



MAINTAINING MODERN PROPERTY RECORDS

In 2013, Massachusetts completed a 2.3 million dollar effort to bring municipal property records into the 21st century. MassGIS established digital standards for parcel and assessors' data, and enlisted contractors to upgrade records from every city and town to meet those standards. Standardized property records support effective and coordinated emergency response operations, enable cross-municipal land use comparisons, and bring a new level of transparency to the tax assessment process.

The Department of Revenue and the Massachusetts Association of Assessing Officers strongly encourage municipalities to maintain standardized property data. To do so, municipalities must (1) keep their digital parcel boundaries updated and (2) keep assessors records linked to those parcels with a special identifier (LOC_ID). These steps are

neither complicated nor expensive, and MassGIS has provided substantial additional funding to make the process easier for communities.

Unfortunately, not all municipalities are taking these steps. Statewide, 80% of municipalities are maintaining standardized parcel maps, but only 60% of those are also including the LOC_ID in their assessors' records. As a result, fully-maintained data are only available for about half of the state's cities and towns. A commitment to standardization would help to preserve the investments made by the state, and create a resource with benefits for all.