

IndianaMap

It's All About Location



John C. Steinmetz

A prime consideration in siting a business or expanding to a new area is location. Fortunately for Indiana businesses, or for any company considering a move to Indiana, there is an Internet resource that can address issues concerning place – and it's free: IndianaMap (www.IndianaMap.org).

IndianaMap is a comprehensive, reliable and intuitive geographic resource ready to address your location questions. The IndianaMap viewer allows users to build their own custom maps to suit their specific needs. Each map layer in IndianaMap was rigorously compiled and reviewed to meet the highest standards of reference by local, state and federal government agencies and universities.

IndianaMap is the product of a cooperative venture that began in 2000 when the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) needed digital maps to plan what is now the extension of Interstate 69 between Indianapolis and Evansville. At the time, INDOT's problem was one of frustration borne from the inefficiencies, redundancies and expenses of being paper based.

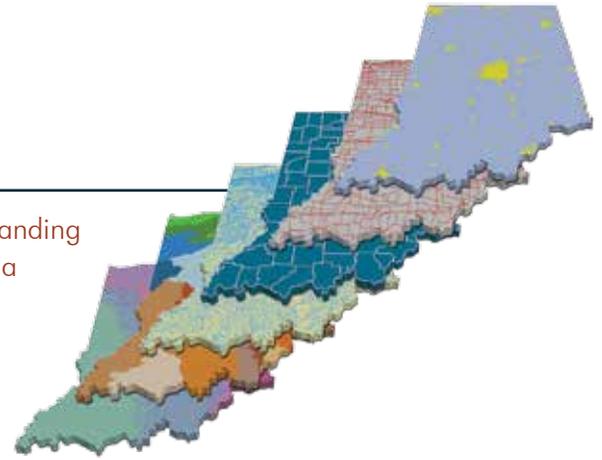
Additionally, paper maps from its many contractors were slow in coming, expensively produced and often of different scales, projections and reliability. Finally, each map needed to be redrafted as new information arrived.

What INDOT sought was a remedy using the rapidly-evolving field of digital mapping, or geographic information system (GIS) technology. Through a collaboration between the Indiana Geological Survey (IGS) at Indiana University-Bloomington – a leader in the compilation, manipulation, mapping and analysis of spatial information – and the Lochmueller Group, an engineering and environmental consulting firm in Evansville, INDOT achieved the desired result.

INDOT was so impressed with the success of the IGS-Lochmueller partnership that it contracted it to create a GIS of the entire state. The end result is the IndianaMap you see today.

IndianaMap was rebranded and a new partnership was created with the IGS and the Indiana Geographic Information Council (IGIC), a nonprofit GIS member organization that fosters education, outreach and building partnerships. IGIC helps coordinate the production and dissemination of geospatial activities at all levels of Indiana business and government; as a result, the value of IndianaMap continues to grow.

Over the years, the number of thematic layers has grown to include topography, streets and highways, hydrology, subsurface information and infrastructure, sites adjacent to those of interest, demographic information, land cover and political boundaries. Currently, two of the most popular features are its high-resolution color orthophotography (aerial photography) and elevation data (LiDAR).



These support a wide range of initiatives such as urban and rural planning, economic development, property assessment, transportation, natural resource management, flood mitigation and public safety. The maps themselves were contributed by various local, state and federal agencies, universities and nonprofits, together with a host of geological information from the IGS. Each layer is accompanied by rigorously reviewed metadata, which document the origin of the map, its reliability, vintage and scale.

IndianaMap currently consists of more than 270 map layers, and it is one of the most comprehensive state-based GIS in the nation, winning national recognition from geographers and cartographers who recognize the quality of the entire system. Users need not be trained GIS technicians: Intuitive tools allow anyone to zoom, pan, measure, save, share and print custom maps.

This resource is never static. In 2015, Indiana's Geographic Information Office (GIO) won the support of all 92 Indiana counties to share four GIS data layers consisting of 5,000 jurisdictional boundaries, 500,000 street centerline segments, three million address points and three million land parcels. In return for sharing data, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security provided some modest initial grants to support the GIS data sharing costs.

It is widely believed that the most accurate GIS data are local data, and Indiana's local governments have long been leaders in collaborating and sharing their GIS data within the state. Not surprisingly IGIC's mantra, "Build Once – Use Many Times," is a common phrase.

IndianaMap exists today through a combination of federal grants, data sharing, partner organizations' contributions and specific project funding, all coordinated through IGIC and its partners like Indiana's GIO and the IGS. Dedicated state sustainable funding has not yet been forthcoming. In spite of limited and variable resources, IndianaMap is a tremendous success and highly regarded by all its users.

One measure is its popularity: At present, more than 1,000 maps are self-constructed and served up daily over the Internet. Such success has resulted in an increased user demand for faster, enhanced services and more current and legacy data. To meet these growing needs, IGIC continues to seek support for both statewide and local programs that create, maintain and distribute this vital geospatial information.

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