



Designer

VectorWorks
Rejuvenates
the Town of
Spa, Belgium

VectorWORKS®



Since Roman times, Spa, Belgium, has been famous for its healing hot springs. Using VectorWorks, the historic city center has been redesigned according to a revolutionary new "Shared Space" concept that integrates the advances of modern times.

The Town of Spa, Belgium, which gave us the word "spa," has been famous for its healing hot mineral springs as far back as Roman times. Today, the town is best known as home to the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps, which hosts the annual Belgian Formula One Grand Prix.

Spa is also the location of one of the pilot projects of the latest European "Shared Space" concept, a new philosophy for the design, management, and maintenance of streets and public places to safely and effectively integrate pedestrian and automobile traffic. The town held a competition to select the best redesign of its historic city center according to the Shared Space concept. And the winning plan was designed in VectorWorks.

Spa's winning treatment

Combining some of Spa's most prized ancient buildings—such as the Thermes, which houses the town's oldest thermal baths—with modern intrusions such as traffic, posed a particular challenge for the architectural team "UnTroisCinq." More than 17,000 vehicles make their way through the city center each day. But the team proposed a solution with the help of VectorWorks.

"There were many challenges on this project," says UnTroisCinq architect Francesco Bellazecca. "From a cultural and historical perspective, Spa is one of the most important cities in Europe, known worldwide for its hot springs, as well as its history and unique architecture. It's a vibrant city that welcomes thousands daily, which creates a lot of traffic. From an urban planning perspective, it's located at the bottom of a valley, and it's difficult to redirect traffic in a linear city that's framed by hills. Because of the underground hot springs, building a tunnel was out of the question."



Shared Space—a fresh approach to designing public spaces

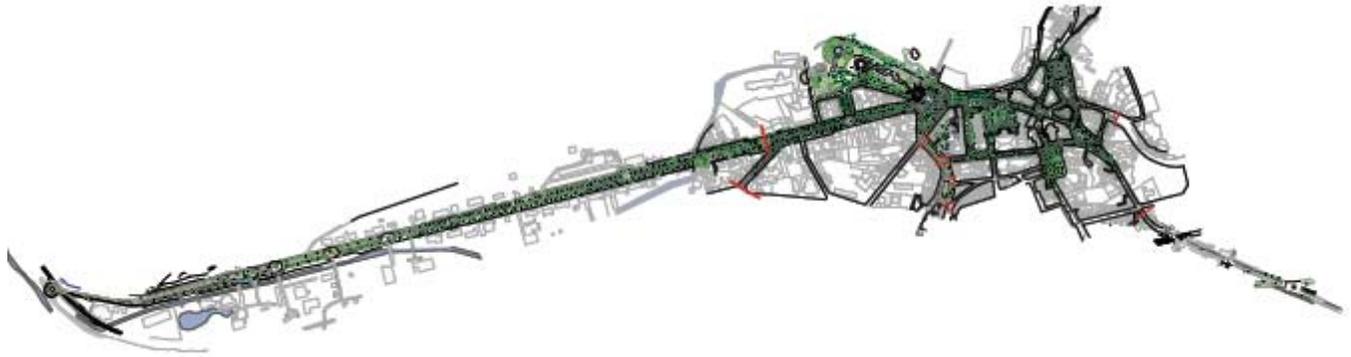
Shared Space is the name of a new concept emerging across Europe. Its new philosophy is forging innovative policies and principles for the design, management, and maintenance of streets and public places, based on integrating traffic and pedestrians safely and effectively. Its striking feature is the absence of conventional traffic management measures, such as signs, road markings, mixed traffic patterns, speed bumps, and barriers. This new concept is currently being tested in seven pilot projects in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, England, and Belgium—including the town of Spa.



A healthy balance of flexibility and ease of use

Six architectural firms from various Belgian cities make up UnTroisCinq. In their individual practices, most members use VectorWorks throughout all phases of their daily workflows and found it to be a real benefit while collaborating on the Spa competition.

"For us, using VectorWorks is primarily a matter of ease of use and flexibility," says UnTroisCinq architect Antoinette Defay. "We can design from scratch, create detailed plans, and produce construction drawings and bills of material in less than two weeks—and while exchanging files between Mac and Windows. This came in handy for us particularly with the Spa redesign competition, since we had limited time to create a design for an entire city center."



Speed and versatility offer a holistic approach

Pierre Lenders, another architect on the UnTroisCinq team, adds, "Once we imported the background plans of Spa's existing infrastructure into VectorWorks, including its many historic buildings, monuments, and plazas, we had already saved time. And we did all our sketches and brainstorming on screen, because VectorWorks allowed us to quickly manipulate objects and make changes. We could easily envision how Spa's city center could meet the concept of a shared space where vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians could circulate freely."

UnTroisCinq architect Roger Bonjean concludes, "We ended up producing many more boards and much more detailed drawings than our competitors—thanks to the speed and versatility VectorWorks gives us—because we wanted people to fully understand the changes we were planning for Spa. I think that helped us win the competition."



VectorWorks— the complete package

UnTroisCinq finds VectorWorks invaluable for many reasons.

"VectorWorks is much more than just a CAD program for us; it is an invaluable tool in so many ways," says Bellazecca. "It's flexible to meet all our needs. The ability to customize VectorWorks is a big benefit, for example; we can easily develop our own plug-ins. We also find it to be a very effective presentation tool—we're able to integrate photos and scanned plans with drawings to create exactly the effect we're looking for. And working between Mac and Windows is not a problem. We can comfortably exchange files over the Internet without having to convert this or that."

Defay adds, "We also like the VectorWorks' upgrades; each new version brings real enhancements, and it's always a pleasure to try out new capabilities. Most of us are smaller firms, and VectorWorks is very reasonably priced, considering all the capabilities it offers us."

