Ramsey County GIS User Group

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http://www.ramseygis.com/Webpages/

Collaborative GIS

- "Those who undertake GIS on their own are not operating efficiently!"

Ramsey County GIS User Group

- What is a Users Group?
- Why did we form the Ramsey County Group?
- How did we form our Users Group?
- Chronology of events
- How does our User Group function?
- What have we achieved?
- How to make your Group a successful one

What is a GIS User Group?

- An alliance of current and potential users of GIS technology with common interests in its development and use

Why Start a Users Group?

- To **help each other** become **more successful** in GIS efforts
- To support each other through mutually beneficial activities
- To share ideas
- To share costs
- To develop contacts and relationships
- ***Why go it alone?***

Don’t operate in a vacuum!

- **Remember!** Public tax dollars have already been spent or will be spent in GIS development. Why not **increase** the value of the public investment made by sharing ideas, successes, failures, data with others so that everyone can benefit?

Ramsey County GIS User Group

- **Who are we?**
  - An alliance of approximately 20 organizations currently using GIS within Ramsey County
  - Users with a broad background of local government operations: cities, school districts,watershed districts, soil /water conservation district, universities and community groups
  - Links to I-35W Corridor Coalition and MetroGIS

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Members

- 14 cities
- 2 school districts
- 2 watershed districts
- 1 soil/water conservation district
- 1 university
- 1 neighborhood consortium (St. Paul communities)

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- **Why did we form our Users Group?**
  - To help disseminate County GIS data throughout the community, therefore providing a **better service to the public** by enabling elected officials and management within a variety of organizations to make more informed and timely decisions.
  - To enable Users to obtain **better data more cheaply and more efficiently** through the sharing of ideas and costs

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- **Why did we form our Users Group? (cont)**
  - To assist the County in its data base enhancements through: data sharing, cost-sharing and user feedback
  - To enable GIS newcomers to get up and running more quickly and cheaply
  - To cooperate with metropolitan and regional organizations
  - To give organizations the ability to look beyond their own boundaries

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- **How did we form our Users Group?**
  - Clearly defined what **kind** of group we wanted to be *(non-software specific, local government focus)*
  - Clearly defined our goals
  - Ensured active participation from Ramsey County
  - Identified who would be the ***"champions"*** of the Group
  - Identified all potential members
  - Invited members to first meeting in May 1995

Ramsey County GIS User Group

- **Chronology of Events:**
  - *May 1995:* First meeting of User Group
  - *June 1995 to November 1995:* Monthly Meetings
  - *November 1995 to March 1996:* Drafting of Joint Powers Agreement (JPA)
  - *May 1996:* County GIS Data Fair
  - *August 1996:* Defining cable pilot project
  - *June 1996 to February 1997:* Finalizing of JPA

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- **Chronology of Events:** *(continued)*
  - *January to August 1997:* Defining cost-sharing for processing aerial imagery
  - *Mid 1997:* Commence regular monthly special topic sessions
  - *October 1997:* Supply of first CD-ROM with entire County parcel data base
  - *April 1998:* Ramsey County GIS Expo held
  - *May 1999:* First User Group FORUM held (Public Works)

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- **Chronology of Events:** *(continued)*
  - Strategic Planning 2000-01
  - *2001 – Present:* Formation of committees (Address, Enterprise, Community GIS, Emergency Management, Public Relations)
  - *October, 2003:* Governor's Council in GIS Award
  - *December, 2003:* User Group Enterprise Committee launches county-wide online mapping website

Ramsey County GIS User Group

- **How does the Group function?:**
  - Operates under the joint powers agreement (JPA) which enables each member to be represented by the Group
  - Operates autonomously from the County but we rely strongly on their support and participation
  - Group consists of **Members** and **Affiliates** (Paying and Non-Paying)
  - Meeting are open to **all** public and private individuals and organizations
  - Meetings held **regularly** (monthly)
  - **Board** meetings held as required by JPA and to resolve other issues as they arise

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- **How does the Group function? - Members:**
  - Can be any local unit of government situated in Ramsey County
  - Pay a one-time $500 membership fee
  - Pay annual data maintenance fee based on size and type of organization *(3 year commitment required)*
  - Have an equal vote at Board meetings
  - Agree to share any permit data with County and any data **derived** from County base with County and other Members

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- **How does the Group function? - Members:**
  - A Member can be **represented** by a **private sector** entity who is undertaking contracted work on behalf of that organization
  - Private sector entity has no voting rights at Board meetings
  - Members are covered by liability insurance through MN League of Cities

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- **How does the Group function? – Paying Affiliates:**
  - Can be any county, regional, state and federal agency, non-profit organizations, educational institutions with direct or indirect involvement in GIS activities
  - Pay membership or data access fees
  - Do **not** have voting rights
  - Cannot enter into cost-sharing agreements under the JPA
  - Operate under the spirit of the JPA (data-sharing etc.)

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- **How does the Group function? – Non-Paying Affiliates:**
  - Can be any county, regional, state and federal agency, non-profit organizations, educational institutions with direct or indirect involvement in GIS activities
  - Do **not** pay membership or data access fees
  - Do **not** have voting rights
  - Cannot enter into cost-sharing agreements under the JPA

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- **Why have fees anyway?**
  - To offset the costs of data supply and storage **not** for cost of creating data
  - So Members can access County plotters and GIS workstations
  - Cost-share in creation/maintenance of **non-mandated** data *(physical features)*
  - Can enter into joint special projects

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- **What have we achieved?**
  - Provided Members with cheap, accurate and useful GIS base information available monthly
  - Created a strong degree of trust between each other and with the County resulting in each of us providing better information to each other
  - Established links to other regional and metro-wide organizations ensuring that data standards are considered

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- **What have we achieved? (cont)**
  - Enabled a more rapid growth in the use of GIS within the County than would otherwise have been possible if individual development had occurred
  - Have educated many elected officials in the value of GIS technology and data

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- **What have we achieved?**
  - Cost shared physical features update with aerial imagery and LIDAR
  - User Group Handbook – comprehensive metadata
  - County-wide Online mapping application (http://maps.metro-inet.us)
  - Governor's Council in GIS award 2003

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- **How to make your Group a success**
  - Ensure that there is a core group willing to donate considerable time to operating and promoting the Group
  - Develop a formal agreement (JPA) or similar legal instrument with each other to enable the Group to negotiate on behalf of its members and for legal recognition of products and working relationships
  - Regular County GIS attendance is essential to maintain their involvement and support.

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- **How to make your Group a success**
  - Member diversity is beneficial to foster creative discussions
  - Meet **regularly** to ensure momentum is maintained
  - Ensure members are willing to form sub-committees as needed to move issues quickly
  - Share the responsibilities once the organization is established

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- **How to make your Group a success**
  - Remember, there is a strong and legitimate role for involvement of the private sector.
  - Have regular hands-on demonstrations at meetings
  - Remember that not everyone is a GIS expert
  - Always have refreshments at meetings
  - Make sure meetings have a broad appeal
  - Try to bring examples of “maps and apps” to meetings
  - Try to include all members/attendees in the discussions

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- **How to make your Group a success**
  - Maintain a comprehensive mailing list to keep everyone informed regardless of attendance
  - Post minutes agendas on a web site or distribute via e-mail where possible