

Local council makes planning maps available to public

| Waitaki District Council | *New Zealand*

The Waitaki District in New Zealand stretches from the Kakanui coastline almost to the foot of Aoraki/Mount Cook. The mostly rural district is home to around 22,300 residents and large swaths of farmland across approximately 7,152 square kilometers (about 2,761 square miles), with almost 14,000 of those residents living in the town of Oamaru. The district is governed locally by a territorial authority, the Waitaki District Council (WDC), which is responsible for a wide range of local services including roads, water reticulation, sewage and refuse collection and community and economic development.

The WDC is shaping the future to benefit its residents and community by revising the Waitaki District Plan in accordance with New Zealand's Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). The district plan is the tool through which WDC manages the use, development, protection and sustainable management of land and associated natural and physical resources as required by the RMA. To implement the mapping portion of its district plan, the WDC uses Hexagon's GeoMedia products to deliver interactive maps to its residents through an online, self-service portal.



Making data freely available to the public

The WDC involved the community in the review and development of the revised district plan, which it refers to as “the community’s rulebook, setting out how land use and development is managed within our district.” A three-month engagement process saw the WDC give access to and gather feedback from landowners and stakeholders about the plan and maps used to inform the revised district plan.

GeoMedia Smart Client allowed WDC users to visualize and agree on the mapping layers and symbology, and GeoMedia WebMap makes the GIS data and portal accessible to the public. With these tools, WDC produces interactive maps accessible to the public in a self-service geoportal. Residents can type in an address and populate a customized map with layers that are relevant to their inquiries. The portal enhances location information transparency, as the data is freely available to everyone in the community. Users can access zoning, utilities, roads, landscape, natural and environmental hazards and historical and cultural data to create layered maps and use custom symbology to define the appearance of the layers.

The district plan map portal is not just for residents. It also serves city planners, consultants and developers, who required the combination of the WDC’s operative, or “as-is” plan, and the proposed revised plan. Leveraging GeoMedia Smart Client, they have the tools they need, including the required shapefiles, to create and edit data before it becomes part of the revised plan. Previously, data received from planners required topology clean-up, and sometimes planners and consultants lacked a cooperative GIS platform. With the portal, they can pull out a planning profile for each property. They can also use the portal to research properties and zones before making planning decisions.

A team effort for the public good

Prior to the revision of the district plan, public-facing data and maps for land use, development and environmental purposes were restricted to PDF files published by the WDC. If a resident wanted to find out information about a parcel of land, such as zoning information or the location of power lines, they needed

to make a request to the WDC, which would research the information and compile reports and maps in PDF. This process was time-consuming and inefficient.

“The rollout of the revised district plan required us to provide interactive access to the public for both the operative and draft plans, so they could see how the plan would affect their properties, and they could provide feedback,” said Isabel Granado, information systems (IS) manager at WDC.

The implementation of these solutions was performed in two stages. First, Andrew Mackay, GIS specialist at WDC, prepared the data using GeoMedia Professional and shared it with the planning team for validation using GeoMedia Smart Client. Second, Liz Leighfield, spatial analyst and applications developer at WDC, gathered the final requirements for the public mapping solution and used GeoMedia WebMap to develop the interface. The solution was made available on the council’s web page, with an embedded link for public submissions.



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Information systems (IS) manager, WDC

Hexagon’s GeoMedia products enabled WDC to support the district plan and more. The portal also empowers the public by making planning decisions more transparent, informing them, for example, of subdivision and housing changes, which is a growing common interest in New Zealand. WDC’s IS/GIS team built out a portal that furthers the council’s digital transformation goals and, most importantly, provides a valuable service to the people of Waitaki.

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