



2026 Outlook

The Trends, Risks and Opportunities Shaping Lease Portfolio Management



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Leaders Are Elevating Strategic Decision-Making With Lease Portfolio Data	5
Leaders Want More Visibility and Control of Lease Portfolios	9
Leaders Face Lease Accounting Compliance Challenges	10
Organizations Are Increasing Lease Volume, But Remain Cautious Due to Economic Concerns	15
Sustainability Reporting Remains Important	17
Collaboration Between Real Estate and Finance Teams Saves Money and Drives Better Decision-Making	18
Conclusion	20

Executive Summary

Finance and real estate teams face an array of opportunities and challenges in 2026, from increased data-driven efficiencies to an unstable macroeconomic climate. This report details key trends driving decision-making in finance and real estate alongside actionable steps that companies can take to improve collaboration between teams and prepare for the future.

Fielded exclusively by Visual Lease and CoStar Real Estate Manager, this report surveyed senior finance and real estate executives to uncover how enterprise organizations are managing their lease portfolios and addressing financial, operational and strategic priorities in the coming year.

Key takeaways include:



Leaders are elevating strategic decision-making

Finance leaders and real estate teams rely on lease portfolio data for forecasting, budgeting, negotiations, cost-saving and more.



Finance leaders continue to see strong potential for AI

Finance leaders predict that tools like generative AI will help reduce reporting errors, streamline manual tasks and more.



Leaders say visibility and control are crucial for their Lease Portfolios

Without proper visibility into and control over lease portfolios, companies have difficulty with compliance and accurate reporting.



Companies are increasing lease volume, but cautiously

While real estate leaders are looking to lease additional space, there's a strong emphasis on flexible terms amid an unstable economic climate.



Sustainability reporting remains important

Although national sustainability reporting requirements have been rolled back, finance and real estate leaders are still invested and continue to prioritize it.



Collaboration between real estate and finance saves money

Finance and real estate leaders recognize the benefits of collaboration across their teams, but there's room for improvement, particularly from finance executives.



Introduction

As organizations look toward 2026 and beyond, the intersection of finance, real estate, and technology is reshaping how companies manage their lease portfolios. Amid economic volatility, evolving workplace models, an ongoing accountant talent shortage and rapid digital transformation, lease portfolio management has moved from a back-office necessity to a strategic lever for cost optimization, compliance and growth.

Backed by exclusive survey data from senior finance and real estate executives, this report — produced by Visual Lease and CoStar Real Estate Manager — offers an authoritative look at the priorities, risks and opportunities defining this shift. It explores how finance and real estate leaders are leveraging centralized data, automation and AI to make more informed decisions and maintain operational efficiency.

What follows is a comprehensive view of how today's most forward-thinking organizations are aligning finance and real estate functions to drive performance, strengthen compliance and prepare for a future where data-driven insight is the ultimate competitive advantage.

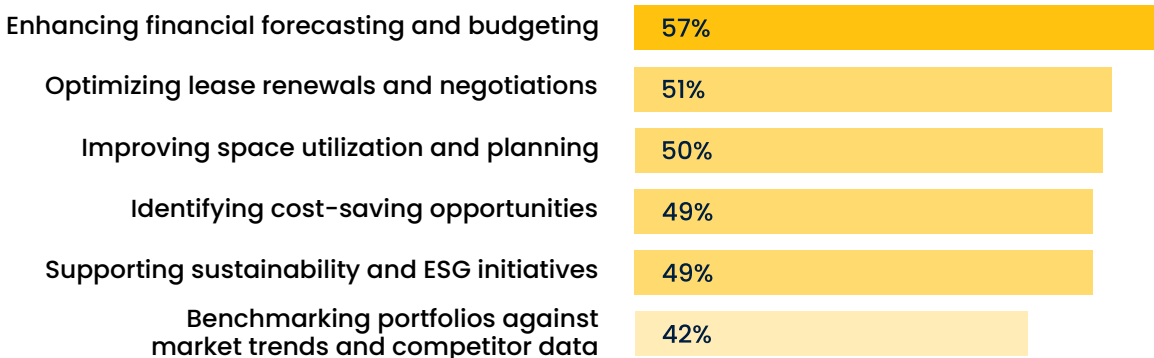
Leaders are Elevating Strategic Decision-Making with Lease Portfolio Data

The value of data-driven decision making is clear to respondents in both the Office of Finance and the Office of Real Estate. Leaders identified technological and strategic shifts that indicate an increase in the sophistication of both functions.

Real estate leaders are using lease data to drive strategic decisions

Real estate executives are using lease portfolio data to drive smarter, more strategic business decisions, from forecasting to reporting and beyond.

