

Making the Most of Online Real Estate Data: Use Parcel Boundary Data to Make Smart Decisions

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For the real estate industry, the importance and widening use of online tools continues to grow. Investors and developers are finding opportunities through new online tools. But some online tools offer richer data than others, and users should make sure they are using a site that offers one essential element – parcel boundary data.

Parcel boundary data shows the actual boundaries, or lines of a property, how close it is to neighboring properties, how far it is from roadways, and other key information. Many of the online tools that show properties do NOT show parcel boundaries, so savvy users need to know how to find parcel boundary data and how to use it.



The figure to the left shows a typical Microsoft Bing Maps™ satellite image. Parcel boundary data is not shown and it is difficult to obtain accurate, detailed information.

(source: <http://maps.live.com>)

Digital Map Products, a California based spatial technology company, has been aggregating, processing, displaying, and creating interactivity solutions for various types of complex spatial data for real estate, government and other clients since 1999. James Skurzynski, CEO of Digital Map Products, answers some common questions about how parcel boundary data leads to more informed real estate decisions.

What's the big deal with parcel boundary data?

I'm sure you've heard the mantra in real estate: location, location, location. Parcel lines largely complete the story of location for a specific property. You wouldn't buy a piece of property without walking around its boundaries and looking at the land.

Parcel Boundary Data

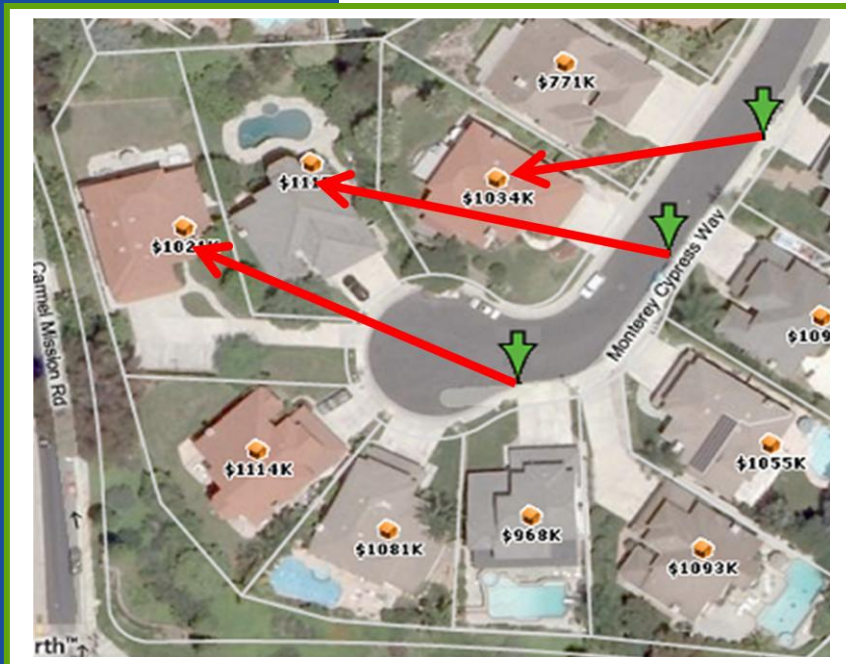
is essential in making informed decisions about real estate. When parcel boundary data is layered over a satellite view it provides the most comprehensive coverage and is useful to builders, developers, buyers, real estate agents, and anyone researching a property.

Benefits of Parcel Boundary Data:

- ✓ Ability to easily locate a property and compare it to others
- ✓ Offers detailed information about property, land and surrounding area
- ✓ Provides more accurate information on maps
- ✓ Helps to identify trends, development patterns and opportunities

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Parcel boundary data layered over a satellite view provides detailed information about the property such as lot size, terrain details, property assets, and more.

“Digital Map Products has helped numerous national real estate companies bring parcel boundary data to their websites, because customers need it to make informed and better decisions.”

– James Skurzynski, CEO,
Digital Map Products

And it’s not like parcel boundary data is something new. Builders, developers and professional real estate agents have long considered this property data set to be essential. Digital Map Products has helped numerous national real estate companies bring parcel boundary data to their websites, because customers need it to make informed and better decisions.

How is parcel boundary data useful?

As most experienced online real estate investors know, satellite images put you on the street in front of the property which is a good start for your analysis. But it can sometimes be confusing to tell exactly which property is for sale. When parcel boundary data is layered over the satellite view, buyers know exactly which property to look at and can see its boundaries.

Once you’ve seen the overview of the property from the satellite image, you should zoom in on the property and follow the property lines around the edges of the property. You’ll get a sense of how large the lot is in comparison to the house and with respect to neighboring properties, and you’ll be able to visualize the size and depth of the lot. Parcel data can also help buyers identify trends, development patterns and great opportunities.

When you “fly over” a property from the satellite view, you can immediately spot areas with larger lots or green areas, see which subdivision lots are the most spacious, and even look for property with a stream or pond, wooded lot, or pool.

Why don’t all online real estate sites include boundary lines?

Gathering and displaying parcel boundary data is a time-consuming, expensive, and technically complex task. Most counties now make this information available digitally to organizations that need it, but often for a fee, plus it’s very tedious to have to contact each county to receive their parcel boundary data. Surprisingly, parcel boundary data still is not available in digital format for about thirty percent of the land in the United States, mostly in rural areas.

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Are there any other benefits to parcel lines?

Yes, there is another significant advantage to online real estate sites having parcel boundary data: more accurate property locations on maps. This is as a result of more accurate geocoding. Without parcel boundary data, when you view a list of properties on a map, the best location you can get is a point in the middle of the street (street centerline geocoding). It gets you close to the true location of your property of interest, but you can't be certain what side of the street it's on, or even which lot the property is on. What you really need to see is your property search result in the center of the parcel (parcel-level geocoding), so there's no question which is your property of interest. Parcel boundary data enables real estate sites to do just this, which helps you in your identification and analysis of properties.

Yet another major benefit to using a site with parcel boundary data is that this data enables you to have more interaction with the map when doing your real estate research. For instance, with parcel boundaries, you can click on a property from the map and the boundaries will highlight, letting you confirm which property you selected and are viewing information for. Even better, you can then see property information in a balloon that appears when you click on the property so you can learn more about the property without leaving the map interface. You can very quickly compare one property to another and maintain your spatial perspective. Real estate sites can also use parcel boundary data to display other, related data sets such as school districts, detailed property information, and even neighborhood information. Once a site has parcel boundary data, all these data sets can be tied together, and you, as the user, can access them from a single click on a property.

In short, parcel boundaries make your real estate research faster, easier, and far more thorough.

About Digital Map Products

Digital Map Products is a leading provider of web-enabled spatial solutions that bring the power of spatial technology to mainstream business, government and consumer applications. SpatialStream™, the company's SaaS spatial platform, enables the rapid development of spatial applications. Its ParcelStream™ web service is powering national real estate web sites with millions of hits per hour. LandVision™ and CityGIS™ are embedded GIS solutions for real estate and local government.

To learn more, visit
<http://www.digitalmapproducts.com>