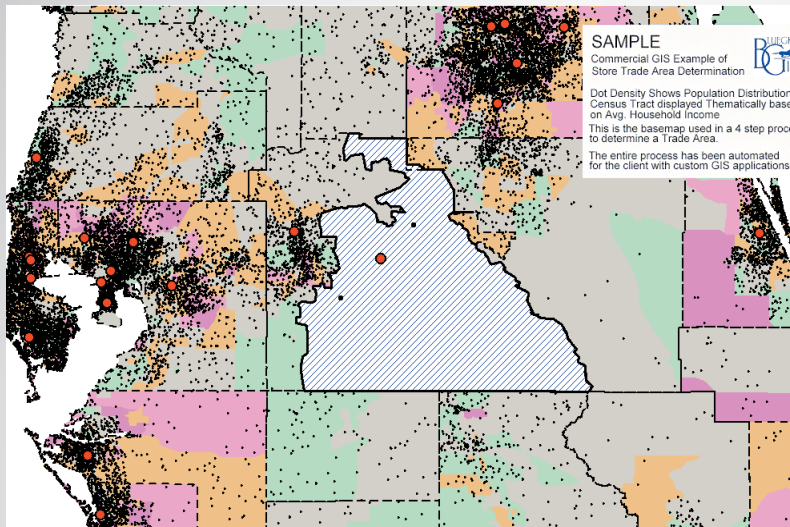


Federated Department Stores: Area Research Division Commercial GIS

The Federated Department Stores (FDS) Area Research Division is tasked with analyzing store performance and retail data, customer and census data, and performing new store site location analysis and reporting the results in the form of maps and reports to high-level management and decision makers. FDS uses an extensive and complex Microsoft Access™ database, several hundred megabytes in size with numerous tables, queries and custom forms which enable their staff to manipulate their data in a meaningful way and to derive results based on user input parameters. By using a legacy proprietary program, select data and results could be viewed spatially, but this program was limited, costly, and not customizable. FDS agreed that an industry standard GIS that would interface with Access and Excel, address their full range of needs, and be fully customizable so as to free them from reliance on a consultant was needed if they were to deploy better spatial information management tools to their staff, and provide enhanced services to management and decision makers.



FDS Area Research selected Bluegrass GIS, Inc. for several reasons including cost and proximity, but the primary reason was that their staff agreed that they were very comfortable working with us. They especially liked that Bluegrass GIS had no pre-conceived solutions to sell them, that we would custom-build their commercial GIS applications to their specific needs, and that we would supply them with all source code so that their technical staff could assume program maintenance and further customization. Also attractive was our ability to listen to the needs of non-technical users, and to translate those requirements into a functional specification that could be implemented.

Bluegrass GIS interviewed the Area Research staff, prioritized their application requirements and submitted a project plan and functional specification that met their needs. Significant time was spent with the Access DBA, as it was imperative that the original database continue to serve in its present capacity as well as support the ESRI ArcView GIS front-end we were building. In short, the applications had to be built around the Access database structure and always in deference to its existing design. Where elements of the database had to be altered to satisfy compatibility, portability, or performance issues, changes were made only after presenting the problems to the DBA and arriving at a mutual agreement on how these modifications were best resolved. This required a significant amount of time communicating with the DBA, and in developing a detailed understanding of their legacy database.

The result was a set of comprehensive, relevant commercial GIS applications packaged neatly as an extension to ArcView, fully documented with context sensitive help and delivered with over 5000 lines of source code in 183 programs. This application put tasks such as trade area definition, store related census and customer data analysis, credit data and store performance evaluation, and new store location analysis behind a series of simple buttons and dialog boxes from which the user can perform analyses or simply browse data by clicking zip codes, tract, block, and store shapes on their screens. The application was so successful that it was presented by FDS at the 2002 ESRI User Conference in San Diego.



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