

## Akron Wireless Project Overview April 10, 2008

**About the Akron Wireless Project:** OneCommunity, a nonprofit technology organization dedicated to fostering economic and civic progress through innovative and collaborative applications of information technology, is implementing a mesh network to provide a free wireless Internet access corridor in downtown Akron. A cooperative communication infrastructure will create a “cloud” of Internet access over the area that may be used by anyone with a computer and wireless capability. OneCommunity will lead the project using its award-winning approach, which encourages sustainability through broad cross-sector engagement and shared services.

**Goals:** The project’s goal is to determine and document the most cost-effective way to implement a universal access model that provides a sustainable and positive return-on-investment in terms of economic growth, community development, public safety and education. Universal access refers to the ability of all people to have equal opportunity and access to a beneficial service or product. Universal access is about leveling the playing field for opportunity, benefit and civic engagement.

**Area Served:** The project will provide free wireless Internet access to 8 to 12 square miles of Akron, including downtown, schools, libraries, museums, government buildings, economic development zones, the biomedical corridor, and high-poverty residential areas. (Please see the attached map.) The project area includes more than 600 businesses and their 30,000 employees. Additionally, Akron’s downtown area serves 2.2 million tourists and business travelers annually.

**Timeline:** Planning for the network is already underway. With cooperation from stakeholders and vendors, the network is expected to be operational by early 2009.

**Budget:** The entire network will cost about \$2.2 million to design and deploy.

**Funding:** Knight Foundation awarded OneCommunity a \$625,000 grant for the corridor, including \$500,000 that will be made available when OneCommunity has \$1 million in hand from other sources for the project. Akron Mayor Donald L. Plusquellic has signed a memorandum of understanding with OneCommunity and will recommend that City Council approve a five-year commitment of about \$800,000 toward the design, deployment, and operation of the network. The city’s commitment would include \$395,000 toward capital costs and \$80,000 a year for the network’s operational and maintenance expenses. The city’s total first-year commitment of about \$500,000 would trigger an installment of \$250,000 from Knight for the project. OneCommunity will seek additional funds for the project from various Akron stakeholders, including foundations, corporations, and organizations.