

The Need

Two years ago a Parcel Mapping Working Group comprised of staff from the Agencies of Commerce and Community Development, Natural Resources, Transportation, and the Department of Taxes, as well as representatives from the League of Cities and Towns, regional planning commissions and the Vermont Assessors and Listers Association began meeting to discuss how best to develop consistent, digital, state-wide parcel mapping in Vermont.

Parcel data depicts property boundaries and ownership information. Each parcel can be linked with other information such as the value, size, ownership, etc. of that parcel. This parcel data and parcel maps can be found in various forms across Vermont, from paper maps and records to more sophisticated Geographic Information System (GIS) maps and accompanying data layers.

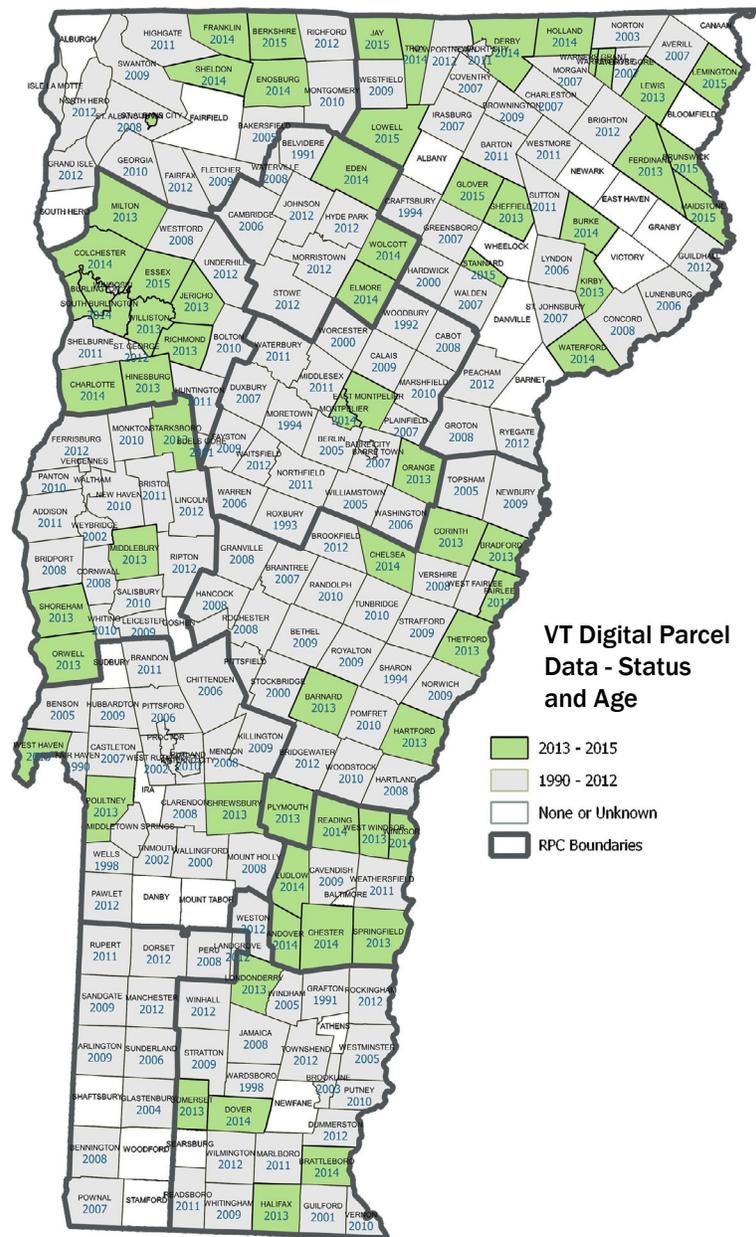
Currently, when it exists, municipalities are the source of the data, but the information has many statewide applications beyond taxation at the local level, including economic development, public safety, transportation and stormwater management to name a few. The information can also inform changes in population, housing values, forest cover and land use. When combined with attributes such as ownership, property value and land use, the data can be used to facilitate property transactions and economic development, identify areas suitable for locating a business, or visualize financially distressed areas. Parcel maps are a public good, but the benefits will not be achieved without a consistent, state-wide approach.

When completed, the following will be achieved:

- 100% of municipalities will have data that meets the VT Parcel Data Standard,
- The data will link to the grandlist and other datasets, allowing for visualization and analysis of the data through GIS mapping, and
- The information will be updated annually.

Development and Maintenance of the Data

This project has two distinct phases that overlap: 1) the initial creation of the statewide dataset and 2) the ongoing maintenance of the data. Creation of the dataset is expected to take three years and will follow a process similar to the one used by other states; with a competitive process using mapping contractors. Ongoing maintenance would be managed by staff at the Statewide Parcel Mapping program. Municipalities would have the option of selecting their own contractors to have their data updated and submitted to the state, or have program staff update the data through the use of deeds and/or plats submitted to the tax department for property transfers that involve newly created lots or boundary line adjustments.



