

ZEH Software Helps HCAD Apply Equality and Uniformity to Review Appraisals

Good News/Bad News

For many individuals a home investment brings both good and bad news. The good news is if you make a great investment, your home increases in value year after year. The bad news is if your home increases in value, you may have a higher property tax bill year after year.

The appraisal district allocates the tax burden by appraising taxable properties each year. The Harris County Appraisal District (HCAD) in Houston, Texas uses GIS data including sophisticated aerial photography and platted maps to ensure values set are appropriate. ZEH Software assists in this effort by plotting high quality, detailed maps that appraisers can take with them to review meetings and hearings.

When a property owner protests the value appraised by the district, the district has to support their valuation with evidence. This can take place in an informal meeting or a more formal hearing. Printed copies of current and historical property maps can have a significant impact in an appraisal hearing. A simple before and after aerial photograph of a property showing improvements like a new pool or a nearby golf course can quickly convince a review panel that the appraisal amount is fair or needs to be modified. It is hard to argue against a 32-inch map that highlights property enhancements in clear detail.

ZEH Implementation at HCAD

ZEH greatly improves the print quality of these detailed images and provides easy access for all HCAD users to a central plotting system. Users can plot on-demand quickly and easily through the ZEHPlot for Workgroups system. Administrators no longer have to worry about installing various plotter drivers on every user's workstation. Every GIS analyst having access to ArcGIS can simply click the ZEH icon within ArcGIS when they need to plot. Users can focus on their area of specialty without jumping through hoops to get the high quality images they need, when they need them.



www.zeh.com

United States (Headquarters)
 ZEH Software, Inc.
 1155 Dairy Ashford, Suite 250
 Houston, TX 77079 USA
 +1 281 589 7757
 +1 281 497 2141 Fax

United Kingdom
 ZEH Software Ltd.
 Dorking Business Park
 Station Road
 Dorking, Surrey RH4 1HJ
 United Kingdom
 +44 (0) 1306 740105
 +44 (0) 1306 740541 Fax

Singapore
 ZEH Software Asia Pacific
 #5 Rhu Cross #9-15
 Singapore 437434
 +65 6342 4101
 +65 6342 4102 Fax

Before ZEH, review appraisers often had to take aerial photographs to outsource printing firms to get high quality, large format color plots for appraisal hearings. The image quality produced in-house was often not sufficient. "ZEH saves us money. Not only the money we paid to outside printing firms for maps, but also the time previously spent running around town trying to get maps printed. Now our appraisers and GIS analysts can print in-house, quickly and easily, leaving more time for appraisal related activities." said Jackie Smith, GIS Supervisor.

HCAD uses ZEH Software to plot to HP and OCE plotters from ESRI's ArcGIS. HCAD's increased use of high-resolution aerial photography, combined with plans to migrate from UNIX-based plotting to a Windows-based system, precipitated a need for ZEH Software. Without ZEH Software, migration to Windows might result in a complex workflow for plotting from ESRI and other applications. With ZEH Software users can submit files for plotting direct to the ZEHPlot for Workgroups system from Windows workstations.

About HCAD

The Harris County Appraisal District in Houston, TX appraises taxable property for the county, cities, school districts, and other local governments that levy property taxes within the district's boundaries. The district appraises more than 1.3 million property parcels annually. The district's primary function is to determine whether property is taxable and to appraise it at its market value. The district also administers exemptions and special appraisals, determines ownership of taxable property, as well as that property's taxable situs. The appraisal review board is responsible for hearing and resolving protests from property owners concerning appraisal of their properties.