

TAUNTON ASSESSOR BOOSTS EFFICIENCY 30% WITH NEARMAP

 APR 2020 | TAUNTON, MA U.S.

Taunton, Massachusetts was founded in 1673 by members of the Plymouth Colony and is one of the oldest towns in the United States. It's known as "Silver City" with many silversmiths, dating back to the early days of the iron industry established alongside the Two Mile River.

These days, Taunton remains a hive of activity. It is home to more than 57,000 residents living within the city's 49 square miles with more than 10,670 single family homes, 1,300 condominiums, 1,800 multifamily dwellings, and 2,500 commercial properties.

Staying on top of property change in this bustling place has its challenges, says Taunton's Assessor, Richard Conti. "In the city of Taunton, Massachusetts, the biggest, most popular sport is construction without a building permit," Conti says.

DETECTIVE WORK REQUIRED

As an assessor, Conti is responsible for estimating the value of property within the city and converting that into an assessment that is used to calculate the tax amount residents pay on an annual basis. It's an important job that often requires assessors like him to be part accountant, part detective, and part collection agent.

"Nobody wants to be taxed. People are always hiding or trying to hide from me," explains Conti. "My colleagues nicknamed me 'Special Agent' and I take that as a compliment because there's a lot of ways to find out what you want to know now, even while we're all working remotely. I'm using all the tools I can right now to be successful at my job."

nearmap 

Of the many tools Conti uses on a daily basis, high-resolution aerial imagery from Nearmap has played an increasingly important role in Conti's job as assessor. Nearmap is a leading aerial imagery and geospatial technology company that delivers up-to-date high-resolution aerial images to government agencies and businesses across the world. The imagery enables Conti and his team to instantly view and assess a property, from wherever they are, whenever necessary.

Conti has a team of "two-and-a-half," (two full time and one part time) tax professionals tasked with assessing each property within city limits. Aside from the sheer volume of taxable parcels, there are a number of other contributing factors that Conti and his small team face, including:

- A wide range of tax designations for residential and commercial properties.
- Residents are continually adding taxable additions to their homes such as swimming pools, patios, and decks without acquiring the proper building permits, which makes it incredibly difficult to track and identify taxable property and assess it properly.
- A lack of resources, including old and outdated aerial imagery that more often than not doesn't include new taxable additions that have been added between limited photo captures.

THE RESOURCES CHALLENGE

One of the most frustrating aspects of Conti's job, and any assessors for that matter, is the lack of government resources allocated to vital aerial imagery technology that helps facilitate their jobs.

"In our city and state, we only have budget for the planes to fly and capture this type of imagery once every two years," says Conti. "In my discussions with other assessors in other states across the country, this is very typical. It also severely

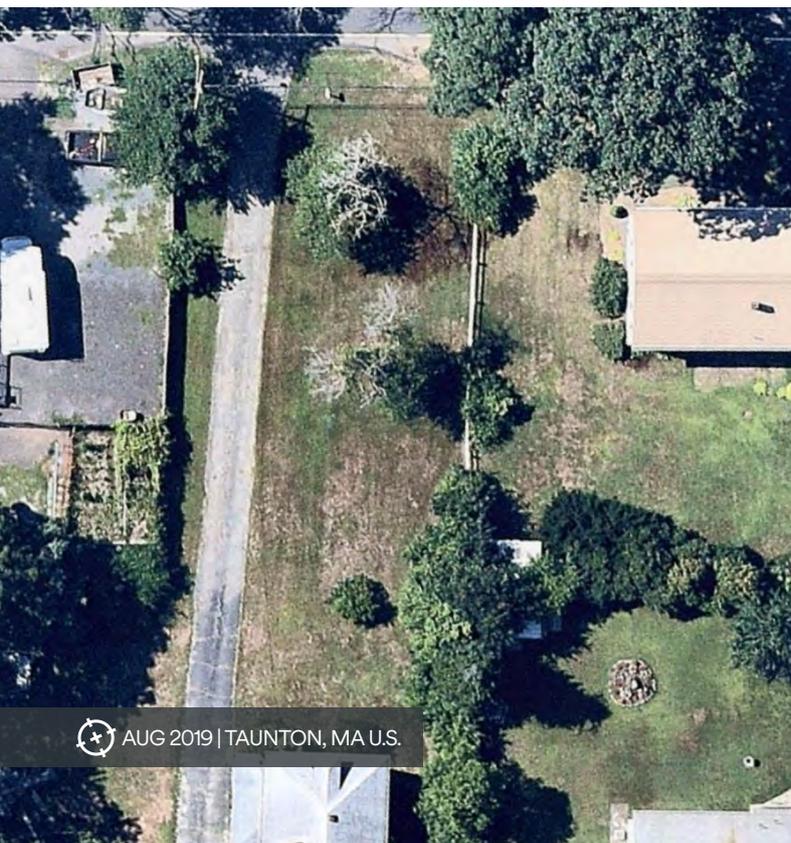
limits what we can do and hinders our ability to rely on this type of technology because so much changes over the course of two years. What it really comes down to is that we're unable to tax as much as we should because we can't accurately track changes that are eligible to be taxed."

