WHAT IS GIS?

Acronym for *Geographic Information System.*

"A geographic information system (GIS) is a framework for gathering, managing, and analyzing data. Rooted in the science of geography, GIS integrates many types of data. It analyzes spatial location and organizes layers of information in visualizations using maps and 3D scenes. With this unique capability, GIS reveals deeper insights into data, such as patterns, relationships, and situations – helping users make smarter decisions."

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http://www.gis.com/whatisgis/index.cfm

Brief history of GIS use in the County of Hawaii

The GIS was first introduced to our Local County government in 1990. The system was primarily used to assist the County of Hawaii, Elections Division with the task of analyzing and preparing maps for the *Reapportionment of Council Seats for the County of Hawaii* utilizing US Census data.

In 1998, the GIS was reintroduced to assist with the *County of Hawaii, General Plan Revision Program.* The General Plan Revision Program continued until its' adoption in early 2005. During that time period, the County continued to look at other alternatives for using GIS, not specific to just the General Plan Revision Program needs. Other GIS data was initially created to assist with the needs of the Planning Department. Eventually, GIS data needs for other agencies were introduced and other data resources became available. Management of GIS data became an ongoing process.

During the year 2000, *The GIS Plan for the County of Hawaii* was introduced by the Data Systems Department. The document composed of both short- and long-term strategy and implementation components for County agencies. Data Systems became the lead agency in coordinating GIS activities for the County and met with various agencies to discuss current and future needs in using GIS. The Data Systems GIS Section has since become the overall coordinator for the *Hawaii Island User Group (HIUG)* of local GIS users composed of people from County, State and Federal agencies, military, university, public and private schools, and many users from the private business sector.

In 2004, GIS was made available to interested County agencies via Intranet servers. Users would view available GIS data utilizing a free software program called *ArcExplorer*, then more recently *ArcReader*. Both software programs are products of *Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI)*. The ArcReader program was available on the GIS Public Data CD that was issued to the general public.

Since December of 2005, the County has introduced GIS to the public via the *GIS Public Data* on compact disc (CD) and more recently, it's provided on DVD due to the size of data made available. It includes various GIS data layers with related documents called metadata or information about the GIS data. New users may initially find the software program somewhat challenging but once they have learned the concept of this program some find it very useful to certain needs. The County has distributed these disks from 2005 through December 2020.

ArcReader began its end-of-life phase and the GIS Public Data DVD reached maximum capacity. The County of Hawaii introduced ESRI's web-based mapping product commonly referred to as *"Portal for GIS"*.