



Celebrating new ideas

2009 New Zealand Post Group
Local Government Excellence Awards

Project Submission Template

BUILDING ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY

Name of Project

Remembering our loved ones in the 21st Century

- Upper Hutt's Cemetery Mapping and Imaging Project

Name of entering council/s

Upper Hutt City Council



1. Brief Description of the Project

The Upper Hutt City Council Cemetery Mapping and Imaging project was designed to improve the quality and quantity of information available to the community from the Council's website www.upperhuttcity.com/cemetery.

Council can now offer an electronic database that allows the user to find memorial headstones and plaques via an online search engine. Users can then view a recent photograph of the headstone and an image showing its precise location within the Cemetery, via GPS mapping. To date over 4800 memorial headstone/plaque images have been captured and mapped. This has resulted in improved and enhanced service and access to this important Council facility.

2. Organisations Involved

The Council would like to acknowledge the assistance of Explorer Graphics Limited (EGL) for the provision of the data capture devices and implementation of external web components.

3. Rationale for the Project and Expected Benefits

Council's primary intention when undertaking this project was to improve the quality of the cemetery information available. This resource is expected to be invaluable for researchers, archivists and family tree enquiries. It is also seen as being a valuable tool for assisting national and international friends and family visually connect with their departed loved ones. In addition, it will assist actual visitors to find the precise location of a plot prior to visiting the Cemetery, should they wish to do so.

As the project title suggests, this project is Council's way of supporting the community to remember our departed ancestors via a 21st century technological medium – the internet.

In addition, provision of high quality Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is a key capability with the Upper Hutt City Council. The previously successful implementation of web browser based access to GIS property information via our internal iMap and external Xplorer websites, meant that we were well positioned for expanding this capability to other location based requirements.

The Council had planned to improve the quality cemetery information. We already had in place an effective search capability for our Cemetery records so enhancing the data provided to include images of memorial headstones and plaques, along with an actual visual location of these in the Cemetery, was the next logical step.

4. Linkage to Council's Strategic Direction

The Council's cemetery services department contributes to a number of Upper Hutt's Community Outcomes. This project in particular contributes to the 'Connected to the World' Outcome by enhancing the Council's ability to respond to enquiries through providing easy access to information via the Internet, and by providing complete information such as images of memorial headstones and plaques along with their actual location.

Furthermore, Council's aim is to continually enhance its services and facilities. For example, during the recent 10 Year Planning process, one of the many areas proposed for enhancement was the Cemetery, where Council proposed to develop a new chapel and crematorium.

Council also tries to keep up-to-date technologically. For example, a project about to start for one of our key attractions is a text marketing campaign for H²O Xtream pool. Further to that, a key Council focus is to look at how we can enhance our services and facilities affordably and increasingly via a 'future-thinking' technological approach. One way Council does this is by encouraging staff to come up with ideas on how to improve services both internally and externally. This particular project was born out of an idea raised by our GIS Officer.

5. Project Planning

Planning for the project commenced several months before resources became available. The process for image capture, mapping and matching was designed by the Council's GIS specialist. Key to completing the planning, especially determining the duration, was a brief pilot to prove that the process was viable. Having gained the relevant data, external costs were calculated and funding sought. We were fortunate that the labour costs to complete the image capture were internal as several resources were available due to a planned maintenance closure of our pool complex.

6. Project Management

The project was broken up into several phases, which enabled a good level of control over expenditure and deliverables:-

1. Piloting of required processes.
2. Capture of images and associated GPS location.
3. Importing and mapping in GIS system.
4. Matching of images to Cemetery system.
5. Deployment of images and location information via the Internet.

7. Relationship / Stakeholder Management

The key stakeholder in this project was the Manager of Parks and Reserves who has responsibility and accountability for Cemetery services. Also key was the Cemetery Sexton who provided significant input during the mapping and matching processes. The vast majority of the work was the mapping and matching processes which were carried out meticulously by the Council's GIS specialist, who provided frequent progress updates to the stakeholders.

8. Innovation and Originality

This project was particularly innovative in its use of technology. EGL provided the Council with a device called IKE which was originally developed commercially by a New Zealand Company called Surveylab. The device will capture an image using an inbuilt camera, then determine the GPS location of the image using inbuilt range detection and GPS capability. The use of the device for our project was quite unique, though it is being used quite extensively by the military in the USA for their various operations.

Following the capture of the information, a simple download occurred directly into the GIS system for the location data and this linked directly to the images which are stored in a server directory. The advantage of storing the images this way means that as new images are taken, or existing images are replaced with better quality images, these can be simply downloaded and are available for viewing immediately.

A key driver to the relatively quick implementation of the project was the use and reuse of existing technologies. These meant costs were able to be maintained at a manageable level. Apart from using our existing GIS system, very minor modifications were required to the display of the cemetery record i.e. adding the image and a link, and our existing external Xplorer site required a small modification to display the location information.

9. Evaluation Framework

This project was reviewed upon completion to discover where improvements could be made. During the process some mismatches were found and this has led to a significant improvement of the cemetery data held by Council. In addition, where required, areas (e.g. certain images) were improved prior to making it available to the public.

A project of this nature does not necessarily obtain any direct financial benefit to Council, but is designed to improve the quality and accessibility of information held by Council. As the cemetery is not easily accessible by everyone due to its location, the enhancement of the data means the people anywhere in the world can visit the cemetery and research their family trees.

10. Impact on Council Capability

Council is now able to succeed in meeting some of its key Community Outcomes, in particular being 'Connected to the World'. The process of adding and updating information very simple and the quality is vastly improved.

Council is now capable of answering a greater variety of questions on the Cemetery and yet at the same time this project is likely to free up resources as people can increasingly discover relevant information on their own.

11. Results

Following publication on our website of the new cemetery capability we fielded a number of calls from the media and other organisations, and from overseas. A story was published in the Dominion Post Newspaper and appeared on their Stuff website. Radio New Zealand covered the story with a radio interview of our GIS specialist. To date this project has been very well received.

12. Supporting Material

Please refer to the attached Appendix for displays of media coverage and website snapshots

Contact/s for further information

For further information, please feel free to contact:

Steve Lock
Information Systems Manager
Upper Hutt City Council
04 527 2169

Graeme Chamberlain
GIS Officer
Upper Hutt City Council
04 527 2169