

Lee County Property Appraiser

Implementing a more productive and streamlined mapping process that reduces paper handling with IcoMap for ESRI's ArcGIS

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Lee County in Southwestern Florida is one of the fastest growing counties in the United States. Since 2000, the population has increased more than 23.6%. Serving over 180,000 households, the mapping staff in the Lee County Property Appraiser's Office maintain the tax parcel map in the county-wide GIS.

Challenge: To streamline the tedious process of entering and maintaining parcels in the county appraiser's GIS

The Lee County Property Appraiser's office has long been a national leader in exploring new and innovative methods to improve the appraisal process including leveraging the latest technology whenever possible. This commitment to innovation has led Lee County to be consistently ranked among the top jurisdictions in the country with the lowest cost per parcel.

Prior to deploying IcoMap, the mapping team in the Lee County Appraiser's Office used the traverse tool in ArcInfo to create new parcels in the tax parcel layer of the county's GIS (Geographic Information System). While the traverse tool was simple to use and effective, each call in a legal description had to be typed in by hand – a time consuming process. Even with several staff devoted to creating new parcels, the number of recorded documents was outpacing capacity. The Appraiser's Office was faced with several choices: increase the size of the mapping staff, accept a backlog and slower turnaround getting newly recorded documents into the GIS, or find a way to increase mapping productivity.

Solution: IcoMap for ArcGIS™

IcoMap's advanced optical character recognition technology (OCR) is optimized to accurately identify mathematical content. IcoMap automatically highlights bearing and distance information from scanned images of legal descriptions. Users simply click on the highlighted calls to create vector line work in ArcMap. This "point-n-click COGO" feature saves time without sacrificing accuracy and was exactly what the Lee County Property Appraiser's Office was looking for.

The Appraiser's Office evaluated IcoMap v.3.1 in mid-2005 and in October purchased their first license for testing. Once this proved successful, the office purchased an additional 9 licenses and brought in trainers from Extract Systems to train all of the mappers on the new system.

The latest release of IcoMap, v.4.0, allows the mapping team to pull PDF deeds directly from the Clerk's website into IcoMap for processing. Printing and sorting deeds are no longer part of the process saving time and money.

Benefits

The Property Appraiser's Office has already reaped significant efficiency benefits. Implementing IcoMap requires very little maintenance or other intervention from the IT staff. Immediately following a 2-day on-site training course, most mapping staff were already mapping faster than they were before and speed continued to increase as users became more accustomed to using IcoMap. A summary of other benefits includes:

- Doubling of Mapping Production
- Elimination of Most Manual Handling of Documents
- Point-n-Click COGO of Legal Descriptions
- Direct Import of PDF, TIF or other Image Types
- Works Well with other ArcMap Tools
- User-friendly Interface

IcoMap is the latest tool in the move towards a more efficient and money-saving paperless office.

Kenneth M. Wilkinson, CFA
Lee County Property Appraiser

Now we use IcoMap [to map] 99% of our recorded documents — IcoMap is a product that really delivers as promised.

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