor Day Foundation™

Overview | Tree City USA Summary | Tree Campus Summary | Tree Line Summary

2023 Tree City USA Summary

TERMS GLOSSARY

FILTER DATA BY STATE

- United States
- Alabama
- Alaska
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- California
- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- District of Columbia
- Florida
- Georgia

Tree City USA Communities

Sioux Falls

IOWA

Des Moines

Lincoln

Iowa DNR, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS

Powered by Esri

States with Most Tree City USA Communities

State	Count
Ohio	233
Illinois	200
Wisconsin	194
New York	185
California	164
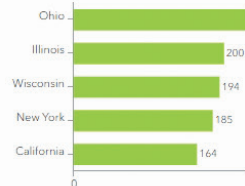
States with Most Growth Awards

State	Count
Illinois	95
Ohio	53
Wisconsin	26
Florida	25
Iowa	21
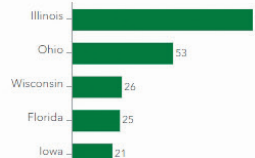
3,577
TREE CITY USA COMMUNITIES
77
NEW

513
GROWTH AWARDS
39
NEW

998,302
REPORTED NUMBER OF TREES PLANTED

LONGEST RUNNING TREE CITY USA COMMUNITY
16 Communities Tied
FOR
48 Years

LONGEST ACTIVE GROWTH AWARD
Euless, Texas
FOR
33 Years

47%
POPULATION LIVING IN A TREE CITY USA COMMUNITY

$9.88
SPENT PER CAPITA BY COMMUNITIES

LARGEST COMMUNITY
New York, New York
WITH POPULATION OF
8,648,000

SMALLEST COMMUNITY
Sibley, North Dakota
WITH POPULATION OF
20

97.90%
OF COMMUNITIES RECERTIFIED THIS YEAR

Contact Us

The dashboard allows anyone to zoom into a specific city, see its metrics, and quickly look at a community across the country. It can also promptly generate its respective tree-planting data on the fly.
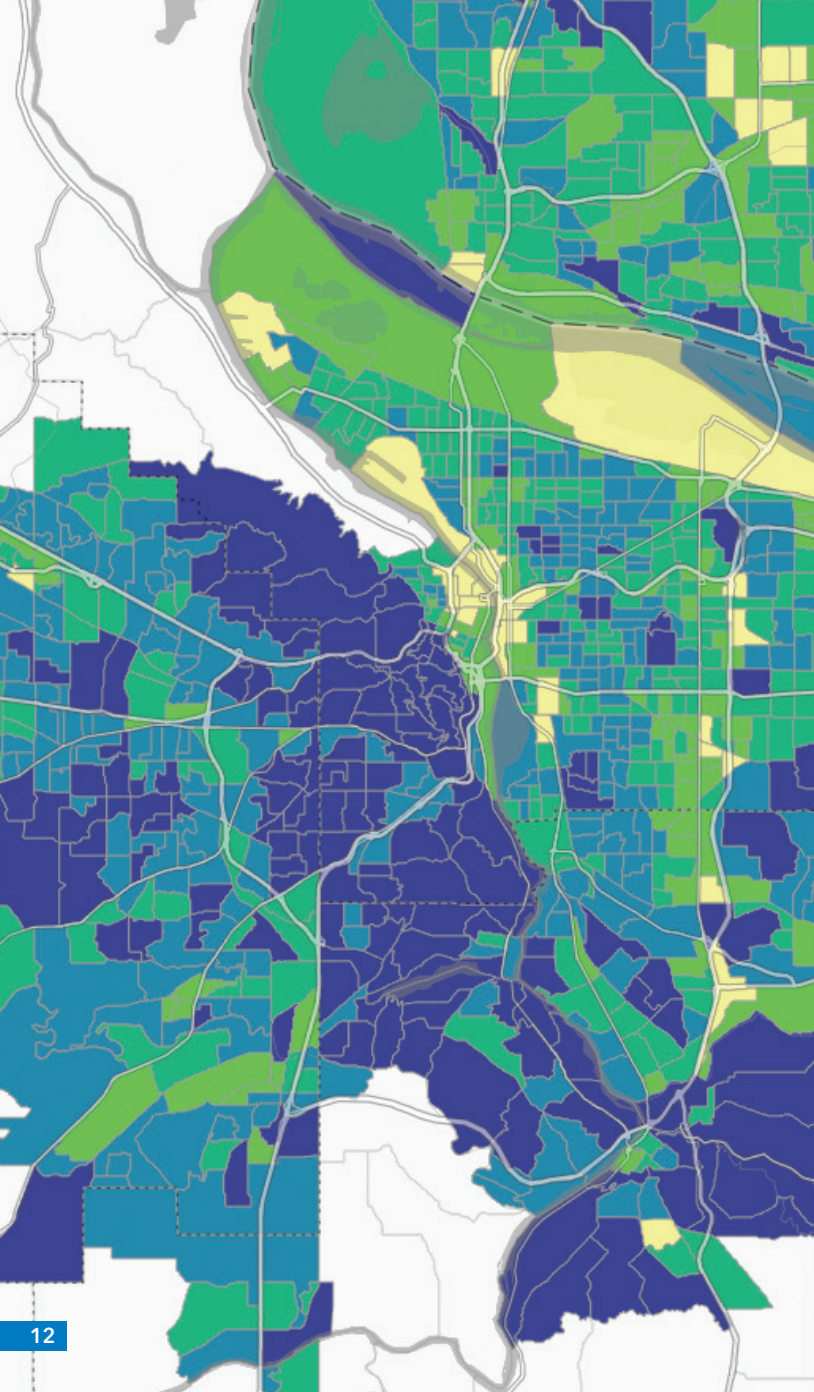
Getting Started

