



# OPENING UP THE VAULT: GIS AND OPEN DATA IN STAFFORD, TEXAS

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary South Central Arc User Group Conference  
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HAVEN'T WE ALL FELT THIS WAY BEFORE?





# WHAT IS OPEN DATA AND WHY CARE?

- Open data is not a “trend”
  - It’s embraced by lots of governments around the world with great results
  - It’s part of a larger conversation about modernizing government IT
- To be open, data must be “machine readable” and should be published automatically
  - JSON or Excel vs. PDF
- Open data engages the community
  - Hackathon events can educate citizens about government services and encourages creativity
  - <http://hackforchange.org/>

# HOW IS IT TYPICALLY IMPLEMENTED?

- Open Data Policy
  - Sets the framework for what and how
  - Is specific to each organization
- Data Portal
  - Vendor built/hosted portal
  - Open source portal
- Community Involvement!
  - This is critical

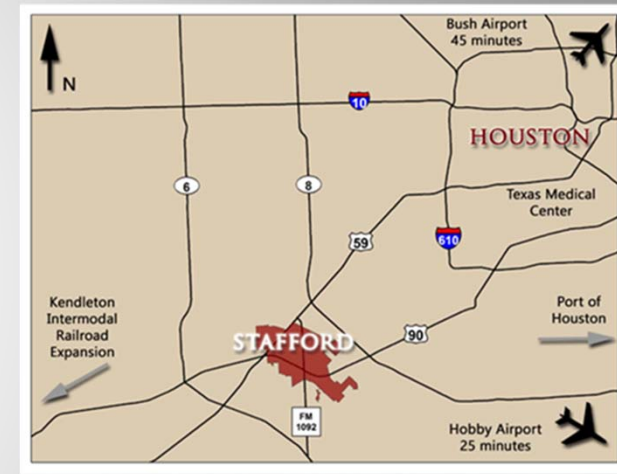


# MORE ABOUT OPEN DATA POLICIES

- What Data Should be Public?
  - Build on the values, goals, mission of the community and government
  - Specify methods of determining the prioritization of data release
  - Safeguard sensitive information
- How to Make Data Public?
  - Provide comprehensive and appropriate formats for varied uses
  - Mandate data be license free
  - Require publishing metadata
- How to Implement Data Policy?
  - Create guidance or regulation for implementation
  - Appoint oversight
  - Create processes to ensure data quality

# A LITTLE ABOUT STAFFORD...

- The City is 7 square miles
- City limits in Fort Bend and Harris County
- 2013 Population: 18,285
- ~ 350,000 cars per day pass through
- No City property taxes
- Have the only Municipal School District in the State



# SOME OF THE ISSUES AT THE CITY OF STAFFORD



- Excessive staff time spent locating information
  - Most data in paper format
  - Data in silos within each department
- Open Records requests taking up hours of staff time
  - One department spends 10 – 15 hours per month fulfilling requests
  - Some research into past requests indicated most people were requesting the same type of information
- City leaders unsure / uneducated about open data
  - Political support is required for an open data policy to work

# HOW WE DECIDED TO APPROACH IT



- Release data first, worry about a policy later
  - City leaders need to see results before moving forward
  - Needed to use existing resources to accomplish this. Enter ESRI's Open Data Platform
- Work with surrounding cities to put together a regional Civic Hackathon event
  - The Fort Bend GIS Consortium is in the beginning stages of putting a Hackathon event together for Fort Bend County
  - Event to be held later this year
  - Stafford City leaders will attend to see the impact and benefits of open data



# OUR ESRI OPEN DATA PORTAL

- <http://gisdata.staffordpw.com/>



# WHAT ABOUT THAT LITTLE ISSUE OF STAFF TIME BEING SPENT FINDING STUFF?



- City staff sought to modernize the way we accessed all data, not just what was open to the public
  - Critical to this was a way to access construction plans and plats spatially
  - <http://www.staffordtx.gov/gis/staff-map/index.html>

# SOME OF THE THINGS WE ARE WORKING ON:



- A completely new City website: <http://www.staffordtx.gov>
  - This website will serve as the City’s “digital front door” and as a platform for a whole new way of operating
    - Web based open records requests replacing paper forms and allowing tracking, analysis
    - Web based information lookup for things like municipal court cases
    - A new GIS home for the City
    - Finalizing and filling out our Open Data Portal
- A new addition to our Staff Map
  - Building plans for the entire City are currently being scanned in and will be connected to a building footprints layer
  - Staff will be able to search and find by type, address, dates, etc.

# THANK YOU!

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