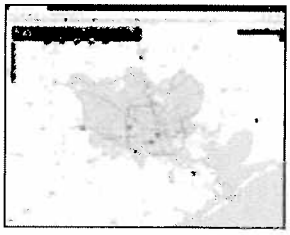
My City Houston Web Sites

***http://mycity.houstontx.gov* — public access splash page**
***http://mycity.houstontx.gov/public* - public access application**
***http://mycity.houstontx.gov/employees* — executive splash page**
***http://mycity.houstontx.gov/executive* - executive application**



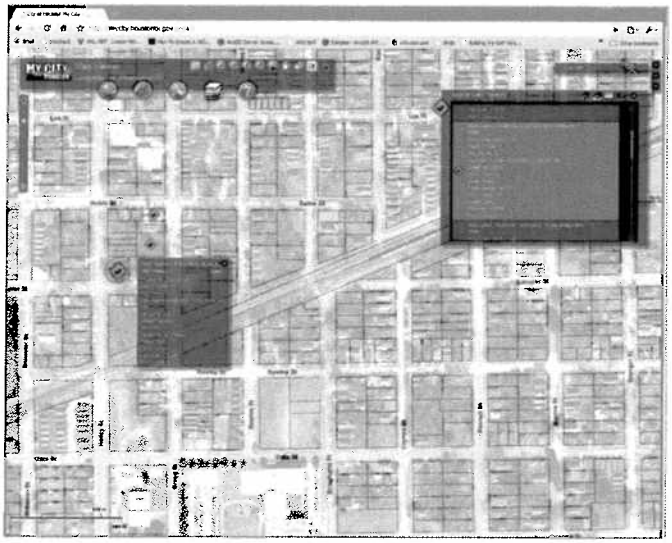
Developed and hosted by the
GIS Technology Division
Planning and Development Department
City of Houston
611 Walker St, 6th floor
Houston, TX 77002

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

Background

The My City Houston applications are web-based mapping applications that allow the users to interact with over 200 map layers and datasets that are relevant to the City's mission. The sites also include multiple sets of aerial imagery and scanned maps. Access to real-time data for traffic conditions, traffic cameras, and stream gages is also provided. The enterprise GIS Team used the same application design employed 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 across mapping applications.

The City Map Layers tool provides access to the full set of map layers, aerial imagery, and scanned maps. Users can select either the Locate Address and Locate Feature tools to quickly navigate to specific addresses or features (Council Districts, Super Neighborhoods, KeyMap grid, Lambert Tiles, Zip Codes, etc.) . A special "Layer Toggle" menu provides 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) with its Search Permits tool. The executive viewer includes a 311 Calls tool that allows the first map-driven access to live 311 call data. 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.



An example of the Search Permits tool.

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 required to support printing to PDF.

Help documents can be downloaded using the Help Menu or the splash screen.

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.

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). For technical questions, contact Lee Graham (LeeGraham@cityofhouston.net).

Interface and Menus

Application Requirements

To run one of the My City family mapping applications, one must have a machine with an Internet connection and a browser that meets the following requirements:

- Internet Explorer 7.0 or higher, or
- a recent version of Firefox, Safari, or Opera (Google Chrome is currently being tested),

and

- the appropriate Adobe Flash Player plug-in (10.x or higher).

Most computers will already have the Flash Player installed. Typically, the application does a check to see if the correct version of the Flash Player is installed. If not, the user will be prompted to download and install it.