Advance your mission with ArcGIS

The world's most powerful GIS software is available to nonprofit organizations at a discounted price. The Esri Nonprofit Program provides eligible organizations with low-cost access to the software, training, and content they need. Organizations of all sizes from around the world are invited to apply. Eligibility is determined based on an organization's status and activities—for US nonprofit organizations, 501(c)(3) status is required.

Join a Vibrant Nonprofit GIS Community

Esri supports more than 15k organizations through the Nonprofit Program. It serves tens of thousands of GIS users across 126 countries who are applying GIS to make the world a better place. From nonprofits that focus on advocacy, historic preservation, or health services to climate action and conservation, program members are taking a geographic approach to solving complex problems and creating a positive impact.

Nonprofit Program Features

Program members can take advantage of the discounted offerings and benefits that best meet their needs. Full details will be shared once eligibility is verified.

Software and subscriptions
Esri's ArcGIS products for the cloud, mobile devices, and desktops discounted from 50 to 99 percent.

Data and maps
Basemaps, imagery, demographics, lifestyle data, and authoritative maps on thousands of topics are included in ArcGIS Living Atlas of the World. Premium content discounts vary.

Developer tools
APIs and SDKs for building custom web, mobile, and desktop apps for mapping, visualization, and analysis.

Training
Get unlimited e-Learning through Esri Academy. Instructor-led training is discounted 40 percent.

Support
World-class support is provided by people who are ready to address any question or issue related to ArcGIS. Esri Services discounts vary. Software installation support is included.

Partners

Connections to Esri's Nonprofit Specialty partners who offer dedicated GIS solutions, services, and expertise. This designation recognizes partners with advanced proficiency in the Esri Nonprofit Program and licensing, ensuring tailored support for nonprofit organizations of all sizes.

Nonprofit Specialty — See a list of all Nonprofit Specialty partners at **go.esri.com/Partners4Nonprofit**.

Community

Access to the largest community of mapping and location intelligence professionals, where nonprofit staff can share, chat, and collaborate.

Esri User Conference (Esri UC)

Gain access to the biggest GIS event to discover how GIS is transforming our world. Registration is discounted by 75 percent. Discounts on other Esri events are also available.

Learn more and apply for the Esri Nonprofit Program at **go.esri.com/GIS4Nonprofit**.

Esri, the global market leader in geographic information system (GIS) software, location intelligence, and mapping, helps customers unlock the full potential of data to improve operational and business results.

Founded in 1969 in Redlands, California, USA, Esri software is deployed in hundreds of thousands of organizations globally, including Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, nonprofit institutions, and universities.

Esri has regional offices, international distributors, and partners providing local support in over 100 countries on six continents. With its pioneering commitment to geospatial technology and analytics, Esri engineers the most innovative solutions that leverage a geographic approach to solving some of the world's most complex problems by placing them in the crucial context of location.

For more information, visit **go.esri.com/GIS4Nonprofit**.

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