

MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:
May 31, 2006

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Parcel Maps Now On-line, No charge

Starting today the Santa Clara County Assessor's Office will provide Parcel Maps on-line, free of charge, from the Assessor's Website, www.scc-assessor.org. "This new service will be available when the public needs it, 24/7, from the convenience of their home, office or public library. Plus, the on-line maps will be free," said County Assessor Larry Stone. The Assessor's Office will continue to charge \$8 for maps processed and printed at the Assessor's Office.

This new feature is just another tangible example of the on-going effort to completely modernize the Assessor's Office. "When took office 11 years ago maps were drawn with pen and ink on linen, and copies of maps were made using the old blue-line ammonia-mapping machine, a health hazard if ever there was one! Today parcel maps are created electronically," said Stone. This capability would not have been possible had the Assessor's Office not embarked on a multi-million dollar effort to upgrade the office infrastructure and technology. The effort was nearly entirely funded without burdening the County general fund, utilizing a State performance loan program created in 1996, in part, by County Assessor Larry Stone shortly after he was elected Assessor.

The new feature is being added as an enhancement to the already popular on-line Property Lookup system. In May, for example, the property lookup site experienced 598,475 hits and remains one of County Government's top three most used sites. Since its inception, the Assessor's Office has continued to improve upon the property lookup website. Offering free parcel maps is just another improvement toward enhanced customer service. Earlier this year the office consolidated public service from three separate Division to offer "one stop shopping" and expanded the availability of public information offered in Spanish, Mandarin and Vietnamese.

"Providing parcel maps on-line without charge is not only a long overdue, and convenient to our property owners; it makes good business sense," said Stone. Annually the Assessor's public service staff manages and assists nearly 50,000 customers. Nine percent of these customers request parcel maps. To provide customers with a map costs us \$8, which we pass on to the customer and is used to pay for equipment costs and the staff time to process the request, handle payment and mail the map. "By providing this service on-line, free of charge, I expect we will see a dramatic reduction in personal requests for maps. This will free up our assessment professionals to continue to provide exceptional customer service and to work on more complex and difficult issues," said Stone. When

the Assessor's Office created the property look-up web site, phone and counter calls dropped more than 15%.

The new website will provide access to 11,421 map pages displaying 447,743 separate parcels. A map page may have as few as 1 and as many as 100 parcels on a page. The maps are configured for 8½ X 11 letter sized paper and are displayed in a PDF format using Adobe Acrobat's free reader. It should be noted the parcel map site utilizes a standard industry security feature to enhance the speed and efficiency for the individual user to obtain maps on-line and stop inappropriate and excessive usage that would drastically decrease the performance of the website. Specifically it requires the user to re-type wavy text into an entry box to prevent access by automated programs and protect data.

Customers who wish to receive an 11 X 17 Parcel Map may continue to request them by completing the "Assessor Parcel Map and Property Characteristic Request Form," which can be downloaded from the website or requested by contacting the office at 299-5500. The charge to receive a map, processed by the Assessor's Office, will remain \$8.

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