

## **Planning for the Future, Building on Decades of Success: The Role of Geospatial Data at the Census Bureau**

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The Census Bureau has been a leader in the collection, production, and dissemination of geospatial data, particularly since the development of the Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (TIGER) database for the 1990 census. Over the past 25 years, the use of, and need for, geospatial data has expanded to all levels of government as well as throughout the commercial and non-governmental sectors. Within the Census Bureau, use of geographic information systems (GIS) and geospatial data for statistical data analysis and review, planning and coordination of data collection activities, and mapping and data visualization products, also has expanded substantially. These expanded uses and needs have raised several challenges:

- 1) A need for greater positional accuracy to support the use of global positioning systems (GPS) in field data collection operations and to ensure accurate geocoding of data.
- 2) Frequent and timely updates of critical geospatial data, particularly in areas experiencing change.
- 3) Varied and flexible geospatial data products to meet diverse user needs and to support access to geospatial data through web services.

In this paper, I discuss the various activities at the Census Bureau to meet these challenges. I provide background information about the development of the TIGER database to provide context. I discuss initiatives to collect and process geospatial data to ensure that data in the TIGER database are as current and accurate as possible. I also discuss the uses of geospatial data throughout the Census Bureau, and the decentralization of development of mapping and data visualization products.

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