



# Memorandum

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Mayor Sam Liccardo  
Councilmember Magdalena Carrasco  
Councilmember Maya Esparza  
Councilmember Sylvia Arenas  
Councilmember Pam Foley

**SUBJECT:** COMMUNITY WI-FI EXPANSION IN ESUHSD

**DATE:** May 13, 2020

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Approved  Date 5/13/20  
  
  

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## RECOMMENDATION

- 1) Direct the City Manager to expand the community wireless network partnership between the City of San José and East Side Union High School District (ESUHSD) to incorporate the neighborhoods comprising the attendance areas of Independence High School, Oak Grove High School, and Andrew P. Hill High School, with the following specifications:
  - a) Craft a funding strategy in partnership with ESUHSD, participating elementary school districts, the County Office of Education, the California Emerging Technology Fund, and the Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation that includes a range of sources, including but not limited to philanthropy, CARES Act funding to school districts, and CDBG funding.
  - b) Expedite design and construction of the networks to maximize the opportunity of low-income youth to participate academically in the coming school year.
- 2) Direct staff to collaborate with ESUHSD to explore options to connect all students at Mt. Pleasant High School and Silver Creek High School to the internet.

## BACKGROUND

There is renewed urgency for closing the Digital Divide during the COVID-19 crisis. Remotely continuing to learn, work, and receive essential services all require residents to access high-speed internet.

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The expansion of community Wi-Fi networks to three more neighborhoods in East Side Union High School District (ESUHSD) would provide critical resources to communities with high need in San José, where it's estimated over 30% of students lack access to the internet at home.

Since the partnership between the City of San José and ESUHSD to build public Wi-Fi networks began in 2014, many individuals and organizations have played important roles in building a foundation that we can now expand upon. We are grateful to Superintendent Chris Funk, Randy Phelps, and the ESUHSD Board for their visionary leadership in championing access to the internet and technology for all students—first through the successful James Lick High School pilot, followed now by Overfelt High School and Yerba Buena High School.

In addition to continued support from the City Council, the Office of Civic Innovation, the Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation, the Information Technology Department, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Transportation, and the San José Public Library have been critical partners to the policy design and ultimate construction of the networks using the City's fiber backhaul and streetlights. Today, the EOC Digital Inclusion Strategy team, led by Jill Bourne, is similarly instrumental in nimbly responding to the digital needs of students during COVID-19.

These projects also would not be possible without our private sector partners, particularly SmartWave for installation and maintenance support, as well as Rosendin Electric, Cupertino Electric, and Pacific Gas and Electric.

The neighborhoods surrounding Independence High School, Oak Grove High School, and Andrew P. Hill High School were recommended by ESUHSD as the next areas for public Wi-Fi networks given the high need, existing infrastructure, and availability of funding through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). In each of these schools, over 45 percent of students are on Free and Reduced Price Meal Programs. Silver Creek High School and Mt. Pleasant High School remain high-priority areas for connectivity in the future.

The launch of the James Lick public Wi-Fi network in 2017 brought free internet access into the homes of 1,700 students and approximately 6,000 surrounding public households. We expect the expansions recommended in this memo to serve similar numbers of residents in each area.

This is a valuable opportunity—at a crucial moment—to support communities with disproportionate numbers of unconnected households. It will complement the City's ongoing work through the Digital Inclusion Partnership and the California Emerging Technology Fund to close the digital divide in San José.

**BROWN ACT**

*The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member's staff, concerning any action discussed in the memorandum, and that each signer's staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member's staff.*