

City of Brampton, Ontario

Customer Profile

Brampton, Ontario, located 20 miles northwest of Toronto, is one of Canada's fastest-growing cities with a population of more than 500,000.

Business Situation

When Brampton replaced its legacy website with a Microsoft SharePoint portal, the city also needed to replace its online mapping solution. Existing maps, built with traditional GIS software, had proven difficult for the public to use. Keeping them current was a time-consuming chore that took the City's GIS department away from higher value tasks.

Solution

The City turned to Visual Fusion to provide a mapping and visualization solution that is easy for the public to use and can be updated by City employees who have little to no GIS experience. The new application was quick and easy to deploy, reduced costs and provided a highly interactive, intuitive user experience.

OVERVIEW

Canadian city saves money and increases usability by replacing traditional GIS application with a Visual Fusion solution.

Summary

When the Canadian city of Brampton, Ontario set out to replace its legacy website, the site's online maps were one of many functions that needed a new approach.

User feedback indicated that the maps—built with traditional GIS software—were confusing and difficult to use. Additionally, new map data could not always be published promptly, as it was a time-consuming chore that could be done only by GIS professionals.

As part of their upgrade to a new site built on Microsoft SharePoint 2007, Brampton's IT developers implemented a mapping solution using Visual Fusion from IDV Solutions. This solution has garnered positive user response and reduced costs, while furthering the City's goal of providing citizens with timely, usable information.

Situation

Brampton, Ontario, 20 miles northwest of Toronto, is one of Canada's fastest-growing cities, with a population of around half a million. To serve this growing population and to keep the city competitive as a business location, City officials embarked on a year-long project to replace their legacy website with a portal built on Microsoft's SharePoint 2007 platform.

The new Citizen Services Portal emphasizes and promotes interaction between users and City employees. Residents can go online to contact City officials, register for more than 2,500 recreation programs, pay tickets and find information on everything from roadwork to pets available for adoption. Businesses can search for available locations and relevant zoning; visitors can find lodging, shopping and dining.

City officials wanted the new site's mapping component to offer the same degree of interactivity and usability. The legacy maps, built with software originally purchased for the City's GIS experts, had been generating negative feedback and requests for support.

"We had comments from the public that the interface could be easier to use," said Matt Pietryszyn, the City's GIS coordinator. "We needed something more intuitive. We'd been with the existing GIS product for six or seven years, and it was time for a makeover."

In addition to being hard to use, the existing maps were cumbersome to update. Only the City's GIS and IT staff had the required expertise to do so; updating the maps was taking them away from higher value tasks and leading to delays in making data available to the public.

