



## Press Release

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Azavea and George Mason University Present District Builder, an Open Source Web Based Redistricting Application**

**Web software can be configured to redistrict any state or locality within the US**

**Philadelphia, PA, February 3, 2011** - As part of their [Public Mapping Project](#), Dr. Michael P. McDonald, Associate Professor at George Mason University and Dr. Micah Altman, Senior Research Scientist at Harvard, Non Resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, have teamed up with [Azavea](#), an award-winning geospatial analysis (GIS) software development company, to develop District Builder (<http://www.publicmapping.org/resources/software>), an open source, web-based redistricting application designed to give the public access to online redistricting tools. The web-based software, can be configured to redistrict any state or locality within the United States, and is based on open source technology in order to make it transparent and accessible by a broad audience.

Every ten years, following the national Census, city council, state legislature and congressional district boundaries must be redrawn to reflect the nation's growing and shifting population. While the 2010 Census apportionment data results were released in December, in a few weeks' time the 2010 Census population demographic profile data will be made available. At that point, legislators along with political consultants will start shifting district boundaries according to their own political interests, often at the expense of the interests of the citizens they represent.

The Public Mapping Project's District Builder is designed to enable greater public participation where redistricting authorities solicit public input or for open government watchdog groups to enable the public to generate redistricting plans for their state and localities. Through an easy-to-use set of map tools, users can select various types of geographies such as blocks, tracts, or counties and assign them to districts. As districts are edited, users can view demographic information, population count and other statistics. They can then save their plans, share them with others, and generate plan summary reports using the [BARD statistical reporting application](#), a software package developed by Dr. Altman and Dr. McDonald. And because the software is web-based, it can be accessible by anyone, anywhere, at any time.

The software was built using several open source technologies including Django, GeoServer, jQuery, PostgreSQL, and PostGIS. The software code can either be downloaded and installed on an organization's own



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servers or run using Amazon.com hosting infrastructure. The Public Mapping Project's website lists instructions on how to access the software at: [www.publicmapping.org/resources/software](http://www.publicmapping.org/resources/software).

Several organizations have already committed to using the software. [The Wason Center for Public Policy at Christopher Newport University](#) and the Public Mapping Project are sponsoring the Virginia College and University Legislative Redistricting Competition, which will be entirely based on using District Builder: [www.varedistrictingcompetition.org](http://www.varedistrictingcompetition.org). The Midwest Democracy Network is committed to hosting instances of the software for use by its member organizations. This February, Azavea will launch a local version of the software for Philadelphia to demonstrate how District Builder can be used at the municipal and county level.

Azavea is no stranger to political and redistricting projects. In 2009, the firm released the "Redistricting The Nation" website ([www.redistrictingthenation.com](http://www.redistrictingthenation.com)) to provide the public with better information about the legislative redistricting process and tools that support and encourage fair representation and competitive elections. Concurrently, Azavea and Committee of Seventy, the Philadelphia region's premier non-partisan government watchdog group, released [Redistricting the Philadelphia Region](#). Along with the web site, Azavea has also published a series of white papers, including Redrawing the Map on Redistricting 2010: A National Study, which ranks the ten most gerrymandered local, state, and federal districts in the country based on four different measures of compactness.

The Public Mapping Project is supported by the [Alfred P. Sloan Foundation](#), the [Joyce Foundation](#), and the [Judy Ford Wason Center at Christopher Newport University](#).

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### **About Azavea**

[Azavea](#) is an award-winning geospatial analysis (GIS) software development firm specializing in the creation of location-based web and mobile solutions, as well as geospatial analysis services to enhance decision-making. Azavea is committed to working on projects with a strong social value component in order to promote the emergence of more [dynamic, vibrant, and sustainable communities](#). Each of Azavea's projects, products and pro bono engagements showcases this commitment. Azavea is a certified [B Corporation](#). For more information, visit <http://www.azavea.com/>.

### **About the Public Mapping Project**

The Public Mapping Project is comprised of a coalition of people who believe that democracy works best when the public is engaged. The principal investigators of the project are Dr. Michael McDonald and Dr. Micah Altman who are both non-resident Senior Fellows at The Brookings Institution. For more information, visit <http://www.publicmapping.org/>.

If you would like more information about Azavea, schedule a demo of District Builder, or schedule an interview with Robert Cheetham, Azavea CEO and President, please contact Abby Fretz at (215) 701 – 7503 or e-mail [afretz@azavea.com](mailto:afretz@azavea.com).

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