



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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In the zone

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Free, public Wi-Fi in downtown Waterbury

Parts of downtown Waterbury are now in the zone — a free public Wi-Fi zone. A new “wireless mesh network” of access points was recently installed around downtown.

The new system is bringing free Internet access to residents and visitors in the downtown area. The Wi-Fi zone encompasses Main Street, including Dac Rowe Field, Rusty Parker Park and the Waterbury Public Library, along with parts of Stowe Street.

Caitlin Lovegrove, network and outreach coordinator for the Vermont Digital Economy Project, has been working alongside economic development consultant Darren Winham of DarWin Dynamic Solutions to get the project up and running for about a year.

“It’s been a long time coming,” Lovegrove said Monday.

The Wi-Fi zone was made possible in part by the Digital Economy Project, part of the Vermont Council on Rural Development, and the Vermont Telecommunications Authority. It is funded entirely through state and federal grant monies.

“In Waterbury, like many other places, there was a real need,” Lovegrove said of Wi-Fi access.

Access points, in the form of small white boxes affixed to various buildings, allow for a direct connection to the Internet through a smart phone, laptop, iPad or other wireless devices.

“Residents, people coming through downtown for business and tourists,” are all welcome to use the system, Lovegrove said, “provided they have a device that can access Wi-Fi, and they are within reach of the signal from an access point.”

There are some restrictions to what folks can do once connected.

Bandwidth is limited to 256 kilobytes per client; streaming movies from Netflix or trying to download large files will not work.

“With this type of access, people can get to things like email and Facebook rather easily, and usage is monitored so we can make sure one person isn’t using 90 percent of the network,” Lovegrove said. “We do it so everyone has a chance to use it.”

After making the initial connection to the “splash page” welcoming users to Waterbury’s new Wi-Fi network, it is made clear that all use is monitored, some uses are blocked and users abusing the system will be kicked off the network.

Everyone’s usage is tracked and recorded so data trends like which sites are the most frequented can be maintained.

Since the zone was activated earlier this week, usage data shows folks have mostly been browsing Facebook, checking their email and hunting down deals on Amazon.com [1].

Users can browse the Internet freely for about 30 minutes before a timeout function kicks in and the user is redirected through the splash page before surfing can resume, Lovegrove said.

“It’s just a reminder that this is a public network, and once you reach the limit, you can log back on,” she said.

Business boon

Area businesses can also see some perks to having Internet access in and around their establishments.

For instance, a group of visitors traveling through Waterbury might see a local business advertised on the splash page and stop in for a visit.

“Beyond the overt economic benefits of driving users to a site that highlights Waterbury’s hotels, restaurants and retail businesses, the system offers insight into Internet trends that can help with local marketing,” Winham said.

Lovegrove said the Wi-Fi zone would also be beneficial during emergencies, such as a flood, allowing people to access important information.

The Digital Economy Project supplied all the equipment for the network and labor costs associated with the setup. The group will also work with community leaders to find a financial sponsor for the ongoing cost of the Internet connection, which typically ranges from about \$80 to \$100 a month.

Many local businesses have already agreed to donate bandwidth to help keep the Internet connection going, Lovegrove said.

When the five-year licenses for the equipment expire, the town will be responsible for paying the

renewal fees at about \$150 per year for each of the 10 access point devices.

Waterbury is one of 14 towns in the state that now have public Wi-Fi zones, along with nine others that have installed smaller hotspots.

There will be an official public launch event for the Wi-Fi zone, probably in late June, “that will include instruction on how to use the system and some of its features,” Winham said.

The exact date of the event has not yet been announced.

Locations of Wi-Fi access points:

Wilson Architects (83 South Main St.)

Waterbury Public Library (28 North Main St.)

Dac Rowe Field (North Main Street)

Vermont Adult Learning Center (60 South Main St.)

Edgeworks Creative (65 South Main St.)

Steele Block Building (46 Main St.)

The Reservoir Restaurant and Tap Room (1 South Main St.)

Waterbury Senior Center (14 Stowe St.)

Rusty Parker Park (1 Rotarian Place)

This article was originally published in the Waterbury Record, [here](#) [2].

Source URL: <https://www.vtrural.org/programs/digital-economy/press/waterbury-wifi>

Links

[1] <http://amazon.com/>

[2] http://www.stowetoday.com/waterbury_record/news/article_ed896312-f196-11e3-88cc-001a4bcf887a.html