

# Wish your credit union had a growth strategy that was *driven by data*, not just intuition?

Discover how TerraStrat helps Rize Credit Union tap into — and analyze — new sources of member and market data to inform their branch location and expansion strategy, as well as other strategic objectives

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*“It’s important for credit unions to know that there is more data out there that can help them reach their strategic goals. TerraStrat’s Branch Location Strategy has helped me gain access to better data that pinpoints prime locations for potentially high-performing branches — and their team helps me interpret and understand the data so that I can make better and easier decisions. TerraStrat is my outsourced data science team that’s helped me think about data in a new way. I love that we’ve built a relationship where I can now go to them with a problem, and they provide me with data and insights that can help me solve it.”*



**JENNIFER OLIVER**  
CEO, RIZE CREDIT UNION

## Rize Credit Union

Rize Credit Union serves more than 67,000 members through eight locations across southern California and Nevada. As a designated Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), Rize's mission is to uplift underserved communities by providing the knowledge, access, and care that empowers all individuals to achieve lasting financial security. Jennifer Oliver has been the CEO since 2022.

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### Challenges

- Jennifer was assessing whether or not to renew the lease on one of Rize's branches and didn't have enough data to make a truly informed decision
- Overall, the credit union lacked sufficient data about their members and their market and couldn't make strategic decisions that were data-driven

#### Solution

Jennifer hired TerraStrat as her outsourced data science team to deploy their innovative Branch Location Strategy, a customizable process that gathers rich sources of member and market data to identify the best branch locations to meet strategic goals.

#### Results

- Jennifer was able to make a data-informed decision to close the branch in question, as well as identify the best neighborhood to re-locate the branch to
- She's exploring new branch locations in Las Vegas and Southern California
- She now has access to data and insights that make her decision-making easier and less time-consuming
- Rize Credit Union's data has been cleaned and enhanced to provide more valid and accurate insights
- She has easy access to a data science team with vast experience in branch and expansion strategy without paying for full-time employees
- Rize Credit Union is becoming a truly data-driven organization that is learning how to use data to make progress on all of their strategic goals

# Challenges

## Making big strategic decisions on intuition alone

When Jennifer Oliver first discovered TerraStrat in 2022, she was trying to assess whether to move one of her credit union's branches.

At that time, she was less than 6 months into her role as the CEO of Rize Credit Union (formerly SCE) – a CDFI-designated institution with more than 67,000 members and eight locations across southern California and Nevada – and was trying to prioritize the long list of objectives she'd identified to stimulate the credit union's growth.

One of those objectives was developing a branch transformation, location and expansion strategy, and with the lease on their Duarte, CA branch coming up for renewal, Jennifer needed to decide whether to stay or relocate.

**The problem was she didn't have good data to help her make that decision – or any other strategic decision for that matter.**

**“When I became CEO, I started assessing what resources I had available to me that could support my decision-making, and it felt like I kept hitting a brick wall when it came to data,” Jennifer said. “The data we had was limited and didn't provide good insights.”**

“In determining whether to close our Duarte branch, I only had the addresses of the members who had been assigned to that branch code, but that didn’t indicate at all if those members actually banked there.

**“I knew intuitively that the branch wasn’t in as prime a location but I didn’t really want to make the decision to close the branch on intuition alone — or use intuition to determine where the new location should be.”**

