Customer Success Story

Autodesk Infrastructure Solutions

The Macerich Company

Macerich Improves Property Management with Autodesk MapGuide

Executive Summary

Dynamic Plans Online

With Autodesk MapGuide®, Macerich is enabling its employees to build color-coded lease plans based on a variety of parameters, saving over 2,500 hours annually.

Accelerating Design

Using Autodesk® DWF™ Composer in its design review and leasing processes, Macerich's leasing and property management representatives are able to mark up designs faster and communicate with CAD designers and prospective tenants more clearly.

Autodesk Consulting

Bringing a rigorous methodology and an unmatched expertise with Autodesk MapGuide to the project, Autodesk Consulting played a pivotal role in Macerich's successful and rapid Autodesk MapGuide implementation.

THE CHALLENGE

Founded in 1972, the Macerich Company (Macerich) has become one of the largest owners and operators of regional shopping malls in the United States. The company's proactive growth and management strategies are at the heart of its success. But, until recently, its property management practices were slowed by dependence on paper-based, color-coded property plans. Since turning to Autodesk MapGuide and Oracle solutions to generate color-coded plans online, Macerich now has the information it needs to make better, faster decisions, saving thousands of hours each year in the decision-making process.

A Dominant Force

Macerich's business strategy is simple: purchase leading regional malls and turn them into dominant regional malls through smart redevelopment, leasing, and marketing practices. With its occupancy rates and tenant sales consistently among the highest in the industry, the strategy is an undisputed success. "At Macerich, we strive to be a great company in general, not just within our industry," explains J.P. Jones, Macerich's chief information officer. "We're always looking for innovative ways improve our processes and technology. Where many in the industry are still using highlighters and spreadsheets to color code property plans, we're doing it instantly with Autodesk MapGuide. It's helping us to carry out our business strategy even more effectively."

As is often the case, innovation came hand in hand with unfamiliar technology. Embracing Autodesk MapGuide meant that Macerich's IT staff needed to learn how to integrate graphical data with tabular data. So Macerich turned to the Autodesk MapGuide experts at Autodesk

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As a participant in the Autodesk Subscription program, Macerich gets the latest releases of Autodesk MapGuide, incremental product enhancements, personalized web support direct from Autodesk technical experts, and access to self-paced training.

According to J.P. Jones of Macerich, "We maintain Autodesk MapGuide on subscription and find the price quite reasonable for the continued growth of the software. In our experience, it just makes sense to invest in quality tools."

"When it comes to technology, we take an integrated approach, and so does Autodesk. From software to implementation to knowledge transfer, Autodesk offers a comprehensive solution. Autodesk's trusted advice was pivotal in making our solution a complete success."