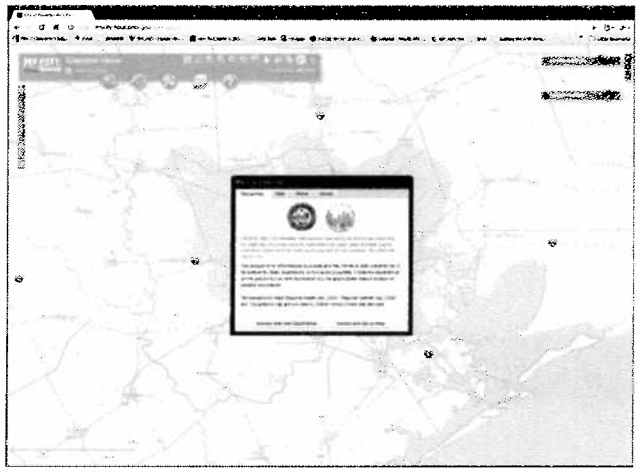
In general, if the user is not using an appropriate browser version or you do not have an appropriate version of the Adobe Flash Player installed, the application will not load properly. The user may see the menus and tools load, but a gray screen where the map should be. If the browser is not able to issue a prompt indicating the need to install the Adobe Flash Player, or if the automated install process does not see to work for some reason (browser security settings, anti-virus software issues, etc.), the user can navigate to the Adobe site (http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/) to download and install the Flash software manually.

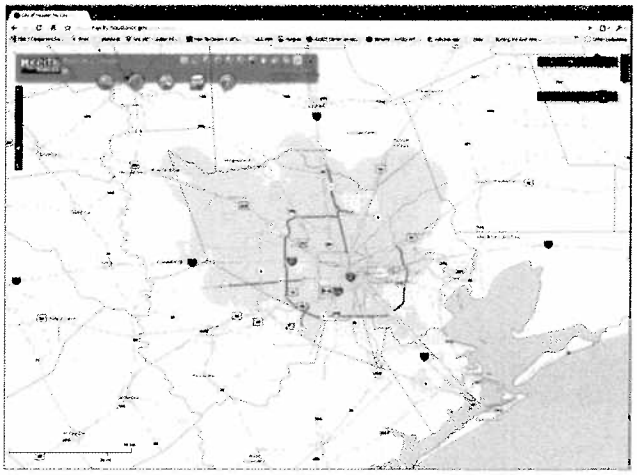
Interface and Menus

Using the Application

When the My City mapping application loads, the user will first see a gray Adobe Flash Player pre-loaded run in the middle of the browser window (it says "Initializing") . After this process completes, a pop-up window (see screen grab on the left below) will be visible that includes a tabbed interface that allows the user

- to see application announcements (top of disclaimer, if applicable, and items accessible via the News tab),
- to view and accept the disclaimer in order to be able to start using the application,
- to download the help documents,
- to read new items that generally announce new datasets, functionalities, and tools, or that may alert the user to a problem that has been identified,
- to read general information about the application, including who to contact to report problems and to request additions or changes to the application.



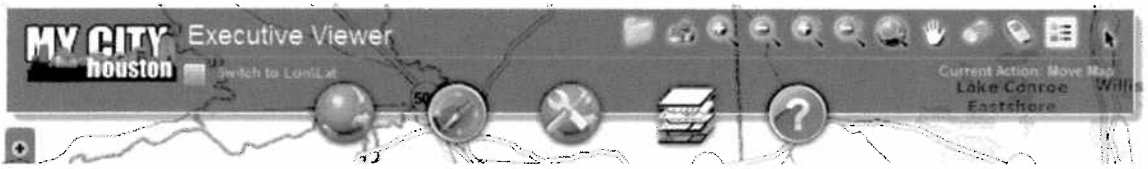


The user must click the "Accept and Use Application" button to close this window and start use of the application (see screen grab on the right above).

The initial scale of the map will depend on how much browser real estate is available. The initial map display shows the COH Street Map as the background map, with the HPD Divisions, labeled by name, are outlined in navy blue. HPD District boundaries are also show in a lighter sky blue, but these are not labeled by name at the initial map scales. The legend for the HPD-related components of the map is show between the two possible first initial displays to add the user in identifying these data.

Interface and Menus

Main Controller Menu



The Main Controller menu appears in the top left portion of the browser window. It can be minimzed or maximized by a click on the My City Houston icon. On the top right, the Main Controller menu contains smaller shortcut icons that the user can click to access the most commonly-used tools. There are also five larger icons on the center, bottom portion of the Main Controller menu that are used expand and access menu items. By moving one's mouse over the larger icon, the menus will expand so that a selection can be made.

