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# **Parcel Identification Numbers Frequently Asked Questions**

Approved by the PRIA Board of Directors June 21, 2023

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## Executive Summary

The Parcel Identification Number (PIN) is a key data point in the integration of land records with the assessor's office and a GIS system. Indexing the PIN provides another way for searchers to find information about a particular property without needing a party name.

The recorder's office benefits when the PIN is indexed by reducing data entry time, eliminating redundant tasks, and offering a modernized searching system with easy-to-use interfaces.

This paper will explain the value of the PIN for stakeholders and the recorder's office while addressing commonly asked questions about the use of the PIN.

## What is a PIN?

- A PIN is a unique number that may have other names such as an Assessor's Identification Number (AIN) or an Assessor's Parcel Number (APN). The PIN is often referenced in property records and is one of the unique identifiers for a specific property. In some states, the PIN is required on recorded documents and included in the index. Although optional in other states, many recording jurisdictions choose to index the PIN.

Like the grantor-grantee index, the recorder is not typically liable for indexing an incorrect PIN, although it is in the best interest of all parties to present the most accurate information possible.

## How does the PIN benefit stakeholders?

(e.g., constituents, professional and business users, state, and local government departments,)

- Makes documents related to a parcel searchable by location, rather than by party name.
- Verifies on a map that the legal description pertains to the correct parcel.
- Enables integration of property records, documents, and land information.
- Creates a common, unique identifier for all stakeholders.
- Provides an identifier that is consistent throughout all government systems and offers access to land records documents with easy-to-use applications.
- Enables parcel-based access to property records from any device, anywhere, and at any time.
- Identifies trends and patterns showing where and when transactions occur.

## What are the benefits of the PIN to the recorder's office?

- Offers innovative services to constituents (e.g., new ways to search for and locate documents).
- Makes workflow more efficient and less error prone because information auto-populates from linked sites (local or state).
- Reduces data entry time and redundant tasks.
- Decreases employee training time because information is verified before being entered into the Land Records Management System (LRMS).
- Improves data quality through multiple validation sources (e.g., assessor's office, GIS, title industry).
- Adds value to the recorder's office by delivering a marketable product.
- Combines and share data in an enterprise-wide environment where the data connects jurisdiction offices.
- Modernizes engagement with the public.
- Reduces foot traffic and phone calls from the public in the office.
- Provides new ways to find and purchase documents.
- Makes strides towards becoming a paperless office.

## Who creates the PIN?

- Whoever creates the parcel layer is usually responsible for creating the PIN.
- Depending on the jurisdiction, this typically could be the assessor, the GIS department, or the recorder.
- The document preparer is responsible for providing the correct PIN.

## Where is the PIN located on the document?

- The PIN is a series of alpha-numeric characters frequently found on or near the legal description on the document.
- The PIN may also be found on the cover sheet.

## How is the accuracy of the PIN confirmed?

- The PIN will correspond to the recording jurisdiction's parcel identification format.
- The PIN will link to a valid parcel.
- The PIN will match the legal description of the parcel.
- The LRMS should have the capability to validate the PIN.

## How should my LRMS manage the PIN?

- It should have a field for data entry and searching of a PIN.
- It should have the ability to manage the genealogy of a parcel.
- It should have the ability to index multiple PINs.

## Who uses the PIN?

- Government can use the PIN to locate, identify and connect systems that have an interest in property.

## Can there be more than one PIN representing the same parcel?

- If a parcel changes size or shape, a corresponding parent-child type of relationship is created resulting in multiple PINs.
- For overlapping parcels, such as condominiums, air rights, mineral rights, and easements, individual PINs are typically maintained.
- In some systems the PIN changes when ownership changes, and the historic PINs remain.
- The rules for assigning a PIN are not standardized and vary among jurisdictions.

## What should be considered when the PIN changes?

- All prior PINs should be linked to the current PIN to maintain the genealogy of the parcel.
- If all prior and subsequent PINs are not linked, the ability to trace the parcel and related government records may be lost.
- Database links to other government systems may no longer be connected.

## Is it time-consuming to index the PIN?

- Indexing the PIN typically requires minimal keystrokes or a few clicks of a mouse.
- If the PIN is not included on the document, the time to process varies based on state statutes.
- If the PIN is on an electronically recorded document, the PIN could be automatically indexed.

## Conclusion

Bringing mobility to land records, via user-friendly mapping systems, makes records more accessible to the public and other users, and reduces foot traffic in the recorder's office. Using a PIN enables the LRMS to be integrated with other systems related to property records making documents discoverable and, thus, increasing sales and revenue.

The PIN is the preferred unique identifier for connecting land records and parcels. Once PINs are part of the index, internal office procedures will be streamlined and more efficient.

For additional information regarding indexing a PIN, review the [GIS Toolkit – How To Get Started](#) in the PRIA Resource Library or send an email to [info@pria.us](mailto:info@pria.us).