

Municipal Spotlight – Bellwood, Illinois – The “Digital City” Project

Like its urban neighbor Chicago, Bellwood found itself facing a number of challenges: budgetary constraints; the need to provide more Village services with fewer resources; citizen demands for safer streets and an enhanced quality of life; requests from public safety officials for “more eyes” to safeguard the Village; the goal to provide schools and residents with ubiquitous Internet access; and the needs of business owners seeking ways to attract and retain more customers. Moreover, the Village has aggressive growth plans to support including the addition of hundreds of new housing units, more commercial development, the expansion of Benedictine University, and supplementary retail build-out.

Bellwood decided to meet all these challenges head-on by deploying a city-wide wireless network. The Village chose Current Technologies Corporation and Proxim Wireless as partners to deploy the network, first to address the budgetary and public safety challenges, then to address the remaining challenges one-by-one. The results achieved to date are impressive.

- **Meeting the Budgetary Challenge**
Bellwood’s security and surveillance application has made the wireless network very affordable for the community and other applications, because the City was able to pay for it using tax dollars collected from developers and funds available from Homeland Security.
- **Safer Streets and Enhanced Quality of Life**
The Village of Bellwood now offers its citizens all the benefits of a gated community without the high price tag. The crime rate decreased 15% in 2005, and another 15% in 2006. Individuals intent on committing crime know that Bellwood is not an easy target, and they are staying away.
- **“More Eyes” to Safeguard the Village**
Prior to the deployment of the Proxim Wireless network, citizens and the Public Safety department were clamoring for the hiring of additional police officers. Now, with its security and surveillance system in place, Bellwood has the equivalent of “a police officer on every corner,” and requests to hire additional police officers have stopped. In a related statistic, calls to 911 decreased by 3,000 calls in 2005 and an additional 3,000 calls in 2006.
- **Ubiquitous and Affordable Wi-Fi Coverage**
Very soon every citizen of Bellwood will have access to the Internet. The Village plans to provide free access to selected educational web sites – so that children of all ages have access to the Internet for help with homework – and will offer “premium” unlimited Internet access to all citizens at a very affordable monthly rate.
- **Enabling Commerce**
The steps taken by Bellwood in deploying a Proxim Wireless network have made the community a much more attractive place to do business. Under development is an additional 250,000 sq. ft. of commercial property, and Bellwood expects even more commercial undertakings in 2007.
- **Supporting Community Growth**
Through its deployment of a Proxim Wireless network, Bellwood has set itself apart from neighboring cities and spurred its growth as an attractive and affordable suburb of Chicago. Soon, the City will be adding 1,000 new housing units, additional retail and a new transportation hub, all made viable by its wireless network.

PROFILE: Bellwood, Illinois

- A suburb of Chicago located in Cook County, Illinois
- Population of 20,535
- Land area of 2.4 mi²

Wireless Goals

- Empower Public Safety and enhance the quality of life – IP-based security & surveillance system
 - Protect citizenry – decrease crime
 - Safeguard critical infrastructure – water treatment and storage facilities, utilities
 - Monitor and enforce traffic
- Provide city-wide Wi-Fi* to residents – bridge the Digital Divide
- Increase municipal productivity – deliver and manage city services faster and more cost-effectively
- Attract and enable commerce
- Support community growth and expansion
- Continue to increase network capabilities and applications over time to better serve the community

The Solution

A partnership with Proxim Wireless and Current Technologies Corporation to deploy a Proxim-based Wi-Fi mesh and unlicensed WiMAX city-wide broadband network.

Results to Date

- Crime down 15% year-over-year
- 911 calls reduced by thousands year-over-year
- Dramatic increase in home values (tri-fold over last two years)
- Significant increase in city revenue from red-light running citations