The first "Globe" icon triggers the "Map Menu", which allows the user to change background maps, load the City Map data tool (which gives users access to the full array of data available in My City), load an overview map, print, etc.

COH Hybrid Map (2008)	The COH Hybrid Map (2008) background map is made visible, which is the COH Street Map overlain on the COH Aerial map.
Regional Hybrid Map (2006)	The COH Regional Hybrid Map (2006) background map is made visible. This is the Regional Street Map overlain on the Regional Satellite map.
COH Aerial Map (2008)	The COH Aerial Map (2008) background map is made visible. These are aerial photographs taken circa January, 2008.
Regional Satellite Map (2006)	The Regionall Satellite Map (2006) background map is made visible. This is an aerial map made of satellite and aerial image from circa 2006.
COH Street Map (2008)	The COH Street Map (2008) is made visible. This is the default map at startup.
Regional Street Map (2006)	The Regional Street Map (2006) background map is made visible. Some features may be outdated (wrong names, missing, etc.).
Topographic Map	The Topographic Map background map is made visible. These maps are very outdated as most were last updated in the 1970s, however, some people like these.
No Background Map	No Background Map is used with this selection. The user is able to change the background color using the tool on the top left corner of the window.
City Map Data	The City Map Data tool will be opened. A table of contents will be shown that allows the user to turn on/off the layer of City Map data as needed.
Overview Map	The Overview Map tool will be opened, showing a inset map with the current map extent of the main map window indicated as a red rectangle.
Bookmarks	The Bookmarks tool will be opened. This tool allows the user to save bookmarks for specific areas of interest. They are specific to that one computer and user.
Print	The Print tool will open to allow the user to print the map.

Interface and Menus

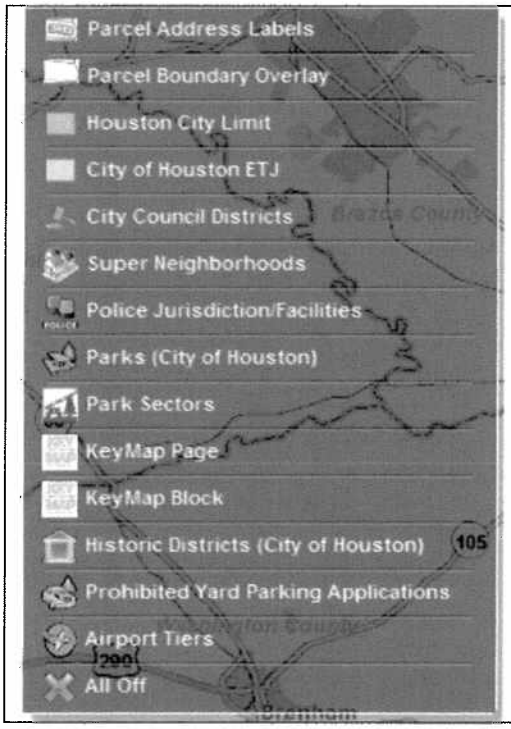
The second "Compass" icon provides access to the Navigation tools and the Clear Graphics tool (these are more easily accessed from the smaller shortcut menu buttons on the top right portion of the Main Controller menu).

Zoom In	The user will be able to zoom in on an area by drawing a rubber band box on an area of interest on the map.
Zoom Out	The user will be able to zoom out around an an area of interest on the map by drawing a rubber band box on the portion of the map that is at the center of that area of interest.
Zoom In 1 Level	The map will zoom in one map scale level.
Zoom Out 1 Level	The map will zoom out one map scale level.
Full Extent	The map will zoom to full extent.
Pan/Re-center Map	The user can re-center the map by using the hand tool to drag the map in the desired direction.
Clear Graphics	This tool will clear any graphics (highlighted address, search areas, highlighted features, etc.) from the map.