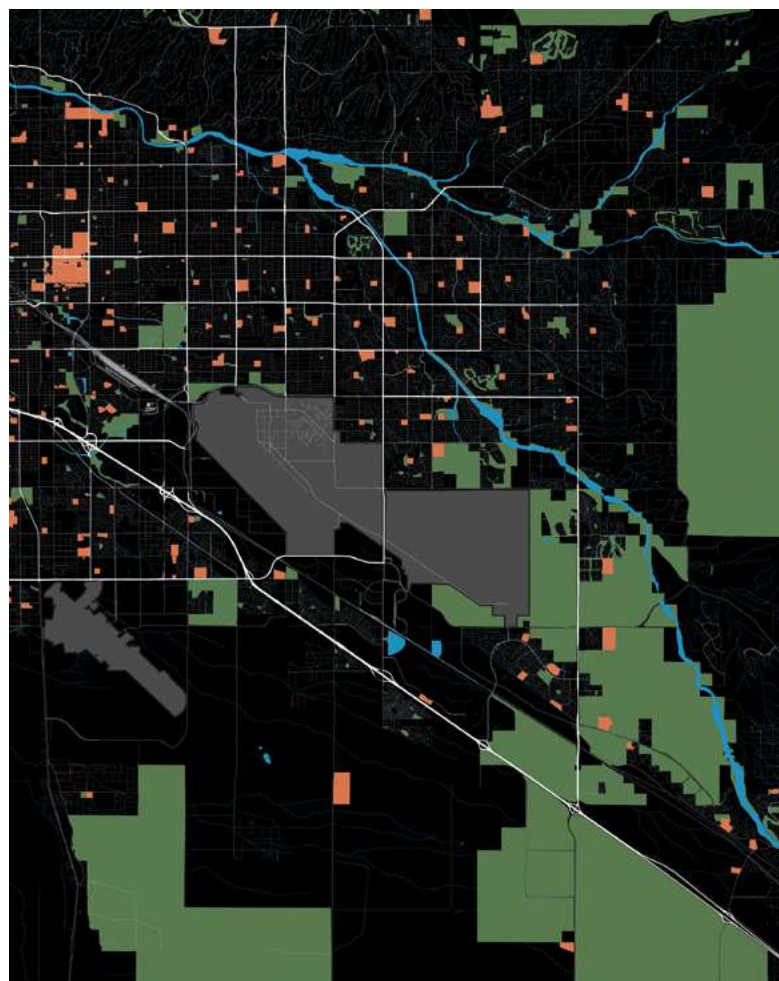
Jennifer was grappling with what to do when she attended a wine tasting event sponsored by CU 2.0 — a digital consultancy and marketing agency that helps credit unions increase their market share through fintech partnerships — and began chatting with Maksim Sobkin, a data scientist and the Chief Technology Officer at TerraStrat.

“Data science is not my speciality, so had I known upfront that Maks was a data scientist I probably would’ve said, ‘Nice to meet you’ and moved on to taste the next wine,” Jennifer laughed. “But he was telling me about what he’d done in the past for a bank that had a huge branching system and how they were

able to make decisions based on data. Given my pressing need with my branch location, that really piqued my interest.”

Jennifer said what resonated with her most was hearing Maks talk about TerraStrat’s Branch Location Strategy, which uses a ranking system around certain criteria that determines how good a branch can be in a given location.

“Listening to Maks, I realized that by changing just a few components of a branch you can turn it from a not-profitable branch into a very profitable branch, and that I could move locations and potentially create opportunities in my balance sheet.”



# Solution

## A data science team that provides the data you need to make better and easier decisions

Impressed and intrigued, Jennifer reached out to TerraStrat after the event and hired them to run their Branch Location Strategy for Rize Credit Union.

To start, they implemented their Customer Branch Assignment process to **gather the right data on the Duarte branch so that Jennifer could determine whether to renew or relocate.**

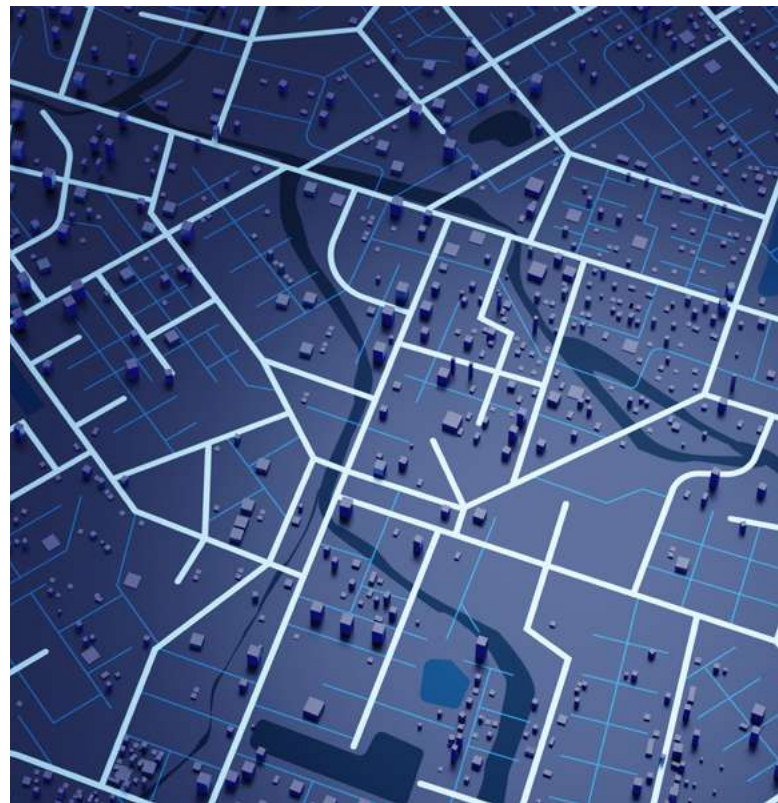
### The Customer Branch Assignment involved three steps:

