

8. Services and Facilities



Master Plan

Relevant plans and policy documents:

- **Five Year Plan, Joint Capital Planning Committee [ongoing update]**
- **Climate Action Plan [October 2005]**
- **Department of Public Works Policies and Procedures**
- **Water Facilities Plan, Tighe & Bond [2001]**
- **Sewer Facilities Plan, Camp Dresser McKee [1991]**
- **Sewer Extension Master Plan [2004]**
- **Fire Station Study Committee, Report to Select Board [Sept. 18, 2006], including Site & Building Assessment Study Caolo & Bienek Associates, Inc.**
- **Open Space & Recreation Plan**
- **Most current planning documents for Police Dept.**
- **Long Range School Facilities Planning, Amherst, Massachusetts, NESDEC [Sept. 2007]**
- **Long Range Plan for Amherst Town Libraries, 2007-2010 [2007]**

A. Goal

To provide excellent, cost-effective, accessible facilities, services, and programs reflecting values respectful of our community diversity, which, through collaboration, contribute to a high quality, safe, civil, healthy, and sustainable community.

B. Overview

This chapter examines Amherst's Town services and facilities, as well as its infrastructure and public utilities. The Town has a strong interest in continuing to provide high-quality services including police, fire, public education, libraries, and social services, among others. Alternative funding sources and creative partnerships need to be pursued to ensure that these services continue to meet the high standards of community members. From an infrastructure standpoint, many of the utilities within Amherst (such as water, sewer, and stormwater systems) were designed and built for future capacities and currently remain in good condition with excess capacity. The community's infrastructure priorities focus on issues of proper maintenance, strategic extensions, and integration of new environmentally sound technologies.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into the following two sections:

- C. **Existing Conditions** provides a brief summary of Amherst's current services and facilities, including its public utilities.
- D. **Objectives and Strategies** details the policy guidelines developed through the Planning Amherst Together public involvement process.

C. Existing Conditions

An assessment of the Town's existing utilities and facilities conditions has been drawn by the consulting team based on technical research, as well as discussions with the CPC and Town Staff. The *Sewer Extension Plan Draft Report (CDM 2004)* and *Facility Plan Update Water Supply and Distribution System (Tighe&Bond 2001)* provided information to aid in the assessment of the existing water and sewer systems.

This section summarizes the key points related to the existing condition of Town services and facilities:

- **Public safety:** The Amherst Police Department has full time police officers and coordinates with the dispatch center. The Amherst Fire Department has a force of fulltime firefighters/EMTs, call

firefighters and student firefighters dispatched from two fire stations. There are mutual aid agreements between the Amherst and UMass police, and between Amherst and neighboring communities regarding emergency medical response.

- **Public schools:** There are approximately 1,400 students in the Amherst elementary schools (grades K-6, plus a small preschool program): Crocker Farm, Fort River, Mark's Meadow, and Wildwood. After 6th grade, Amherst students attend the Amherst-Pelham regional schools, which bring together approximately 1,785 students from Leverett, Pelham, Shutesbury, and Amherst (about 75% of the total), at the regional middle school (grades 7-8) and the regional high school (grades 9-12). Amherst's public schools have a reputation for both academic excellence (with high college enrollment rates) and diversity (elementary students include native speakers of over 30 languages and over 40% students of color).
- **General government:** The Town provides a wide variety of basic government services including policy and day-to-day management, voter registration/elections, construction and business permitting, long-range development and conservation planning, community financial management (assessment, taxation, collections, borrowing, etc.), and health and safety inspections. Most general government services are housed in the Town Hall.
- **Community services:** Amherst provides a wide range of community services including health services, recreation programs, information on childcare and early education, emergency assistance to low-income families, and support services for seniors, children, and veterans. Many of these services are housed in the Bangs Community Center.
- **Libraries:** Amherst has three public libraries: the Jones Library in the downtown, the Munson Library in South Amherst, and the North Amherst Library. The library system receives a combination of public and private funding, with strong private support. These libraries receive over 350,000 visitors annually, and contain more than 210,000 books and 24,000 audio-visual items. As part of the regional lending library system, Amherst sends nearly 43,000 books/year to other communities. The Jones Library and its Special Collections section are a destination for historians, genealogists, and Emily Dickinson/ Robert Frost scholars and enthusiasts.