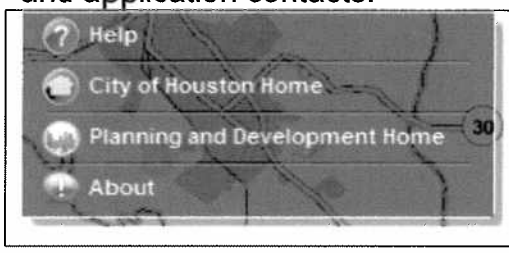
The third "Tools" icon provides access to special tools for interacting with application data. Only a few of these tools can be accessed using the Shortcut menu

311 Calls	The 311 Calls tool is used to query and show 311 Calls on the map. There is a shortcut menu icon for this tool.
Search Miscellaneous	The Search Miscellaneous tool is used to search Parcel Appraisal data, view Parcels using Google StreetView, and other general search functions.
Search ILMS Permits	The Search ILMS Permits tools allows users to search out ILMS Permits such as building permits, demolition permits, certificates of occupancy, etc.
Legend	The Legend tool shows the map legend.
Locate Address	The Locate Address tool allows a user to find and zoom to an address, plus search out Jurisdiction Info, Solid Waste Collection schedules, and HPD jurisdictions.
Locate Feature	The Locate Feature tool allows a user to find a KeyMap Page or Block, Zip Code, Super Neighborhood, Council District, Lambert Tile, or GIMS tile, and zoom to it.
Draw	The Draw tool allows the user to draw on and/or annotate the map. These annotations are printable.
Crime By Area	This tool allows users to see Recent Crimes for the last 30 days by Zip Code, Super Neighborhood, Council District, Police Division, District, or Beat.
Crime By Address	This tool allows users to see Recent Crimes for the last 30 days for a buffer area around an address.
Houston Traffic	This tool allows users to see Houston Traffic incidents are reported by Yahoo Traffic. These data will ultimately be replaced by Houston TranStar traffic incidents.
Traffic Cameras	Houston TranStar traffic camera images can be seen with this tool.
HCOEM Stream Gages	Links are provided to show the status of stream gages in Harris County as reported by the Harris County Office of Emergency Management.
Identify	The Identify tool performs a drill-down identify of all data in the system for a location that the user identifies by clicking on the map. There is a shortcut icon for this tool,.

The fourth "Layer Toggle" icon provides a quick way to simply turn on or off commonly used map layers. Each button except the bottom button (which turns all of these layer off if they are on) acts as a toggle.. If the layer is already drawn on the map, it will be removed. If it is not shown on the map, it will made visible.

The fifth "Help" icon provides access to general information, help, organizational links, and application contacts.

	This document will open in or else the user will be prompted to download or save it (if Acrobat Reader or a similar application is not installed on the user's computer).
	The City of Houston home page will load in a new window or tab.
	The Planning and Development Departments' home page will load in a new window or tab.
	The About tool provides information on the team that developed the application, support contacts, and another rendering of the disclaimer.

