



map news



Cook County Assessor Thomas Tully (left) and Sidwell Representative Jerry Johnson review new aeri-als.

COOK COUNTY ASSESSOR TAKES TO THE AIR

There's a saying that one picture is worth a thousand words. Cook County, Illinois Assessor, Thomas M. Tully, has taken this a step further by using precision aerial photography in combination with the county's tax maps to develop an innovative assessment program.

The photos are taken using precision calibrated aerial cameras at a scale that clearly shows all residential, commercial and industrial property in Cook County.

By matching the detailed photos to the county's 1"=100' scale tax maps, the Assessor's office can check the accuracy and completeness of each parcel. The photos are particularly valuable for spotting improvements which might otherwise escape the tax rolls. Mr. Tully explained that, "One of the things taxpayers are concerned about is making sure they're being treated the same as their neighbors. Using the photos, we're able to spot changes throughout the county and keep assessment on an equitable basis."

Cook County quadrennial assessment schedule

Cook County, which includes the City of Chicago, operates on a quadrennial assessment schedule. This means the Assessor's office is required by law to re-assess all properties in the county every four years. They accomplish this task by dividing the 956 square mile county into four areas or "quads" and reassessing all properties in one of the four quads each year. At the end of the four year period, all properties have been reviewed and the process starts over again.

This is a big job in a county that has

over 1,300,000 real estate parcels. To help get the job done, they use the latest assessment techniques available. They were one of the first counties to use detailed aerial based tax maps and a permanent parcel numbering system. This original mapping and numbering system was provided by The Sidwell Company.

Nearly 6,000 enlargements, each covering 80 acres, were required to cover Cook County. The photography was flown by Sidwell in the late fall or early spring when the leaves were off the trees and the ground was not obscured by snow. This ensured that buildings, fencelines and other ground features could be easily seen on the photos.

Photo negative rolls 250' long

The original photography consists of 9" x 9" negatives on rolls 250' long. The negatives are accurately enlarged to 1"=100' scale and printed on dimensionally stable plastic material called Cronapaque. This material prevents changes in the scale of the photo which means that very accurate measurements of lot size, building dimensions and square footage can be made in the assessor's office.

The aerial enlargements are printed so they match the corresponding tax map which has been printed on a clear plastic material. This method of overlaying the map on the aerial allows all the property information and detailed ground features to be viewed together.

One of the present major uses of the photo-tax map combination is to check

the status of vacant property. The process begins by requesting a computer print-out of all parcels classified as vacant. The print-out gives the permanent index number which indicates the geographic location of the parcel. Next, photo interpretation is done to see if the parcel's classification should be changed. If the photo check indicates the parcel is no longer vacant, a field check and appraisal is made by one of the staff appraisers to establish a new assessed value.

Mr. Dan Berck, Director of Assessment Standards, explained that using the photos for just this one purpose more than pays for the cost of the photography.

Aerial photos save field time

The Assessor's office, however, doesn't stop there. The aerial photos save a tremendous amount of field time by allowing most parcel checking and verifying to be done in the office. Building additions, total square footage, size of parking areas and other features associated with commercial and industrial property are measured on the photos and compared to the dimensions on the property record card.

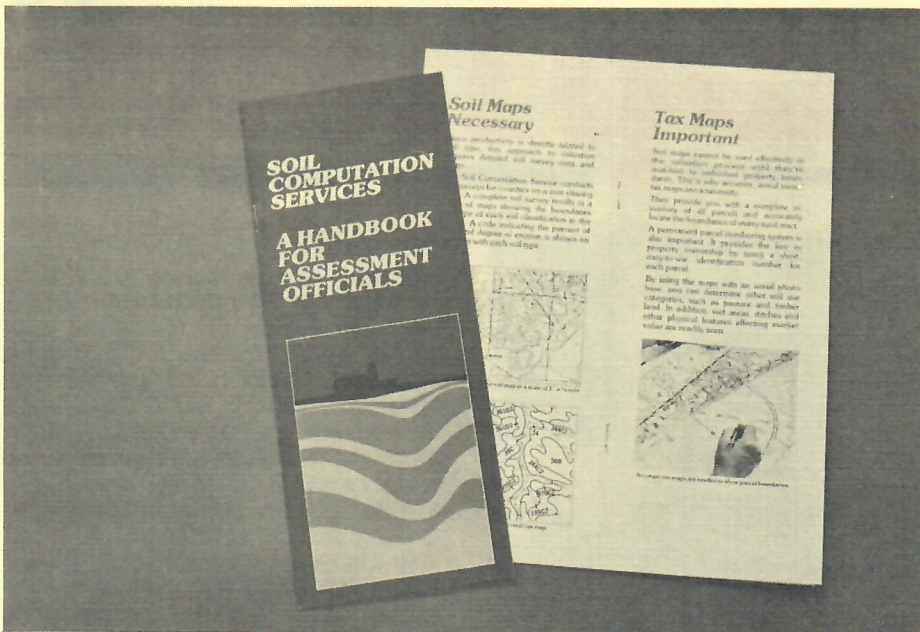
Although Cook County has a dwindling amount of agricultural land, its value for development means a close watch must be kept on every square foot. The Cook County Land Department does this by using the photos to check the extent of tillable and nontillable areas and to verify agricultural use when processing applications for farm use valuations.

