Dutch city launches iPhone app for lodging civic complaints

Potholes, stray garbage, broken street lamps? Citizens of Eindhoven can now report local issues by iPhone, using the BuitenBeter app that was launched today. After spotting something that needs to be fixed, residents can use the app to take a picture, select an appropriate category and send their complaint directly through to the city council. A combination of GPS and maps lets users pinpoint the exact location of the problem, providing city workers with all the information they need to identify and resolve the problem.

The application covers a wide range of familiar nuisances, from broken sidewalks to loitering youth (who will hopefully respond favourably to having their picture taken by concerned citizens). Compared with lodging a complaint by phone or in writing, BuitenBeter creates a nearly frictionless experience and will no doubt prompt a wider group of people to become active reporters of issues that need the city's attention.

Besides giving people an easy way to send through detailed reports, city officials also believe the concept will create shorter lines of communication, and will facilitate quicker feedback from local government to citizens. Developed by mobile solutions provider Yucat, the BuitenBeter app will soon be available for Android and Windows Mobile phones, too. Eindhoven has signed on for a twelve-month trial, and Yucat hopes to roll out the system to other cities in the near future. (Related: In San Francisco, civic complaints via Twitter — NYC challenges developers to create apps using city data — Tagging repairs for local government.)

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