

Service-Centered GIS: THE INTEGRATED LAND OFFICE

The Mecklenburg County, North Carolina Property Assessment & Land Records Management Division was charged with accelerating real property revaluation to a two-year cycle.

Fueling Intelligent Decisions

In Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, GIS stands for Geospatial Information Services, with an emphasis on services. Thanks to the County's GIS group, real estate developers, attorneys, Planning Commission members, and citizens all have access to a rich array of essential map-based information at the touch of a browser button.

Few other counties in the nation provide as much real property and tax information via the Internet. Tax maps, owner information, and tax values, along with real property sales analysis tools, fuel the intelligent decision making that supports Mecklenburg County's impressive growth. Residents also turn to the County's GIS website (based on ESRI's ArcIMS™ technology) for answers to questions like "what school district are my children in" and "where do I go to vote."

To address these requirements, Mecklenburg County makes extensive use of ESRI technology, including ArcSDE™, ArcIMS™ and desktop products such as ArcInfo™. Because roughly 80 percent of the services that Mecklenburg provides touch on a geographic location, this technology forms the integration backbone for enterprise-wide information sharing. This integration is essential to keeping ahead of the demands of a population increasing not only in number, but in technical sophistication as well.

Comprising most of the area and population of Mecklenburg County, county seat Charlotte is the second largest banking center in the United States. The County and

its "Queen City," as Charlotte is called, collaborate to provide police, fire, MEDIC (emergency medical), and utilities services to residents.

Mecklenburg County's population grew by 19 percent from 2000 to 2006, per Census Bureau figures. According to Garrett Alexander, the County's Tax Assessor: "We're about 350,000 parcels large; handling about 40,000 sales annually, as well as handling probably 50,000 or so building permits. Not all are direct new construction. If you build a 40-story high-rise, it generates a lot of permits."

The County Commissioners have charged Alexander with accelerating real property revaluation from its current four-year cycle to a two-year cycle. (The North Carolina state-mandated cycle is eight years.) The shorter revaluation cycle will make for more equitable tax assessments in keeping with the rapid growth and change in the County. It will also increase revenue, enabling Mecklenburg County to continue to enhance services to its residents. Alexander says: "Our annual property tax base increases by approximately \$3 billion annually. At the current level of assessment, which is about 88.7 percent, we're looking at significant annual increases."

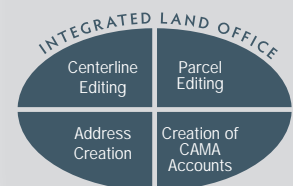
New Technology, New Processes

As Tax Assessor, Garrett Alexander directs the County's Property Assessment and

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MECKLENBURG COUNTY INTEGRATED LAND OFFICE

The consolidation of resources brings together the talent and expertise needed to provide world-class geospatial information services to Mecklenburg County residents in the most efficient, effective manner possible.



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Streamlined Workflow

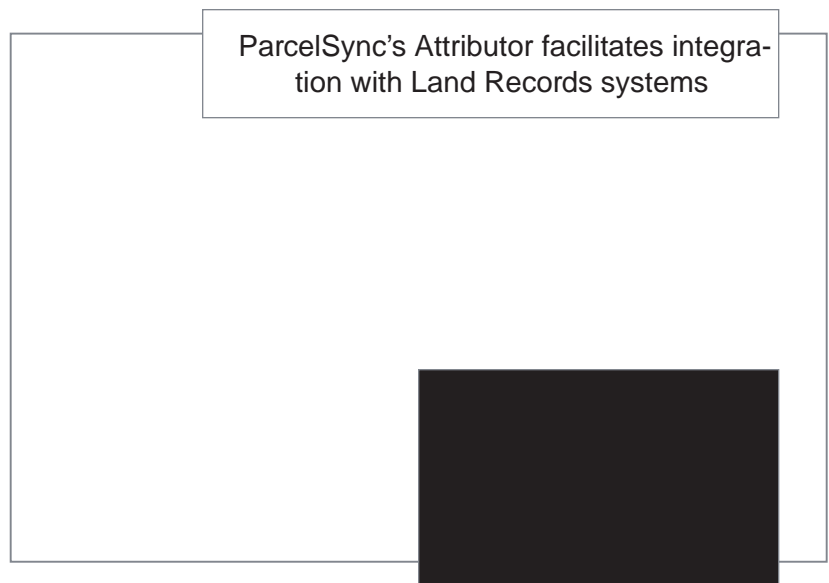
Like many local government entities, Mecklenburg County's Land Records team is being asked to handle an ever-increasing amount of work, while keeping staffing levels constant. Buckner explains, "The volume here is extreme. We get an average of 25 to 30 new subdivisions a month... We're seeing a lot more multi-family and urbanization uptown, with all the high-rise condos. There's no more land, but there are a lot more parcels per acre being created. We get in an average of 200 to 400 new deeds a day. We're very busy; we're a high-volume shop!"

Last year, North Carolina passed a statute requiring that land records data be current for the collection of delinquent taxes. This statute, combined with the target two-year revaluation cycle, will necessitate speeding up the already- prompt processing of real property records. The increased currency will also support the budget process, providing valid data for solid decision-making.

Smooth flow through the land records process is essential to Buckner's staff being able to turn the crank faster on processing new parcels. ParcelSync's integration with the Register of Deeds system will constitute a huge process improvement for her group. For each deed from the Register of Deeds Office, the FARRAGUT tool will automatically push data that the Register of Deeds office captures about the deed (grantor, grantee, and similar data) and TIF images of the original documents onto a Land Records server, sorted by document type. The tool's management interface will allow team leads to further refine

the sorting process and assign deeds to mappers' work queues. The applicable data from the deed will automatically populate the appropriate fields in the ParcelSync Attributor form.

Contrast this new process with the current paper-based one. Today, Land Records staff members print the deeds and process them manually. According to GIS Director Kurt Olmsted, "If you go out there right now to the shelves, we have stacks and stacks of deeds that we have to print. We stack; we sort; it's a waste of time. If we



can pull that data in digitally, it'll save time and space." The upstream integration with the Register of Deeds' system will smooth the flow downstream as well, to the Tax Assessor's CAMA system. Data entry specialists in Land Records currently hand-write data control forms for data entry into the CAMA system.

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