

CITY OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
Office of the Mayor
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PRESS RELEASE

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Menino Announces City's First WiFi Pilot Project

*Grove Hall, Dudley Square Area to Host First Demonstration;
Mayor Also Lights Two Downtown WiFi Hot Spots as
City's Wireless Initiative Takes Off*

Mayor Thomas Menino today announced that the city's wireless initiative will begin work immediately on its first demonstration program, a square-mile network in Roxbury's Grove Hall and Dudley Square neighborhoods. The mayor also today lit two wireless hot spots in Quincy Market and in the North End's Columbus Park, making it possible for business people, tourists, and residents who visit the areas to access the Internet anytime.

"We said we would move quickly and we have," Mayor Menino said. "The Boston Wireless Initiative is up and running."

The Quincy Market hot spot will provide service throughout the marketplace area and will also cover the area around City Hall Plaza. Two companies, Galaxy Internet Services and SkyPilot, donated the service and equipment. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 103 (IBEW) donated time and labor for the radio installation. The Columbus Park hot spot is the result of a collaboration among Verizon, Cisco, Inc., the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and the Boston Parks Department.

"The downtown locations will help boost economic growth by making the city an even more attractive place to work and visit," Mayor Menino said. "But the Grove Hall and Dudley Square initiative – which is really a network, not just a hot spot – sends a clear message to the neighborhoods that bringing service to everyone is our number one priority."

In its report last summer, the mayor's Wireless Task Force found that only 43 percent of Boston residents have high-speed Internet service and city officials estimate that access in less affluent areas like Grove Hall is far below that percentage. What's more, as many as 80 percent of Boston Public Schools students do not have access at home.

In order to bridge this so-called "digital divide" while at the same time jump-

starting economic growth, the task force recommended a unique model that relies on a non-profit entity to build the citywide wireless system. The non-profit will build a wholesale network open to any Internet Service Provider, thus creating a hotbed for competition and innovation. Prices for the service are expected to be as low as \$10 - \$15 a month.

According to Menino, the Roxbury demonstration project will cover about one square mile and will reach about 5000 households. The service, which will be 25 times faster than dial-up, will initially be offered free but eventually will move to the fee-based structure envisioned by the task force.

Four companies have agreed to donate time and service to the Grove Hall and Dudley Square project: BelAir Networks will provide Wi-Fi mesh radio nodes, antennae and other equipment; MetroNext, Inc. will provide the network's Internet backhaul connection; GigaBeam Corp. will provide ultra high-speed radio equipment to facilitate the transmittal of the Internet backhaul; and Charys will install and operate the network. In addition, Galaxy and US Internet have agreed to be retail ISPs for the demonstration project.

"Building an actual neighborhood network so quickly would not have been possible without the support of these companies and Local 103," said Pam Reeve, a former software executive who was tapped by Menino in July to serve as interim chief executive of the wireless initiative. Reeve said installation of the equipment is expected to begin later this year.

Menino was joined at the formal ceremony at Quincy Market by Reeve, City officials, representatives of the companies working on both projects, community representatives from the Grove Hall Dudley Square areas, and students from TechBoston Academy and the Trotter Elementary School in Grove Hall.

Among the Grove Hall area community members leaders who joined Mayor Menino were Reverend Greg Groover from Charles AME Church; Darnell William, from the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts; Sister Virginia Morrison, Executive Director of the Grove Hall Neighborhood Development Corporation; Jeanne Pinado, Executive Director of Madison Park Development Corporation; Frederica Williams, Executive Director of the Whittier Health Center; Jeanne DuBois, Executive Director of the Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation; Jose Duran, Executive Director of the Hispanic Office for Planning and Evaluation (HOPE); Ricardo Neal, Executive Director of Freedom House; Claudia Smith-Reid, Executive Director of the Roxbury Multi Service Center; Vanessa Calderon, Executive Director of Inquilinos Boriquas en Accion (IBA); and Curtis Henderson, President of the Timothy Smith Network.

For more information about Boston's Wireless Initiative, visit www.cityofboston.gov/wireless.

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