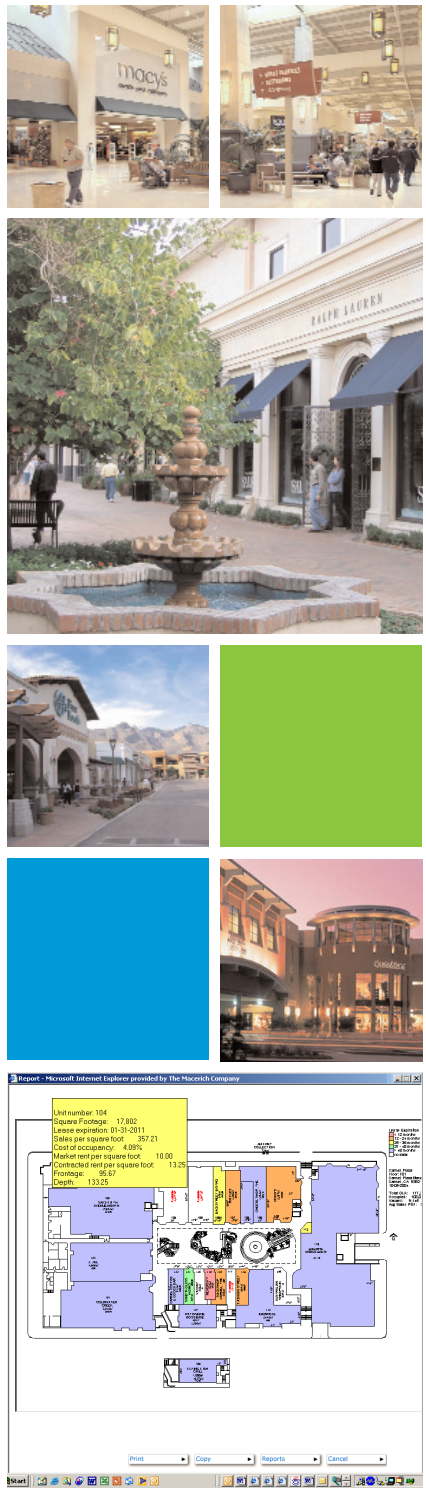
J.P. Jones,
The Macerich Company

Consulting to lead the implementation. "After Autodesk Consulting implemented the solution, the Autodesk team worked alongside our developers to ensure a smooth transition," says Lori Andrade, a business analyst with Macerich. "The process was very collaborative, and we learned a great deal about different ways to use and represent data. The Autodesk team made sure we got the solution we wanted and the knowledge to keep enhancing it."

A Slow, Static Plan Coloring Process

The practice of color coding property plans has long been an important—if somewhat low-tech—part of retail property management. Traditionally, a leasing or property manager used a highlighter to mark up a paper plan of a property based on the criteria that need to be analyzed or illustrated. Different colors are used to represent where a particular store stands in relation other stores in the property. For instance, a color-coded lease plan—visually depicting different lease expiration dates in different colors—is used to analyze and account for upcoming vacancies in a property. In the leasing process, a lease plan that is colored based on sales volume by location and store type can be used to sell a potential tenant on leasing a location. "Colored plans are a great tool for understanding and illustrating what's happening or needs to happen with a property," says Andrade. "The easier they are to create, the easier they are to use as a proactive decision-making or leasing tool."

Before turning to Autodesk MapGuide, the lease plan color-coding process at Macerich was incredibly tedious. Employees who needed a colored plan created each one individually, using a black and white paper plan, highlighters, and tabular data. Not merely slow, the plans were out of date as soon as the ink dried. Because it was so time-consuming to color plans for presentations, leasing staffers were hampered in their ability to create as many high-quality, custom plans as they would have liked. And



on the enterprise level, color-coded lease plans for every Macerich property were only updated on a quarterly basis. "We're in a dynamic business, but the colored paper plans we used were completely static, limiting our ability to manage proactively," says Jones. "Our Oracle database contained the real-time data we needed for over 8,000 individual leases, but in a tabular form. We needed a faster way to turn reports and leasing data into color-coded plans."

THE SOLUTION

Choosing the Right Solution

In 2002, Macerich acquired Westcor, another owner and operator of regional malls. With J.P. Jones as its CIO, Westcor had adopted a digital solution several years prior. When Jones became the CIO of Macerich, he decided it was time for Macerich to throw away its highlighters. Although the solution Westcor used was better and faster than coloring plans by hand, the solution wasn't compatible with Macerich's Oracle Property Manager database. Jones says, "We collect over 420 data points per lease in our Oracle database, and we wanted a solution that could use that wealth of data to build color-coded and interactive floor plans."

Ready to adopt a digital solution, the Macerich team evaluated three plan color-coding products, including Autodesk MapGuide. The decision-making team was impressed with the wide array of processes, such as facilities management, infrastructure maintenance, and land use planning, for which companies and governments were utilizing Autodesk MapGuide. But it was Autodesk MapGuide's ability to integrate with Oracle technology that sold Macerich on the Autodesk solution. "Autodesk MapGuide is a very dynamic tool," notes Jones. "And because MapGuide is designed to integrate seamlessly with Oracle database technology, we thought it was the perfect vehicle for making our data more dynamic."

The Implementation: Autodesk Consulting Delivers

Its technology choice made, Macerich assembled an implementation team to carry out its vision. Autodesk Consulting, chosen for its strong methodology and expertise with both graphical and tabular data, led the Autodesk MapGuide implementation from the beginning. At every phase of the project, from defining the requirements to designing the user interface and building the application framework to knowledge transfer, the Autodesk Consulting team took a collaborative approach and worked closely with Macerich's IT department and end users. Two other key players also collaborated with Macerich and Autodesk Consulting on the project. Already on hand to work with Macerich's Oracle Property Manager database, Oracle Consulting created the data structures. And CADsoft Consulting, a provider of technology services to design professionals, prepared the CAD standard and graphical data.

