

Parcel data is fundamentally important to a wide range of organizations. Each organization has its own mission and practices, but all have one thing in common – parcel data is vital to their work. The findings of this study amply demonstrate the potential benefits, and the key difficulties, of treating parcel data as a collective statewide information resource. Under New York State law, responsibility for parcel data is distributed among many organizations at the state, county, and municipal levels. As a consequence, changes in the treatment of parcel data will require a high degree of consensus. We therefore conclude by offering a set of principles that might guide a collaborative approach to future discussions, decisions, and investments.

Broad recognition of parcel data content, value, and uses. Each user approaches parcel data with a different set of needs generated by specific missions and goals. Taken together, however, all these individual needs add up to a comprehensive picture of parcel data attributes and value across many domains. Broad appreciation for the many ways people think about and use parcel data can encourage opportunities for collaboration and joint investments.

Standard parcel identification and location information. A common parcel identification scheme would allow data users to integrate and merge data from multiple counties and municipalities across New York State. Easily integrated data would allow users to save resources by reducing the effort required to obtain and refine or correct data before it can be used. It could also potentially reduce the number and frequency of requests made of each county and municipality.

On-line access in a variety of formats. Most users want ready access to electronic parcel information, ideally on the web and via a self-service process. Depending on their needs, users want tabular, graphical, and GIS formats. However, many users are willing and able to convert data into their preferred format, as long as the data is available electronically. In addition, readily available logical subsets and more frequent updates would make parcel data more useful and more usable, thus generating greater value for each of the individual users.

Ready access to authoritative sources. Many users would prefer a single authoritative source for all parcel data in the state, but many would also be satisfied with multiple sources that follow the same standards and policies.

Feedback from data users to data sources for data improvement. By providing data users the opportunity and a mechanism to communicate data errors and enhancements back to the source, the overall integrity and quality of parcel data can improve with increasing benefit to all future users.

Balanced approaches to the costs and benefits associated with collection, use, and supply. Costs related to collection, use, and supply of parcel data are complex and difficult to measure. Benefits are relatively easy to describe but equally difficult to quantify. Progress toward treating parcel data as a collective resource will depend on willingness to discuss, experiment with, and evaluate policies and practices that balance costs and benefits for all stakeholders.