

Cattaraugus County, New York  
Collections, Finance, & Operations  
Case Study



**Cattaraugus Transforms Their  
Countywide Collection Efforts**

How Operating in a Secure Cloud Environment  
Provided Scalability and Improved Efficiency



# LEVERAGING PROVEN, INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE EFFICIENCY



**“We wanted a solution that was simple to use for us and our local collectors, and powerful and flexible enough to meet our needs.”**

Robyn Fisher,  
Property Tax Specialist  
Cattaraugus County, NY

## Background

Cattaraugus County is a municipal corporation, home to roughly 78,892 residents, and responsible for over 51,430 parcels in 58 jurisdictions. The county is tasked with analyzing the service needs of the public to sort, realign, and consolidate them whenever possible, and to deliver those services in an economical effective manner.

To perform these duties, Cattaraugus prides itself on leveraging innovative technology that’s proven to best serve its residents. That’s why in 2012 Robyn Fisher, the Property Tax Specialist for the county, launched an initiative to replace their aging tax collection system, and simplify the subsequent processes involved. This would effectively allow them to streamline their operations and consolidate their countywide collections by implementing the latest in secure, cloud-based software.

## The Challenge

At the time, Robyn and her team were using a home-grown, legacy tax collection system developed years ago by their in-house programmer. While the system was quite progressive for its time, it had begun showing its age. The system no longer offered the

capabilities the county and local collectors needed to meet their obligations. Plus, the system required too much intervention from the support staff to perform many core functions, including running reports and handling returns. Finally, their lead programmer was poised to retire soon, meaning they would inevitably lose the ability to perform these vital tasks unless they moved decisively.

Understanding this, Robyn and her team began looking for a viable alternative to deliver the scalability they needed, while drastically improving their operational efficiency. This system also needed to be flexible enough to integrate with their existing 3<sup>rd</sup> party financial system.

After careful consideration of the solutions that could meet their needs and a brief failed attempt with another provider, the county leadership chose the expertise of Systems East, Inc.

## The Solution

“We were pleased when Cattaraugus County selected our Total Collection Solution (TCS), and our secure, cloud-based environment to handle their evolving tax collection needs,” said Jan Burling, Vice President of Systems East, and lead on the effort. “Mainly because we knew

## IMPLEMENTING THE PROPER TOOLS & TRAINING TO REDUCE SUPPORT



**“With the proper training and support, Cattaraugus was able to get running quickly and with confidence... because they now had to the tools needed to be effective”**

Jan Burling,  
Vice President  
Systems East, Inc.

they would be able to leverage this powerful system for years, if not decades, to come,” Jan added.

The first task in moving the county’s operations into TCS was to convert their data and optimize it for the cloud. This ensures the information is more secure and accessible by both their staff and the local collectors. Because TCS operates in the cloud, all that’s needed for access is an Internet connection and a secure login. This eliminated the need to install and maintain expensive software on every machine, and reduced support costs for the county.

After data conversion, the staff received training on routine tasks as well as selecting, editing, and customizing the myriad of available reports. This allowed them to become more effective and productive, as they were more self-sufficient in handling their day-to-day operations.

After getting comfortable with the system, Mrs. Fisher and her team quickly found numerous aspects to be incredibly beneficial. “The bill extract function, for me, is the most helpful. It offers almost every way to choose criteria to build a report, with the power of deciding to use the data to create a PDF or spreadsheet based on our needs,” said Mrs. Fisher.

Robyn went on to say, “The ability to update bill numbers quickly makes it easier to see if a split or apportionments exists, or correction of errors for a quick sort reference was also nice.

The ‘flags’ feature provides numerous benefits as well, given the many ways in which they can be applied. For example, being able to flag a bankrupt parcel ensures it will no longer appear on certain reports, like the advertising list, to reduce errors. We also created special flags to identify parcels that are Indian Reservations, or had taxes paid with NSF checks, corrections of errors, and those in the PILOT program to align our efforts with New York State laws.

Also, because 95% of our local collectors also run TCS, the returns process has been greatly simplified. That’s because we’re all using the same secure database to post and process our data in real-time.”

Jan added, “With the proper training and support, Cattaraugus was able to get running quickly and with confidence. That’s because they now had the tools needed to be effective in performing all their collection processes with one countywide solution – TCS.”

# FREEDOM TO MANAGE THE SYSTEM INTERNALLY LEAD TO BETTER SERVICE



**“With 95% of our collectors also using TCS for their own collections, the return process has been greatly simplified.”**

Robyn Fisher,  
Property Tax Specialist  
Cattaraugus County, NY

## The Results

Robyn closed by saying, “We have been able to streamline a lot of our functions since adopting TCS. Prior to this, we were always required to request a report from our IT department, for instance. And while they were very accommodating, being able to use [TCS’s] ‘point and click’, cloud-based environment ourselves has allowed us a lot more independence and continuity for our department’s processes without waiting.

Also, since we are now more involved in the maintenance of the program we are in a better position to answer questions from the public and even our collectors.

This program also allows all lockbox collectors to import the payment files they receive from the bank. Before, the files had to be accessed by our IT department and imported on-site here. This new functionality and accessibility allows the local collectors to be more involved in the process, and be part of any problem solving needs in regards to bank reports.

Because [TCS] is so powerful, with so many options, it will

impact our work in ways we haven’t even imagined yet either. We are still learning new things, and finding new and better ways to use it, and are very happy with our choice. I’d happily recommend this system to anyone looking to gain scalability, and improve their operations, especially as we’re now able to better serve our 80,000+ residents.”

## What’s Next

Clearly, Robyn and her team found tremendous success with the Total Collection Solution from Systems East, and we’re sure you will too. Contact us today to schedule an in-house demonstration of this or any of our other municipal solutions.

Whether you’re looking for a better way to manage your finances, payroll, electronic payments, or collections, we have everything you need to grow. You can reach us at:

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## Case Study Snapshot

### The Challenge

- An aging tax collection solution needed to be replaced
- Heavily relied on IT support to perform daily tasks
- Needed a reliable provider to deliver an innovative alternative

### The Solution

- Strategic Partnership with Systems East
- Implemented TCS to leverage their secure cloud environment
- Convert, simplify, and secure their data in the cloud
- Drastically improve accessibility to data, while keeping it secure

### The Result

- Reached scalability across entire county for collections
- Improved efficiency with new tools that could be managed individually
- Still finding new ways of using the system after four+ years

### About Systems East

Systems East was established in 1981, developing software solutions that assist our clients in effectively managing and growing their operations. These solutions include our Total Collection Solution (TCS), Integrated Financial Management & Access System (IFM), Payroll, and Xpress-pay, our online and mobile ePayment system. To learn more, please contact us at (607) 753-6156 or [sales@systemseast.com](mailto:sales@systemseast.com).