Lawrence Freenet is a non-profit organization that has as its primary purpose the provision of free broadband internet access to Kansas Communities, as an alternative to traditional broadband ISPs. The organization was started in April of 2005 and has a goal of covering the entire Lawrence Kansas area by January 2006.

The construction of the Freenet network is a community project and makes extensive use of networking technologies developed by the Champaign-Urbana Community Wireless Network (CUWiN). These technologies were developed using a federal grant and are intended to make the deployment of projects like Lawrence Freenet simple and inexpensive. By taking advantage of these new technologies, Lawrence Freenet will be the first non-profit organization to deploy a network of this size without the direct financial support of a municipality.

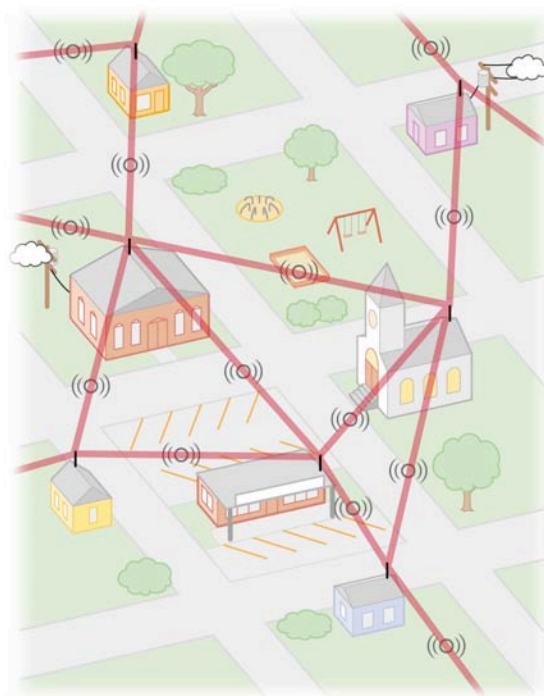The Freenet project fills four major needs of the Lawrence community:

1. Freenet provides internet access to those who could not otherwise afford a high speed connection to the internet
2. Freenet refurbishes legacy equipment and installs it in homes that would otherwise have no computer
3. Freenet staff works one on one with troubled teens to provide constructive activities for them to participate in after school and on weekends
4. The Freenet captive portal provides a forum for community debate and a instrument for other non-profits to raise awareness of issues and activities

Providing Free Internet Access

Access to the internet has become a requirement for almost every profession in the united states. The internet now plays a key role in almost every activity, from finding used auto parts, to developing cutting edge aircraft, to finding a good job. Though it may be surprising to some, many members of the Lawrence community don't have readily available access to the internet. The Lawrence Freenet team aims to solve this problem.

The main focus of Lawrence Freenet is to provide a ubiquitous WIFI network available to all. In order to reach this goal, Lawrence Freenet is using a community oriented approach.

1. Bandwidth is purchased wholesale for reasonable rates.
2. Each user of Lawrence Freenet purchases an access point to gain access to the network.[1]
3. Each access point acts as a smart gateway for neighboring access points.
4. Internet traffic is routed by the fastest possible path to the internet.

Mesh Networking, The Key to the Freenet Approach

This approach is reliable, redundant and is in use throughout industry and in the US military. It provides comprehensive access to data in a self healing network environment.

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[1] Qualified applicants will be eligible for free equipment.

Supplying Computers to Families in Need

Most of the business world is now run via state of the art computing equipment. To keep a competitive edge companies regularly upgrade desktop and server equipment to the newest and fastest available. This constant cycle of upgrades leaves thousands of reasonably fast computers to be thrown away or scrapped.

Many of these legacy systems are more than capable of browsing the internet and word processing. Lawrence Freenet will be giving companies the opportunity to donate these computers to needy households. Our team members will restore, reformat and redeploy these legacy systems and get them back into circulation.

Legacy Computers Awaiting Attention at Freenet Headquarters

Working With Kids

One of the most important benefits that the Freenet team can provide is constructive role models and activities for teens. We would like to recruit 7 or 8 interested teens to work one on one with a Freenet volunteer as we design, build and deploy this community resource.

The kids involved with the project will learn many valuable skills, including:

1. Networking
2. Marketing
3. Business Operations
4. General Computer Trouble Shooting
5. Computer Hardware Integration and Installation

These skills will be useful going forward whether the teens involved become software engineers or lawyers. In addition, working with our volunteers on a one to one basis will allow them to interface with an adult who is close to their own age. We are convinced that exposure to twenty something adults in a non-authoritarian environment will have a positive impact and will help to keep the kids on the right track.

Providing a Community Forum

One of the key reasons for starting the Lawrence Freenet project was to give professionals with significant IT experience an opportunity to use their skills to benefit the community. As part of this effort, Lawrence Freenet is implementing a captive portal that will capture Freenet users for the first 30 seconds they are on the internet.

This captive portal website allows the Lawrence Freenet team to focus the attention of the community on other non-profits that are in need. We are not plumbers, but putting an announcement on our captive portal page that lets the community know that Habitat for Humanity is in need of plumbers allows us to indirectly fill their needs.

Use of City Property

To provide citizens of Lawrence with service, Freenet needs to mount between 100 and 125 antennas in the Lawrence area. Because these antennas function as the backbone of the Freenet mesh, they need to be mounted on tall objects such as light poles, traffic control poles, water towers or multistory buildings.

Since Lawrence Freenet is committed to public service, the organization would like to ask for reasonable access to City owned and operated light poles, traffic control poles, water towers. Specific examples include:

One of the 50' light poles at Holcomb park.	
The roof of the main building at S.W. Elementary School.	
The traffic control signal at the corner of 23rd and Inverness Drive.	
The traffic control signal at the corner of 23rd and Kasold.	

The city sewer treatment center at located at GPS coordinates N 38.932247 W 95.285209. (Approximately 1 block west of 29th & Kasold)	
The water tower at 19th & Kasold.	

Commercial Activities

The Lawrence Freenet team is committed to keeping the Freenet network available to the public at no charge, provided the network is not used for commercial purposes. The use of the Lawrence Freenet network for commercial activities is strictly prohibited unless the end user is using equipment approved by the Lawrence Freenet staff for commercial use. This equipment may be made available to businesses for purchase or under leasing agreements. Monies from these sales or leases will be used to maintain and expand the network to make it available to the public at large.

Requested Action

The Lawrence Freenet team would love to begin working with city staff in order to begin attaching Freenet Access Points within the city right-of-way. We respectfully request that the City Commission direct staff to begin working on a Use of Right-of-way Agreement pursuant to City Ordinance 16-902. We also ask that the City Commission consider waiving any fees that might be associated with attachment of Freenet Equipment within the city right-of-way. In addition to right-of-way access, Lawrence Freenet needs space to refurbish legacy computers and build access points. If the city has any space available, we could put it to good use