Here's what real estate leaders are doing with the data they have at hand:



Finance leaders' priorities are largely aligned with how real estate leaders are leveraging lease data, creating ample opportunities for cross-functional collaboration. Over the next five years, finance executives identified the following as top priorities:



49%

Improving financial forecasting and scenario planning



47%

Driving operational efficiency and cost savings



46%

Adopting and integrating new technologies



43%

Strengthening risk management and resilience

Taken together, it's clear that **data collection and analysis are high priorities for both real estate and finance executives.**

In addition to substantial internal data, the Office of Real Estate is benefiting from increased access to external data when negotiating new leases. Here's how they're sourcing that data:



65%

from a third-party real estate service provider or broker



55%

from a licensed real estate data provider



53%

from industry peers

Companies that haven't centralized lease data are missing out on more accurate forecasting, cost-saving measures and improved reporting functions. If your organization has yet to put lease management software in place, strategic decision-making may be hampered across multiple teams, including both finance and real estate. Decentralized data is often incomplete data — and that means professionals have an incomplete picture of their lease portfolio's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and risks. Decisions based on that incomplete data is costly.

Finance leaders have high hopes when it comes to AI

If your organization hopes to gain efficiencies from data-driven technology like AI, **it's more important than ever to ensure that you're collecting and storing high-quality data.**

Finance leaders are hopeful when it comes to AI's potential to streamline reporting and increase productivity, especially amidst an ongoing accountant shortage. In fact, 33% of finance leaders believe this talent shortage is one of the most pressing issues in the industry, as more current accountants retire and fewer college students pursue accounting degrees. By automating manual tasks, streamlining workflows and increasing efficiencies, AI can be a useful tool for organizations struggling to hire new talent, to avoid employee burnout and support smaller teams.

Further, 70% of finance leaders believe that generative AI will provide resources and information in record time, helping their teams move more quickly. And 69% of finance leaders see data extraction and optical character recognition (OCR) features as a way to reduce reporting errors. While tools have begun to implement this tech, challenges with data accuracy arise. Data integrity remains critical for compliance, and AI output still needs human validation.



33%

of finance leaders view the **accounting talent shortage** as one of the most pressing issues in the industry

The Promise of AI



Increase productivity



Identify reporting errors



Analyze complex data



Improve data quality

However, it's important to note that while AI promises to revolutionize both finance and real estate functions, **its outputs are only as good as its inputs.**

Visual Lease and CoStar Real Estate Manager are at the forefront of data-powered lease management, helping countless customers streamline their data processes and improve the quality of their data.

Finance executives' hopes for AI



70%

Help teams move more quickly



69%

Help reduce reporting errors



45%

Streamline manual tasks



41%

Analyze key data sets



Leaders Want More Visibility and Control of Lease Portfolios

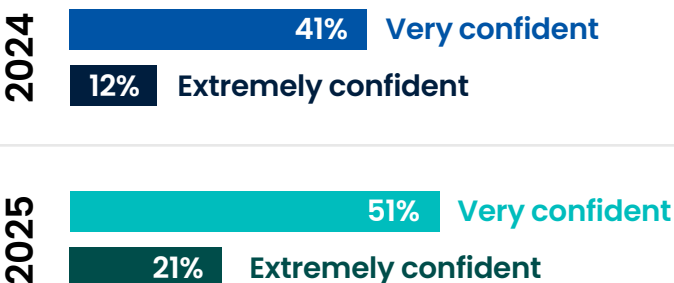
Real estate leaders have gained a notable amount of confidence in understanding the total cost of their lease portfolios over the past year — something finance executives will appreciate — but there's still significant room for improvement.

The share of real estate executives saying they're "very" or "extremely" confident in understanding the total cost, risks and opportunities in their lease portfolio grew from 53% in 2024 to 72% in 2025.

Implementing tools to better track and analyze lease data is a crucial strategy for any organization looking to maximize the return on its real estate investments. Better data on leases leads to more accurate reporting, more negotiating power and the reduction of expensive errors.

Real estate executives' confidence

in understanding the total cost, risks, and opportunities in their lease portfolio



"Visual Lease has given us visibility and reliable reporting, which helps us with budgeting and forecasting. It gives us more intel. We track lots of metrics – so we can see high-level information and then go into the weeds to make sound decisions."

