

Detroit-area MLS gets street-level digital imagery

Canadian company plans to gather drive-by images in 11 U.S. metros

BY [GLENN ROBERTS JR.](#), FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2008.

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A Realtor-owned multiple listing service in Southeast Michigan has contracted with a technology company that provides high-resolution street-level property images.

ILookAbout, a real estate technology company based in London, Ontario, launched as a virtual tour services company in 2000 and began developing its street-level imagery product, called StreetScape, in 2005.

Realcomp II, an MLS with about 12,000 members, has contracted to use the StreetScape imagery for properties in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Livingston and St. Clair counties, and will also use the company's photography services for Lapeer, Genesee and Washtenaw counties.

ILookAbout walks among giants in capturing street-level imagery. Google's Street View imagery is available in about 30 major metro areas, and Microsoft has Live Search Maps, a street-level imaging product available in the Seattle and San Francisco areas.

Real estate search and marketing site Trulia.com this week announced an integration of property information at the site with Google's Street View product, and users can also choose to view properties on a Google Maps-based platform.

Amazon.com's a9.com had developed street-level imaging data for about two dozen market areas, though the images are no longer available at the site.

Street-level imagery is captured by vehicles equipped with digital cameras and global positioning technology that calculates a map position for every image.

Jeff Young, iLookAbout president and CEO, said his company is capturing street-level imagery for 11 major U.S. metro areas. "We have 32 vehicles on the road right now. We will hopefully double that this year," he said.

ILookAbout uses two cameras on each vehicle, and the cameras capture images using high-resolution 10.2 megapixel cameras with a 180-degrees-by-180-degrees field of view.

The cameras snap images every 15 feet, Young said. "When we're going into a market, we actually shoot every single street." The imagery allows users to virtually "walk" up and down a street and gaze at properties of all types.

While Google's Street View application is targeted to a general audience, iLookAbout is gearing its product to a select market that includes assessors, appraisers, insurance companies, real estate companies and MLSs.

Young said the company's product differs from Google in that it is "not so much eye candy," and the photos actually meet certain standards for the purpose of assessments and could serve as MLS photos.

Realcomp MLS members could use the images in preparing comparative market analyses for clients, Young said.

Karen S. Kage, CEO for Realcomp, said in a statement that the StreetScape imagery "is a real win-win for subscribers, their clients and Realcomp. This new digital photo library of Southeast Michigan will be a

powerful tool by which we will reduce costs, improve services, and create new revenue opportunities."

Realcomp's director of information technology added that the integration of real estate listings information and public record data with iLookAbout's imagery "will create an important strategic asset for Realcomp and our subscribers."

The MLS has been in the news lately for its legal battle with the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, which has charged that policies adopted by the MLS discriminated against some non-traditional real estate business models and were anti-competitive. A hearing was held April 1 related to that lawsuit.

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