



Canadian Assessor Improves Service for Millions of Taxpayers with Mapping Tool

Overview

Country or Region: Canada

Industry: Professional services—Real estate

Customer Profile

The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) of Ontario, Canada, is responsible for the assessing and classifying of nearly 5 million properties in the province.

Business Situation

MPAC wanted to improve transparency and service for millions of taxpayers who rely on the organization for accurate, timely results.

Solution

MPAC implemented a web-based service integrated with Bing Maps that taxpayers can use to look up their properties and verify information online.

Benefits

- Improves service for millions of taxpayers
- Increases efficiency and citizen satisfaction with self-service portal
- Improves access to information for mobile employees
- Optimizes business processes

“Following the previous provincial assessment, we received about 160,000 Request for Reconsiderations. After using a solution integrated with Bing Maps ..., we received about 106,000 requests even though the volume of properties had increased.”

Greg Baxter, Director of Valuation and Customer Relations, MPAC

The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) of Ontario, Canada, is responsible for assessing nearly 5 million properties across the province. To improve transparency and timeliness, the organization implemented an online service integrated with Bing Maps. Now, taxpayers can quickly find their properties online and are provided with additional data. By improving transparency with an interactive service that enables a two-way dialogue and better access to information, MPAC has improved customer satisfaction. As a result, this has contributed to reducing the number of Request for Reconsiderations that were filed. The organization has gained other efficiencies too, including fewer manual processes and mobile access to information. As a result, MPAC has more time available to focus on enhancing its core services and providing better value to Ontario’s taxpayers.



“By offering an online app integrated with Bing Maps.... we’re providing a higher level of customer service, and taxpayers can gather the information they need to make informed choices.”

Scott Milne, Information Technology Director, MPAC

AboutMyProperty – Interactive interface integrates with Bing Maps to provide personalized property data.

Situation

The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) classifies and assesses property for the taxpayers of Canada’s Ontario province. Based in Pickering, Ontario, MPAC is responsible for evaluating nearly 5 million properties with an estimated value of CAD\$2.17 trillion dollars (US\$2.6 trillion).

As part of the four-year assessment cycle or if a property is modified or sold, MPAC issues the owner a notice that reflects the current market value and use classification. In the past, property owners had little input into the process, and would receive a notice in the mail when the assessment was complete. Then, if owners had questions about the process or objected to the findings, they had several time-consuming options for resolution. For example, they could call a customer service center or visit field offices to make inquiries. They could also ask MPAC to review the assessment by submitting a formal Request for Reconsideration (RfR).

More than 160,000 such requests were filed for the 2008 assessment update. The manual processes and extended wait times were frustrating to both property owners and MPAC field employees, who were often required to travel to properties to verify information. The organization offered an online tool that owners could use to look up properties, but it wanted a more transparent, interactive solution. “As a public service organization, providing information to taxpayers is an important part of what we do,” says Greg Baxter, Director of Valuation and Customer Relations, MPAC. “We wanted a service that would facilitate a two-way dialog, so that the taxpayer could not only look at the details, but also validate and input any changes made to their property.”

Every four years, MPAC performs a province-wide update of all assessments. In preparation for the update in 2012, MPAC wanted a more efficient, transparent process to better serve property owners.

Solution

In July 2011, MPAC began looking for a new mapping solution that it could integrate with its web-based application called AboutMyProperty. After looking at several mapping services the organization selected Bing Maps from Microsoft. MPAC chose the solution because the familiar interface would be easy to use, and the platform provided technology and tools for rapid deployment.

“Bing Maps offered a familiar user interface that required little additional training, and we knew we would benefit from a true partnership from Microsoft” says Scott Milne, Information Technology Director at MPAC. “Also, we would gain a well-supported service with APIs that allowed us

mpac AboutMyProperty™
578 HOLLYWOOD Drive

My MPAC My Notice (2 Items) My Property \$159,000 My Neighbourhood

Sales (14) My Properties of Interest (024)

Search Property Residential Condo

Address: 578 HOLLYWOOD Drive
Property Code: 301 - Single-family detached (not on water)
Year Built: 1989
Square Feet: 1074
Lot Size: 6528 F
Number of Storeys: 1
Current Value Assessed: \$159,000
Sales Indicator: 2011 Jun

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LIVE SUPPORT

“By using a service enhanced with Bing Maps, we can validate property details and collect information more efficiently, and act on it faster. This, in turn, gives us more time to focus on our core business, which is valuation.”

Greg Baxter, Director of Valuation and Customer Relations, MPAC

to layer our assessment data on the map and expedited deployment of the solution.”

