

Network cameras increase feeling of safety in the city of Boom.

Boom installs Axis cameras to solve crime and act as a deterrent.



Organization:

City of Boom

Location:

Boom, Belgium

Industry segment:

City surveillance

Application:

Safety and security

Axis partners:

VolkerWessels Telecom
Belgium, SeeTec AG

Mission

When it came into office in 2012, one of Boom Town Council's priorities was to improve security and the accompanying feeling of safety in and around the town center. This included the installation of security cameras at strategic locations.

Solution

The Boom town council opted for a combination of Axis cameras linked together in a network.

Result

Thanks to these security cameras, not only has the feeling of safety increased significantly but the cameras have also helped solve some petty crimes. And last but not least, potential offenders or troublemakers are aware of the presence of the cameras, and that has a strong deterrent effect.



Boom is a town in the province of Antwerp, situated on the river Rupel, with around 17,200 inhabitants. The population density is approximately 2,200 inhabitants per square kilometer.

After the elections in 2012, the new coalition (consisting of the CD&V, Open VLD and NVA parties) began tackling the perception of insecurity. "That was one of the main items on our agenda," explains NVA Mayor Jeroen Baert, "and perhaps one of the most important reasons why so many people voted for us. So we made this our number one priority. It was also high time – people were no longer happy using the bus stop on the market square. Some were even too afraid to go to the movies. The cultural life of Boom was at risk, and we had to put a stop to this."

To combat the feeling of insecurity, various measures were taken. "License plate recognition was one," says Baert, "another was a mobile camera to catch illegal dumping. But the most extensive measure was certainly the installation of security cameras in and around the market square in Boom town center."

Deterrent effect

Shortly after the elections at the beginning of 2013, Boom Town Council began looking into exactly what they needed to achieve their objectives: deter criminals, increase the feeling of safety and, if possible, also assist in solving any crimes. This investigation led to an invitation to tender in the autumn of 2013. From the offers received, the Council chose that of VolkerWessels Telecom Belgium.

These specialists in the field of telecom, energy and security included Axis cameras in their offer. "Axis is the only supplier," says Bart Van Weyenberg, Project Manager at VolkerWessels Telecom, "with a wide in-house range of high-quality cameras with which Boom could achieve the desired result – a combination of wide camera angles for a good overview and cameras with high resolution for zooming in on details when necessary."

Initially there were some reservations about the use of security cameras. The police in particular expressed some misgivings; they have insufficient personnel to continuously monitor the camera images, but were afraid that residents would expect this of them.

"But the security cameras are not a monitoring system," clarifies Mayor Baert explicitly. "They are not used to keep an eye on the market square and immediate vicinity 24/7, but to be able to look back in the case of incidents and find out exactly what happened." As soon as this was explained, the reservations quickly disappeared.

The cameras were installed and connected in April 2014 and officially brought into use in June. The implementation project proceeded virtually faultlessly. "VolkerWessels Telecom proved to be an excellent and reliable partner who reacted to every question or problem. The only delays we experienced were associated with external governing parties," reflects Erwin Forceville, Department Manager for District Affairs in Boom, with satisfaction.

Good location and good combination

The first misdeed recorded by the cameras was surprisingly enough directed at the cameras themselves. "Someone from the immediate vicinity of the market square was not happy about his comings and goings being continuously monitored. So he angled one of the cameras so that it gave an almost useless image. Unfortunately for him, the sabotage was filmed by another camera so the offender could quickly be confronted with his own actions," grinned Forceville.



Since then, a few offenses have been captured on camera. "One of the offenses perfectly illustrated the importance of a good combination of cameras and a good location for each camera," said Bart Van Weyenberg. "On one camera, an offender's license plate was not legible. But when we looked for this car on the images of the other cameras, on one camera in a side street we were not only able to read the license plate but we also saw the driver commit two further offenses."

Nicer to linger

More important than solving individual crimes is the effect of the cameras on potential offenders and on the inhabitants of Boom, believes Mayor Jeroen Baert. "Anyone who was intending to commit an offense now thinks twice, because they know that the chance of being caught is so much greater. The effect is also noticed by law-abiding citizens, who feel more at ease in the town. Once again it is pleasant to linger in and around the market square, without always being afraid that you'll be harassed or robbed."

This feeling outweighs any concerns about privacy that previously hindered the installation of security cameras, confirms Baert. "On social media, for example, we've only had favorable comments about the deterrent effect that the cameras have on potential offenders and on young people loitering around. No one says a word about infringement of privacy. On the contrary, now some citizens are asking whether they should have their own private cameras installed."

The positive reactions to the presence of the cameras and their beneficial effect has convinced the Town Council that installing security cameras was a good decision. "Together with our other measures, we have made the town nicer than it was two years ago," concluded Mayor Baert, "but things could be even better. So we are now considering installing security cameras elsewhere in the town so that the feeling of safety extends over our entire district."

"The security cameras on and around the market square in Boom town center have greatly increased the chances of catching offenders. Offenders now think twice, and for law-abiding citizens it is once again pleasant to linger in the town center."

Jeroen Baert, Mayor of Boom



About Axis Communications

Axis offers intelligent security solutions that enable a smarter, safer world. As the global market leader in network video, Axis is driving the industry by continually launching innovative network products based on an open platform - delivering high value to customers through a global partner network. Axis has long-term relationships with partners and provides them with knowledge and ground-breaking network products in existing and new markets.

Axis has more than 1,800 dedicated employees in more than 40 countries around the world, supported by a network of over 70,000 partners across 179 countries. Founded in 1984, Axis is a Sweden-based company listed on NASDAQ Stockholm under the ticker AXIS.

For more information about Axis, please visit our website www.axis.com.