One of the key challenges on the project was ensuring that the solution could develop meaningful data for each of Macerich's properties without property-by-property customization. In terms of revenue and performance, each property in Macerich's portfolio is distinct and has unique targets. For instance, rents and sales per square foot can vary widely by region. To account for these differences, Autodesk Consulting customized the solution to analyze information dynamically and to generate performance-based color legends automatically. "By averaging the lease and sales information coming from our Oracle database, Autodesk MapGuide creates meaningful lease plan legends on-the-fly," says Jones. "So in a color-coded lease plan, red means 'take action' and blue means 'okay' across all our properties. Autodesk Consulting really understood our business needs and made sure the solution met them."

Eager to deliver its integrated solution to employees quickly, Macerich gave the implementation team just nine weeks to develop the first release. The team was up to the task. Autodesk Consulting held weekly demonstrations with the Macerich team, soliciting its approval for design choices at every stage of the process. This allowed for nimble course corrections while keeping the project moving forward quickly and effectively. According to Jones, "Autodesk Consulting brought a consistent and rigorous methodology to every phase of the implementation. Because the roles were well defined at the outset, we never had a conflict around scope. Everyone on the project was focused and delivered on schedule and on budget."

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Managing in Full Color

Following its rapid implementation, Macerich unveiled its Autodesk MapGuide solution, dubbed the Macerich Interactive Lease Plan, in dramatic fashion at a meeting of C-level executives. The presenter, Lori Andrade, only had a few hours to learn the product, but thanks to Autodesk MapGuide's ease-of-use and the Autodesk Consulting team's skills, she was well prepared. "Our executive team is very visual, so it was exciting to see their reaction to the solution," says Andrade. "They dove right into the application. During the meeting, we created various views of a property and identified areas of concern. You can't do that on-the-fly analysis with tabular

data or hand-colored lease plans."

The solution was rolled out to Macerich employees with the ability to run six different types of reports, each containing multiple data parameters. For instance, a property manager can create a color-coded lease plan that references information such as expiration dates, rent or sales data. "We're already developing additional reports based on user feedback," reports Jones. "From a property or facility management perspective, the Autodesk MapGuide solution gives our employees a new way to analyze and understand performance across a property. In leasing meetings, the color-coded plans are a quick way to illustrate why a specific location might be ideal for a business."

Macerich's smooth Autodesk MapGuide implementation set the stage for its successful adoption of the solution. Macerich attributes much of that success to Autodesk Consulting's ability to convey its Autodesk MapGuide expertise the rest of the team. "Autodesk Consulting was very organized, approachable, and responsive," says Andrade. "There was a real knowledge transfer at every stage of the implementation process."

Sold on the value of visual information for its leasing and property management employees, Macerich plans to roll out Autodesk DWF Composer, a tool for sharing and annotating design files. Macerich's leasing and property management staff will use the tool to notate designs to speed presentation creation. "With DWF Composer, our leasing managers will be able to mark up designs and demonstrate the potential of our retail spaces to prospective tenants during the lease negotiation process," says Andrade. "Also, since Composer is compatible with AutoCAD®, it will facilitate updates to our lease plans by our CAD designers. It's going to streamline and clarify some of the more detail-oriented aspects of the leasing process."

THE RESULT

2,500 Hours Saved Annually and Improved Analysis

The Autodesk MapGuide solution is not just a great fit with the Macerich's proactive management philosophy, but it's also saving the company's employees thousands of hours annually. According to Jones, "Our Autodesk MapGuide solution is helping us to make profitable decisions and find new opportunities, such as advantageous tenant moves, more quickly by giving us better visibility into the data in our Oracle database. Compared to coloring lease plans by hand each quarter, our Autodesk MapGuide solution is saving us 2,500 hours annually. Autodesk Consulting's expertise and strong methodology played a key role in the success of our solution."

He adds, "Autodesk MapGuide is also helping us to create more plans more often. We're now updating all our lease plans on a weekly instead of a quarterly basis. The solution helps us to explore and understand things like why sales might be low in one area of a property. These kinds of analyses were very time-consuming before our MapGuide implementation."

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For More Information

To learn more about how Autodesk MapGuide saves time and money, visit us on the web at www.autodesk.com/infrastructure.

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Autodesk, Inc.
111 McInnis Parkway
San Rafael, CA 94903
USA

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