

Non-profits Join Forces to lead OpenStreetMap Mapathon, October 16-18 to make Atlanta the most digitally mapped city in the United States

Technology Association of Georgia (TAG), Georgia URISA, the GeoGeorgia Initiative, and 4-H Clubs are spearheading a public mapping event to help stimulate economic development by creating the first FREE digital map of Atlanta

September 21, 2009 – High profile members of OpenStreetMap (OSM), the non-profit organization which aims to map every corner of the world through crowd sourcing and make this data available for free, are rallying around a citywide Mapathon, October 16-18. The aim of the event is to ensure Atlanta is the first, most detailed and accurately represented US city on OpenStreetMap.org, effectively putting Atlanta map data back into the hands of its citizens.

Why is a free digital map of Atlanta so important?

The “geospatial industry” is one of thirteen high-growth, high demand industries highlighted by the Department of Labor from where new economic growth is expected to derive. A free, digital detailed map of Atlanta will help stimulate economic development by reducing the financial barrier to geo-spatial innovation. The Atlanta OpenStreetMap will be used for a wide range of applications. These might include local businesses wishing to streamline location-based operations, students wishing to carry out geographical surveys/ projects, and civic groups participating in urban development projects.

Why use OpenStreetMap?

The use of traditional maps is hampered by high cost, legal and technical restrictions that severely curtail their use. The aim of the Atlanta OSM project is to create better geographic data that can be used by anyone. Attendees of the Atlanta Mapathon, will be wandering the city with GPS (Global Positioning System) units, recording the routes of as many streets, cycleways and footpaths as they can and registering POIs (points of interest) such as famous Atlanta landmarks, attractions, restaurants and hotels. The tracks and POIs will then be recorded and put online in the OpenStreetMap.org database where anyone can access the information.

“Having accurate, detailed, free maps is a necessity for any modern city,” said **Steve Coast, founder of OpenStreetMap**. “The passion of the Atlanta community to unite together and make this mapping initiative possible in a very short period of time is a fantastic achievement, we looking forward to other cities following suit. ”

Who's involved in the Mapathon?

Organizations including: CloudMade, Gainesville State College, GeoGeorgia Initiative, Technology Association of Georgia (TAG), Georgia URISA, the Georgia GIS Coordinating Committee, Southeastern GeoTech Center, Georgia 4-H Clubs and REI are coming together to lead the Atlanta Mapathon, where together with their members, OSM mappers and the general public they aim to map as much of Atlanta as they can within the I-285 perimeter. The Mapathon will be followed-up with additional mapping events that will complete the map in six months.

“OpenStreetMap is the ‘linux’ of geospatial data: it's the stuff of which the future of location-based services and analysis is made. Georgia welcomes the Atlanta Initiative to showcase how a major city can quickly get digitally mapped through a grass-roots effort”, said **Dr. Frank Howell, Director** of the volunteer **GeoGeorgia Initiative**. “The GeoGeorgia Initiative’s mission is to facilitate the growth of the geospatial industry in Georgia through training and the education of state and local governments to make geospatial data freely available to the public”.

“The Technology Association of Georgia is proud to support this initiative”, said **Tino Mantella, TAG President**. “The project promises to spur innovation and promote technology based economic development, while at the same time establishing Georgia as a leader in the geospatial mapping industry”.

“Our environment changes rapidly with new roads, restaurants, hotels, and so on being built every day. However it takes forever for these to be added to the maps we use in our daily lives”, said **Tripp Corbin, GIS/IT President, Georgia URISA**. “Open Street Map allows users to capture these changes and share them with the world so we are no longer forced to wait for updates. This promotes the use and development of spatial data and puts the power back in the hands of the users which is why Georgia URISA is a supporter of this effort”.

“With an increased emphasis on Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET), Georgia 4-H recognizes the natural ties between our youth development programming and the OSM project”, said **Melanie Biersmith, Georgia 4-H Environmental Education Coordinator and Extension 4-H Specialist**. “We look forward to working together to engage youth in this exciting initiative”.

Who should take part?

Everyone can take part in the Mapathon. Here's what just a few groups will get out of the event:

- **Local businesses** should come along and make sure that they're not only on the map,

but understand how they can make their businesses more visible to prospective customers using OSM

- **Students / job seekers** will be able to enhance their skill-set in preparation for entering the emerging geospatial industry and other technology careers by: gaining valuable experience in collaborating in one of the largest open online mapping projects, learning how to use a hand-held GPS device and building detailed knowledge of civil infrastructure and responsibility
- **Families** should take part because it'll be a FUN day out! The Mapathon will be an exciting outdoor social activity. Not only will it be educational and a good workout, but it will also provide a fantastic sense of achievement. Just think, your family could lay claim to mapping the Georgia State Capitol!
- **Cyclists / walkers** should join to mark their routes on the map to share with other outdoor enthusiasts or to find new paths worth exploring and the fastest and safest routes around the city

How to register

The citywide Mapathon takes place on October 16-18. Interested parties should register [here](#).

More information about the event is available [here](#).

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About OpenStreetMap

OpenStreetMap is an online community of over 160,000 people who are making a free map of the world. Every day in countries all around the world, people just like you are walking, cycling, driving, running and sailing the roads, trails, paths and rivers of the world, making a map for anyone to use and share. Find out more about OpenStreetMap on the project's wiki, here: http://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/Main_Page

About GeoGeorgia Initiative

The GeoGeorgia Initiative is a volunteer umbrella collaboration among Georgia Tech, University of Georgia, and other universities in Georgia. The GeoGeorgia Initiative mission is to facilitate the growth of the geospatial industry in Georgia through workforce training and the education of state and local governments to make geospatial freely available to the public.

About Georgia URISA

The Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA) is a non-profit professional and educational association that promotes the effective and ethical use of spatial information and information technologies for the understanding and management of urban and regional systems. It is a multidisciplinary association where professionals from all parts of the spatial data community can come together and share concerns and ideas.

About Technology Association of Georgia

The Technology Association of Georgia (TAG) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to support its members by generating opportunities for personal, professional and business growth. By forging strategic alliances, TAG serves as a primary catalyst to foster a rich environment for economic development in Georgia's technology community. TAG is made up of over 7,500 members representing technology leaders from over 1700 Georgia-based companies, affiliated technology and business organizations. For more information on TAG, visit www.tagonline.org

About 4-H

4-H is part of the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the United States Department of Agriculture. Partnering with schools and counties of our state, Georgia 4-H assists youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society.

About CloudMade

CloudMade provides you with access to a range of innovative tools and APIs that allow you to make the most of map data. We source our map data from OpenStreetMap, the community mapping project which is making a free map of the world. Our first set of APIs were released to selected developers in May 2008 and allow the integration of high quality maps into mobile and web-based applications.