

GISette



A quarterly newsletter to broaden people's understanding of mapping, geography and the City's Geographic Information System

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For Marlborough's Public GIS Web Site Visit the Following Link:

<http://gis.marlborough-ma.gov>

Welcome to the start of the third year of the *GISette*! It's hard to believe that two years have gone by since I started this little pet project. I hope you still enjoy reading it as much as I enjoy writing it. Marlborough's geographic information system continues to expand and new data is being added and updated all the time. Our publically available website continues to be well received, and that too is always evolving. There should be some substantial improvements to it coming soon with a new release of the existing software we use. Stayed tuned here for all the updates!

Coming improvements to Marlborough's GIS you will be seeing in the near future

- Ability to download exiting GIS data layers from the City's website for developers, engineers, planners and the like
- Addition of water/sewer stub information to GIS website
- Added linking of residential plans as PDF files to be viewed and downloaded
- Behind the scenes software upgrades to improve performance and display of data

I Love Geography

What is it? There's more to it than just maps.

It's true, I do. I even have a bumper sticker in my cubicle that says so. Everybody laughs when they see it, but when I was looking for inspiration for this issue, all I had to do was look up. The heavens parted, trumpets sounded and low and behold, there was the bumper sticker, aglow in all of its wisdom and glory.

What draws me to geography so fervently is the sheer expansiveness of the subject. There's always something new to investigate. Defined, Geography is the study of the land, the features, the inhabitants and the phenomena of the earth. That's almost like...*everything*!! The discipline of geography is credited to the Greek scholar Eratosthenes, and rightly so. He was the first person to calculate the circumference of the earth, invented the system of longitude and latitude, measure the distance of the earth to the sun and calculate the tilt of the earth's axis just to name a few. Not too shabby! In a comical twist, ironically, if you look at his "portrait" on Wikipedia, the profile of his head looks exactly like the continent of Africa!

Making maps is only one aspect of the overall field of geography. Though, they're probably not that different in most people's minds. The common perception is that maps *are* geography and they are the study of place names and numbers. It's kind of like the bad rap that history gets for being seen as just long dead people's names and dates that don't really matter anymore.

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I love Geography cont.

Geography is traditionally broken up into a wide variety of sub-disciplines. However, I think you can really summarize this vast list by saying that as a general rule you have two main categories. They are physical geography and human geography, and together they encompass a multitude of different fields of study.

Physical geography refers to all that which you can touch. Meaning that, like it implies, it's physically there. The atmosphere, biosphere and hydrosphere are part of this. The long term study of the climate (climatology) as well as the short term study of the climate and forecasting variations and patterns (meteorology) fall within this category. So, when you boil it down, the pretty weather girl on channel 7 *is* a meteorologist but she in fact *also* a geographer!

Human geography is more interpretative. It covers the study of patterns and processes that shape our society. This covers the human, political, social and economic aspects of geography. Political geography? Yup. Just think red states and blue states.

I've usually found that the best way to see a subject more clearly for what it is and to make the light bulb go off is to give an example that somebody can relate to and have fun with. Let's wrap up with a Cliff Clavin-esque factoid and then present it in a geographic context. (*Please read with a thick Boston Accent*)

Ehhahh, it's a little known fact that next to Warsaw, Poland, Chicago has the largest Polish population in the world.

- Unlike a lot of Cliffy's factoids, this one is true. Poles first began arriving in Chicago in the 1830's, fleeing the Polish-Russian War. Growth began in earnest with larger waves of immigrants arriving during the 1850's to 1920's. This second round was fleeing social and economic change that swept through Poland. Like so many other Europeans, they came to America to seek a better life. They settled where they knew of relatives and where their culture had already been established. They established new Roman Catholic Parishes and created a community in Chicago that went on to effect to the political and social climate that we still see today.
- Okay, we have just discussed political, cultural, ethnic and social geography in a few short sentences. *Ha!* Poland didn't even exist as a country until the end of World War One. It was previously divided among Germany, Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire just to name a few. As they all jockeyed for territory, peoples were displaced by unwanted political climates and economic conditions. As borders shifted, repressed peoples sought better ways of life. Poles, with their own language, Catholic beliefs and unique culture despite shifting boundaries, began to migrate in an attempt to find a happier, healthier climate for their way of life.....Don't you just love geography?!?

DATA UPDATES

RECENT UPDATES TO EXISTING GIS DATA LAYERS

1. **Parcels** – The parcels data layer (property lines) now reflects property line changes through July 1, 2012
2. **Address Points** – This layer is always kept as updated as possible. As we receive lot plans from developers, we update this layer.
3. **Utility Poles** – This layer has recently been obtained and includes the pole numbers (posted on the poles themselves) for your reference. This can be valuable when trying to explain location information.
4. **Airport Imaginary Surfaces** - This layer was developed in conjunction with State and Federal agencies. These sets of layers define the volumes of airspace that are invisible to the eye but are restricted to certain types of activities that may threaten the safe approach and landing of aircraft.



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