

LAND WATCH CLUES

Builders such as **D.R. Horton** and **Ryland Homes** find value in technology that helps pin down possible land parcels. **Digital Map Products** (DMP) brings the mapping tool *LandVision* to builders, city governments, corporate real estate departments and others. Currently 20% of DMP's customers are home builders and 30% of clients deal in a builder-development industry. Builders do not close their eyes to opportunistic land purchases although the hunger for land has slowed considerably and companies off load parcels during the market slump. The areas garnering the most interest: Houston metro and Southern California and most all areas suited for infill development. Developers and California builders look at Florida. Utah builders eye California and Northern California builders peek at Texas. Everyone is snooping in someone else's backyard.

Home builders do not put their heads in the sand but keep resources available to track prospects. Cost is crucial at this time as builders reduce company overheads and workforce. Builders utilize tools and services that serve double duty: a way to find parcels or even as a way to move inventory or dispose of current land assets. *LandVision* — created for the builder-developer market — allows companies to “do more with less” during tough times. Builders like the idea of searching for land parcels from the comfort of their office in order to identify their next prospect. It's like a one-stop shopping process that saves both time and money for the builder.

D.R. Horton recognized the need to bolster its competitive edge when it came to land and latched on to DMP a number of years ago. The company — as early as 2006 — used the software for all of its Texas divisions and California operations. The software is invaluable when locating infill and adjacent parcels that are tricky to chart using traditional methods.

Ryland Homes' instincts sought out new method of land searches about two years ago. The company used the software in its Central Valley division in Central California to sort through available parcels and track those of interest. The bonus: a time saver for employees that can use one resource instead of seven.

DMP notices a shift in customer base from predominantly large public builders to a more specialized group that includes mid-sized private and residential developers, investors, brokers and financial underwriters. *LandVision* is considered part of large public builder's “survival strategy” as they perform significant retrenching to steer through the difficult times. DMP now covers more than 700 counties nationwide, selling a significant number of new subscriptions in Southern California. The hottest expansion territory is the Sunbelt. President **Jim Skurzynski** feels one of the most progressive aspects of the product is that it can help builders value their land assets in a fast-paced environment. He can also post properties for review on the Internet.

In addition to Internet access, clients receive one-on-one assistance from a “customer success” team member to help subscribers use the product to its fullest capability for the most benefit. Subscription costs vary depending on the software, number of users, geographic range and depth of information. Pricing — on average — can start from \$1,000/month. DMP has an 80% retention rate for its subscription service. Flexibility is one of *LandVision*'s benefits as subscribers/builders change their geographic coverage and requirements. DMP opened its doors in 2000 and now has 50 employees providing assistance to 350 companies.

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DMP takes TITAN Investment Partners help to fund the company's growth. Recent changes in the real estate market have highlighted other uses for the software such as market analysis and collection of a company's aggregate information as it relates to its geographic region. DMP also fuels parcel information for such real estate websites as ZipRealty, Move.com and Fidelity Cyberhomes. Other builders who have used LandVision in the past include **John Laing Homes**, **KB Home** and **Taylor Woodrow Homes**.

CONTACT

Digital Map Products Inc.: 1936 E. Deere Ave., Suite 220, Santa Ana, CA 92705. Jim Skurzynski, President, (714) 727-1234, fax (714) 727-1235. Jskurzynski@digimap.com