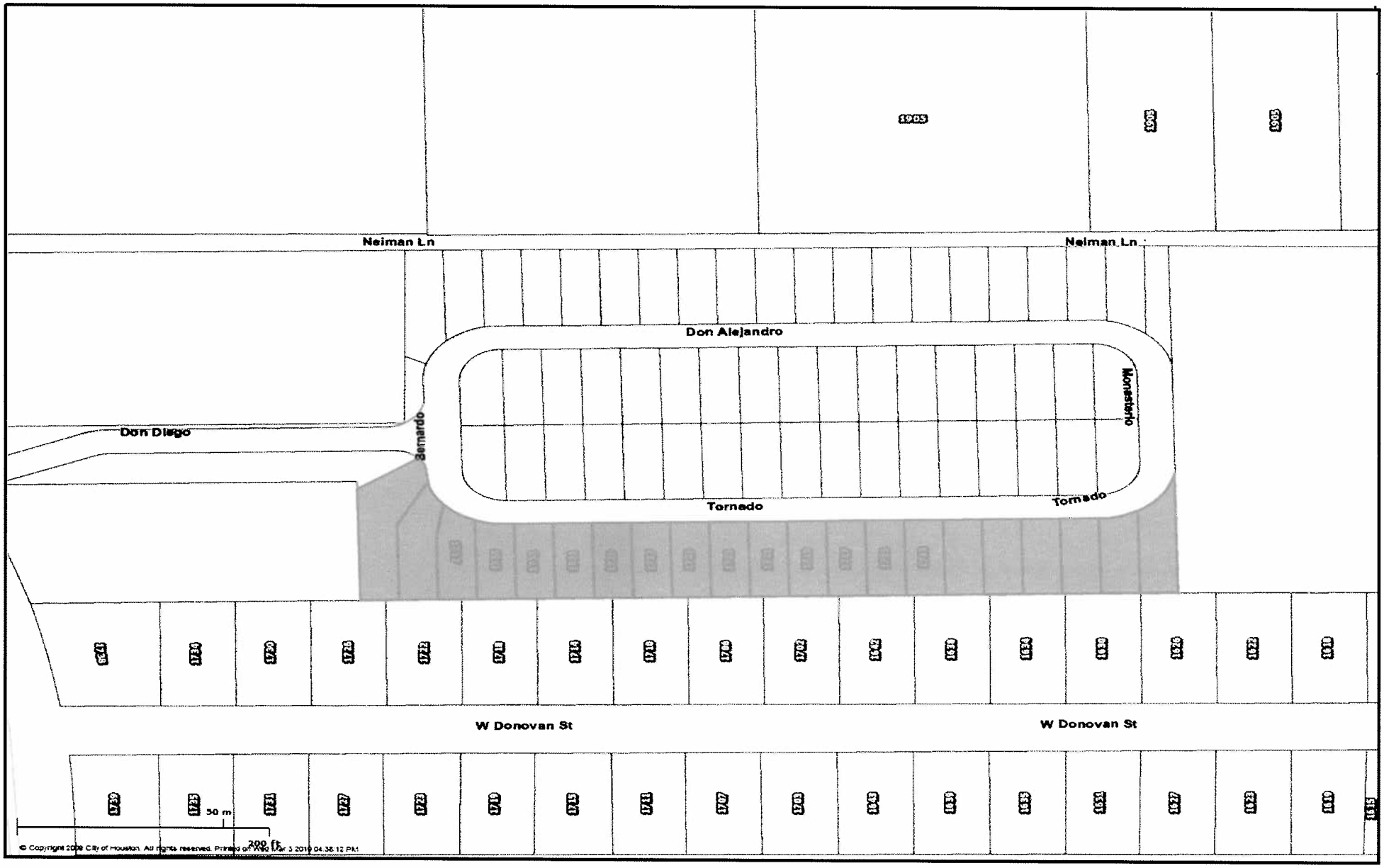
Shortcut Menu Items

The shortcut menu provides quick access to commonly used tools. These are (from left to right) City Map Data, Print, Zoom In, Zoom Out, Zoom In 1 Level, Zoom out 1 Level, Full Extent, Pan/Re-center Map, Clear Graphics, 311 Calls, Legend, and Identify.

Interface and Menus

Zoom Slider

The zoom slider on the left side of the map can be used for basic navigation (zoom in/zoom out). Click on either the + icon at the top of the slider to zoom in. Click on the – icon at the bottom of the slider to zoom out. Alternatively, click on the slider triangle and drag to the desired zoom level.



Tornado area

Generated by the My City Application

Disclaimer:
The map is only for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes and does not represent an on-the-ground survey and only represents the approximate relative location of property boundaries

Using the Locate Address Tool

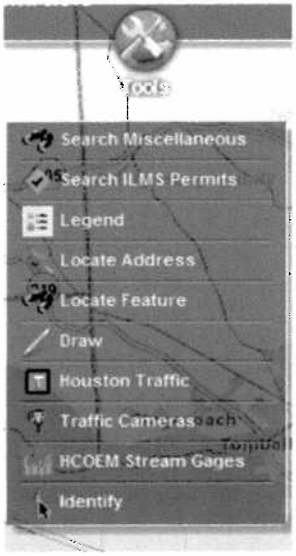
The Locate Address tool will show up in the top right portion of your browser window when the application first opens. If one exits the tool, it can be brought back by selecting the Locate Address tool from the Tools menu (see graphic to the right).

