

iPhone: Tool or Toy for Land Use Planners

We raised eyebrows when CSA Associate Planner and Cartographer Michael Savage brought his new iPhone to work. Tool or toy, we wondered. No doubt we were impressed when he showed us a simple feature of turning the iPhone in his hand to change the three dimensional field of view on Google Earth. That's a trick he can't do with his desktop computer. Our skepticism ended for good, however, when we returned to the office after a staff walk and soon found an email from Mr. Savage with an aerial photo of our trek, the pace, distance and elevation change.

"Both GPS and GIS are powerful site design tools, especially in determining the layout of roads or determining roughly the property boundaries," Mr. Savage said. "It won't replace a professional survey. But it will provide a useful and cost effective tool in determining locations of existing or proposed structures or configurations of property. In addition to collecting locational data, it is generally important to capture photographs during site visits. The iPhone saves time by integrating site photos with GPS data. The application is able to tie individual photos to specific gps points and integrate the data into a robust GIS application in the matter of seconds with just a few clicks."

Mr. Savage turned his iPhone into a work tool with the software MotionX-GPS. He downloaded aerial photos, tax lot information and other data from Jackson County GIS Services. Mr. Savage knows the county's GIS data bank first hand, having worked ten years for Jackson County Planning. During his tenure, he helped with development of the award-winning interactive website Front Counter (www.web.jacksoncounty.org)

How might Mr. Savage use his iPhone on the job? He could take it on a field visit to trace the route of an unmapped BLM Road. He might use it to determine the dimensions of a property that has not yet been surveyed, to measure the setback of a homesite or trace the pathway of a stream. The possibilities are many. "It also works as a phone," Mr. Savage reminds us, "Ties to email, has fast and safe access to internet, has games to keep my son entertained. I used it at a business lunch the other day to pull up some important documents." One thing is certain: his new toy can make the work of CSA Planning more efficient, which helps save money for clients. For more information, email Michael Savage, mike@csaplanning.net

GPS track data from CSA Planning staff walk on Jan. 16, 2009 at 10:49 am

Distance:	0.76 miles	Max Altitude:	1,781 ft
Elapsed Time:	16:46.2	Start Latitude:	42° 20' 26" N
Avg Speed:	2.7 mph	Start Longitude:	122° 48' 30" W
Avg Pace:	21' 56" per mile	End Latitude:	42° 20' 25" N
Min Altitude:	1,686 ft	End Longitude:	122° 48' 33" W