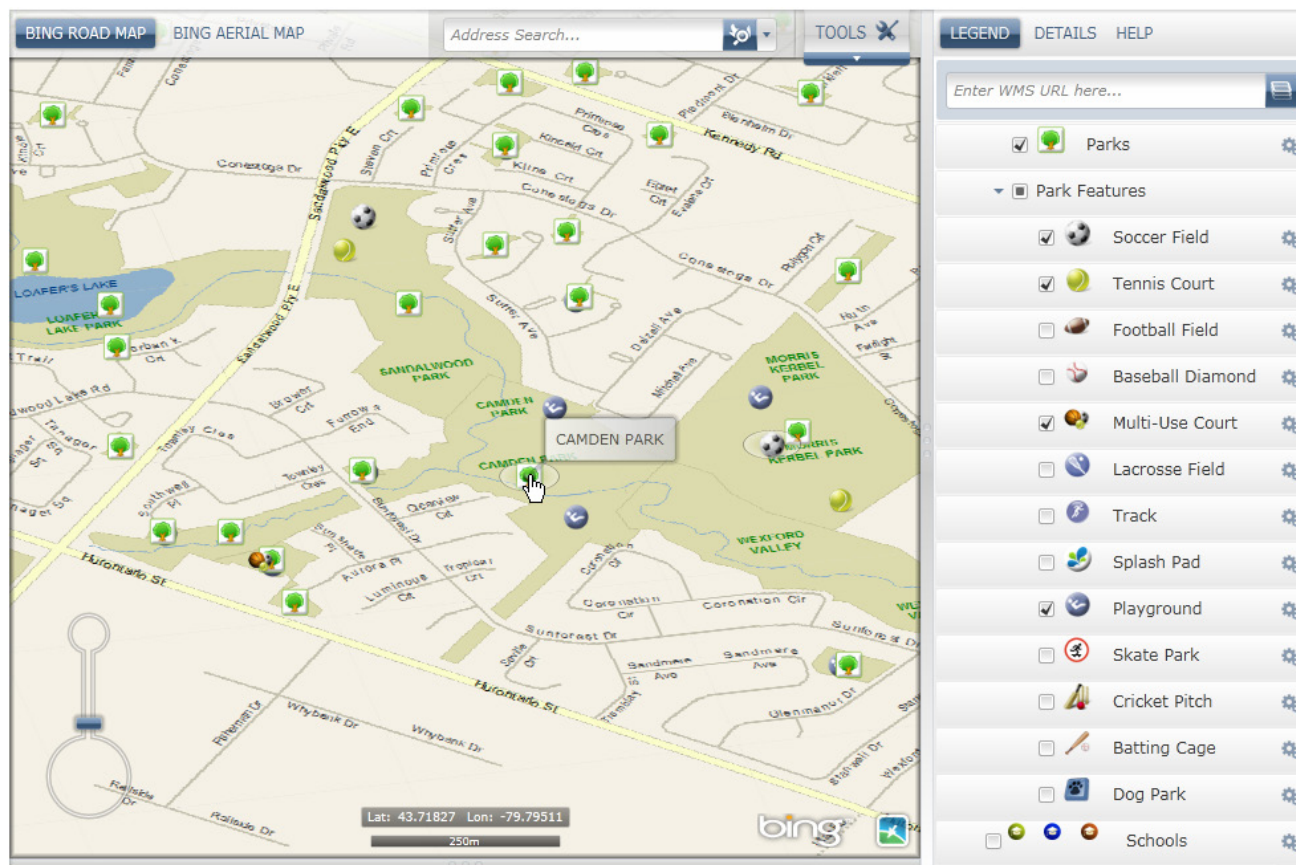
The City needed a solution that would work within their SharePoint 2007 portal while being easy to use, easy to update and quick to deploy.

Solution

After investigating several solutions, Brampton chose Visual Fusion to build their new mapping application.

"We were looking for something that would integrate seamlessly with our SharePoint portal," said Bill Latchford, Brampton's Manager of IT Systems Operations. "Visual Fusion was the only solution we found that did that right out of the box."

"The implementation of the Visual Fusion product was completed with one dedicated City IT-developer and in just three months," said Alber Hanna, Brampton's Manager of CSP Program. With Visual Fusion's supplied connectors, SharePoint lists, GeoRSS feeds as well as the City's large store of GIS data were integrated into a single view on top of Bing Maps.



On the new maps, users can locate City parks with selected amenities, like tennis courts and playgrounds.

