

# City of Norfolk departments benefit from Pictometry® Imagery

## JURISDICTION:

City of Norfolk, VA

## INDUSTRY:

Government

## CHALLENGE:

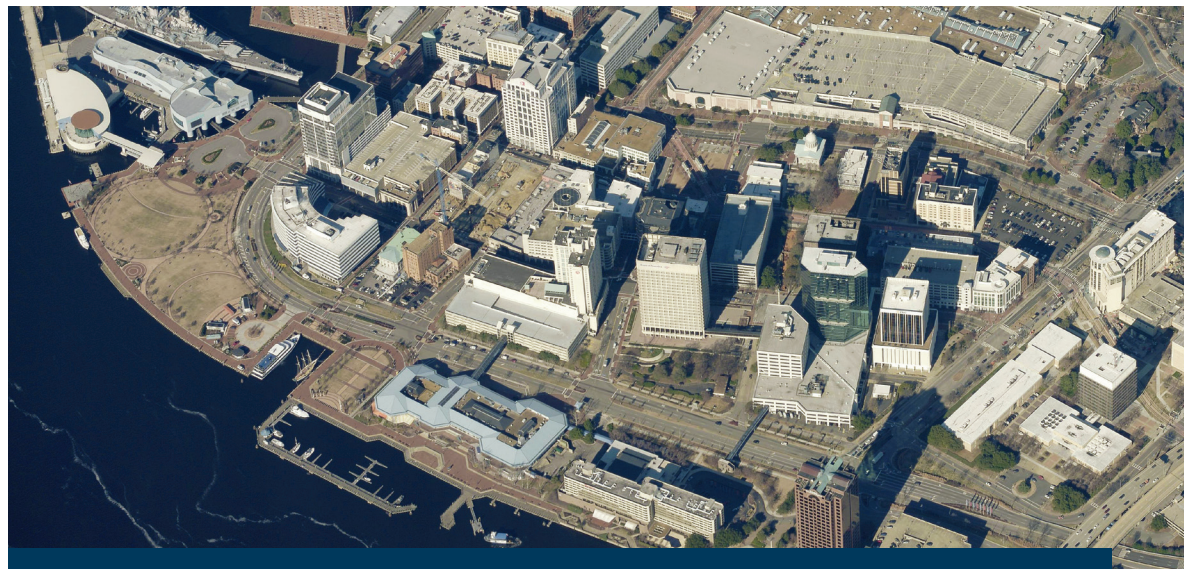
To implement a true GIS enterprise solution that integrates Pictometry imagery throughout all departments in the city.

## SOLUTION:

The city utilized the CONNECT platform, offering fast, easy access to Pictometry imagery and analytical tools through a web browser. It is now being used by 18 city departments.

## PRODUCTS:

Pictometry orthogonal and oblique imagery; CONNECT.



The City of Norfolk, Virginia has taken the science of GIS to the next level under the direction of Fraser Picard, GIS Bureau Technology Manager. Picard incorporated Pictometry® intelligent aerial imagery into the city's GIS program in 2004, following the example of neighboring Arlington County.

Picard was aware that the young Pictometry International (founded in 2000 and renamed Eagleview in 2017) had captured its first imagery in the spring of 2001 and delivered its first complete library to Arlington County. The imagery was used by the fire department during the response to the September 11 attacks on the Pentagon. EagleView was also the first company to be allowed to fly Ground Zero to help in the search, rescue and recovery efforts.

Norfolk followed with their first flights in 2004. They incorporated a desktop imagery viewing

application at the same time, Electronic Field Study (EFS)\*. Developed to view, interact and extract data from the imagery, EFS\* was unique in that it allowed users to measure not only distances and areas, but heights as well, all through the use of a single image. This surpassed the technology at that time which involved the use of two or more overlapping images in order to extract any height information or vertical measurements.

## IMAGERY FOR EVERY DEPARTMENT

Pictometry imagery is now being used within eighteen Norfolk City departments. The assessment department is one of the top users of the imagery and software. As an early adopter, the City of Norfolk worked side-by-side with EagleView as the company revolutionized the assessment market by allowing assessors

\*Electronic Field Study (EFS) has been upgraded to CONNECTExplorer™

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to do more work from their desktop than ever before. The oblique Pictometry imagery, provided a forty-five degree view of structures allowing for views that had never been seen on a desktop before. The improved communication surrounding the selection of comparable properties to constituents, significantly reduced the number of costly appeals for the city. In many states, assessment guidelines and regulations were modified to incorporate this new capability.

Picard said that in addition to assessing properties they found the imagery to be an asset in many additional ways. “We also use the imagery to measure building surfaces, determining impervious areas that will not drain. Commercial properties pay a fee on impervious square footage to help with storm water control and flooding.”

