

Culver City, California

New Hotspot Catches on Fast with Firetide Instant Mesh Networks

Organization

Culver City, California

Industry

Local Government

More Information

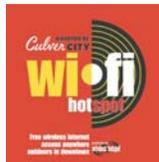
www.ci.culver-city.ca.us

Challenge

Deploy a hotspot downtown to encourage foot traffic and provide convenient Internet access for shoppers, business workers, and visitors

Solution

Firetide HotPoint™ 1000R Outdoor Mesh Routers



The hottest thing in an already-happening city, the new Wi-Fi hotspot in Culver City, California attracted dozens of users before it was even announced and launched. Using a Firetide™ Instant Mesh Network™, the Culver City IT department and Redevelopment Agency brought instant Internet access downtown easily, quickly, and cost-effectively.

Home to the film industry's leading post-production studios, Culver City has undergone extensive redevelopment in the past several years. The latest project is Town Plaza, site of the original "old town" business district. Running five blocks along Culver City Boulevard, Town Plaza is the hub of a vibrant new downtown that attracts tourists, film industry workers, shoppers, and business people for theater, shopping, dining, and people-watching. In seeking to differentiate the city from neighboring areas and attract new business, the Culver City Redevelopment Agency and city IT department teamed to investigate the feasibility of bringing Wi-Fi Internet access to Town Plaza.

"Based on results from Wi-Fi deployments in other cities, we believed that introducing Wi-Fi would enhance visitors' experiences and offer businesses an added incentive to locate here," said Alicia Weintraub, Community Development Management Analyst.

Added John Richo, Culver City's Director of Information Technology, "Our working population is primarily young, technical, creative folks who use technologies like Wi-Fi. We knew we could add value to downtown visits and increase dwell time with free, wireless Internet access."

An Emerging Necessity

Richo and other Culver City leaders had explored other cities' uses of Wi-Fi and appreciated its value as a free service. The Town Plaza project offered a perfect opportunity to pilot a Wi-Fi deployment and become the first community on the west side of Los Angeles with free public Internet access. With a small budget and the go-ahead for a pilot project, Richo and his team began evaluating solutions.

Their first step was enlisting Wireless Hotspot, Inc., a systems integration partner, to help them identify potential solutions and ultimately deploy the new network. Joseph Hsieh, president of Wireless Hotspot, introduced the city to Firetide and Firetide Instant Mesh Networks and arranged a demonstration.

"When we first saw the Firetide solution, we set up a mesh network in our conference room in about five minutes," said Carlos Vega, Microcomputer Analyst for the Culver City IT department. "Then I took several nodes and set up a network in the office and boom there it was. It worked flawlessly. What sold us on Firetide was its mesh architecture and self-healing

Case Study: Culver City, California



capabilities,” he continued. “Other alternatives that offered the reach we needed were line-of-sight solutions. If one went down, it couldn’t automatically re-route. The other solutions required extra equipment and were difficult to manage. The system integrator we chose, Wireless Hotspot, was also great to work with. Together with Firetide, they provided an easy-to-use solution that exactly matched our needs.”

One. Two. Three. Go!

Wireless Hotspot created the one-mile-square downtown hotspot for Culver City using a Firetide wireless mesh network consisting of three HotPoint 1000R outdoor mesh routers mounted on top of city hall, the theater, and the Culver City Hotel. With the Firetide mesh network in place and blanketing the downtown area, Wireless Hotspot connected wireless access points to each HotPoint mesh router to provide Wi-Fi access at each location. A gateway device connected to a 384 Kbps DSL line provides an Internet feed to the mesh network as well as log-in and authentication capabilities.

Each HotPoint 1000R mesh router employs a 200mW radio that can cover up to two miles, and patented technology allows the mesh routers to locate each other automatically. HotPoint mesh routers connect wirelessly to each other and adding more mesh routers to the network is as easy as plugging them into an AC



Downtown Culver City—Location of the first free municipal wireless hotspot on Los Angeles’ Westside.

power source. By creating multiple paths for each node, mesh networks can increase aggregate bandwidth and provide redundancy for added network reliability. If a HotPoint router is moved to a different location or removed completely, the network automatically heals itself and reroutes network traffic accordingly.

With the extended operating range and multi-hop routing capability of its mesh routers, the Firetide mesh network can extend

to any distance and any location without wires. This allows network connectivity in areas that would otherwise be too distant, expensive, difficult, or environmentally sensitive to wire with LAN cable. And because each HotPoint 1000R mesh

router provides standard 10/100 Ethernet via two weatherproof ports, Ethernet devices such as Internet gateways, access points, surveillance cameras, computers, switches, and sensors, can operate on Firetide’s wireless mesh backbone. For example, by simply plugging IP video cameras into these Ethernet ports, Culver City can also have an instant wireless video surveillance network. No software, reconfiguration or additional setups are required for Ethernet devices to work on a Firetide mesh network.

The new Town Plaza Wi-Fi network covers a perimeter that includes Trader Joe’s, located at Culver Boulevard and Ince Street, and the border of the Sony Pictures campus at Washington Boulevard and Hughes Avenue, five blocks west. Shoppers, workers, and visitors have wireless coverage in the outdoor areas of the downtown business district, including the Town Plaza for outdoor performances and gatherings, the Ivy Substation & Media Park, Culver Hotel, and outdoor dining areas along Culver and Washington Boulevards.

“Wireless Hotspot installed the hotspot quickly and easily, allowing us to provide instant service to our community,” said Richo. “Connecting with Firetide and Wireless Hotspot really made it happen.”

Catching on Quickly

Within a day of turning the network on, almost a dozen people discovered the network and registered for free access. Even prior to the city’s official announcement and launch, dozens of people were already registered and more sign on every day.

“The Firetide network enables us to deliver convenience to our visitors, promote downtown businesses, and keep our city on the leading edge,” said Richo. “With low maintenance and a fair cost, it’s a perfect fit for our requirements. We couldn’t be working with a better group of people and we expect this to become a big success.”

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