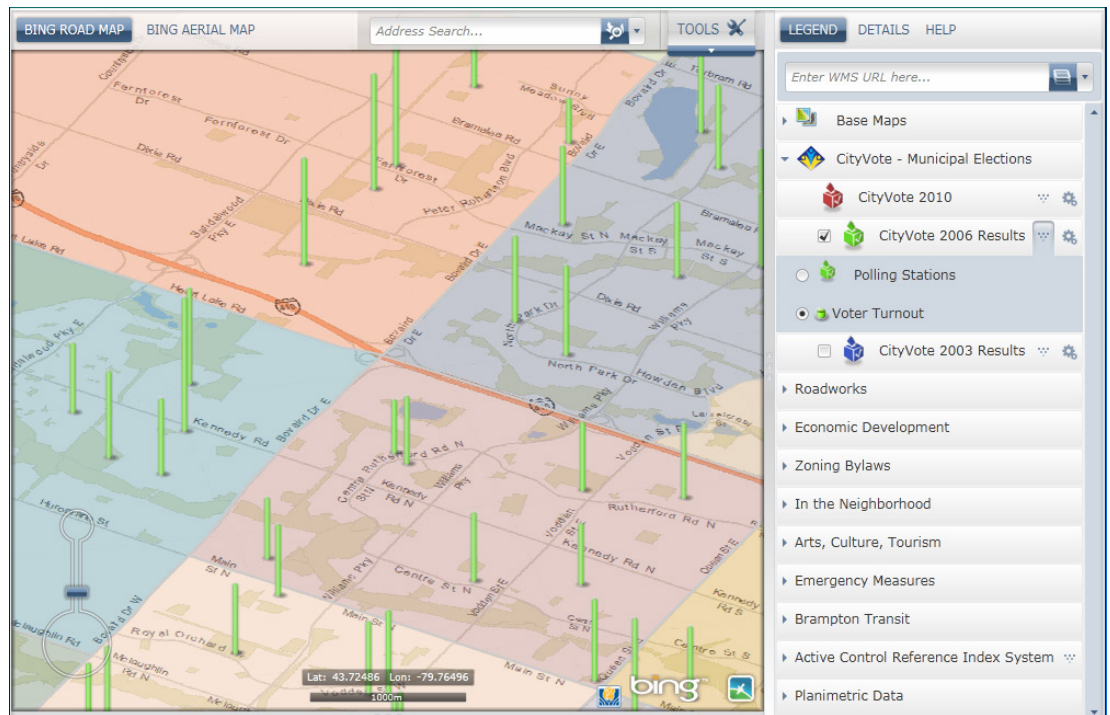
"Citizens – especially an emerging demographic group of young, mobile information workers – expect the same level of customer service that they get in the private commercial sector."

Rob Meikle,
Chief Information
Officer,
Brampton, Ontario

In the new application, users can access a wide variety of information in a direct and visual way:

- Residents can turn on layers for libraries, schools, transit stations, emergency services, road closures and public meetings. They can selectively display park amenities like playgrounds and tennis courts.
- Businesses can view traffic data and search by type and size for vacant land parcels.
- Visitors to Brampton can find dining, shopping, accommodations and City attractions. The map entries provide contact information and link users directly to businesses websites.
- A project called "CityVote" visualizes voter turnout statistics and lets users locate polling stations on the map.

The maps provide a "one-stop shop" for many types of resources. When a resident locates a public meeting on the map, the meeting notice and report are linked to the map entry; select a ward, and the application displays both demographic data about the area residents and contact information for the ward councillors. When visitors locate a theatre, gallery, golf course or other attraction, they see a link to the attraction's website where available.



Voter turnout statistics are visualized with extruded icons in Brampton's Visual Fusion application.

"We profoundly believe that by architecting an intuitive and service-oriented public portal and by utilizing solutions such as Visual Fusion Mapping, the City will invite more citizens and casual surfers to experience its portal firsthand." said Alber Hanna, Brampton's Manager of CSP Program.

Benefits

In place of a traditional GIS interface, Visual Fusion provides Brampton with the type of intuitive, consumer-oriented experience that Web users increasingly expect. The new map application supports the City's goals of reducing costs, increasing usability and providing better access to more timely information.

"We're definitely getting a lot more positive feedback," Latchford said. "People are impressed with how fast we were able to get the solution online and working."

Map data is more current and frequently updated, as employees in each department now upload data to the map without the help of the GIS department.

"Business units have been waiting for years for this," said Pietryszyn. "It's simplified their workflow so much. It's a huge win!"

By relying on Visual Fusion, the City expects to reduce its software licensing costs, as fewer employees will need desktop GIS software. Instead, most will now manage their GIS data through SharePoint libraries.

"We expect big operational savings," Latchford said of Visual Fusion. "The Visual Fusion application meets all our needs and allows the GIS Section to concentrate on higher value tasks."

Authors' Note: *The 11th-largest city in Canada, Brampton has a well-diversified economy and is home to more than 500,000 residents and 8,000 businesses. The city continues to retain a "Triple A" credit rating by Standard & Poor's, reflecting its successful economy and debt-free position. Brampton celebrates its diverse population that represents people from more than 175 distinct ethnic backgrounds who speak more than 70 different languages. Offering more than 6,000 acres of parkland, Brampton takes pride in being known as the Flower City of Canada. Brampton also has been designated as an International Safe Community by the World Health Organization. For more information, visit www.brampton.ca.*

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About Us

IDV Solutions®, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, is a software company specializing in enterprise mashups.

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