1. Analyzing recent customer transactions and sales interactions to reassign customers to the branches where they actually bank, so that branch performance and revenue can be accurately measured
2. Analyzing transaction capabilities and sales to help credit unions understand how they're servicing their customer base and the role it's playing in growing the business
3. Using all of the new insights gathered to reassess branch performance in comparison to industry standards

Jennifer said going through the Customer Branch Assignment not only helped her make an informed and data-driven decision to close the Duarte branch, but it also **upleveled the pool of data she'd be able to access for future decisions.**

“Because of TerraStrat’s algorithm we could see where members actually bank, and who we could count as a member of the Duarte branch,” Jennifer said. “They added to the limited data I had access to, and it helped to make my decision easier to close the branch.”

The next step was to determine where to move the branch to.





“By using TerraStrat’s model, I was able to narrow down some prime locations that met those criteria and gave us the potential of a high-performing branch as well.”

TerraStrat also provided data that helped them pinpoint the best location, and even provided support in how to retain members at the closing branch.

**“When I identified a particular location I liked, they could tell me the probability of what drop off would be, and they could also provide a list of members to extend ‘white glove service’ to, so that we didn’t risk losing our most loyal members when we moved to the new location.”**

For that, TerraStrat implemented their [Market Analysis](#) and [Micromarket Optimization](#) processes to thoroughly assess and identify branch location options that would **best serve Rize’s members while also creating profitability for the credit union.**

Again, Jennifer found that TerraStrat’s process **produced high-quality possibilities that were based on rich and accurate data.**

“We are a CDFI credit union that primarily serves the Hispanic market,” Jennifer said.

In addition, Maks even flew out to southern California to tour potential locations with Jennifer.

“Maks identified the areas to look into and then my realtor gave him addresses to check out,” Jennifer said. “He came out and toured locations with us and would say, ‘Now that’s a million dollar branch.’ Maks offers much more than just expert data analysis; he’s also got vast experience in choosing great locations as well.”

# Results

## A branch strategy — and a credit union — that’s driven by good data

Not only did TerraStrat’s Branch Location Strategy help Jennifer accomplish her primary need of deciding what to do with the Duarte branch, it’s also helped her assess and evaluate other branches, too — as well as **illuminate the initial stages of a bigger branch expansion strategy.**

“Our work started with one branch, but now it’s turning into, ‘Ok, where do I want my next five branches to be?’ TerraStrat is helping me explore locations in Las Vegas, and map out opportunities where we’ll be able to service more Hispanic CDFI markets, bring the best level of awareness to our brand, and ultimately create more assets and revenue for our credit union.”

Jennifer said that her work with TerraStrat is beginning to extend beyond Branch Location Strategy, and she’s anxious to put their data expertise toward a wider range of her strategic goals and objectives.

“The next iteration of our work is to make sure we’re serving our CDFI markets as well as we can,” Jennifer said. “I want TerraStrat to help us identify the trends in my market space so that we can grow in those areas. That data can lead our expansion plans as well as our media spend plans.

**“Their branching strategy is what interested me initially, but now that we’ve worked together I’m learning how to use them in new ways. Now I know I can say, ‘Ok data scientists, what would do with this? And how do I incorporate it into a major strategy in our organization?’”**

Of all the results and value that have come from working with TerraStrat, perhaps the most transformative for Rize Credit Union is the way it’s evolving them into an institution that’s truly driven by data.



“TerraStrat has helped us evolve our credit union into a whole new iteration of itself,” Jennifer said. “I’ve learned a lot from working with them, and **that knowledge helps me go to the next level and think about data in a new way.** They’ve been great partners in that, and they create an environment where I can learn as well as get things done.”

Excited about what the future holds because of their continued partnership, Jennifer said she loves that Rize Credit Union can tap into TerraStrat’s industry-leading experience without hiring full-time staff — a benefit that has allowed her to make quicker and easier progress toward her strategic goals.

“For me to find and hire data scientists with their level of experience would be incredibly lucky on my part,” Jennifer said. “They’re used to working in branching systems on a much larger scale, but I get the benefit of their vast experience and knowledge in my much smaller organization, without the cost of hiring anyone full-time.

“If I hadn’t found TerraStrat, I would’ve made the move of my branch just based on intuition, and I would still be spinning my wheels about how to use data to design my growth strategy. **TerraStrat has a turn-key solution that makes my decision-making easier and saves me time.** I just tell them my problems and they come back to me with data-based solutions, which really is a beautiful thing.” ◀

**To learn how TerraStrat can help your credit union develop a data-driven growth strategy, visit [terrastrat.com](https://terrastrat.com).**

