



Office of the Mayor
City of Los Angeles

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MAYOR VILLARAIGOSA ANNOUNCES LA WIFI INITIATIVE

The LA WiFi network will be the single largest citywide network in the country providing wireless, cost-effective, high-speed internet access

LOS ANGELES - Working to connect all of Los Angeles to the global community and global economy, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa today announced the LA WiFi Initiative, which will provide residents, schools and businesses with cost-effective, high-speed access to the internet. The LA WiFi Initiative will plan and build the single largest citywide network in the country.

“Today is the start of Los Angeles version 2.0,” Mayor Villaraigosa said. “Today we announce our commitment to creating the single largest citywide wireless network in the country.”

Joining Mayor Villaraigosa for the announcement were Councilman Tony Cardenas, chair of the city's information technology committee; Tim Sarnoff, president Sony Pictures Imageworks; John Manulis, CEO of Visionbox Media Group; and, students from the Oscar de la Hoya Charter School.

“In today's fast-paced world, we need to give hard-working Angelenos an easier and cheaper way of doing business with the city. Providing a city-wide wireless telecommunications program is another way of bridging the gap between local government and the communities it serves,” said Councilman Cardenas, chairman of the city's information technology committee.

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“The lifeblood of the entertainment business is communicating,” John Manulis said. “Whether it’s creative ideas, complex logistics or bringing the story to audience, our industry is already global. “But for Los Angeles to maintain its primacy as the entertainment capital of world, a robust and fully accessible broadband network is essential.”

The first step of the LA WiFi initiative is to hire a technology expert who will join a city team to structure a proposal to attract and engage the private sector. The working team will consider several issues, including adopting best business model for Los Angeles’ needs, ensuring community participation in the network’s planning, and honing the network’s ability to improve city services. Once negotiations with the private sector are complete, the construction of the network’s infrastructure will begin. It is estimated that construction of the network would begin in mid 2008 with completion of the citywide network by 2009.

“By giving every resident high-speed access, we will transform Los Angeles into a cutting-edge city across every neighborhood and every economic sector,” Mayor Villaraigosa said. “LA WiFi will help us meet the technology needs of our world-class media and creative industries, give a leg up to small businesses, plug every neighborhood directly into the knowledge-based global economy, and make computer training programs for students an after-school reality.”

Wireless internet is just one component of WiFi usage with businesses and municipal governments using the technology to transfer endless amounts of data. On a practical level, this means providing integral, high-speed solution for entertainment companies to juggle simultaneous projects in real-time at lower cost with reliable teleconferencing, for example.

“For a business, efficiency is at the heart of being able to compete. By bringing WiFi citywide, we are trying to leapfrog our physical limitations,” John Manulis of Visionbox Media said. “If you extrapolate how the shift to email from faxes had on the efficiency of business, you realize the future ability to move around ideas and pieces aggressively within a community or overseas are simply extraordinary - and critical.”

The City of Los Angeles could use the network to enhance the delivery of city services by transmitting data between police patrol cars, instantaneously sending the location of potholes or forwarding on-site building inspection reports to speed up the building process.

Today’s announcement was held at 7 + FIG, a shopping and dining destination located at the foot of Ernst & Young Plaza. Brookfield Properties, who owns and manages 7 + FIG, currently provides wireless internet at no cost to its customers.

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“WiFi” is short for Wireless Fidelity and is commonly used to refer to a system that sends data over radio waves through a network of transmitters. Transmitters, the size of shoe boxes, bounce data back and forth to each other and to users. Many Angelenos have connected wirelessly to the internet using a WiFi network at home or at a coffee shop. The LA WiFi Initiative would expand that type of network citywide at a low cost and at high speeds.

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