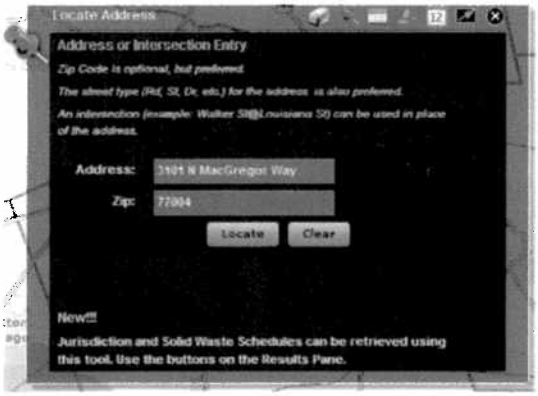
To use the tool, click once on the tool to open it up.

Type in an address and/or zip code in the boxes provided. Zip code is preferred but not optional. Street types are preferred but not required. Often, if you are not able to get a match if you left off the street type and/or intersection, you can add on a street type, even if it is wrong, and then get a match. This is due to the way that address geocoding tools attempt to standardize addresses prior to performing the matching operation.

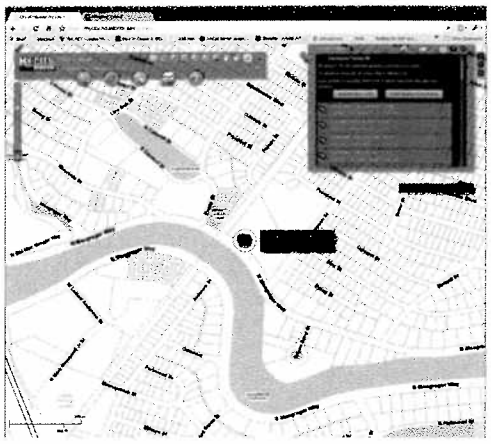
An intersection can also be search for using syntax such as the following: Louisiana St@Walker St .

Once the address has been entered, click on the Locate button.





The tool will attempt to locate (or geocode) the address. If results are found, the tool will switch to the Results pane and list them. The map will zoom to the area around the best match and also highlight that address. If the user wants to zoom to one of the other results, simply click on that result listing in the table shown in the Results pane.



Using the Locate Address Tool

To find out Jurisdiction information for the selected address, click on the Jurisdiction button.

The results will show up in the Jurisdiction Info pane:

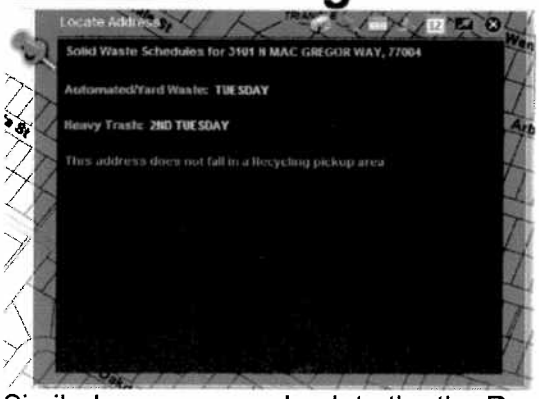
The user can also go back to the Results pane and click on the Solid Waste Schedules button to report on solid waste collection schedules for an address.

The results will be shown in the Solid Waste Schedules pane. If the address falls in a recycling pick-up area, a link is provided the Solid Waste Department page that lists printable schedules for recycling pick-up.

