

# Time-saving Technology Revolutionizes Garfield County, OK



When Wade Patterson, County Assessor for Garfield County, OK, saw a demonstration of Pictometry his mind began racing.

“I instantly saw thousands of ways to implement it,” says Patterson, “each one saving us more time and labor than the next.”

At the time Patterson saw the demonstration, he and his staff of 25 were handling over 9,000 parcel re-evaluations per year plus assessments. With properties stretched over nearly 1,100 square miles, many filled with wheat, pasture and woods, Patterson and his team spent hundreds of hours and countless gallons of gas per year simply driving to and from locations.

“Right away I knew I wanted it,” says Patterson. “I could see how the technology would literally save us hours every day... hours that could be spent in much more productive and beneficial ways.”

## Cross-departmental applications lead to affordable solutions

After consulting with Pictometry, Patterson was able to determine several county and city departments that could also benefit from the technology.

“It didn’t take me long to rack up a nice list of ways the technology could be used,” says Patterson, “The next step

was getting the various departments and players to take a look at it in a meaningful way.”

To prove its usefulness in an enterprise environment, Pictometry created a customized demo that highlighted how it could benefit the different entities. “Basically we built a demo that illustrated how the technology could be used by law enforcement and public safety teams.”

According to Patterson, the demo lasted approximately one hour and by the end, “Everyone walked out saying that even though we hadn’t yet nailed down the costs, they were all in.”

## Changing the game — for the better

Once the actual cost-sharing details were worked out each department began applying the technology to their specific tasks. Like Patterson’s assessors office, the other departments immediately began to realize time and money savings.

“It’s no exaggeration,” says Patterson that the implementation of Pictometry has literally changed the game for county assessments. “In the past a resident might come in and complain that their property was over-assessed. Depending upon our schedule, it might take weeks for us to get out there and take a look. But with Pictometry we can now call up an image of the property right there in the office and take a look at it with the owner,” explains Patterson.

Patterson says that kind of accuracy and instant access builds credibility with taxpayers. "It's a boon," says Patterson. "For the first time many of those taxpayers feel like our assessors are working for them, not against them."

Another feature that Wade credits with identifying assessment conflicts is Pictometry's ChangeFinder Analysis. By comparing past images of properties against current ones, Pictometry identifies when new structures go up or significant changes are made to existing ones.

"This is particularly important for us in Garfield County as building permits aren't required in rural areas," says Patterson. "It's possible, and has happened, that entire barns and houses have been erected and pools put in. Now we can identify those types of changes from our desktop and in the field and determine if an on-site visit is warranted."

Patterson further credits Pictometry for helping his department correct long-standing errors in historical data. "It's amazing how many small errors we've been able to identify and correct; errors that have been on our books for not just years, but generations," enthuses Patterson. "To be able to correct assessments to finally cite the correct aspects of a property — things like roof composites, siding, square footage — that's highly satisfying."

Pictometry's professional-grade imagery helps the Garfield County assessors better prepare for site visits. "Now our team can see what they're going to look at before they get there," says Patterson. "There's really not an aspect of the exterior



## Shared Benefit, Shared Cost

By identifying multiple applications, Garfield County was able to divide the benefit and cost across the following departments:

- Assessor's Office
- Commissioner's Office
- Planning Department
- Sherriff's Office
- Police Department
- Fire Department
- 911
- SWAT

property we can't see. We can do a complete window count and even determine if the windows are new. That's a huge help in preparing for inspections, especially if the assessor has no previous history with a property. Even just traditional assessments. What used to take us three months now gets done in half the time."

## "The wisest investment I ever made."

While Patterson frequently refers to Pictometry as his "other full-time employee," he's quick to note that it doesn't replace staff. "Pictometry definitely accomplishes twice as much as a full-time employee could but for less money," says Patterson, "and that frees my staff up to take on additional work. Our workload has increased but the staff hours needed to accomplish it is way down.

"Frankly, it's hard to recall how we did it all before. I feel like every time the phone rings in our office, someone inevitably brings up a Pictometry screen to address an issue or answer a question. It's that integrated into our office. Plus, it ensures that our goals for uniformity and equality are met every time.

"In the fifteen years I've been here, I can honestly say it's the wisest investment I ever made." 