

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

La Plata Communities

LotVue® interactive site maps provides a solid platform for growth and teamwork

It's a basic fact of life for just about any business these days: what got you where you are today probably won't be able to take you to where you need to be tomorrow.

Just ask Mike Ruebenson and Denise Wallace at Colorado Springs, Colorado-based La Plata Communities. Ruebenson, Chief Operating Officer, and Wallace, office manager, serve as key members of the management team at one of Colorado's leading master-planned community developers. The company has a remarkable track record in innovative design, outstanding amenities, distinctive architecture, and enhanced landscape treatments that goes back more than 20 years.

Business maturation demands homebuilder-specific inventory software

For much of that time, La Plata managed operations with a customized version of the Microsoft® Access program. While that program served the company well for many years, times change and what had once worked just fine had become increasingly less responsive to La Plata's needs, says Ruebenson.

So when one of the company's builder partners started talking to Ruebenson about a new lot management program they were using, it got his attention. "I was intrigued by what I saw of the program's capabilities and thought it could really help us," he recalls.

That program was LotVue® interactive maps from MarkSystems, and nine months after Ruebenson's first sight of the program, La Plata Communities went live with LotVue.

"LotVue seemed to be more flexible than what we had been using," he says. "Making alterations in Access was challenging and cumbersome and we'd have to bring in a programmer to do that. In addition, I also liked the ease of generating reports in LotVue that we could not effectively generate out of Access."



OVERVIEW

La Plata Communities
www.laplatalc.com
Colorado Springs, Colorado

BUSINESS CHALLENGES:

- Working with data in the former system required using multiple spreadsheets, which was a time-consuming, error-prone process
- The DIY Access program they were using was in need of expensive and challenging alterations

BENEFITS OF SWITCHING:

- Eliminated the need for labor-intensive manual and error-prone processes, and enabled more people within the company to work with the program than was previously possible
- Transitioning to LotVue may have costed less than continuing to reconfigure an outmoded, inefficient business management system



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A complete builder’s management system drives homebuilder growth

Timing on the conversion could not have been better. When La Plata switched to LotVue in 2016, the company was selling about 130 lots per year and the market was picking up the pace on its recovery from a prolonged downturn. Fast forward to today and sales are closer to 300 lots per year. While that growth surge is due primarily to general market conditions and a hard charging team of professionals at La Plata, LotVue has certainly helped the company manage growth far more efficiently and productively. With Access, Denise Wallace recalls, just a handful of La Plata team members would enter data and utilize reports. Manipulating that data was an increasingly cumbersome process that usually involved working with multiple spreadsheets.

One single source of data, with access and visibility for all

When La Plata switched to homebuilder-specific residential construction project management software, it gained a single point of contact for all of its data needs. The software was far easier to operate and it soon created enthusiastic fans throughout the company, and among business partners and suppliers. “LotVue and the way it displays information visually literally gave us and the builders we work with a big picture view of our processes and operations,” says Wallace. “We were able to see our developments in map form in a way that we just couldn’t do with Access, and that has made a huge difference.”

Manual time-consuming, error-prone tasks are automated and simplified

Before switching to LotVue, development maps would all have to be created manually, a process that was both time consuming and error prone. The initial map could easily take two-to-three hours to put together, Wallace reports, and additional versions showing lots owned by builders and lots sold were equally labor-intensive. And of course, every time a lot was sold, the map would need to be updated.

LotVue took what was a hugely inefficient process and not only automated it, but also made the information it provided far more accessible, both internally and externally.

“With LotVue, we are able to house information on specific lot requirements within the map,” Ruebenson explains. “Under our old system, any time our builders had questions about adjacencies, color selections, or elevations, they would have to contact us and wait while we spent time looking up the requirements. It was all done manually and was very time consuming.”

Real-time lot updates through the map make everyone involved more effective

With LotVue, those days are gone. Now, the builders’ sales agents can get the answers they need themselves. All they have to do is click on a particular lot on



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the map and get all that information, along with anything else they need in real-time while they’re with potential buyers. LotVue not only saves valuable time for the La Plata office staff, but also enables the builder’s sales team to provide customers with timely information, and faster than they ever could before.

La Plata’s Development Dept. is also reaping significant benefits from the move to LotVue, Wallace says, in the way it helps them track the status of landscape approvals.

“With LotVue, all we have to do to see if a landscape plan has been approved, is pending, or has been turned down is just click on a lot in a map,” she explains. “That’s so much better than having to run two or three different reports out of Access and search through literally hundreds of thousands of entries of data.”

LotVue has also bought a new level of efficiency to the way La Plata Communities works with builders in other key areas, Ruebenson says.

“LotVue is giving us more real-time information from the builders we work with on contracts and closings,” he reports. “It has eliminated the need for us to be manually inputting that information into our database the way we used to. With LotVue, our builders now enter that information into the database themselves and all we need to do is review it.”

The work of gathering business intelligence is minimized, leaving time to strategically use it

And mission-critical reports on residual prices, average lot prices, and average home prices now take at least 30

percent less time to prepare with LotVue than they did using the old Access system, he adds.

It’s been just over two years since the team at La Plata Communities put LotVue to work and its value to the company and its builders, developers, and other business partners continues to grow.

“LotVue has become a great teamwork tool for us all,” Wallace says. “It’s a far more effective way to share information and now we all work together on the input of the data to make sure it’s the best that it can be. It has also created a valuable tool for the sales agents of our builders that they weren’t privy to before.”

For La Plata Communities, their old Access system may have been what they needed to get them to where they were back in 2016. But it wasn’t enough to take them to where they needed to be going forward.

As Mike Ruebenson and Denise Wallace talk about the changes LotVue has brought to their company and the way they work with their builders, their confidence in the program’s ability to take them to that next level comes through loud and clear. They still see plenty of growth potential in the Colorado Springs market. And after two years of working with LotVue, they know they’ve got just the tools that they need to take advantage of every opportunity. is pending, or has been turned down is just click on a lot in a map,” she explains. “That’s so much better than having to run two or three different reports out of Access and search through literally hundreds of thousands of entries of data.”

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