Jurisdiction results include information on the following:

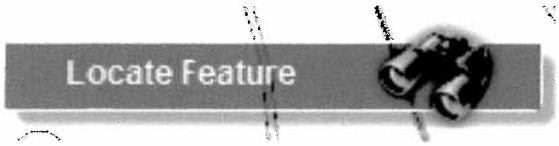
- Mayor's Office and link to web site
- Council district member and link to web site
- At-large council members and links to web sites
- Super Neighborhood name and number, link to Planning and Development Dept web page
- Information on whether the location is in the city limits (FULL vs LIMITED purpose area) and/or in the Extra-territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). If is a Limited Purpose Area, it will report on the types of city service provided based on the original agreement with the appropriate Municipal Utility District (MUD).

Using the Locate Address Tool

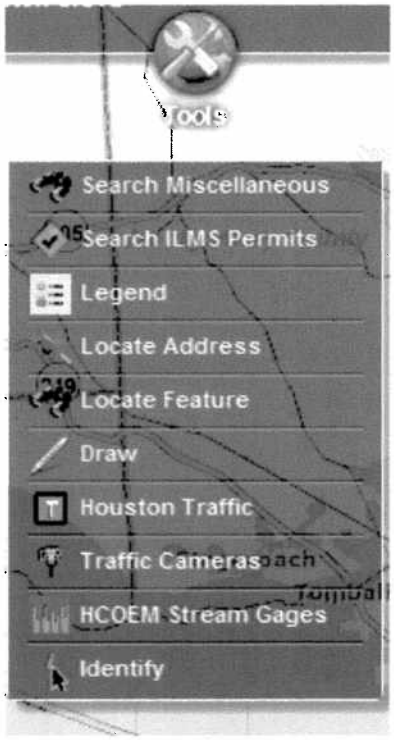


Similarly, one can go back to the the Results pane and click on the Police button to find out the HPD Police Division, District, and Beat for the address.

Using the Locate Feature Tool



At startup, the Locate Feature tool will show up in its minimized form in the top right portion of your browser window - just under the Locate Address Tool. If one exits the tool, it can be brought back by selecting the Locate Feature tool from the Tools menu (see graphic to the right).



If the tool is minimized, start using the tool by clicking on the icon part of the minimized tool. This will cause the tool to expand.

By clicking on one of the first two small icons on the top of the tool window, It is possible to select either a Text Search or a Graphical Search. The Text Search is the default search mode.

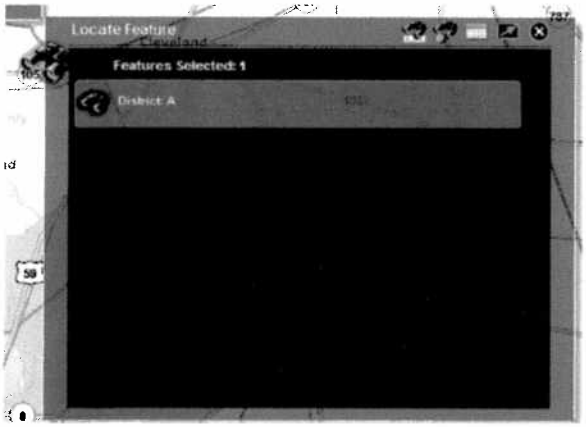
Text Search - If Text Search is selected, use the Search Layer dropdown list to select the search layer. The choices are City Council District, Super Neighborhood by Name, Super Neighborhood by No., KeyMap Page, KeyMap Block, Lambert Tile, GIMS Tile (Public Works uses this), or Zip Code. *Note – these selections may expand in the future, but not necessarily appear in this documentation.*

