

GREENWOOD

Commonwealth



MONDAY

GREENWOOD, MISS. 75¢

Avenue J



Edward Thompson

oming on Avenue J. Greenwood Fire Chief Marcus Banks said the rapid / set.

Apparently intentional



Mapping software to help city

By BOB DARDEN
Staff Writer

A computer software program will enable the city of Greenwood to map and preserve locations of almost anything in a digital format.

The Geographical Information System (GIS) program will help make the city more responsive and prepared in the modern, paperless world, says Thomas Gregory, the city's chief administrative officer.



Gregory

"Greenwood is trying to move from analog to digital. This enables us to really make progress," he said.

Nel Ruffin, an instructor with the Geosciences Department at Mississippi State University, described GIS to the City Council last week and also has led classes in Greenwood.

"It's as if you took every data base in town that had a location for things, such as curb cuts, which we are currently working on, or holes or crimes or fires," she said. "Every one of these locations, you would know exactly where it was and could put it on a map."

The system has tremendous advantages, Ruffin said. "It could relate fires to burglaries. It could relate traffic accidents to school districts," she said. "Anything you have in a relational data base management system, you can put into this."

GIS allows people to take in the bigger picture, Ruffin said.

"You can ask questions, not just of space, but also of time. What time do most accidents happen? What time and what place? ... It's not just a map, and it's not just a data base; it's both, and it allows you to coordinate from

main ballot initiative in court

ut before Speed said in a recent state-
general ment. "Only economic devel-
opment would be affected by
the initiative and Mississippi
would be prevented from com-
peting with other states to
attract the jobs we so desper-
ately need."
Eminent domain is the
process government uses to
take private land for projects
ranging from road construc-
tion to industrial develop-
ment.

The proposed constitutional
amendment would prohibit
state and local government
from taking private land to
give to another person or busi-
ness.

The politically powerful
Mississippi Farm Bureau
Federation sponsored the ini-
tiative and gathered signa-
tures to place the issue on the
ballot. Supporters have said
the amendment will protect
property rights.

In a "friend of the court"
brief filed this past week, the
National Federation of Inde-
pendent Business said the
proposed amendment is con-
stitutional because it would
not change the definition of
public use, and it would not
grant new rights to property
owners.

"It's one thing for govern-
ment to take private property
for long-standing and well-
agreed public uses, but it's just

plain wrong for the govern-
ment to take someone's home,
business or farm so someone
else can develop the land or
secure a better location," said
Karen Harned, executive
director of the NFIB Small
Business Legal Center.

Speed said the state has
used eminent domain spar-
ingly and the legal process
"respects private property
rights and ensures individuals
are heard."

t limit is the bal-
the endment



Reid

that has ected by er's office tion. d Sunday proposal e the cer- ure looking ny of the ic conse- d be trig- elf." the White ming with Democrat- Pelosi, D- was craft- 2.7 trillion g cuts that he govern- authority a timeline op Democ- g. It would 7 new rev- thus meet- for no new said Reid's l touching said and

the cuts it contains would prove illusory.

Sen. Chuck Schumer, the No. 3 Democrat in the Senate leadership, said today one difficult reality is that no debt-crisis solution can be successful unless it has the support of five top players: Obama, Boehner, Reid, Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. But Schumer also said he thought Reid's proposal had the best chance of succeeding.

The competing plans were emerging after debt talks between Obama and Boehner on an ambitious \$4 trillion package of spending cuts and revenue increases — the so-called "grand bargain" — collapsed spectacularly when Boehner walked out Friday. The speaker at the time accused Obama of moving the goalposts with demands for more taxes. The White House disputed that, but the focus of the talks has now largely moved from the White House to Capitol Hill.

The drama seemed certain to play out in nail-biting fashion, and it consumed Washington, as Obama canceled planned appearances at two Democratic fundraisers tonight in Washington.

He has barely ventured from the White House all month.



Schumer

VBS

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She said at least 70 volun-
teers helped made the school
a success.

"We could not have done it if
one of those people had not
shown up," she said.

Fair said she is especially
grateful for the hard work of
Heidi Makamson, the school's
assistant director.

At the conclusion of the
school, each child received
a Bible. That was funded
by donations from the com-
munity, Fair said.

"I think it is something
that is very much needed,"
said Bill Clay, founder of the
Greenwood Mentoring Group,
one of the volunteers who
attended



Clay

three nights of the school.
"Teaching children the
power of religion is important.
If you're working with the
Lord, then it is nothing but a
success," he said.

Fair said future multiracial
Vacation Bible Schools are
planned.

"The seeds were planted.
The real fruit will be forth-
coming for a long time," she
said.

■ Contact Bob Darden at
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Maps

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department to department
and service to service," she
said.

Gregory said GIS got its
start after Hurricane Katrina.

Waveland was just one
coastal city that was essential-
ly wiped off the map.

Not only were familiar
physical landmarks obliterated,
but the city's paper
records, which covered vital
infrastructure such as water
and sewer lines, were also
lost, he said.

"There were no longer any
points of reference," he said.

With GIS, thanks in part to
assistance from the Mississip-
pi Emergency Management
Agency, coastal communities
began to map infrastructure
in a format that was surviv-
able.

Gregory, who had used GIS

while a graduate student at
the University of North Car-
olina at Chapel Hill, knew the
value of it. He wrote a propos-
al for a GIS software grant for
the city, which was approved.

The city purchased software
from ESRI of Redlands, Calif.

City employees participat-
ing in the two-day training
included Gregory; Victor
Stokes, head of the Inspection
Division; Betty Stigler, code
enforcement officer; Benny
Herring, director of public
works; Lt. Ray Moore and Lt.
Mike Johnson, both of the
Greenwood Police Depart-
ment; and John Lewis, assis-
tant fire chief.

Also participating in the
training were Raymond
Banks, assistant engineer
with Greenwood Utilities, and
T.W. Cooper, director of the
Greenwood-Leflore Emer-
gency Management Agency.

Some in the group had
extensive computer skills and
GIS experience, while others
had little such experience,

Gregory said.

Ruffin's example of curb
cuts is just one beneficial use
of the program particularly
with regards to the federal
Americans with Disabilities
Act.

"The city of Greenwood is
being asked to submit a
review of its sidewalks," Gre-
gory said. "We have to deter-
mine which are ADA compli-
ant, not compliant or partially
compliant."

Gregory said some of the
data already in the city's GIS
system came from Shelly
Johnstone, principal associate
of Johnstone & Associates of
Hernando.

She helped draft the city's
comprehensive 30-year plan,
which was adopted earlier
this year.

Gregory said there will be
two more introductory ses-
sions, which still must be
scheduled.

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