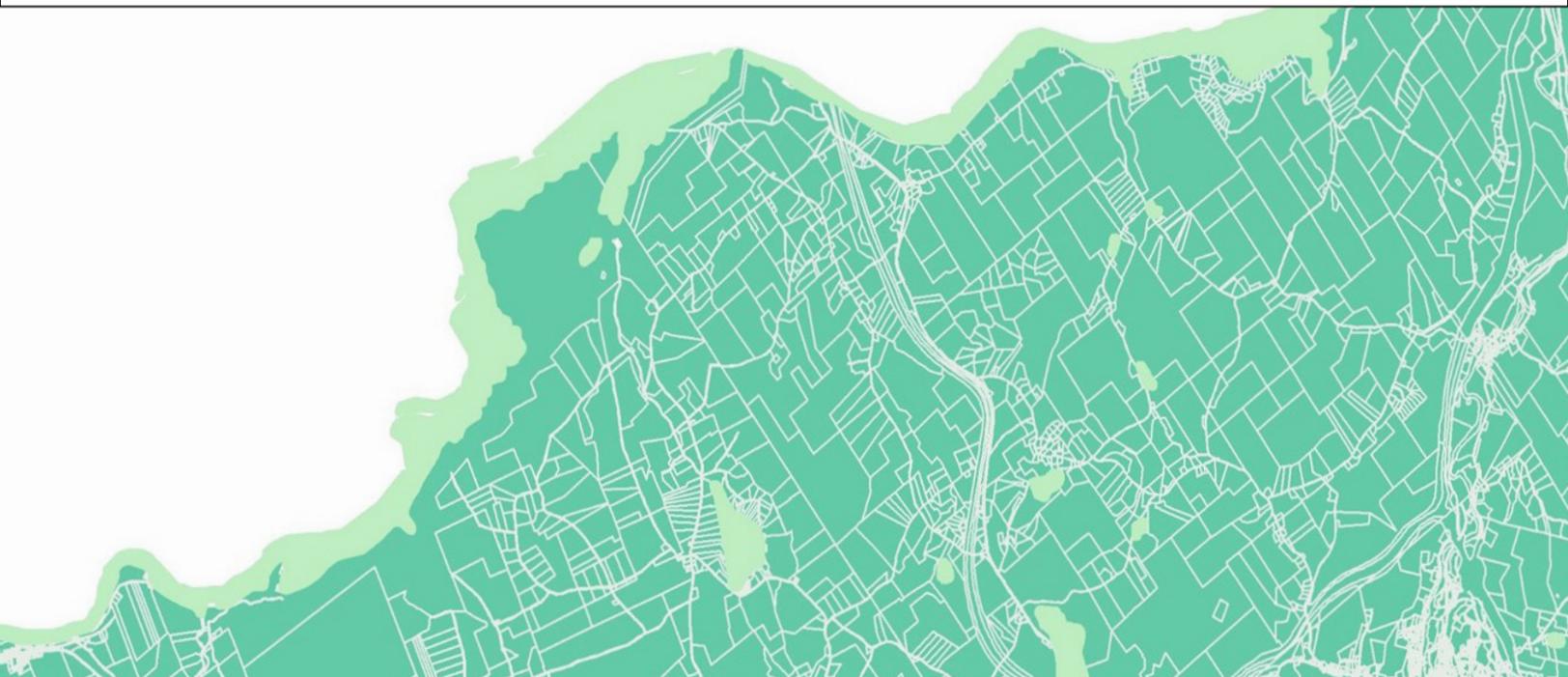
For more information, please contact:

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The Benefits to Municipalities

The Working Group reached out and conducted a survey that included 63 municipal representatives, and also conducted a focus group with municipal officials including assessors, town managers, clerks and planners. VLCT and VALA representatives have been part of the working group throughout the process. In developing and analyzing options for the design and maintenance of a state-wide parcel mapping system, the working group recognized that: 1) most towns in Vermont have extremely limited capacity, 2) some towns have sophisticated existing parcel data systems they like and that 3) no municipality wants an unfunded mandate that requires additional work with no resources. Below are some benefits of a state-wide parcel mapping initiative:

- **Creating and updating data statewide.** All municipalities would have digital parcel data updated (or created if it does not exist) and brought up to the same standard. The value of the initial phase of creating the data and bringing it up to standard for each town will vary, depending on the condition of the existing data, and the average benefit per municipality will be \$4,850. (Calculated based on cost.)
- **Ongoing maintenance cost savings.** The annual benefit of updated digital parcel data for each municipality is estimated to range from \$1,200 to \$3,500, based on the costs incurred by municipalities currently updating their data annually.
- **Time savings.** According to a survey of 37 municipal employees/volunteers in Vermont who currently use digital parcel data, the number one benefit for them is the ability to do their jobs faster and more effectively. Approximately half of them use it daily and most others use it on a weekly basis. Everyone who uses the data reports saving time, with the median time savings estimated to be approximately 80 hours a year per user.
- **Finding new untaxed parcels and development.** Digital parcel data allows tax assessors to compare properties to the orthophotography and the existing grandlist, allowing them to identify untaxed or inaccurately taxed property. The Town of Waterford, Vermont recently completed the creation of digital parcel maps and was surprised to find a number of untaxed residential structures – including an 80-acre parcel on the grand list.
- **Expedites emergency response and disaster recovery.** Parcel data would provide an invaluable tool in assembling the information needed to conduct damage assessment during emergencies, which could speed disaster funding allocation. Property owner notification would be made possible in matters of public safety, such as the reporting of hazardous spills where individuals might need to be informed about a threat to their water supplies.



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