

# CASE STUDY: CITY OF UNLEY

The City of Unley enjoys user-friendly, faster access to map-based information and improved customer service thanks to MapInfo and Tonkin Consulting



“We wanted a simple system with an easy-to-use interface so that the system would be readily accepted. The users liked the MapInfo interface the best. They were more comfortable with MapInfo, particularly Exponare.”

*Ludwig Kraayenbrink, Manager Strategic & IT Services, City of Unley*

## CHALLENGE

City of Unley Council had an old mapping system, which was used by only a few employees and was no longer technically supported. It needed to be upgraded to a user-friendly system that would integrate seamlessly with its other major corporate software applications.

## SOLUTION

The Council's GIS project steering committee selected MapInfo Exponare. The painless and rapid transition to this more powerful, user-friendly system resulted in greater take-up by users and improved customer service because of better access to information.

## Situation

Just south of the city of Adelaide, capital of South Australia, lies the inner metropolitan council City of Unley. The Kaurna people inhabited the district before Europeans settled in the area and cleared and farmed the land in the mid-1800s. Unley was proclaimed a city in November 1906. Today, some 36,000 people live in 18,000 properties in an area of 14 square kilometres.

The Council employs 170 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff and has an annual operational budget of \$29.5 million.

The Council's IT Department employs 2.5 FTE staff and manages 170 PCs and 35 servers across eight sites. Corporate software applications include Microsoft Office, an electronic document and customer request system (Dataworks), a land information system (Pathway), a public library management system (Horizon), financial and payroll systems (Enterprise One) and MapInfo's Exponare and MapInfo Professional corporate location intelligence offerings.

## Challenge

According to Ludwig Kraayenbrink, Manager Strategic & IT Services at The City of Unley, the Council has been a long-time user of corporate mapping systems, having introduced a limited mapping software solution in 1993.

At that time, the Council was using one completely integrated software product, which incorporated all the applications the Council required. In early 2000, when that sole supplier decided to focus on land information systems only, the Council was forced to look for other options for its remaining management systems.

After formal tender processes, Council selected a range of new management systems – all 'best of breed' software solutions, explained Kraayenbrink. With this new basket of suppliers, however, came the need for seamless integration of disparate systems.

## Result

The mapping system was the last major corporate application to be replaced.

MapInfo Exponare and MapInfo Professional were selected in June 2005 after a formal tender process during which Council personnel, including users, attended demonstrations and trialed various offerings.

Kraayenbrink explained that the team focused on selecting a system that could be used by operational users and senior management alike.

The system also had to integrate with the Council's other corporate software applications. "Now we had a whole lot of suppliers with different database structures which needed to work together effectively and efficiently," Kraayenbrink explained.

Representatives from each Council department were involved from the start of the 10-week implementation period, as well as during the GIS tender process itself. A project steering committee was established to ensure the system was implemented on schedule.

Adelaide-based MapInfo Strategic Partner Tonkin Consulting led and managed the tender process and primed the implementation process, which took place in three phases to reduce down time and to ease the transition from old to new.

## THE MAPINFO ADVANTAGE



It is no surprise Tonkin Consulting won the coveted MapInfo Australia/NZ Partner of the Year award for the second year in a row (2005 & 2006).

"If we have an issue, the personnel from Tonkin Consulting are very good, they assist us very quickly," Kraayenbrink said.



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"A major challenge for Council was to have easy access to information, and also to provide consistent information to its customers across all levels of the organisation. Exponare helped us achieve these objectives."

*Ludwig Kraayenbrink, Manager Strategic & IT Services, City of Unley*

During phase one, Tonkin Consulting installed the system, integrated the system with the land information system, and trained 50 users in just under 10 weeks.

The functionality of Exponare when it went live was far better than the old system, said Kraayenbrink. "It allows us to customise the user interface to four target groups: General User; Development Staff; Infrastructure Staff; and Transport Staff," he explained. "Each group may use and search for information available in other groups."

Phase two saw Tonkin Consulting integrate the MapInfo solution with the Council's electronic document management and customer request management systems in March 2006.

The result: a vast improvement on how the previous systems worked together, according to Kraayenbrink. "Now users can go to the mapping system, click on a property and find all the documents associated with that property," he said. "All that information is stored in the electronic document management system."

Phase three is about to commence. "We are looking at integrating the system with Council's public library system," Kraayenbrink explained. "We've taken an incremental approach and it has worked well. The users are happy."

### Benefits

More than 50 technical and non-technical Council personnel – including the CEO administrative staff, traffic engineers, planners and community services – are now using the MapInfo system within 12 months of its implementation.

"If we have an issue, the personnel from Tonkin Consulting are very good, they assist us very quickly," Kraayenbrink said.

"Most people wouldn't have touched the old mapping system. Because the new one is so easy to use, however, they are now using it for day-to-day activities."

For example, the mapping system allows users to map boundaries of a property, extract the owners' details from the land information system, then merge the information into a Word document and generate a standard letter.

Planners in the planning department use the mapping system in their assessment of the merits of a development application. They access an aerial photograph of the property, look at trees and other features, check the placement of traffic signs, assess how the property would be affected by flood, and verify other attributes.

Because of its integration with Council's other systems, MapInfo Exponare is the only interface needed to give users quick access to information. This means that the City of Unley's customer service to ratepayers has improved, with information just a few mouse clicks away.

"It is the single corporate source for retrieval of spatial information, which avoids the danger of inaccurate data duplication," Kraayenbrink said. "It is an important integrator. It allows users to retrieve information from Council's many databases."

Kraayenbrink explained that Local Government officers were usually experienced in working and thinking in spatial terms. The MapInfo solution gives users access to spatial as well as textual data, better complementing employees' skills.

"By combining textual and spatial searches you really have a very powerful tool," Kraayenbrink said. "It gives users immediate access to a vast array of information, which can then be used for many different purposes within the organisation – for operational activities and customer information, or to resolve issues with the customer."

The Council intends to integrate the GIS into its library, finance and asset management systems in the near future to enhance its current intranet solution. Additionally, Council is currently exploring the possibility of enabling public access through a mapping interface 'front-end' via the internet. One of Exponare's deployment options Public, a complete browser-based solution, will enable this long-term strategy to be fulfilled.

"There is no doubt that the new MapInfo system has resulted in an important advancement in the way Council manages its information," Kraayenbrink said.