In March 2012, MPAC began working with partners such as iLOOKABOUT, a provider of StreetScape imagery, to build a new solution. The project was ready for launch six months later in September 2012. For maximum scalability, the solution runs in a hybrid cloud environment, and it integrates with multiple services including one that users can use to save and print PDF versions of MPAC documents such as notices, forms, and reports.

Information is easily accessible, and users have multiple options for finding what they need. MPAC created accurate maps overlaid with parcel information. When users log in, they immediately see an image of their property, along with basic details such as address and lot size. Then they can navigate around the interactive maps to see sales of nearby properties or view the information in a text-based report format. They can also use a search function to look at different addresses or request real-time support through a live-chat feature.

Equally important, users can quickly find a copy of their assessment notice and other MPAC correspondence. They can choose to validate and correct information on the assessment for MPAC to review, file an RfR online, and save and print copies for their records.

In addition, MPAC employees have their own, internal version of the app, which they can use in the office or from the field on mobile devices.

Benefits

By providing an online application integrated with Bing Maps, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation of Ontario, Canada, has improved

transparency and service for millions of taxpayers and, as a result, helped reduce number of appeals that were filed. The new solution has also improved access to information for employees, who now have more time available to focus on value-added services.

Improves Service for Millions of Taxpayers

With an innovative solution based on Bing mapping technology from Microsoft, MPAC is improving service for millions of Ontario residents. In the past, taxpayers had limited insight and input into MPAC processes. Now, taxpayers can take advantage of multiple tools to not only find information faster, but actively participate in the valuation process itself. “By offering an online app integrated with Bing Maps, we can provide more transparency to taxpayers,” says Milne. “We’re providing a higher level of customer service, and taxpayers can gather the information they need to make informed choices.”

MPAC believes that the new solution is helping to build a stronger relationship with taxpayers across the province. “When you can offer a solution like this and provide the level of transparency that Bing Maps enables, you gain additional credibility with the public,” Baxter says. “It says that we are truly a service organization that is working with the taxpayers of Ontario.”

Reduced the Number of Request for Reconsiderations (RfR’s)

In its first year of use, the solution has already significantly reduced the number of Request for Reconsiderations filed. “Following the previous provincial assessment, we received about 160,000 Request for Reconsiderations,” says Baxter. “After using a solution integrated with Bing Maps in our most recent assessment

update, we received about 106,000 requests even though the volume of properties had increased.”

Increases Efficiency and Satisfaction with Self-Service Portal

The organization has gained other efficiencies as well. The solution has cut down on visits to field offices and call center requests, and it has reduced other manual processes considerably. “Before, we received about 15,000 requests for reprints of our Property Assessment Notices, which would require us to send either an email or a paper version,” says Baxter. “Now, we can direct people to the AboutMyProperty app, which is integrated with Bing Maps, and they can immediately find all their information there.”

Improves Access to Information

By using online tools and Microsoft mapping technology, MPAC employees can find comprehensive information faster in a visual, map-based UI that enhances insight, and they can access the information from virtually any location. “As assessors, it is crucial to understand where properties are located and property details,” says Baxter. “With Bing Maps, we can look at images of structures relative to other properties and landmarks of interest, which assists in the valuation of a property.”

The information is accessible in the office or from the field on mobile devices. “Integrated with Bing Maps, the new app is used daily by all staff, whether they are assessing a new property or responding to inquiries,” explains Baxter. “One of the great things about this tool is that it provides a unified view of information. And it doesn’t matter if staff is physically in an MPAC office or on the road collecting data—they are able to take advantage of this data anywhere at any time.”

Optimizes Business Processes

With more efficient customer support, MPAC has more time available to enhance its services and provide better value to taxpayers. “By using a service enhanced with Bing Maps, we can validate property details and collect information more efficiently, and act on it faster,” says Baxter. This, in turn, gives us more time to focus on our core business, which is valuation.”

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers in the United States and Canada who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to:

www.microsoft.com

For more information about iLOOKABOUT products and services, call (866) 963-2015 or visit the website at:

iLookAbout.com

For more information about Municipal Property Assessment Corporation products and services, visit the website at:

www.mpac.ca

or

www.aboutmyproperty.ca

Bing Maps Platform

Bing Maps helps organizations view and understand their data, providing better insights to plan and allocate resources effectively, optimize customer service and day to day business processes, and monitor performance.

From engaging customer interactions to insightful business analysis, Bing Maps provides the mapping platform to help developers and organizations realize their vision.

For more information about Bing Maps, go to:

www.microsoft.com/maps

Software and Services

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