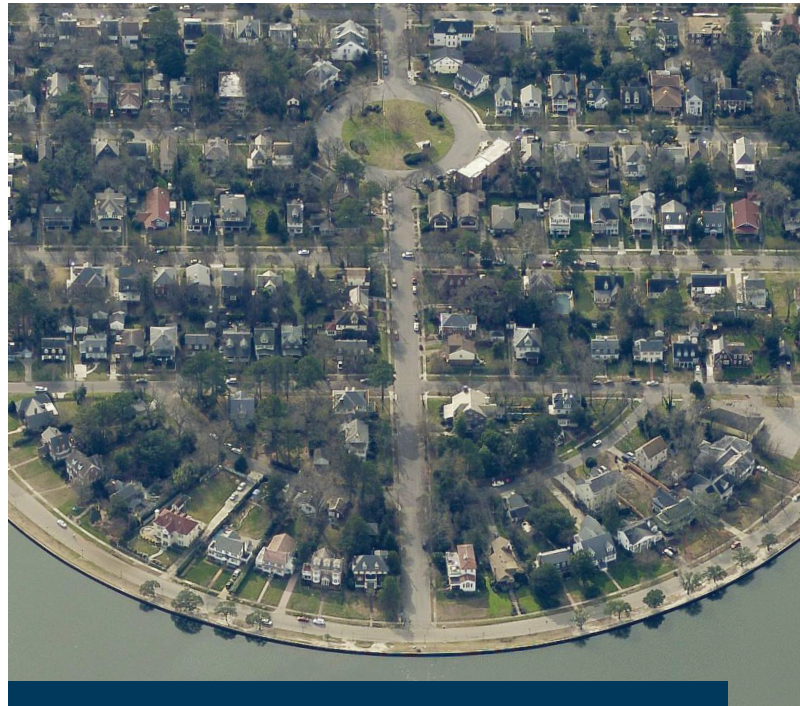
In 2014, Picard led the city in an important change, moving from server edition, a locally hosted software that followed EFS\*, to the CONNECT™ platform, a cloud-based solution accessible through any web browser. “With eighteen departments utilizing Pictometry imagery we had to have a strong online solution. I have personally trained more than 700 employees over the last 10 years. We currently have 300 who are using the systems daily,” stated Picard. “We had to have a system that was easy to upgrade, easy to train and overall easy to use. With the new CONNECTAdmin functionality it was exactly what we needed.”

“The transition was so smooth it was like driving a new car on new pavement,” said Picard, smiling. “I don’t think people even knew the difference. We had to set up GIS layers in CONNECTAdmin™ which worked really well. The staff from gets the credit. They understood our system making the transition very easy. It was great and I was very happy.”

“When we first got EFS\* in 2004, I thought I would only need to train about seventeen people. Not so; the popularity of the product exploded and prior to EFS\*, I would ask people to commit three days to GIS training. That was a huge commitment for a very busy staff,” noted Picard. “Now with the CONNECT platform we have trainings a couple of times a year and reduced the training class to half of a day. Word has spread on how easy it is to use and how powerful it is for data collection and analysis. I have people asking to get on board constantly.”

### FINDING NEW USE CASES EVERY DAY

“The list of use cases goes on and on,” continued Picard. “The legal departments use it for court cases, assessor for assessment appeals, and planning checks vegetation violations along the Chesapeake Bay buffer protection areas. Our events coordinator uses it for park events for booths, vendor communications and researching new and different areas. Our public arts manager



uses it to research and investigate suitable areas for placing art. Everyone uses it every day for presentations including the city council for their short- and long-term planning.”

Using Pictometry imagery, Picard’s team has also built numerous applications including Norfolk AIR (Address Information Resource). They developed it to aggregate property data along with imagery from as far back as 2004 with the goal of viewing properties over time. Making it accessible to the public they now see over a thousand hits a day and believe that without the photos there would not be this level of interest. City officials and residents now share common imagery and information when reviewing building codes, set-backs and property development.

“The City of Norfolk has been an amazing long-term customer who truly has embraced the importance of Pictometry imagery and solutions,” stated Robert Locke, president of Pictometry Government Solutions. “Fraser’s leading role incorporating the technology into all of the departments has provided a model for other GIS departments and jurisdictions.”

“Pictometry imagery is part of our culture and our overall organizational success,” concluded Picard. “If anyone tried to cut it, I would have eighteen departments yelling, so it is clear that it is not just the GIS office that needs and depends on this technology. It should never be under just one department. For GIS solutions and Pictometry imagery, the more people using it the better the investment.”

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