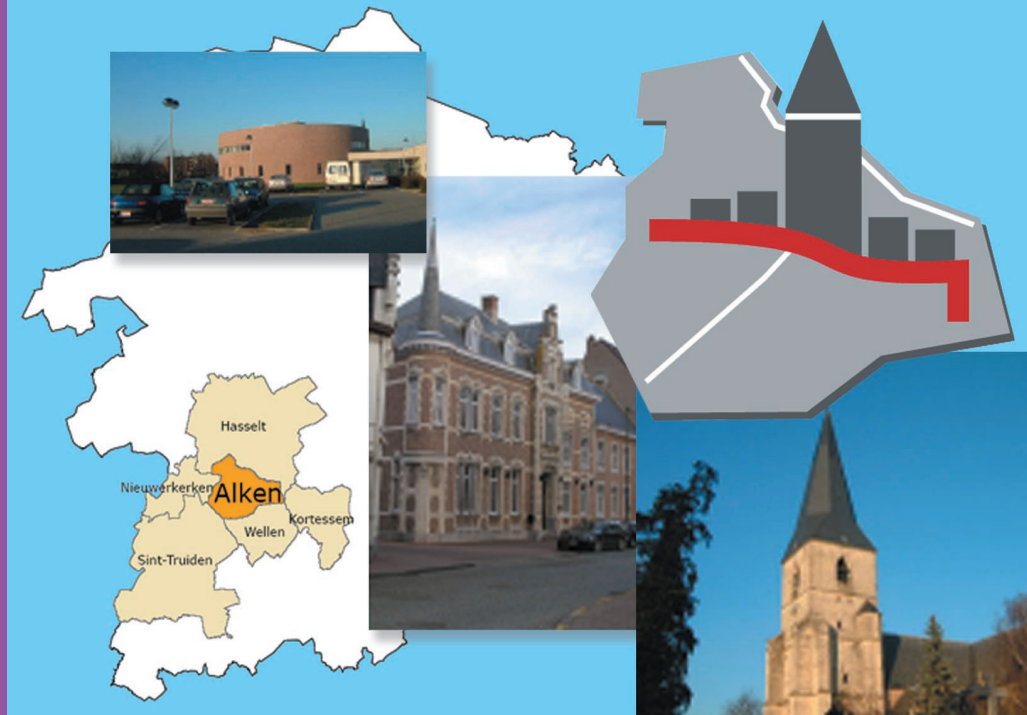


The Municipality of Alken

Customer Success Story

Autodesk MapGuide®



“Our municipality naturally wanted to opt for a digital solution, but the existing digital system was inadequate.”

Mr Niels Indestege,
Projects Manager
The Municipality of Alken

The Municipality of Alken opens up a world of GIS opportunities: Autodesk MapGuide® serves as the basis for a powerful but user-friendly environment.

The Municipality of Alken in the Belgian province of Limburg is situated halfway between the local poles of Hasselt and Sint-Truiden. With 11,000 inhabitants, this rural municipality may not be that large, but the municipal services are in no way inferior to those of larger municipalities and cities in Flanders. The Municipality of Alken attaches considerable importance to innovation and technical development, for the benefit of own personnel but particularly for citizens.

An Ambitious Project

A recent ambitious project geared to making municipal GIS information available confirms this ambition. Since a few weeks, the Municipality of Alken has a GIS Intranet which all municipal employees can use to look up relevant information with the click of a mouse. This assists them with their work and also benefits citizens.

Autodesk MapGuide, a GIS Server, forms the basis of this network, along with specific GEO-IT GIS™ software from the Belgian Autodesk Reseller Geo-IT from Antwerp. According to Mr Niels Indestege, who is responsible for GIS projects within the Municipality of Alken:

“The Municipality of Alken has a previous history with GIS. It already had a system in the 1990s, which indeed only allowed cards to be consulted and therefore prevented users from personally adding information or developing applications. But the point is that the town council had already invested early on in automation, particularly in order to keep track of technological developments.”

“In 2003 the Flemish government issued a directive obliging every municipality to create and maintain a map register, a permit register

and a list of vacant lots. However, the government allowed municipalities to choose between traditional cards or a digital system.”

“Our municipality naturally wanted to opt for a digital solution, but the existing digital system was inadequate. The most obvious option at the time was to build a completely new system, an environment in which we could indeed personally enter cards or draw or develop projects.”

The new system, implemented in 2003, was a major step forward in the sense that Alken now had real control over the creation and management of its administrative GIS data. During the first year, data was mainly entered for the map register. The Spatial Planning and Environment departments in particular were the driving force behind the input of this information.

GIS information for supporting municipal services

The municipality wanted more than information, however. According to Niels Indestege: “We now had an open system that contained a wealth of information, but only 9 people had access to this data. Personnel from other departments still had to approach us for information.”

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Caption?.....

“The Technical Department, for example, had to turn to us to consult GIS maps in order to carry out repair or maintenance activities. The Spatial Planning department also had to contact the GIS department in order to consult maps for a building permit application.”

The municipality decided to make this information available in an Intranet environment. Niels Indestege comments:

“In early 2005 we instructed several suppliers to provide a demo, and we also spoke to a number of other town councils that had implemented similar projects.”

“One of the key requirements was that the new environment had to work seamlessly with Remmicom, the existing municipal information system containing permits for building dossiers, allotments, environmental permits, and the municipal registry of births, marriages and deaths.” The existing systems were actually all fairly good, but one stood out, namely the solution offered by GEO-IT, thanks to a number of details. This solution, for example, offered the largest number of and best links to various modules from Remmicom (Spatial Planning, Environment, Population, Cemeteries, etc.)”

“Also the fact that the Autodesk MapGuide (with its open architecture) formed the basis of the system was definitely an advantage. MapGuide can read in shape files from the existing GIS environment without any problem.”

Niels Indestege talks with pride about the system that his department is developing and managing for the municipality:

“Alken uses GIS in more than one advanced way. For example, we were one of the first municipalities to allow a consultancy firm to create a detailed cadastral map of the municipality.”

“You can see utility pipes on this map. In fact, the system’s level of detail is so high that the maps show you where lots are separated by small walls. Municipal services can therefore schedule and carry out repair and maintenance activities far more efficiently.”

“Our information is also very detailed. We have links to various databanks and information sources that gives us access to comprehensive information. For example: we have entered the data of the Special Planning Scheme along with linked Word documents in which the regulations and directives governing the use of the ground have been laid down. The data already existed separately, but thanks to GEO-IT we have also been able to incorporate it into our Intranet environment.”

For Alken, GIS remains an environment that is continuing to grow and develop with new possibilities. Niels Indestege says:

“The moment the data is stored in databanks or other sources, you can create a valuable information system thanks to the link with the map material.”

“A wonderful example are the walking trails that Natuurpunt is developing in our municipality. GIS not only enabled us to draw them far more quickly, but to also create all of the signs immediately.”

Other Prospects?

Another excellent project is the management of traffic signs. Niels Indestege has created a comprehensive overview of all traffic signs in the area, including a location map and photos, in an MS Access environment. As a result, the Municipality of Alken can accurately plan when specific signs need to be replaced. What are the prospects for GIS in Alken? According to Niels Indestege:

“We very recently established a GIS working group in which representatives from various municipalities in Limburg can unveil their projects and exchange ideas. We can learn from the experiences of others and discover countless more opportunities together.”

“We certainly have not reached the limits of our own system yet. As soon as the entire system is used, we will include new options such as the ability to create maps, records and reports.”