- **Public works:** The Department of Public Works has a full time staff and the equipment to maintain the Town’s roadways, traffic control equipment, street lighting, water, waste and drain systems, recreation areas and most of the Town’s buildings, parks, and grounds.
- **Water, sewer, drainage, and solid waste/recycling:** The Town’s municipal water system provides, and the sewer system disposes, of up to 3 million gallons of water each day, servicing 93% of the homes and all of the businesses in Amherst. The Town operates a waste/recycling transfer station. These systems are self-supporting through fees and enterprise funds. Each system has some capacity for supporting growth.
- **Buildings and facilities:** The Town owns and maintains about 600,000 sq. ft. of facilities in 65 structures. The oldest was built in 1800 (the DPW shed), the newest in 2003 (the new animal welfare facility). These include libraries, school buildings, a parking garage, fire stations, an old trolley barn now housing DPW offices, the Police Station, waste treatment plants and the Town Hall. The Town also maintains other public and recreational facilities; pools, a golf course, ball fields, historic commons, ornamental parks, and cemeteries, as well as accessory buildings and structures such as comfort stations, storage barns, playground equipment, and foot bridges.
- **Other infrastructure and Town lands -** The Town owns and maintains 98 miles of roadway, sidewalks, bike lanes and other public ways, and is also responsible for numerous bridges and culverts, and two closed landfills. Amherst maintains over 80 miles of conservation trails and actively manages numerous conservation and watershed properties to preserve habitat and mitigate the impacts of human use.

The Objectives and Strategies discussed in the remainder of this chapter provide a framework for meeting Amherst’s future services and facilities needs.

D. Objectives and Strategies

This section describes the objectives and strategies that will support the Services and Facilities Goal for the Town of Amherst.

OBJECTIVE S.1 - Deliver high-quality public safety services.

Maintaining safe and secure communities is important to residents, businesses, and local governments alike. These strategies suggest ways in which the Town of Amherst can enhance the provision of public safety services, reduce crime, and improve overall perceptions of public safety.

STRATEGIES

S.1.A Support high-quality police, fire/EMS and dispatch services that are adequately staffed with trained and properly equipped personnel.

Adequate funding and staffing for police, fire, and EMS services is critical to keep residents safe. As the community continues to change and grow, expansion of these services is necessary. Different avenues of funding and service delivery should be investigated to ensure the desired quality level.

S.1.B Pursue grant funding to enable community policing and bike patrols and other opportunities to bring citizens and law enforcement together.

Community policing is based on the philosophy that greater interaction between police officers and residents can help deter crime and enlist the support of residents in promoting community safety. More foot and bike patrols can lead to familiarity and trust between police and local residents and help to create safer communities. See also H.8.C.

OBJECTIVE S.2 - Deliver high-quality education from pre-school through grade 12.

The Town of Amherst is home to four elementary schools and is part of a regional middle and high school system. The following strategies identify ways to improve educational opportunities and enhance educational facilities in the community.

STRATEGIES

S.2.A Support high-quality schools that are adequately staffed and properly equipped.

Adequate funding and staffing for Amherst's schools is essential to maintaining a high-quality education for the community's children, strong property values, and overall quality of life. Amherst is in competition with other communities for the best teachers, for instance, and, to maintain their historic excellence, Amherst's schools need appropriate levels of staffing, as well as supplies, textbooks, and equipment adequate and up to date.

S.2.B Provide adequate funding for school renovations and new facilities as recommended by the School Committee, school administration, and the Joint Capital Planning Committee.

Investments in physical facilities must be made in order to maintain a high standard of quality education in the community. The School Committee, school administration, and the Joint Capital Planning Committee have developed a set of recommendations regarding renovations of aging facilities and additional facilities required; adequate funding from the Town is necessary to ensure the completion of these projects.

S.2.C Identify appropriate land parcels for a potential new elementary school.

In selecting the location of a new elementary school, the Town should determine which sites would best meet the needs of its changing populations. Ideally, a new school should be easily accessible and serve multiple functions within the community, such as offering space for recreational opportunities and other activities. Such long-range planning is needed because the future of the Mark's Meadow Elementary School, UMass-owned and located on the UMass campus, is in doubt. The Town will continue to pay for repairs to the building under the 2007 Agreement with the University.

