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"ADVANCING YORKEXPLORER" AWARD OF EXCELLENCE AT THE ESRI REGIONAL USERS CONFERENCE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, October 12, 2005, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services and that the 'Advancing YorkExplorer' Project Team of the Geomatics Branch be recognized for their contribution to this project: Project Manager Rica Saporta, Web Developer Claudia Letea, Brian Cullen, Debra Kelloway, Duncan Rowe, Andrew Satterthwaite, Karoleigh Miller and Director Nancy Prout, supported by Information Management, Business Solutions, and Products and Services teams.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

York Region received an Award of Excellence for its "Advancing YorkExplorer" project at the 2005 ESRI Regional Users Conference, Toronto, in recognition of the leadership and integration performed by the Region's Geomatics team to fully exploit the power of ArcIMS, including the ArcIMS metadata explorer and interoperability extensions. The purpose of this report is to inform Committee and Council of the award, and recognize staff from the Planning and Development Services Department's Geomatics Branch for enhancing customer service through the YorkExplorer website.

3. BACKGROUND

Environmental Systems Research Incorporated (ESRI) is the largest supplier of GIS software. ESRI software is used by many municipalities and government agencies. Each year ESRI Canada presents Awards of Excellence at the Regional Users Conferences held across Canada to recognize outstanding GIS applications in different industries. There is no financial value to the award.

The Advancing YorkExplorer Project was undertaken 2004-2005, funded by York Region and the federal GeoConnections program. York Region was the first municipal recipient of GeoConnections funding. The project brought new functionality to the Region's internet web mapping views, added a metadata tool to enable discovery of York Region geographic data, and published web map services (WMS) that can be used by other mapping agencies.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

YorkExplorer internet mapping services were created to enable citizens, businesses, staff at York Region, other public agencies, as well as students and teachers, to gain easy access to York Region geographic information to support their activities. The services are widely used, with an average of 64 map views accessed every hour, and over 130 map views accessed in peak business hours.

There were three major goals of the Advancing YorkExplorer project:

1. To publish web services of geographic information compliant with ArcIMS, and OGC-web map services (WMS).
2. To provide metadata search services through YorkCatalogue for public discovery of available geographic information in York Region and other portal websites, such as the GeoConnections Discovery Portal.
3. To enhance YorkAtlas, an interactive ArcIMS-based Internet mapping application, with powerful functionality, flexibility, and enriched geographic information.

York Region has published metadata for the majority of its geographic datasets, for all of its current external web services, and will soon be publishing metadata of its publicly-available map products. Key geographic datasets of the Town of Richmond Hill, a project partner, are also online. The Region has published four web map services, compliant with the Open GIS Consortium (OGC) standard, for anyone to use at no charge. Nine interactive map views are publicly available through YorkAtlas, and six views require account-based access for collaborative programs.

Collectively these improvements to the York Region internet mapping site make the Region's geographic data holdings and products more accessible to users throughout York Region, and thereby help strengthen the local economy, improve education in York Region's schools, and assist staff at the Regional and local level in their activities and decision-making.

The Region has benefited from the "Advancing YorkExplorer" project with the new ability to rapidly deploy interactive mapping functionality to environmental assessment project websites such as the 19th Avenue (YDSS Interceptor) project. Residents are able to map their address in relation to the project study area and are asked if they would like to join the notification list.

ESRI presented the award of excellence in recognition of the integration work performed by the Region's Geomatics team to fully exploit the power of ArcIMS, ESRI's internet geography software, including the ArcIMS metadata explorer and OGC interoperability extensions. The Award was accepted by Nancy Prout, Director of York Region's Geomatics Branch on behalf of the Region at the ESRI Regional Users Conference held on October 25th, 2005, in Brampton.

YorkExplorer was also recognized in the August 2005 issue of the international industry magazine, GeoWorld, as the Resource of the Month.

The Geomatics Branch continues to promote the use of YorkExplorer by York Region staff through training sessions.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report is for information only, and therefore, there are no direct financial implications at this time.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Richmond Hill was a project partner in the Advancing YorkExplorer project, and contributed metadata to be hosted on the site, enabling discovery of Richmond Hill data by other agencies. The opportunity to have discoverable metadata is being extended to other local municipalities.

7. CONCLUSION

The ESRI Award of Excellence further recognizes the diversity and depth of skills within York Region's Geomatics Branch and its reputation as a Centre of Excellence.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.