In June 2019, Conti attended the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) meeting. This organization is the premier assessing organization in the world. In a chance meeting with the Quincy, Illinois assessor, Conti was introduced to Nearmap.

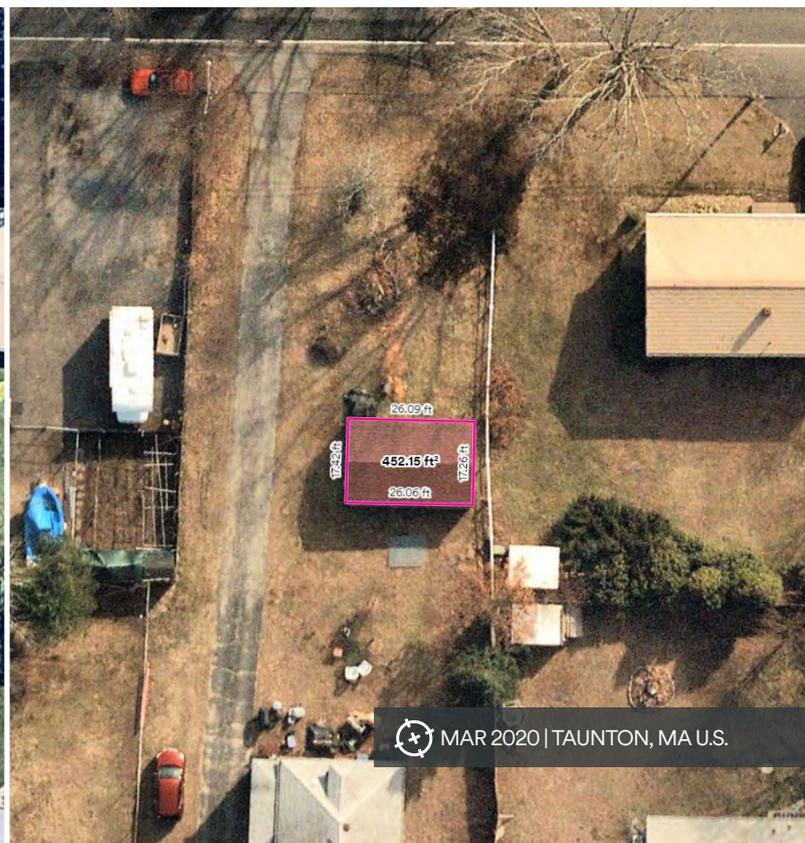
"The Quincy assessor is a real cracker jack and has achieved amazing results with her team and office," recalls Conti. "As I was picking her brain to learn how she's doing it, she told me how she began using Nearmap and how she now has access to new, high-resolution images three times a year. I immediately saw the value. Later in the conference, she included Nearmap in a presentation highlighting the functionality of her department, specifically how she uses Nearmap, and I was instantly jealous."

Upon returning home from the conference, Conti's first order of business was to rush to the Department of Public Works to tell them about Nearmap and convince them to purchase an account.

