precisely

Case Study:
Southwark Council delivers GIS data for not-too-techie users

Overview

For Southwark Council, a London borough, geographic data is mission-critical. Employees from planners and highway engineers to contact center representatives and social workers routinely refer to location information as they serve residents.

Business challenge

Southwark Council staff were using a traditional GIS system to access the data they needed, but Stuart Carter, corporate GIS manager for the council, saw an opportunity for improvement. "When we started using our legacy solution in 2009," he says, "smartphones and tablet computers hadn't really taken off. We needed a solution that worked better with the devices people are using now."

Southwark Council began looking for a GIS system with a modern user interface. From a shortlist of eight alternatives, they selected Precisely Spectrum Spatial. "The other systems we considered were designed to appeal to a GIS professional, but that is not our user base," Carter says. "I was very taken with the intuitive interface in Spectrum Spatial. It has power, but it doesn't look or feel too techie."

He also liked that the solution includes Location Intelligence capabilities. "Spectrum Spatial is not just an out-of-the-box map interface," he says. "It comes with a Web development toolkit and API that enable us to enhance geospatial data to support all kinds of services throughout the council."

Solution

During implementation, Carter worked closely with Precisely Professional Services to customize Spectrum Spatial from integrating Google StreetView to pulling in data from the local land and property (LLPG) database. Now hundreds of Southwark Council employees can view maps and run searches of all council data related to a particular address, including planning data, environmental information and building restrictions.

"You can click a point on the map, and it presents the information about that location," Carter explains. "Then you can play around with the data that is presented. You can insert images, or you can annotate with drawings and notes."

Client profile
Southwark Council
southwark.gov.uk

- One of 32 London boroughs
- Borders the River Thames; bridges connect Southwark to the City of London
- Attractions include the Shard (the tallest building in the U.K.), the Tate Modern art gallery and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre

"I was very taken with the intuitive interface in Spectrum Spatial. It has power, but it doesn't look or feel too techie."

— Stuart Carter, Corporate GIS Manager, Southwark Council

precisely.com | 877 700 0970

The annotation feature enables users to draw a shape on the map, then get a list of addresses within that area. Following the June 2017 terrorist attack on London Bridge, the council's emergency response team restricted access to certain parts of Southwark. Recognizing the financial strain this placed on local businesses, councilors wanted to offer them tax relief. "Our staff used Spectrum Spatial to draw zones of impact on the map and identify the businesses within those zones," Carter says. "If they had done this manually, it would have been extremely time-consuming and imprecise."

The system also enables users to pull data on every address within a certain radius of a specific location. For example, when someone finds an unexploded World War II bomb in Southwark, council staff use the Concentric Circles functionality in Spectrum Spatial to view contact information for every address within each of a series of exclusion zones, to warn them of the risk or suggest evacuation.

Benefits

The solution is optimized for use with mobile devices, and Carter is very pleased with its consumer-oriented interface. "I can tell that the designers were focused on how people use the Web today," he says. "Consumer interfaces have changed dramatically over the past 10 years, and when I look at Spectrum Spatial I see style cues from social networks and modern Web services."

In addition, since November 2017 Southwark residents have been able to access Spectrum Spatial . Residents now have access to a wealth of useful spatial insights.

For a future version, Carter envisions a system in which residents who want to report graffiti or an abandoned car will click a point on a map, and data from that location will flow into the council's customer relationship management system. "These are just ideas at the moment, but they are possible using Spectrum because of the Web development toolkit," he says.

Technology used
- Spectrum Spatial

"Spectrum Spatial comes with a Web development toolkit and API that enable us to enhance geospatial data to support all kinds of services throughout the council."

— Stuart Carter, Corporate GIS Manager, Southwark Council

precisely.com | 877 700 0970