OBJECTIVE S.3 – Provide high quality facilities, services, and programs that serve the needs of all the people of Amherst.

A diverse population base necessitates diversity in the services and programs provided within the community. To provide these services, the Town needs to provide adequate personnel and material resources to keep Amherst's citizen-driven participatory government functioning.

STRATEGIES**S.3.A Maintain basic general government services at a high level of quality.**

Demand for government services in Amherst is high. As Amherst becomes an increasingly attractive community for residents and visitors, the demands on general government services will increase. Amherst values and practices a strongly participatory form of citizen government. To sustain this, we need to fund and provide the resources Town staff need to support the more than 50 citizen committees that help to make Amherst government work, as well as the day-to-day work of registering voters, managing Town finances, enforcing health and safety codes, and reviewing and controlling new development.

S.3.B Continue to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and other available sources of revenue to help low and moderate-income families pay for childcare services.

Access to affordable childcare is a necessity for many working families. The Town should continue to use Community Development Block Grant funds and other available funds to make childcare services more affordable to low and moderate-income families.

S.3.C Support the expansion of medical facilities in Amherst in order to provide access to more comprehensive health care services.

- a. Continue to assist Hampshire HealthConnect in maintaining a satellite site which assists Amherst residents in finding free or low-cost health care.
- b. Support multi-cultural education and outreach to Amherst residents on health care issues.
- c. Encourage Cooley Dickinson Hospital to move forward on a proposed urgent-care facility on University Drive.

Providing affordable, accessible, quality health care is a growing challenge throughout the United States. Hampshire HealthConnect, has helped Amherst residents to find free or low-cost health care. The medical community, public health officials, and policymakers should work together to identify options for low-cost health care, reduce the number of uninsured residents, and improve communication and outreach so that all members of the public are fully informed about existing health care options.

S.3.D Help support social service agencies by encouraging communication, coordination, collaboration, and accountability. Seek funding to support priority services for Amherst residents in need.

Inter-agency collaboration can lead to more efficient and effective provision of social services in Amherst. When allocating funding, priority should be placed on those programs that meet the needs of low-income residents and other citizens in need.

S.3.E Expand senior services to meet the needs of a growing senior population.

The demographic trends for Amherst show significant aging of the population in the coming years from both the aging of the resident population and an influx of retirees drawn by the community's high quality services and quality of life. Amherst should carefully consider this demographic trend and look for ways to expand and improve senior services.

S.3.F Increase local enforcement of Massachusetts building and safety codes and Town regulations requiring maintenance of rental housing.

The Town should improve its enforcement of health and building codes to ensure that rental housing stock is safe and complies with state and local maintenance regulations. Housing support services can be offered to residents who report unsafe housing conditions.

S.3.G Support the activities of the Human Rights Commission.

The Human Rights Commission has a leadership responsibility in helping the community celebrate diversity, build civic pride, and promote a sense of tolerance and respect among all residents and visitors. A variety of programs – including communications strategies and community service activities – can help in promoting Amherst as a respectful and civil community.

The Commission could develop and implement programs and actions that promote a respectful and civil community, such as:

- a. Providing increased opportunities for community service and volunteer work for all Amherst residents, including students, that will encourage and reinforce a sense of civic pride.
- b. Supporting and encouraging multicultural events and activities.
- c. In all Town actions and public settings, promoting respectful and civil behavior by example, and through prompt responses to disrespectful or uncivil behavior.
- d. Promoting education and training to encourage tolerance.
- e. Fostering a culture of neighborhood civility by involving student residents in neighborhood activities and organizations.

S.3.H Maintain high-quality library services.

The Town of Amherst should maintain and enhance its library system by ensuring adequate hours, offering a wide selection of books and other media, hiring and training staff as needed, improving building facilities, and investing in technological improvements.

S.3.I Support LSSE and its program of recreation and leisure activities for Amherst residents of all ages.

Recreation opportunities and leisure activities contribute to the quality of life in Amherst. In accordance with the objectives and strategies addressed in Chapter 7, Open Space and Recreation, the Town should support the improvement, expansion, and maintenance of recreational facilities, athletic programs, and cultural events for residents of all ages. The Town should:

- a. Provide activities for youth that support a physically healthy, socially-responsible lifestyle.
- b. Develop an inventory of available community facilities and public meeting space (e.g., Library community spaces, school buildings).
- c. Develop a multi-purpose community/recreational facility (see LSSE Master Plan).
- d. Explore possible uses of the old landfill for recreation or other purposes. See O.3.D.
- e. Construct public restrooms at Kiwanis Park, Plum Brook soccer fields and other public areas.

