

CASE STUDY



BY CALCULATING PRECISE PROPERTY VALUES QUICKLY, HAMILTON COUNTY KEEPS CITIZENS INFORMED AND STREAMLINES PROPERTY TAX BILLING

Utilizing ProVal from Thomson Reuters for 20 Years Leads to Continuous Improvements in Property Assessment Efficiency

Located near the center of Indiana, Hamilton County is home to approximately 300,000 people. Cities and towns in the southern part of the county have developed as suburbs of Indianapolis while the northern portion of the county remains largely agricultural. Today, Hamilton County is one of the fastest-growing counties in the state and the fourth most populous. Rapid growth over the years have made the process of maintaining an accurate property assessment database all the more challenging.

THE CHALLENGE

Hamilton County has benefitted from a long-term relationship with Thomson Reuters that goes all the way back to 1995. Prior to this collaboration, the county wanted to deploy a more comprehensive property appraisal solution that would make it possible to efficiently calculate accurate property values for the county's land parcels, which today number approximately 122,000.

"Going back to the early 1990s, we sometimes ran into delays of several weeks in generating accurate reports on current ownership, missed splits and plats of new subdivisions," explains Kim Powell, Deputy Assessor for Hamilton County.

In searching for a new solution, Hamilton County hoped to find an effective tool that would make data entry more efficient. The county also hoped to streamline parcel sketching, land pricing and report generation relating to assessments and building/parcel counts.

Achieving these objectives would allow the Assessor's office to meet the needs of citizens who require timely property value information. Such a solution would also help achieve the Assessor's office mission of promptly calculating precise property values in order to streamline the overall property tax collection process.

THE SOLUTION

As the last 20+ years have proven, Thomson Reuters has become the perfect partner for Hamilton County's needs. This holds true not only for the ProVal property assessment software that Thomson Reuters deployed, but also for the company's experience with property assessment in the State of Indiana.

ProVal is a robust CAMA product that has stood the test of time both in Indiana and across the country. With ProVal, Thomson Reuters was the first company to offer a CAMA solution that was Phase 2 Certified by the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF).

"Thomson Reuters has provided many ongoing enhancements and upgrades to ProVal over the years," Powell says. "They help us retrieve the data we need from reports that show all the key property assessment data such as transfers and acreage differences. They are also aware of all Indiana statutory requirements ahead of time so that the software enhancements they apply allow us to meet state deadlines."

THE DEPLOYMENT

Thomson Reuters immediately demonstrated its understanding of Hamilton County's needs when deploying ProVal in 1995. By installing the software and applying custom enhancements at night, disruptions in workflow were avoided within the county office. Thomson Reuters also eased the impact of converting the data to new software by providing comprehensive software training to the staff in the Assessor's office.

Thomson Reuters then integrated ProVal with Hamilton County's tax and billing system. Both systems exchange information on transfers and new parcels so that the county staff does not have to manually re-enter information. ProVal also automatically uploads parcel values into the tax system, which expedites the processing of tax bills.

“The two systems work very well together,” says Robin Ward, Hamilton County Assessor. “It’s important that ProVal gives us the flexibility to work with software from another software partner. Thomson Reuters worked with that partner closely to ensure the data we receive from tax and billing matches what the state requires.”

ProVal also connects to an Indiana state government system. When necessary, Thomson Reuters helps the internal IT department pull required data and upload it to the state. The ProVal system also complies with state vendor certification requirements, so state officials can be assured Hamilton County conducts property assessments correctly and provides all the necessary information.

When Hamilton County started using the permits module within ProVal, Thomson Reuters helped design specific reports to present the information. “We needed common reports when we brought our commercial assessment team into one centralized office,” says Ward. “It’s helpful for the four of us to be able to look at a parcel and see if there is a permit outstanding. The process is now more streamlined and efficient with ProVal rather than the four of us working off our own spreadsheets.”

“Thomson Reuters also reacts very quickly to requests and does what they can to accommodate us,” Ward adds. “This is unique in comparison to our other software partners—we don’t have this kind of relationship with anyone else. Whenever we need a report that shows specific information, they are very helpful.”

THE BENEFITS

Today, 40+ staffers in the Hamilton County Assessor’s Office use ProVal throughout their normal work routines. The increased familiarity with the software data tables benefits county taxpayers as the staff has become more efficient in delivering information about parcel assessments.

Ward and Powell both emphasize that the staff could not get its work done if the county did not have the ProVal system. “The solution is efficient, works reliably and integrates easily with our tax and billing system—we highly recommend ProVal to any county assessor,” Powell says.

Since deploying ProVal, Hamilton County has consistently met property assessment data deadlines imposed by the State of Indiana. The staff is better able to keep property record card data current. Also, the system streamlines the flow of information to the public via a link to the county website, where citizens can easily access property records.

The county has also been able to free up staff members that were previously spending a lot of time reviewing deeds and performing data entry. “ProVal speeds up our time to enter those deeds and assists with cyclical reassessments, land orders and permits,” Powell explains. “We complete all these tasks in a timelier manner without additional staff and can send notifications of assessments to taxpayers ahead of the previous year.”

BENEFITS THAT EXTEND WELL BEYOND SOLUTION CAPABILITIES

Ward and Powell value the improved efficiencies of ProVal and how much the solution accelerates property assessment processes. But they are even more impressed with the level of professionalism Thomson Reuters has demonstrated consistently throughout their shared, long-term relationship.

“Thomson Reuters is unique among all of our software partners in that they host quarterly Advisory Group meetings that all Indiana ProVal customers attend,” says Powell. “This gives the staff here at Hamilton County a chance to not only provide feedback to Thomson Reuters on software improvements we would like to see, but also more opportunities to interact with colleagues from other counties. We can all work together to take on and solve our common property assessment and tax challenges.”

Hamilton County officers and support personnel also benefit from the bulletins and webinars that Thomson Reuters regularly produces. Thomson Reuters closely monitors mandates from the state that require Hamilton County to provide new information or to handle processes in a different way. The bulletins and webinars inform the staff about any new functionality that Thomson Reuters adds to ProVal along with recommendations on how to apply changes to internal county processes.

When required, Thomson Reuters provides software developer resources that make specific changes to ProVal for Hamilton County. “In some cases, the changes that Thomson Reuters applies prove beneficial for all counties involved,” says Ward, who in 2015 was recognized as a Public Sector Champion Award winner by Thomson Reuters for Hamilton County’s success in the office’s use of ProVal. “They are always taking what they learn from us and other counties in the state.”

THOMSON REUTERS IN INDIANA

What local government officials do is too important to trust to just anyone. The experience of your software solution partner matters. That’s why for the past 46 years, we’ve worked to make sure our Indiana customers get the support and functionality they need for both their CAMA and property tax solutions.

Our customers enjoy many benefits:

- Collaborating with over 300 Thomson Reuters employees who live and work in the state of Indiana serving Indiana customers
- Utilizing the first CAMA (ProVal) and Tax (MVPTax) solution to be Phase 2 Certified by the Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF)
- Sharing experiences with a mature user group that is over 10 years old and continues to grow

If you’re interested in learning more about solutions and expertise you can trust, visit tax.thomsonreuters.com/Aumentum.