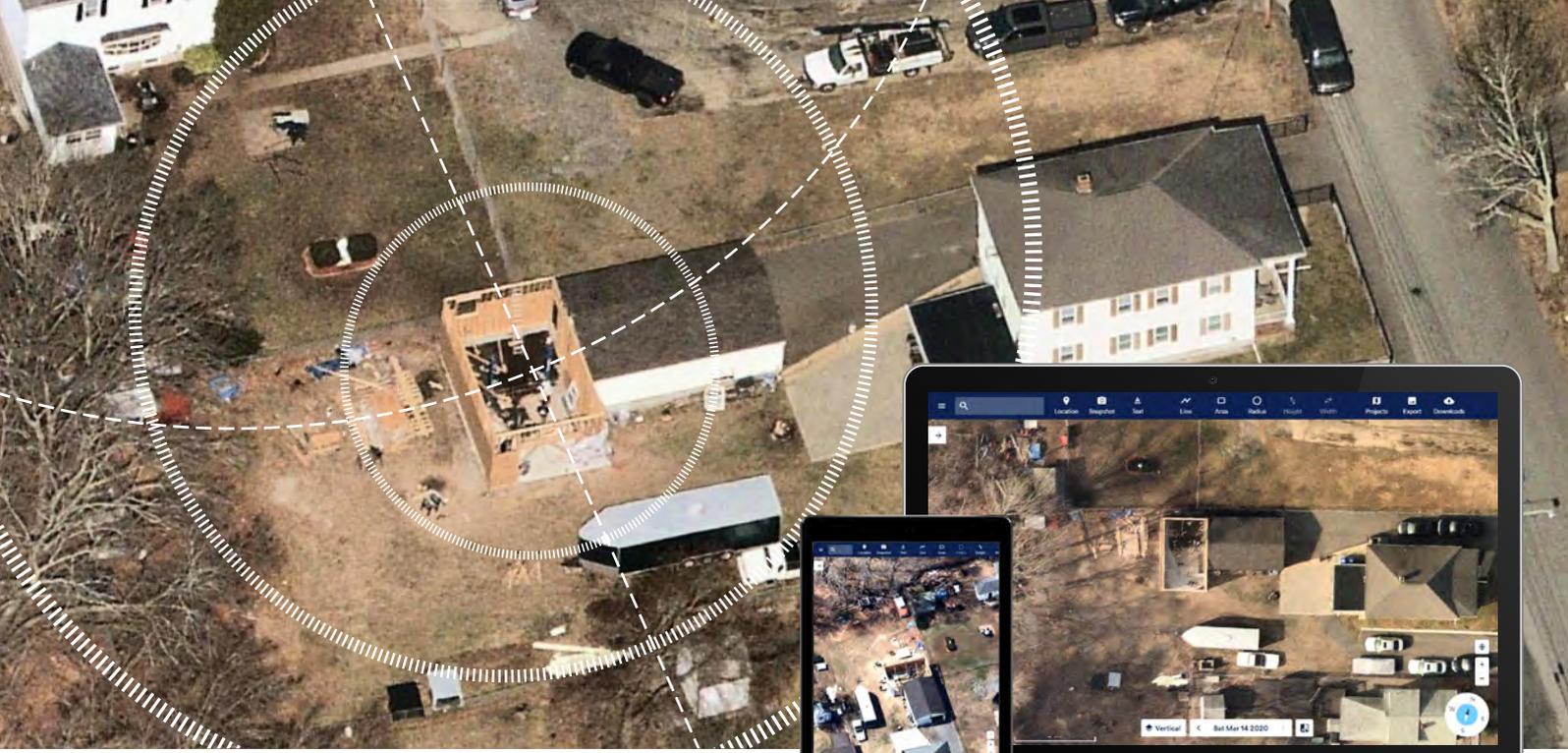
"It didn't take the decision makers in Public Works, specifically the City Planner and Engineering Staff, long to see the value and get us an account," recalls Conti. "Once we had our account, the first thing I did was put four years of imagery onto our public website so that any taxpayer could look at their house and click through the various layers of images Nearmap provides and the history of their property so they could see firsthand what has happened, not only to them, but to their neighbors, and why they were taxed the way they were. This proved to be highly useful as well as just plain cool."



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INCREASING TAX REVENUE

As Conti began integrating Nearmap into their processes, the COVID-19 pandemic struck and began impacting their ability to perform on-site assessments.

“Nearmap was a lifesaver as the pandemic dragged on,” stated Conti. “I started relying more and more on Nearmap and discovered just how easy it was to pick up decks and patios in backyards that we never even knew were there before. I quickly realized that we were capturing significantly more in tax dollars as a result of our use of Nearmap. In October I decided to actually track exactly how much more we were capturing so I started a spreadsheet and discovered that we generated an extra \$1,700 in tax revenue with minimal effort and my time on Nearmap being limited to just five days.”

After compiling his spreadsheet and seeing such a significant increase in tax dollars, Conti explored the data further. What he saw was surprising and encouraging.