— Herbert Cohn, Director of Corporate Services,
Treasury & Risk at HomeServices of America



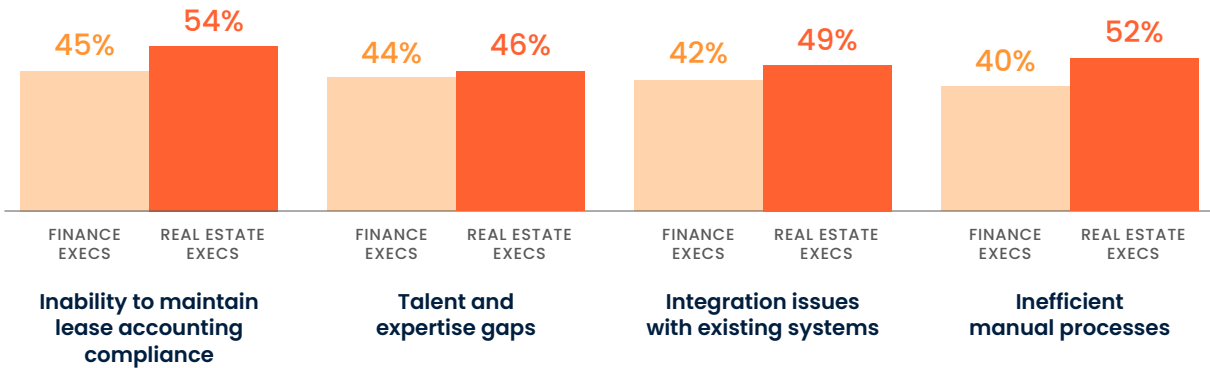
Leaders Face Lease Accounting Compliance Challenges

Organizations lacking strong controls over their leased assets are finding it difficult to manage those assets, leading to reduced compliance.

According to finance executives, 45% report the inability to maintain lease accounting compliance as the biggest challenge organizations face in managing leased assets. Meanwhile, 40% identified inefficient manual processes as a significant challenge.

More than half of real estate executives consider the inability to maintain lease accounting compliance (54%) and inefficient manual processes (52%) as the top challenges their organization faces in managing leased assets.

Biggest lease management challenges



72% of real estate leaders reported being very or extremely confident in their understanding of the cost of their lease portfolios in 2025 — up from 53% in 2024. Despite this increased confidence in understanding, organizations continue to struggle with compliance. The consequences can be serious: overspending, reporting errors, difficulty aligning with sustainability goals, and inflexibility in adapting to changing market conditions.

If your organization lacks visibility or control, implementing more effective systems can help you avoid these repercussions. This is especially important if your lease portfolio is growing quickly, which puts added pressure on both finance and real estate teams.



Fastest-growing brokerage company managing 1,000+ leases.

After using Visual Lease



\$60K saved
in billing
reconciliation



Centralized,
analytic-ready
lease portfolio
data



Future
overpayments
prevented



Acrisure is the fastest-growing brokerage company in industry history and provides an example of the value of these systems. The company grew their portfolio from 230 leases to over 1,000 in just four years, leading to considerable complexity in their lease data.

After using Visual Lease to centralize and analyze their lease portfolio data, Acrisure discovered significant erroneous billing from landlords. A reliable process for reconciliation resulted in saving over \$60,000—and prevented future overpayments.

Sharing and centralizing data creates significant savings for organizations with lease portfolios, and those savings compound over time. A few thousand in savings today could translate to hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars over several years.

A lack of centralized data, on the other hand, places companies at risk of missing opportunities to cut costs through improved negotiating power and reducing errors. This can have a notable effect on a company's bottom line and the efficiency with which their portfolio is managed. Organizations without centralized and accessible lease data also run the risk of costly compliance and reporting errors.

If you're less than 100% confident in lease visibility and control at your company, working with Visual Lease and CoStar Real Estate Manager can facilitate significant improvements and cost savings from improved data processes.

Companies are investing in lease management

Against a backdrop of persistent inflation, higher interest rates and ongoing cost scrutiny, organizations are making investments to more effectively manage one of their largest expense lines: leases.

Top lease management processes used by finance leaders

When it comes to lease management processes, finance leaders reported investing in...



Outsourcing related work to a third party

66%



Hiring new people internally

57%



Implementing dedicated technology

50%

More than two-thirds (68%) of real estate executives feel their company has appropriately prioritized investing in dedicated technology, people and processes to successfully manage their lease-related expenses. This is a large jump from 25% in 2024.

Together, these investments indicate that executives see the strategic value of proper lease management and that companies are investing in the related tools and people to help them manage their lease portfolios.



68%

of real estate executives feel their company is properly resourced to manage lease expenses compared to 25% in 2024.

Facing the challenges

Inadequate lease controls and misreporting remain persistent challenges for both finance and real estate teams. A lack of effective controls can create costly mistakes, from failure to take advantage of lease options to operational downtime. Misreporting can also result in financial losses, whether from reduced decision quality or fines from noncompliance with regulations.