S.3.J Improve the distribution of information about Town government to all Town residents.

In addition to the Town website, print media such as newspapers, public access television, flyers distributed to homes, and village center postings should be used to circulate Town notices and information.

S.3.K Explore the use of an information and referral system such as *First Call For Help*, through which people can get answers to questions about services, programs, and facilities in the Town.

First Call For Help is a hotline available in some communities that offers confidential information and directs callers to local providers of health and social services. The Town should explore whether such a referral system would be appropriate for Amherst. The feasibility of the program may be enhanced if the Town collaborates with neighboring communities and the hotline encompasses a broader geographic area.

OBJECTIVE S.4 Maintain and enhance Town infrastructure and facilities consistent with best practices.

To function effectively, the Town needs and expects well maintained facilities. Infrastructure should be kept in good, environmentally-sound repair to assure the safety and well-being of the community. The Town should plan, budget, and act to maintain the quality and soundness of its buildings, facilities and infrastructure.

STRATEGIES

S.4.A Maintain and repair roads sidewalks, bike paths, and bike lanes consistent with established plans.

The DPW's Pavement Management System prioritizes repairs needed for roads and sidewalks based on the existing conditions and should explicitly include bike lanes (even when part of an established roadway) and bike paths.

S.4.B Maintain wastewater facilities according to the 1991 Wastewater Facilities Plan, and update the plan as needed.

The wastewater treatment plant facilities should be maintained to ensure the quality of the effluent meets the required Federal and State standards. Septic Systems should be tested to meet Title V requirements. All maintenance and improvements made to the facilities should be in keeping with the 1991 Wastewater Facilities Plan.

Activities that pose a threat to the drinking water quality include septic systems and wastewater effluent. Source Water Assessment and Protection Reports (SWAP) are conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to assess the activities that impact the quality of drinking water sources, such as groundwater wells, surface water and aquifers. The Town should plan for routine inspections and strategic spot-checking to ensure that individual well water and septic systems meet necessary safety standards, and that affected ground water resources are protected.

S.4.C Maintain and update water facilities as appropriate to ensure high water quality standards according to the 2001 Facility Plan Update – Water Supply & Distribution System.

The DPW should use the Tighe & Bond Facility Plan Update - Water Supply & Distribution System (2001) as a guide to make upgrades and improvements to the water system and facilities as recommended. This plan should be updated every five to ten years to ensure the most accurate water demand projections are utilized for future design projects. The DPW should continue water quality testing per the Environmental Protection Agency requirements to provide high water quality to its customers.

S.4.D Study and plan for future utility extensions.

Amherst's town-owned utilities include public water, sewer, and storm drain systems, as well as street lighting. In some places (downtown Amherst) it includes wireless computer installations. The Town should coordinate its utility planning to ensure that future extensions are aligned with the community's land use, growth management, economic development, and environmental protection principles. Future sewer extensions should direct development to appropriate areas that have been designated for growth. Where possible, the Town should seek utility extension reimbursement costs from private developers.

S.4.E Plan for and make improvements to the Town's storm water and drainage systems.

The DPW should implement a Stormwater Capital Improvement Plan that prioritizes stormwater and drainage projects and upgrades based on the

need, age, and quality of the infrastructure. This plan should include existing and future areas that require stormwater treatment, such as grass swales, detention swales, ponds and infiltration structures prior to recharge of groundwater. This planning should be coordinated with new local and federal floodplain and flood way mapping.

S.4.F Continue to practice Integrated Water Resource Management.

This management should include, but not be limited to, the following areas:

- a. Water conservation and leak detection.
- b. Wastewater reuse for irrigation of athletic fields.
- c. Implementation of a Stormwater Management Plan and water quality Best Management Practices.
- d. Reduction of inflow/infiltration in the wastewater collection system
- e. Watershed and aquifer land acquisition.

S.4.G Establish a program for capital maintenance of the Town's buildings and facilities, and infrastructure.

