



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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By Matt Mientka | Waterbury Record

Waterbury now has the largest downtown free Wi-Fi coverage in Vermont.

The public Wi-Fi network, completed this month, encompasses Stowe and Main streets and allows access from Rusty Parker Park, the Waterbury Library and Dac Rowe Fields.

The network has a half-dozen signal repeaters along that route. It has been attracting hundreds of users per month, many catching the signal from the parking lot outside the library or along the street.

The Vermont Digital Economy Project developed the network with support from the Vermont Telecommunications Authority and Waterbury's town and village governments. The development sprang from federal and state grants intended to help Waterbury and other Vermont towns recover from the devastating effects of Tropical Storm Irene in 2011.

In November, 115 people used the Waterbury Library's indoor network, which offers printing, too. Outside, 668 people used the public Wi-Fi via the library's signal repeater, one of six broadcasting the network, said Mary Kasamatsu, library director.

"It seems quite popular and occasionally it was very popular when folks were down on Dac Rowe Field during the summer, she said. "I haven't actually had to do anything on the maintenance side and there doesn't seem to have been any long outages."

Kasamatsu also said she has not yet had to block any users for violating the network's terms of agreement.

"We feel this is a small but important step in Waterbury's continued revitalization," said Caitlin Lovegrove, network and outreach coordinator for the Vermont Digital Economy Project. "There are many exciting projects going on in Waterbury that will help the town and village to thrive in the coming years, and the free public Wi-Fi can help signal how forward-thinking Waterbury is, as a place."

Indeed, Waterbury has followed a typical path of development with regard to Internet

development. By the turn of the millennium, the public library had wired Internet access for patrons, then added wireless access in 2005 that attracts users to the library or to the parking lot after-hours.

Moreover, the public network drives users to a sign-in page advising of activities and businesses in Waterbury, helping the town to market its hotel, restaurant and retail businesses.

Aside from Waterbury, the Vermont Digital Economy Project is working with a couple of dozen other Vermont towns that suffered flood damage in 2011. In large part, funding came from a federal disaster recovery grant from the Economic Development Administration, as well as from donors such as IBM, Microsoft, the Snelling Center for Government, the Vermont Department of Libraries, the Vermont Small Business Development Center, and the Vermont State Colleges.

According to Broadband Now, Waterbury ranks as the 2,061st fastest small city in America for broadband speeds, with an average speed of 27.6 BPS across 14 broadband service providers. Those speeds are 20 percent faster than average speeds across Vermont, which include many remote areas with limited broadband access.

Overall, Waterbury's broadband coverage is 6 percent faster than the national average.

[Read the original article here.](#) ^[1]

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[1] http://www.stowetoday.com/waterbury_record/wired-in-waterbury-free-internet-access/article_9b1a06ac-8ac7-11e4-a483-5f54d4bc1e27.html