



Iowa County Real Estate Information Portal

Executive Summary

The Iowa Real Estate Information Portal links information from a multitude of county data sources in Iowa that maintain county real estate data so the public is able to access Iowa real estate information from any web-accessible location. The design supports moving seamlessly and transparently between the different data sources without being required to reenter parcel information.

During the 2005 legislative session, House File 882 created the County Real Estate Electronic Government Advisory Committee (CREEGAC). The committee was charged with statewide integration of information from the four offices in each of the ninety-nine counties that develop and store real estate data – the Auditor, Treasurer, Recorder, and Assessor. The membership of CREEGAC, as specified in the legislation, is two County Auditors, two County Treasurers, two County Recorders, two County Assessors and one member each from the Iowa State Association of Counties, the Iowa Land Title Association, the Iowa Bankers Association, the Iowa Credit Union League, the Iowa State Bar Association, and the Iowa Association of Realtors.

Title: Iowa County Real Estate Information Portal

Concise Description of the Business Problem and Solution, Including the Length of Time in Operation:

Beginning on July 1, 2003, the legislature required County Recorders to begin collecting a fee of five dollars for each recorded transaction, regardless of the number of pages. The fees collected were used for planning and implementing electronic recording and electronic transactions in each county and developing county and statewide internet websites to provide electronic access to records and information. The County Real Estate Electronic Government Advisory Committee (CREEGAC) was created by the legislature in 2005 to develop an implementation and oversight plan for the statewide integration of real estate information from the four offices in each of the ninety-nine counties that record and use real estate data – the Auditor, Treasurer, Recorder, and Assessor.

The Iowa Real Estate Information Portal was required to link information from a multitude of county government data sources that house county real estate data so the public is able to access Iowa real estate information from any web-accessible location. The design supports moving seamlessly and transparently between the different data sources without being required to reenter parcel information.

To reduce the complexity of the Iowa Real Estate Information Portal, CREEGAC decided the portal neither houses data nor contains a search engine. Instead, the web portal initiates concurrent searches on multiple affiliate websites using the websites existing search engines to retrieve the specified data. The data on a given real estate parcel is then displayed in a common, consolidated format using a data structure based on the tax or assessment year. By taking this approach, the portal creates a user-friendly single access point, displays information in a simple and understandable manner, and minimizes duplication and project cost by using existing resources.

Additionally, the web portal also contains active links to individual county websites to assist users in obtaining additional detail. For those counties that have a geographic information system (GIS), the user is able to see an electronic map or aerial photo of a real estate parcel.

CREEGAC decided the web service is comprised of the following functions:

1. A single web portal to search and view information from the four independent websites/web portals;
2. Display of specific real estate parcel information on a 'consolidated' screen that shows data accessed from multiple sources in a manner that is transparent to the user.
3. Initiation of concurrent searches on multiple websites using existing website search engines to retrieve specified data.
4. The following information retrieval services:
 - Property search to allow the users to search for property records from among the four affiliate databases
 - Consolidated property view to allow the user to be able to view information about a single parcel with data from the affiliate databases.
 - Extended links - from the consolidated view, this allows the user to link to other websites to view additional information about the selected parcel or perform actions such as paying property taxes
 - Frequently asked questions (FAQS) which includes explanations of the property information and answer common question about discrepancies or limitations of the data
 - State and county links – the website allows users to browse and follow statewide and county specific links to property related information and services.

- Content administration – the application allows authorized users from each of the four affiliates to update the FAQs and links content, thereby eliminating the need to engage outside IT support services when changes are necessary.

CREEGAC is currently in the implementation phase of this portal.

Significance of the Project to the Improvement of the Operation of Government:

The vision of the project is to have a web portal that itself houses no county real estate data, but which serves as a one-stop access point to find real estate information. The joint web portal links to the four county affiliate websites/web portals and link to individual county websites by the use of multiple unique identifiers, such as the county permanent parcel identification number. The user is unaware the search engines and data actually exist on the affiliate and independent county websites/web portals. The user is able to access current ownership information, assessed values, images of recorded real estate documents and pay taxes, all without knowing the joint web portal accessed multiple data sources in a manner that was transparent and seamless to the user.

Public Value of the Project (benefits realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agencies or the state – also include documented outcomes such as realized return on investment, short-term/long-term payback with summary calculations, or cost avoidance data):

Users of the project include any member of the public. High volume users include real estate attorneys, real estate loan officers from banks and credit unions, real estate brokers, and abstractors. This project is currently in the operational phase so there are no benefits realized at this time.