“\$1,700 is very significant, especially given that most of my tax increases are small increments such as in the form of a shed valued at \$700 or \$1000 that can be taxed at \$1,420 a year,” explains Conti. “One other factor that jumped off the page to me was that in October, I was only in Nearmap for five days because we were too damn busy. As I analyzed the data, I quickly realized that if I could spend focused time everyday in Nearmap that the increase would more than quadruple in a given month and that over the course of a year, we would easily surpass six figures of increased tax revenue.”

DREAMING BIG

When you have the right tools, it breeds confidence. Having and displaying confidence at work can show you're capable of rising to the challenges of your job, boost motivation and focus, and keep stress at bay. For Conti, Nearmap has provided him with the confidence to set aggressive goals moving forward.

“Our goal in the past was to visit every property once every nine years,” recalls Conti. “With Nearmap, I was able to reduce that time to once every six years after just a few months of use Nearmap. To be honest, I'm hoping to lower that down to live, real-time assessments. Ideally I'd like to get to the point where if a resident puts a shed in on the first of December, that I've captured and processed it by the first of January. That's unheard of. It's never been done before. I'm not sure that it can be done, because the workload is enormous, but if I could get it down to even just three years, it would be amazing. A three-year cycle would allow me to have real numbers every five years when I have to go in and be evaluated and recertified.”

THANK YOU, MAY I HAVE ANOTHER

The immediate success Conti and his team have experienced with Nearmap have left them wanting more. As always with a government agency, budgets are tight and funds limited. Conti knew that if he could expand his Nearmap package and secure all the options available that it would make a significant difference in his ability to increase productivity and tax revenue.

As he was trying to find a way to get more Nearmap features, he turned to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), a \$2.2 trillion economic stimulus bill to provide loans to consumers and businesses struggling due to the pandemic.

“I took advantage of the CARES Act through the federal government and got a grant to be able to get the full Nearmap package, so now we have artificial intelligence, access to oblique images as well as panoramic and vertical imagery,” says Conti. “These extra functions will enable me to decrease the amount of time I'm in my car driving around this big city and spend more time sitting in front of my computer monitors examining aerial imagery and changing property records so I can be a lot more efficient.”

TAXPAYER MONEY WELL SPENT

Like most cities, Taunton has limited finances and is very cautious when it comes to the allocation of taxpayer dollars. City employees are very conscientious and never want to be reckless or give residents the impression that they're squandering their money.

"I'm more than convinced that the return on taxpayer dollars for purchasing Nearmap is easily 100%, and this is after only a few months using Nearmap," says Conti. "The things I'm adding, little things like sheds, patios and decks bring in revenue and open the opportunity to move on to other, larger planning projects such as building permits and roads construction."

In addition to providing an ROI on taxpayer dollars, Conti believes he's found a solution that will continue to provide value to his team and Taunton residents for years to come.

"We're going to be Nearmap customers for a very long time," concluded Conti. "And, a funny thing happens when you get something new and you like it, you tell everybody about it."

ABOUT NEARMAP

Global technology pioneer Nearmap provides easy, instant access to up-to-date and historic geospatial data that organizations depend on as their source of truth for the livable world.

Nearmap proactively captures wide-scale urban areas in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand multiple times each year, with patented plane-mounted camera systems that provide superior detail, and automated processing pipeline that ensures rapid availability.

Regular surveys cover 71% of the US population—over 430 urban areas encompassing more than 330,000 square miles annually, with major metros frequently captured up to 4x per year.

Customers rely on Nearmap for consistent, high-quality content that enables remote capabilities and unlocks productivity for profound change: crystal-clear high-resolution vertical, oblique and panoramic aerial imagery; a vast library of historic captures; frequently updated city-scale 3D datasets on demand; and verified pre-processed property insights at unmatched scale with Nearmap AI.

Founded in 2007, Nearmap was named as one of the world's 10 Most Innovative Companies of 2020 by Fast Company magazine. With offices in the United States and Australia, Nearmap has a global customer base including government agencies and enterprises for whom current, reliable and truthful data is essential to critical decision making and operational workflows.

Nearmap's parent company, Nearmap Limited, is a publicly traded company listed on the Australian Stock Exchange and one of the 200 largest ASX-listed stocks in Australia.



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nearmap The Nearmap logo, featuring the word "nearmap" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, followed by a graphic of a grid of dots that tapers to the right, suggesting a map or data visualization.