Finance executives identify data accuracy and completeness as their top concern related to their organization's lease portfolio, but also emphasize the importance of reacting to unforeseen circumstances:

Top challenges for finance executives

1	Data accuracy and completeness	56%
2	Reacting to unforeseen circumstances such as supply chain disruptions and inflation	50%
3	Compliance with ESG requirements and policies	48%
4	Sustaining lease accounting compliance	40%
5	Ensuring audit-readiness	40%
6	Challenges resourcing the required work	40%

Results of insufficient lease controls

Both finance and real estate leaders report significant consequences of insufficient lease controls.

Finance Execs

Increased audit fees and fines	58%
Damage to professional reputation	53%
Damage to company reputation	53%
Risk of legal action	41%

Real Estate Execs

Missed reimbursements or incentives	45%
Forgetting to update unfavorable or unwanted terms	42%
Missing options to extend deadlines	42%
Incurring responsibilities that belong with the landlord	42%
Miscalculating lease costs	41%
Being unable to respond to changing circumstances	36%
Overpaying rent or other expenses	33%

Both real estate and finance leaders agree that a lack of lease controls can accrue unnecessary expenses. The distinct responsibilities of each office also create different concerns: _____

Real estate leaders report forgetting to update unfavorable terms as a result of insufficient controls, as a top concern, while finance leaders are more focused on a damaged reputation and legal action.

Aligning on the shared value of effective lease controls, however, benefits both teams. By effectively managing leases — a typically expensive line item in an organization's budget — both offices can reduce costs and minimize the risk of reputational or financial damage.

It's never too late to start improving your organization's data pipeline. Even if your organization manages data well, the amount of data generated, collected, stored and analyzed is constantly increasing.

Put scalable tools and data infrastructure in place to prepare for an even more data-driven future. If you fall behind competitors on this point, you may find it difficult to catch up.

American Axle & Manufacturing was one of those organizations — before they started using Visual Lease, leases weren't part of the company's internal controls process. After

"[Implementing Visual Lease] has helped us drive more controls around the entire process as a company. We are constantly testing our framework to ensure it's operating effectively and updating it when the Visual Lease software adds more features, like the approvals module."



—Arianne Ault, Director, Treasury & Capital Markets, American Axle & Manufacturing

placing a stronger strategic focus on lease management, equipment and location leases are now part of the company's global controls framework.

With centralized lease data, the finance team can now more effectively negotiate equipment leases and stay ahead of key location renewals. It has become so crucial, in fact, that each department tests its lease control framework every quarter.

Organizations are Increasing Lease Volume, but Remain Cautious Due to Economic Concerns

After years of contraction, organizations are showing renewed appetite for leasing additional space, fueled in part by return-to-office momentum. The latest findings suggest companies are cautiously optimistic about growth, while still hedging against uncertainty in the economy and workplace.

In 2025, real estate leaders reported a renewed appetite for leasing additional space—a shift from recent years, when they’ve shown more caution in making changes to leasing plans.

70% reported adding space as part of their strategy compared to **56%** in 2024.

Of the 70% that reported adding space as part of their strategy...



44%

plan on expanding existing spaces



44%

plan on leveraging co-working spaces



38%

plan on adding new satellite locations

While real estate leaders are looking to lease additional space, their enthusiasm remains tempered by macroeconomic concerns. **64% of real estate leaders say their company is extremely or very likely to delay making needed upgrades or moving facilities in the coming year due to the state of the economy.**



And, now more than ever, those that are looking to lease additional space are prioritizing flexibility: 78% say flexible lease options are extremely/very important in navigating today's market compared to 61% last year.

According to Mark McDonald, President of Visual Lease and CoStar Real Estate Manager, employees returning to in-office work is driving companies to rethink lease management. Strong, centralized lease data helps organizations maximize their ROI on space needs, while flexible lease terms—like expansion rights and shorter durations—let them adapt quickly to workforce and economic shifts.

Overall, **finance and real estate executives are feeling optimistic about leasing additional space.** But companies want flexibility to adapt to evolving economic and workplace conditions.

78%

say **flexible lease options** are extremely/very important in navigating today's market compared to **61%** in 2024.

Using data to negotiate preferable lease terms will continue to be a crucial approach for organizations managing leased assets. If you don't have full visibility into your lease portfolio, using a lease management platform to centralize lease data will open up new avenues of negotiation, unlocking cost savings for both real estate and financial teams.



Sustainability Reporting Remains Important

Despite economic and policy changes, companies around the world are still prioritizing sustainability reporting. Key stakeholders continue to demand transparency around environmental impact.

