

(Sent to NGAC and FGDC on July 9, 2014)

URISA Board Recommendations that the FGDC Add Address Data as a New NSDI Framework Theme,  
and Establish Criteria and Procedures for Doing So

This memorandum transmits recommendations from URISA's Board of Directors that the NGAC consider and upon concurrence recommend to the FGDC, that the FGDC:

1. Incorporate address data into the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) as an eighth framework data theme;
2. In support of that, incorporate the FGDC address standard into the FGDC's *Geographic Information Framework Data Content Standard*;
3. Establish general criteria and procedures necessary to consider this and other requests to add new data themes to the NSDI; and,
4. In so doing, establish criteria that ensure that additional NSDI data themes are well-defined, consistent with existing NSDI data themes, and of significance to a broad variety of users nationwide.

The full text of the recommendations follows, including specific criteria, and a brief statement of the rationale and benefits of adopting the recommendations. These recommendations were adopted unanimously by the Board at its March 6, 2014 meeting. If questions arise, please contact me.

**A. Recommendations**

The URISA Board of Directors recommends that the National Geospatial Advisory Committee (NGAC) consider, and upon concurrence communicate to the U.S. Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), formal recommendations that:

1. The FGDC, under its authority granted by OMB Circular A-16 and Executive Orders 12906 and 13286, establish criteria and procedures for adding additional framework data themes to the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI);
2. The criteria ensure that:
  - a. Any additional framework data theme is significant, in the determination of the FGDC, to a broad variety of users nationwide;
  - b. The additional framework data theme is defined and described by an FGDC-endorsed data standard; and
  - c. The standard for the additional framework data theme conforms to the FGDC's *Geographic Information Framework Data Content Standard Part 0: Base document*, and does not conflict with any of the other Parts of the *Geographic Information Framework Data Content Standard*.
3. The FGDC add *Thoroughfare, Landmark, and Postal Address* data as a new theme to the NSDI; and
4. The FGDC's *United States Thoroughfare, Landmark, and Postal Address Data Standard* be incorporated as an additional part into the FGDC's *Geographic Information Framework Data Standard*.

## **B. Rationale and Benefits**

The FGDC has defined, as one aspect of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI), seven essential data themes as the data framework for the NSDI. To underpin the data framework the FGDC has endorsed a data standard for each theme. To ensure that the seven standards are consistent with each other, they have been brought into a single consistent data model, the *Geographic Information Framework Data Content Standard*.

The FGDC defined the NSDI and established its seven data themes in the early 1990's. Since then, no new themes have been added. The framework standard does not mention how a new data theme would be added. There is nothing to be found in the FGDC's public website as to how anyone would make such a request, or how FGDC would evaluate it. Before the FGDC can consider a particular recommendation about address data or the address data standard, the FGDC should set general procedures and criteria for considering this and other requests.

The recommendations, if implemented by the FGDC, will provide the following benefits:

1. Adding the FGDC address data standard to the *Geographic Information Framework Data Content Standard* will place the address data standard formally within the framework data model, confirming that the address data standard is consistent with the other framework standards.
2. Adding address data as a framework data theme, underpinned by a framework data standard, will provide a focal point for various state- and local-level address data compilation and aggregation efforts proposed or now underway.
3. By providing for consistency between standards, the framework data standard will encourage coordination and consistency among various proposed and ongoing efforts to compile national framework geospatial data sets (e.g., Addresses for the Nation/Census National Address database, Transportation for the Nation, Imagery for the Nation).
4. Defining criteria and procedures for adding new themes to the NSDI, and for incorporating new data standards into the framework standard, will encourage the addition of NSDI data themes that are created primarily at the state and local level but of interest to federal agencies. In turn this will foster compatibility among the various state and local efforts, thereby expanding opportunities for federal-state-local geospatial data partnerships, and helping to make our National Spatial Data Infrastructure truly national.
5. All of these results, in turn, will further FGDC's strategic priorities of:
  - a. Adding value to the A-16 portfolio as the portfolio management priority (see <http://www.fgdc.gov/initiatives/portfolio-management>) by:
    - Reducing duplication and cost
    - Providing greater accessibility
    - Supporting shared services across the Federal Government
    - Offering an accurate and accountable inventory of Federal Geospatial Portfolio assets
    - Improving government accountability and transparency
    - Improving data quality through lifecycle evaluations for content quality and fitness for use
    - Ensuring national data are high quality, dependable, consistent, and available to agencies
    - Increasing return on existing geospatial investments by promoting the reuse of data, applications, and tools
  - b. Improving coordination to reduce redundancy (to address GAO concerns)

c. Improving the landscape-level understanding and decision-making (Secretary Jewell's directive)

**C. Maintaining the Significance and Consistency of the NSDI**

Opening the NSDI to the addition of new data themes could lead to requests for the addition of trivial, ill-defined, or special-interest data themes. To discourage such requests, FGDC should set a high bar for adding new themes to the NSDI. The proposed procedure does so by including three demanding tests:

1. The proposed additional framework data theme must be defined and described by an FGDC-endorsed data standard before it can be considered for inclusion among the NSDI data themes;
2. The standard for the proposed additional framework data theme must conform to the FGDC's *Geographic Information Framework Data Content Standard Part 0: Base document*, and not conflict with any of the other Parts of the *Geographic Information Framework Data Content Standard*.
3. The proposed new framework data theme must be found significant, in the determination of the FGDC, to a broad variety of users nationwide.

The FGDC standards endorsement process is lengthy and thorough, ensuring that any proposed standard will be reviewed from a broad range of viewpoints before it is endorsed by FGDC. The Framework model ensures that any new standard is consistent with other framework standards, and it imposes an additional level of methodological rigor on the particular data model defined for a new standard. Finally, the FGDC has authority to determine whether a proposed theme is significant enough to merit inclusion in the framework. Together these three tests assure that new data themes will be significant, well-defined, and consistent with other NSDI data themes.

Respectfully submitted,



Allen Ibaugh, AICP, GISP

President 2013-2014, Urban and Regional Information Systems Association

aibaugh@dtsgis.com