



Don't Tell Me; Show Me GIS Technology Paints a Picture with Data

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a “geographic information system” illustration must be worth volumes – and is a whole lot easier to comprehend. GIS is a computer program that draws on databases of maps, population numbers, transportation resources, and much more, then presents the data as a visual map of a given location with overlays displaying whatever data is sought.

Geographic Information Systems are fast becoming critical tools for gaining a competitive edge in economic development, according to Ashley Peterson, who manages the GIS software that Teamwork Arkansas uses to help Arkansas communities market themselves. Teamwork Arkansas is the economic development office of Entergy Arkansas.

GIS software applications help to speed the process of analyzing data and recognizing trends, which lets decision-makers develop better and more strategies quickly. According to Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc., a leader in GIS software and services, using GIS for economic development:

- improves project management
- increases efficiency
- provides decision support
- saves money
- manages resources
- saves time
- builds consensus

In print and on the web, GIS is being used to graphically depict economic data. Ultimately, it helps businesses and governments answer the all-important question -- WHERE? Where are communities that need assistance? Where does a qualified labor force exist? Where should one offer tax credits? Where should one locate a factory?

Geographic Information Systems are also used for a multitude of other functions. For example, GISs are used by emergency 911 services to locate accident victims, by government agencies as a management tool, and by local communities as a planning tool to name a few. Entergy Arkansas is using it to recruit business to Arkansas. To tap into this valuable resource for your economic development purposes, call Ashley Peterson at 501-377-4439 or email her at apeter1@entergy.com.