

**Town of Amherst
Information Technology Department GIS Division
PRESS RELEASE**

Amherst Joins Google Cities in 3D Program
Collaborative Efforts Lead to a Freely Available 3D Model of the Community

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AMHERST, Mass. –Visitors to this famous New England town need go no further than the nearest computer to “see” the town and its largest college, thanks to a town-gown project announced today.

Soaring gas and airfare prices have made this joint endeavor of the Town of Amherst, The University of Massachusetts (UMass) Amherst and Google Cities in 3D Program to develop realistic, easily accessible three-dimensional (3D) building models even more valuable for people worldwide who are trying to get a sense of the town, including those considering colleges.

Users of the free Google Earth™ mapping program now can simply turn on the 3D Buildings Layer and see more than 100 realistic looking Amherst buildings pop up. These buildings are also available for download from the Google 3D Warehouse, an online 3D model sharing web community.

The accessibility of the technology has an important local advantage, as well. “Town officials now can base building and zoning decisions on better information than in the past,” said Amherst Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Administrator Michael Olkin.

“Local architects are using the program to place their models in a real-world context, and no longer have to go from project to project recreating the context for their proposals.”

The idea of creating a realistic model of Amherst began in 2006 to help the town understand the impact of potential development. It was initially a complex initiative that required a contractor, Green Mountain GeoGraphics of Essex, Vt., to use expensive specialized software that was state of the art to render realistic 3D models, but has been a community effort over the past year.

“What we ended up with goes well beyond our wildest dreams,” said Niels la Cour, a Physical Planner at the UMass Amherst Department of Facilities and Campus Planning, who originated the Amherst Center 3D concept in his former role as a Senior Planner at the Town of Amherst Planning Department. “We wanted to be able to show scenarios in public meetings and give decision makers more tools, but we could never have anticipated how easy it has become for just about anyone anywhere to have this capability.”

In spring 2007 a group of students from the UMass Amherst programs of Building Materials and Wood Technology (BMAWT), Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning (LARP), and Architecture+Design (A+D) under the supervision of Alexander Schreyer, Faculty member in BMAWT and A+D, created a 3-dimensional model of most buildings on the UMass Amherst campus. The effort currently continues at UMass Amherst, with 60 new buildings added to the campus model this spring as part of a new entry into this year’s “Model your Campus” competition. Alexander Schreyer continues to push the boundaries of this technology through collaborative efforts, “together with the Architecture program at UMass Amherst, we are now working on architectural walking tours of campus,” said Schreyer.

The UMass Amherst campus model is being put to good use for planning purposes, as the campus goes through a major rebuilding effort. And in his role with the UMass Amherst Department of Facilities and Campus Planning, La Cour is seeing the benefits of his foresight. “I am excited to see that our staff are using Google and the 3D renderings as visualization and planning tools. But what is really great about it, is that it happened with very minimal investment in time and training, and no investment in software.”

With 3D models in place representing two of the most populated areas of town, Amherst last year became the first

community in the nation to participate in Green Mountain GeoGraphics founder Gary Smith's "Model Your Community in 3D," training program, sponsored by Google. A team of a dozen community volunteers took part in this program, which consisted of a one-day training in Google SketchUp™, the software used to render 3D models for use in Google Earth™. The training program came with the challenge for each participant to model 10 buildings, which has thus far led to the submission of 40 new building models in North Amherst, East Amherst and South Amherst. This training program brought people together from many professional backgrounds including architects, landscape architects, planners, engineers and even kitchen designers, with tangible results that the world can now see.

"It is great to be a part of the first ever large scale effort to model our world in 3D. 3D technology is the future of almost all design and development. As our world expands and changes so rapidly, having powerful tools to make the right decisions is key. The technology that is available to us today we only could have seen in movies or dreamed about. Whether it's designing eco friendly buildings, visualizing a new structure on your landscape, or communicating ideas in 3D, with this readily available technology, and an ongoing effort from the community, the possibilities are endless!" Eric Schimelpfenig – Kitchen Designer and President of Innovative Design Concepts

"We are pleased to see that Amherst, Massachusetts has decided to contribute 3D data as part of the Cities in 3D Partner Program," said JL Needham, Manager of Public Sector Content Partnerships, at Google. "The Cities in 3D Program represents a continuation of our efforts to engage with content providers, including government agencies, and provide them with tools for making the information they produce more accessible to Internet users."

More about the Amherst 3D modeling effort is available on the Google Cities in 3D Program website:
<http://sketchup.google.com/3dwh/citiesin3d/amherst.html>

About Amherst, MA

Founded in 1759, this scenic Pioneer Valley town combines the neighborliness of a rural community with the sophistication and amenities of a major college center. Its year-round 30,000 population swells in winter with the arrival of students to the five colleges in and around it. Amherst also is home to sites as diverse as the Emily Dickinson Museum and the National Yiddish Book Center.

About University of Massachusetts Amherst

Located on 1,450-acres in the scenic Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts, The University of Massachusetts Amherst is the flagship campus of the Commonwealth's University system. UMass Amherst is a major research university enrolling 24,000 students, from all 50 United States and over 100 countries. Its 10 schools and colleges offer 88 undergraduate majors, 68 master's and 48 doctoral programs. Sponsored research activities total more than \$100 million a year.

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