The aerial photos have also been used to uncover instances where exempt property has been sold for development without being added to the assessment roll. This situation is spotted when the tax map indicates a large tract of exempt property and the aerial photo shows new development.

Photos answer taxpayer questions

Another important use involves handling taxpayers' questions. Many of these are settled by showing the taxpayer the aerial photo which clearly shows his property and improvements in detail. It also demonstrates that the Assessor's office is making equitable assessments based on accurate, up-to-date information.

Assessor Tully has also developed sophisticated computer programs for processing and storing data information. This information is always readily available through visual display units placed throughout the main office and at the branch locations. Even with these sophisticated computers and aerial photography, it's a never ending job keeping up with all the property changes each year. That's why, if you are in Cook County and see a plane overhead, smile—they may be taking your picture.



NEW BROCHURE EXPLAINS SOIL COMPUTATION SERVICES

A compact, six-page handbook has just been released explaining Sidwell's new soil computation services for county governments.

The booklet will be especially useful to assessment officials who are now or will be soon using soil productivity ratings to determine valuations for farm properties.

As explained in the booklet, Sidwell's

new service saves many hours by using a combination of electronic digitizers and rapid computer processing to measure soil types. A computer print-out gives parcel-by-parcel computations ready for use in the valuation process.

Copies of the new brochure are available free of charge by writing to Department MN, c/o The Sidwell Company.

SANGAMON COUNTY ATLAS NOW AVAILABLE

The new, 1978 edition of Sangamon County's tax map atlas is now available for those needing up-to-date property information.

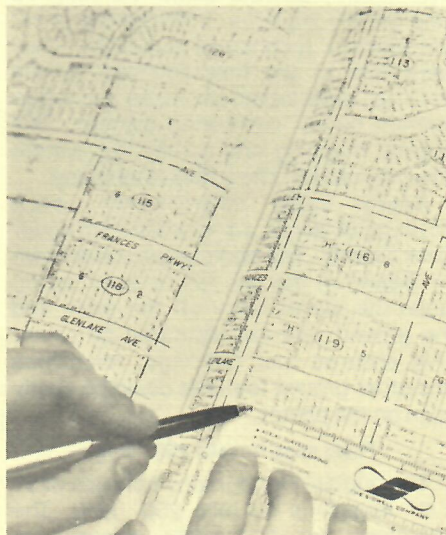
The compact 11" x 17" two-volume set contains reduced size copies of the official county tax maps. The maps show every parcel of property in the county.

City and urban areas of the county are covered by maps at a scale of 1" = 200' with rural areas mapped at a scale of 1" = 800'.

Each detailed map contains parcel boundaries, dimensions, street and subdivision names, lot numbers, acreage and permanent parcel numbers.

Atlases are also available for Champaign, Kane, Cook, DuPage and St. Clair Counties, Illinois, and Kent County, Michigan.

For further information on any Sidwell atlas, contact our Map Order Department at 231-8200.



MAP NEWS RECEIVES AWARD

Sidwell's newsletter, MAP NEWS, was awarded first place at the 1978 annual meeting of the Society for Marketing Professional Services.

The award recognizes achievement in fulfilling design, content and cost objectives established by the Society.

More than sixty companies in the design and professional services fields submitted entries.

WILL ADDRESSES PLANNERS



Mr. Dave Will, Sidwell Photogrammetric Services Representative, recently addressed a special meeting of the McHenry County Regional Planning Commission.

Dave's presentation centered on the use of aerial photography and topographic mapping as a planning tool.

His talk was illustrated by a color film-strip program explaining the photogrammetric mapping process.

STATE MEETING SCHEDULED

Officials in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan will have the opportunity to meet Sidwell mapping representatives while attending conferences scheduled during the next several months. They include the Indiana County Officials Conference, the Ohio Commissioners and Engineers Convention, and the Mid-Winter meeting of the Michigan United County Officers.

We hope to see you there.

DICK HOFFMAN SPEAKS TO TAX ADMINISTRATORS



Sidwell representative, Dick Hoffman, was a featured speaker at the recent mid-west meeting of the National Association of Tax Administrators.

Dick's presentation at the annual meeting focused on the use of soil productivity indexes for establishing property valuations.

A typical Ohio county was used to illustrate the equitable results obtained by using this method.

❄️ *Season's Greetings* ❄️



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY SIDWELL MAPPING SERVICES . . .

write The Sidwell Co., 28W240 North Avenue, West Chicago, IL 60185 . . . or phone (312) 231-0206.