



## **New Bern wins state technology award**

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Aliens have not — repeat, have not — invaded New Bern.

Straight from a science fiction novel, city residents recently have reported sightings of strange creatures throughout town, each wearing bright yellow backpacks and carrying outer space contraptions.

Alice C. Wilson, a coordinator in the city's planning and inspections department, said there's nothing to fear: They're not aliens, even if they are dealing with space-age technology.

Wilson, a Geographic Information Systems coordinator, uses Global Positioning System units to electronically "map" New Bern for the city's GIS project — a high-tech, system connecting police, engineering, fire and inspections offices into one database of information.

"It's a great way for cities to plan using 'what if' situations," she said. "Our GIS system combines geographic data, like maps of roads and water and sewer lines, to provide up-to-the-minute information when dealing with growth and development.

"If a new subdivision is being built, the city can pull up the plans and see digitally how a road would work there, without actually doing it. It saves lots of time and money."

It's that kind of technology-minded thinking that won New Bern the biennial G. Herbert Stout Award for GIS Excellence, a state accolade given to governments and individuals for innovative and exemplary use of GIS technology.

Diana Hales, with the Center for Geographic Information and Analysis in Raleigh, the issuing agency for the award, said about 20 submissions were received this year, but that New Bern did an "exceptional job."

Only one other government agency won a Stout Award this year. Pasquotank County, located in the Albemarle region, received one for its Web site that includes comprehensive digital maps.

"GIS technology has really grown in the last two decades," Hales said. "We are excited to see cities and counties all over the state utilizing this helpful tool."