The Town should anticipate and budget for the capital maintenance needs of: 1) its 65 buildings and many non-building facilities; pools, parks, public spaces, recreational field, etc., and 2) its infrastructure, roads, bridges, utilities, etc. Since the Town can expect to use its buildings and facilities over the decades, a program anticipating capital improvements should be established. Typically 2%-5% of the replacement value of buildings and facilities or infrastructure needs to be budgeted each year for capital maintenance.

S.4.H Establish objectives for increased recycling of the waste stream and the use of life-cycle costing in municipal capital investments.

In accordance with the Climate Action Plan (see S.6.A), the Town should establish specific programs and objectives intended to significantly increase recycling of Amherst's waste stream and should also use life-cycle costing in its funding and construction of capital projects.

OBJECTIVE S.5 Anticipate, plan, and budget for large projects in response to growing demand on Town services.

The community is expecting increased levels of service from the Town in many ways. Some of these services cannot be provided for with the existing infrastructure. The Town needs to plan for and secure the resources necessary to meet the episodic demands of major projects.

STRATEGIES

S.5.A Support and implement recommendations and priorities of the Joint Capital Plan and secure adequate funding to support the Plan to avoid and reduce the backlog of deferred maintenance.

Funding for the Joint Capital Plan, other new sources of funding and fees need to be used to reduce and prevent the backlog of capital maintenance. The Town should attempt to adhere to the longstanding policy objective of allocating 10% of every annual tax levy to support the community's capital needs.

S.5.B Improve Fire/EMS response time to all areas of Town consistent with national standards with careful consideration of the Fire Station Study Committee report.

The Town should provide adequate service to all areas of Town in accordance with national standards. The recommendations of the Fire Station Study Committee can be found at the Amherst Fire Department webpage at: www.amherstma.gov/DocumentView.asp?DID=29.

An in-house study for recommended staffing-level improvements (Final Report of the Amherst Fire Department Re-Organization Study Committee, 2003) is available at: www.amherstfirefighters.org/files/fire-reorgreport.pdf.

S.5.C Support improved and expanded recreation and leisure facilities for Amherst residents.

Recreation is a vital and necessary aspect of individual physical and mental health and an important component of community social life. Amherst has acquired no new recreation properties or facilities in decades, while demand for those facilities has steadily increased. See S. 3.I.

Priorities include:

- a. Planning for, siting, and developing a multi-purpose community/recreational facility (see Open Space & Recreation Plan).
- b. Exploring possible uses of the old landfill and other underdeveloped parcels for recreation use.

S.5.D Create a new or renovated Department of Public Works facility.

The existing DPW garage and office building was originally built around 1900 as a trolley barn. Despite some recent additions and improvements, this facility suffers from long-deferred maintenance and will need to be extensively renovated to adequately support the DPW's work and meet modern building code requirements.

S.5.E Identify and secure land for new cemetery space.

The Town should assess its need for additional cemetery space, and take the necessary steps to identify and acquire new cemetery lands.

OBJECTIVE S.6 Take a leadership role in promoting environmentally sound practices in services and facilities.

The Town has a significant opportunity and responsibility to promote and demonstrate meaningful environmental policies and programs that help ensure a sustainable future for the community.

STRATEGIES**S.6.A Support the principles of the Town's Climate Action Plan (2005) and implement its strategies.**

The Town of Amherst developed a Climate Action Plan (see <http://www.amherstma.gov/index.asp?NID=681>) in an effort to limit local greenhouse gas emissions and reduce Amherst's role in global climate change. The plan outlines Amherst's goals and strategies in a variety of areas, including energy use, facilities, transportation, waste management, and land use. Future updates to Town facilities and services should reflect the principles found in this document and incorporate appropriate sustainable technologies.

S.6.B Provide incentives for use of alternative sources of renewable energy (e.g., wind, solar, local biomass, thermal, fuel cells, etc.). Identify programs that will facilitate use of alternative energy sources through public and private partnerships.

The Amherst community should explore opportunities for public/private partnerships that would promote the use of alternative energy sources. Residents and businesses should be encouraged to change to alternative energy sources and providers where possible. Federal and State funding opportunities to encourage renewable energy investments should also be examined.

S.6.C Explore ways of reducing energy consumption and implementing environmentally sound practices in public buildings and facilities.