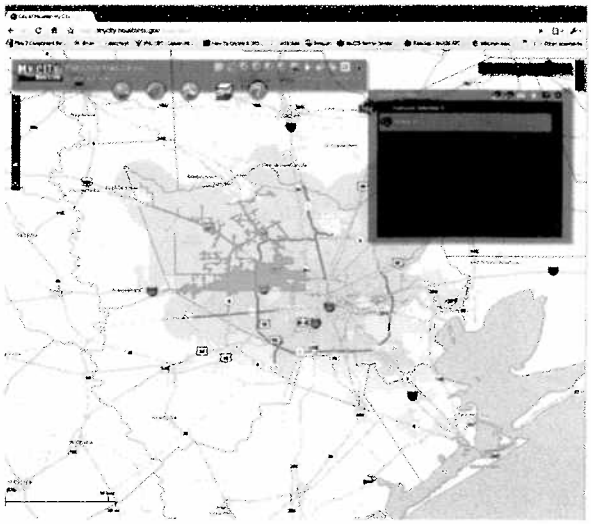
Once the Search Layer is selected, enter a string that corresponds to appropriate text to use in the search. Examples are provided for each type. For all cases except Super Neighborhood by Name, the search is an exact, but case-insensitive search. For example, for City Council District, one enters either A or a to locate that city council district. For Super Neighborhood by Name, one only needs to enter a word or words appearing the the Super Neighborhood name. For example, entering the string acres will produce two results as there are two

Super Neighborhoods that have the word "acres" in their names.

Once the string is entered, click on the Search button.

The search will initiate and the tool will flip the panel to the Results panel (this panel is indicated on the top right icon panel by the icon. Any results will be listed there, plus the map will show the result feature(s) highlighted in a semi-transparent red color. If one clicks on a one of the results listed in the Results Panel, the map will zoom to and highlight that single result. The highlighted features can be cleared by clicking on the Clear button in the Text Search panel, or by clicking on the Clear Graphics tool in the Shortcut Menu on the Main Menu Controller.

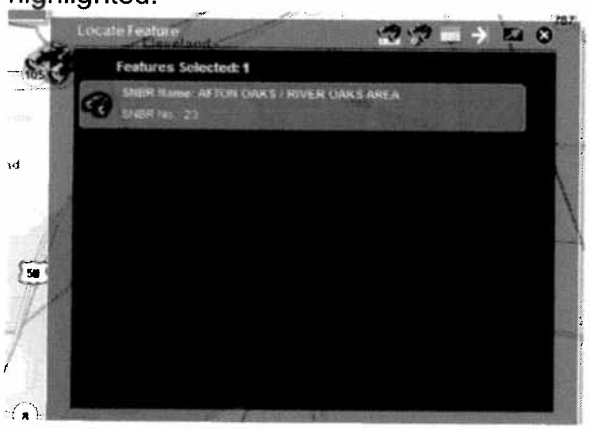


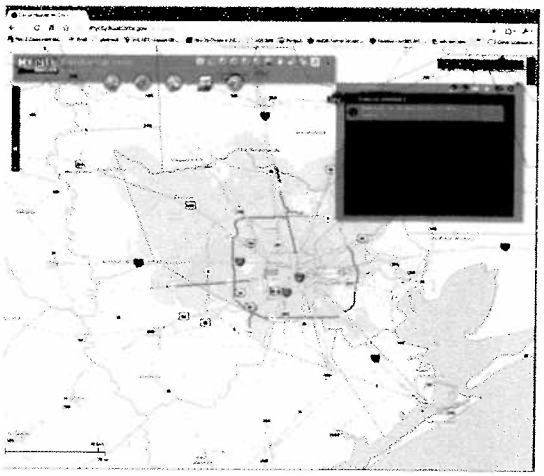


Graphical Search - If Graphical Search is selected, use the Search Layer dropdown list to select the search layer. The choices are City Council District, Super Neighborhood by Name, Super Neighborhood by No., KeyMap Page, KeyMap Block, Lambert Tile, GIMS Tile (Public Works uses this), or Zip Code. *Note – these selections may expand in the future, but not necessarily appear in this documentation.*

Using the Locate Feature Tool

Then select one of the graphical search tools to select a feature by clicking on the map (Select by Point) or drawing a feature (Select by Rectangle or Select by Polygon). Once the feature is drawn, any features in the selected Search Layer will be selected and highlighted. A list of results will be shown in the Results panel. Once again, clicking on one of the listed results will cause that single result to be zoomed to and highlighted.





The highlighted features can be cleared by clicking on the Clear button in the Text Search panel, or by clicking on the Clear Graphics tool in the Shortcut Menu on the Main Menu Controller.