Four in five (80%) Real Estate leaders are prioritizing sustainability reporting efforts more than in 2024, even in light of the current administration.

Similarly, the vast majority (88%) of Finance leaders said sustainability reporting efforts are more of a priority than in 2024 in light of the current administration.

Leaders prioritizing sustainability reporting efforts more than in 2024

Real Estate Leaders

80%



Finance Leaders

88%



Organizations are already committed to sustainability reporting—**87% of finance leaders responded that their organization has begun or established initiatives around sustainability reporting.**

Taken together, these findings show that sustainability reporting is no longer just a “nice to have.” It’s highly valued, expected by stakeholders, and it remains a priority. If your organization has reduced sustainability reporting in the past year or has yet to begin, you may be falling behind.

Collaboration Between Real Estate and Finance Teams Saves Money and Drives Better Decision-Making

Gaining visibility into lease portfolios allows both Real Estate and Finance leaders to make more informed, data-driven decisions, resulting in improved compliance, accurate reporting, better lease terms, and more cost savings. All of these benefits are also fostered by improved collaboration between finance and real estate leaders.

The good news is that this is getting better.

From 2024 to 2025, the percentage of real estate executives who said their company's finance team is completely collaborative with the real estate team jumped from 4% to 26%. Meanwhile, 77% of real estate leaders reported that their finance colleagues are mostly or completely collaborative, compared to 50% in 2024.

Leaders reporting mostly or completely collaborative in 2024, 2025

Real Estate Leaders

77%

compared to 50% in 2024.

Finance Leaders

81%

compared to 90% in 2024.



Finance executives continue to report a high level of collaboration, with 81% reporting that they're mostly or completely collaborative with their real estate colleagues.

The difference between real estate leaders and finance leaders and shifts between years may indicate a lack of communication. Both real estate and finance executives should prioritize communicating what they need to maintain a collaborative partnership.

Finance teams aren't just collaborating with real estate — they're also working closely with other teams throughout their organizations. For example, 99% of finance leaders say their team is at least somewhat collaborative with their organization's IT/tech team, another key player when it comes to lease portfolio management decision-makers.

This high level of inter-team collaboration helps reduce silos, improve alignment between teams, and lays the foundation for better decision-making. Teams naturally prioritize and collect information that only they need to see. This can create gaps in company data or may even create duplication of data and efforts, leading to wasted money, along with potential confusion from misalignment on reporting standards or losing time to inefficient interdepartmental processes.

By aligning efforts and storing lease data in a single repository for a “single source of truth”, companies can streamline accounting and forecasting functions and avoid leaving value on the table, from favorable lease terms to landlord concessions that could reduce total occupancy cost.



99%



of finance leaders say their team is at least somewhat collaborative with their organization's IT/tech team

Those drawbacks have significant effects if left unchecked. Want to keep them from derailing your business? Put systems in place—like a centralized lease management system—to foster collaboration between finance and real estate.

Let's Sum it Up

As organizations navigate a complex interplay of factors heading into 2026, effective lease portfolio management has emerged as a critical driver of strategic value. The findings in this report make it clear that leading organizations are no longer treating lease management as a purely administrative function — instead, they're leveraging centralized data, advanced technology and cross-functional collaboration to unlock cost savings, improve compliance and make more informed decisions.

Yet, challenges remain. Data accuracy, compliance gaps and insufficient lease controls still lead to unnecessary costs and risks for many organizations. The gap between those who have invested in dedicated lease management technology and those who haven't will only widen as the volume and complexity of data continue to grow.

The path forward requires action across three key areas:



Implementing scalable **technology** that centralizes and organizes lease data



Fostering deeper **collaboration** between finance, real estate and other key stakeholders



Building robust **processes** that can adapt to evolving economic and regulatory conditions

Organizations that prioritize these investments today will be better positioned to optimize their real estate spend, respond nimbly to market shifts and maintain the visibility and control needed to thrive in an uncertain future. Those who delay may find themselves struggling to catch up as competitors pull ahead with data-driven insights and strategic agility.

Methodological Notes

The Visual Lease Finance Survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com) among 200 US senior finance and accounting executives with titles of CAO, CFO, Controller, or Director of Reporting at private, public, and government organizations, between August 5th and August 18th, 2025, using an email invitation and an online survey.

The Visual Lease Real Estate Survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com) among 200 US senior real estate executives, with a seniority of Director+, at companies of 1,000+ employees, who manage their organizations leases, between August 5th and August 18th, 2025, using an email invitation and an online survey.

Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results. For the interviews conducted in this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 6.9 percentage points from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.