



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** James R. Helmer  
Interim CIO

**SUBJECT: STATUS OF CITY'S WIRELESS  
STRATEGY**

**DATE:** May 20, 2005

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Approved	/s/	Date	05/26/05
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## **BACKGROUND**

In the Mayor's March Budget Message, the Administration was directed to report back on the City's Wireless Strategy, including a comparison of wireless programs in other cities.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Wi-Fi Hotspots City-wide**

Wireless fidelity, more commonly referred to as wi-fi, refers to a local area network which uses high frequency radio signals to send and receive data over short distances. Currently, there are over one hundred and fifty (150) wi-fi hotspot zones throughout the City of San José. This includes the Convention Center, Airport, hotels, restaurants, bookstores, and many other types of commercial businesses within San José. With such a larger number of sites, staff is reviewing options to provide an easy to use application on the City website that will facilitate citizens in finding wi-fi service areas.

### **Free Wi-Fi Outdoors in Downtown**

In a limited Downtown area, the City facilitates a pilot program providing free Internet access in outdoor spaces through a *pro bono* arrangement with a third-party provider (GNI). Coverage includes the Circle of Palms, Plaza de Caesar Chavez and San Pedro Square. The City provides this service through a partnership with the Convention and Visitors Bureau. The original partnership agreement expired in March 2005 and has been extended for an additional six months.

The pilot has demonstrated the value of the free service to activate outdoor public spaces, to promote Downtown offerings, and as potential infrastructure for special events such as the Grand Prix. Usage has averaged 2,000 log-ins per month; there have been more than 5,000 unique users over the 13-month period.

There is strong interest in making the pilot service permanent and expanding the service area to include greater coverage of the Downtown core, including the Guadalupe River Park.

### **Airport Wireless Services**

As part of the Airport's efforts to improve travelers' experience at the Airport, they are reviewing wireless strategies. This work is expected to result in enhanced coverage for users and provide a greater degree of customer satisfaction.

### **New City Hall**

The new City Hall (NCH) provides a potential opportunity for the City to expand wi-fi coverage. The site is being evaluated to identify the exact placement of wi-fi equipment. This work is being done through the City's converged network vendor, Nortel. The highest priority locations are those that allow visitors to use the service. The first phase of the wi-fi installation, expected to be brought online in early August 2005, focuses on portions of the NCH public spaces where this service would be most helpful to the public.

### **Collaboration with San José State University**

As part of the NCH wi-fi project, staff has been working in collaboration with San José State University. The University is working on its own wi-fi implementation and is well along in the selection of a vendor for their campus-wide system. City staff is working with the University in defining how to integrate these services, ensuring that they work well together, while focusing on the wireless needs at the Main Library.

### **Comparison with other Cities**

As indicated above, San José is working with all the cities within Santa Clara County as part of the SVWTF in order to implement wireless technologies in a coordinated and seamless manner, where possible. This applies both in the public safety arena, such as interoperability, as well as several public access models. What we have discovered is that each city has different levels of implementation in a field of technology that is rapidly changing.

Comparing San José's wi-fi efforts to other successful programs across the country is also occurring. We are currently exploring different models of wireless services, and results of a comprehensive comparison will be provided to Council in an information memo prior to Council's adoption of a City Wi-Fi Policy in fall 2005.

### **City Wi-Fi Policy**

Finally, work continues on the drafting of a City wi-fi policy. Working with the Public Technology Institute, Joint Venture Silicon Valley Wireless Task Force (SVWTF), and other wireless groups, staff is reviewing wireless programs and compiling information to be used for the formulation of a policy. The next step in preparing this policy is to work with a consultant and identify the requirements of the community. Staff working with the consultant, will reach out to interview all stakeholders. This information will provide the foundation for a policy that guides San José's wireless strategy. A policy will be brought forward for Council's adoption in the fall of 2005.

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March 20, 2005

**Subject: Status of City's Wireless Strategy**

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**COORDINATION**

This item has been coordinated with the Airport Department and the Office of Economic Development.

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