

- I. **REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY:** Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC)
- II. **PROJECT NAME:** MVPC Regional GIS Service Center
- III. **CATEGORY OF PROJECT:** Existing Regional Service New Regional Service in Development
- IV. **PURPOSE:** To assist communities, regional organizations and public non-profit groups in the development of geographically-based data, maps and the use of mapping software (Geographic Information Systems).
- V. **COMMUNITIES SERVED/PARTICIPATING:** MVPC has provided GIS services to each of its' fifteen cities and towns. MVPC has also assisted community groups as well as other public and private non-profit organizations in the development of data, maps and analysis.
- VI. **SUMMARY OF PROJECT SCOPE:** Working as the state-designated Regional GIS Service Center for northeastern Massachusetts (see M.G.L. Chapter 21, Section 4B), MVPC has strived to foster cooperation among local, state, regional and federal government agencies and the private sector in order to improve the quality, access, cost-effectiveness and utility of geographical information as a strategic resource. With two (2) certified GIS Professionals on staff, MVPC provides access to information technology (IT) through the provision of GIS/IT services on a regional basis.

MVPC produces a wide range of mapping products using existing and custom prepared datasets. As an example, MVPC maintains and updates the official assessor maps for ten (10) of its fifteen (15) member communities. This process not only provides the community with paper maps but enables them to utilize parcel data in an electronic format for a broad array of planning and development projects.

During the past two years, MVPC has implemented an interactive GIS mapping application called MIMAP (municipal information mapping access program) for its member communities. MIMAP is an internet-based GIS application that enables the user to access the wealth of GIS data archived at MVPC and through the state's GIS office. By accessing the system, specific addresses can be located and information such as assessor records, building permits, board of health records and orders of conditions from conservation commissions can be quickly queried. Each deployment of MIMAP is customized for a particular municipality which enables other datasets and maps, including oblique images from Pictometry to be readily displayed. The program is easy to use and employs innovative internet development techniques that eliminate the need for software installation. More than half of municipalities in the MVPC region have contracted with MVPC to implement MIMAP.

In 2001, MVPC was the first regional council in the country to assemble a regional purchasing of the Pictometry product with participation by all of its fifteen member communities. The Pictometry product has been an invaluable visual information technology whereby users can immediately access both traditional "top-down" perspective photography as well as innovative "oblique" imagery. Participating communities have found Pictometry useful as an aide to public safety, municipal assessing, economic development, planning, transportation management as well as a variety of other applications. Since the initial regional procurement in 2001, flights covering the region were conducted in 2003, 2005 and 2007 with a special "Mother's Day Flood" flight in 2006 capturing the extent of the historic and devastating flooding.

Another example of regional GIS services is MVPC's award winning economic development website called "Merrimack Valley Means Business (MVMB)". MVMB relies on GIS to identify business locations that are for sale or for lease. By implementing GIS in a web-based application, business owners

are able to search for properties that meet their individual needs across the entire region.

The Regional GIS Service Center also serves as an information clearinghouse for MVPC’s fifteen member communities by providing phone support and on-site technical support to municipal officials. Additionally, many communities participate in the GIS/IT training opportunities provided by MVPC.

VII. BUDGET AND TIMETABLE: The Regional GIS Service Center provides a detailed estimate of costs associated with all GIS/IT projects. Expenses associated with GIS/IT work are estimated on a fee for service basis.

VIII. EXPECTED COST SAVINGS TO COMMUNITIES: Through development of data standards and mapping templates, MVPC communities have benefited from economies of scale. Technological developments of this type are transferrable and do not need to be replicated with each GIS/IT project – thereby providing a cost savings to communities.

During implementation of MVPC’s MIMAP application, a significant investment in hardware and software was made by the organization. This investment was made by MVPC on behalf of its member communities. By making this investment, individual communities were able to join a regional consortium rather than expending funds individually. For each municipality participating in MIMAP a savings of approximately \$20,000 was realized.

Another area of cost savings is generated through training classes held by MVPC’s GIS Program. Communities of the region are able to use Local Technical Assistance (LTA) time to cover staff time associated with the training. This unique benefit has been leveraged by each of MVPC’s fifteen cities and towns and has resulted in thousands of dollars of savings to municipalities of the region.

IX. OTHER BENEFITS TO COMMUNITIES: Through MVPC’s Regional GIS Service Center, communities of the Merrimack Valley are able to take advantage of GIS/IT resources as they are developed by MVPC for the region. Individual communities do not have to expend their resources on hardware, software or personnel but can take advantage of the expertise at MVPC and benefit from regional economies of scale.

XI. CONTACT NAME(S) AND INFORMATION FOR LEAD RPA STAFF:

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