

# Press Release



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## “My City – Houston” Brings Wealth of Information to the Public

**HOUSTON, December 18, 2009** –The City of Houston Planning and Development Department is releasing a new web service called, “My City - Houston”, an interactive Geographic Information System (GIS) portal that gives citizens a new window into the City’s operations. It can be found online at <http://mycity.houstontx.gov/public>.

GIS, as it’s commonly known, is a mapping and analysis system, based on extensive database technology combined with computerized mapping capabilities. The result is an ability to dynamically create maps that give users an intuitive view of complex information. For the City of Houston, the concept is one that enables one department, such as Public Works, to see their data in conjunction with data from other departments, such as Planning and Development. The ability for departments to view information about each other’s projects enables much better coordination while reducing redundancy and costs.

For Houston’s citizens, GIS promises online access to mapped information about where activities and projects are occurring. It can provide insight into patterns of development, planned improvements, building permits, land use, flood information, evacuation routes and patterns of crime. Citizens can access mapped information such as street maps, aerial imagery, utility services, permitting, parcel addresses, solid waste services, tax data, political boundaries, land use and much more.

Design Innovation and Quality of Data have been the focal points for Planning and Development’s GIS Technology Division in designing the Enterprise GIS and, following Mayor White’s vision of transparency in government, this remarkable technology has been largely oriented toward public access to public information. In the coming months, the City will continue to add new information to the site, as well as creating additional sites with specialized applications.

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## "My City - Houston" Web Site

<http://mycity.houstontx.gov/public>



Developed and hosted by the  
GIS Technology Division  
Planning and Development Department  
City of Houston  
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The My City Houston interactive mapping web site provides the citizens of Houston a means to access the most current geographic information systems (GIS) data and aerial imagery (current and historical). These data all are hosted within the City's enterprise GIS system that Mayor Bill White initiated in 2006. Users of the web site are provided with a variety of search and identify tools to assist them in finding information relevant to their needs.

### Background

My City Houston is a web-based mapping application that allows the citizens of Houston to interact with over 200 map layers and datasets that are relevant to the City's mission, as well as multiple sets of aerial imagery and scanned maps. The site also provides access to real-time data for traffic conditions and cameras, and stream gages. The enterprise GIS Team used the same application design used for the My City-Recent Crime site that they had earlier developed with the Houston Police Department. The common look-and-feel helps assure a similar user experience for the mapping applications.

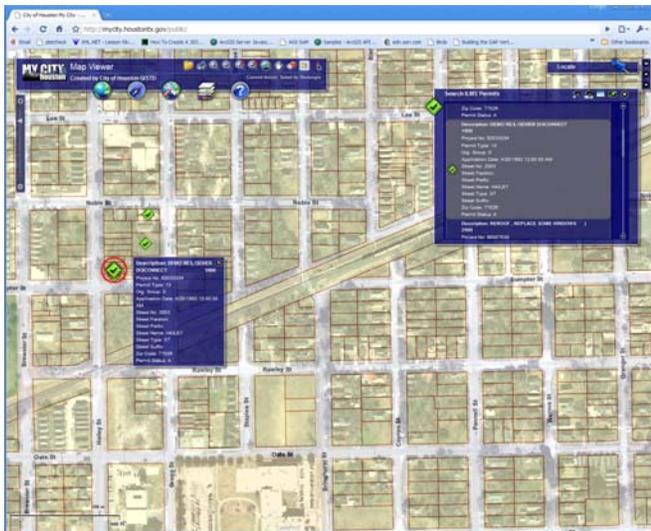
The City Map Layers tool provides access to the full set of map layers and aerial imagery. Users can select either the Locate Address and Locate Feature tools to quickly navigate to specific addresses or features. A special "Layer Toggle"

menu is provided to provide a quick way for users to display high interest map layers. A "drill-down identify tool provides users a means to quickly find out a lot of information about a location, with handy links provided to navigate the users to externally hosted information (appraisal district property records, Google StreetView™, county web sites, etc.). The site also provides the first map-driven access to the city's ILMS building permit data (ranging back to 1987). A redlining tool is also provided to allow the users to annotate the map. This tool includes the ability to save the graphics to a file. This file can then be transmitted to others so that they can be re-loaded on to My City from another location or at another time. The site also includes a print to PDF function.

### Technical Information

The site is based on the Environmental System Research Institute's (ESRI) Adobe Flex API. The following browsers can be used: Internet 7.0 or higher, as well as recent versions Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari, and Opera. The appropriate Adobe Flash Player 10.x plug-in (version 10.x or higher) for the preferred browser must be installed. The higher version of the Adobe Flash plug-ins is required to support printing to PDF.

The City's GIS data are ever-changing. The enterprise GIS team has gone to great effort to assure that the data in this application are of high quality and that they will remain as current as possible. This has involved forging agreements between the departments responsible for each dataset, and working out processes for regular update of each dataset.



An example of the Search Permits tool.

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General questions about My City Houston can be directed to our GIS Helpline at (713) 837-7777 or to Max Samfield ([Max.Samfield@cityofhouston.net](mailto:Max.Samfield@cityofhouston.net)). For technical questions, contact Lee Graham ([LeeGraham@cityofhouston.net](mailto:LeeGraham@cityofhouston.net)).