In order to play a leadership role in promoting environmentally responsible development and reducing energy consumption, the Town should undertake steps to incorporate green building technologies into new public buildings and facilities. Existing buildings should be adapted to incorporate more energy-efficient technologies. Where appropriate,

adaptive reuse of existing buildings and facilities should be accorded preference over the construction of new facilities.

S.6.D Establish a permanent standing Town committee to oversee community energy policy.

Convert the ad hoc Amherst Energy Conservation Task Force (formed to develop the Climate Action Plan) into a permanent Amherst Energy Committee capable of working with staff and other Town boards/committees to initiate, coordinate, and implement community energy policies and actions.

S.6.E Maintain street lights and upgrade the lighting system to be more energy efficient and implement “Dark Sky” concepts to reduce light pollution.

The DPW plans to update all outdated street lights in Amherst. Upgraded street lights will feature energy efficient “dark sky” fixtures that reduce light pollution.

S.6.F Encourage good health practices including regular physical activity through sound infrastructure design, public policies, and education.

Amherst can encourage healthy lifestyles among its residents through appropriate design of community infrastructure, community activities and educational programming, and land management practices which encourage and facilitate walking, biking, hiking, team sports, outdoor recreation, and other non-motorized forms of daily activity.

OBJECTIVE S.7 Strengthen partnerships with colleges and University and improve coordination of services and facilities.

The Town, the colleges, and University should strengthen their established partnerships through improved and expanded collaboration in the provision of services and facilities for their mutual benefit.

STRATEGIES

S.7.A Support mutual aid agreements between the Town and the University and colleges.

A number of recent mutual aid agreements focus on campus and community safety. Community members should continue to support this and other cooperative efforts between the Town, colleges, and the University.

S.7.B Develop programs such as public health emergency planning and coordinate community service activities.

Positive town-gown interactions can greatly contribute to safety and quality of life in Amherst. Planning for public health incidents or emergency response needs must be coordinated with educational institutions to ensure overall community safety. Additionally, the community as a whole can benefit from community service activities that promote healthy interactions between Town residents and college and university students.

S.7.C Coordinate shared use of existing facilities at Amherst and Hampshire Colleges and the University of Massachusetts.

The Town should continue to work with the University and colleges to discuss opportunities for joint recreational facility agreements. Sharing facilities, such as recreation fields, facilities, and performance and exhibition spaces, can maximize the use of existing resources and promote positive interactions between students and local residents.

S.7.D Continue town-gown collaboration regarding inappropriate and disruptive student behavior.

University and college communities experience unique challenges regarding student behavior and its effects on the community at large. Collaborative efforts should continue among all community members, Amherst police, campus police, and security services to ensure that noise, drug, and alcohol problems are effectively addressed. The Town should:

- a. Work with the colleges and University to address noise, drug and alcohol abuse and other problems.
- b. Encourage neighborhoods to work with police and with each other to control disruptive behavior.

S.7.E Negotiate payments from the colleges, University, and neighboring municipalities for their share of the cost of public safety services.

The Town of Amherst is home to a substantial student population, and often provides public safety services to address needs related to that specific population. Agreements should be reviewed periodically.

OBJECTIVE S.8 Incorporate emerging technologies such as wireless networking technology into future infrastructure planning.

The Town has made important strides in the use of new technologies. Free wireless internet access has been provided downtown. In addition, the Town has a very sophisticated GIS (geographic information system) program. The Town needs to maintain its competitive edge through acquiring and utilizing emerging new technology.

STRATEGIES**S.8.A Develop a single Town website/portal that provides citizens and businesses access to all Town services and information.**

The Town should work to consolidate its resource and information systems in an easy-to-use, web-based format. Currently, the Town, the schools, the Jones Library, the Police Department, and Leisure Services all maintain separate websites.

S.8.B Provide Town departments seamless access to technology systems while in the field (e.g., Inspection Services, DPW, public safety).

Wireless technology can transform the work of Town departments and employees, allowing for direct access to data and information systems from any location. This is particularly important for employees who conduct a significant portion of their work in the field.

S.8.C Improve and expand internet communications throughout the Town to connect citizens and promote business retention and growth.

Amherst should undertake steps to ensure that all areas are covered by existing and new high-speed internet providers. The Town should also examine the possibility of extending free wireless service in strategic locations.