



GLOBAL Wi-Fi NETWORKING

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REDIFINING WI-FI SERVICE GLOBALLY

AUTHORIZED MERAKI CHANNEL SALES PARTNER

[Meraki: A Google, Sequoia and DAG funded Company]

Municipalities: Ypsilanti, MI

"It took less than 30 days from sitting downtown having a hot dog and talking about free WiFi, to having a fully functional wireless network."

– Steve Pierce, Wireless Ypsilanti



Challenge

College town has multiple cafes and stores with wireless, but no consistent free signal city-wide

Local county has contracted with a provider, but after 3 years and an exhausted budget, the project is incomplete

Meraki Solution

Initial Deployment:
25 Meraki Indoors

Cost: Extremely Affordable

Results

Local businesses get reliable WiFi for themselves and for customers from 25 access points across the city—and the network has since grown to 125 access points

Network serves 400-500 users per day

Local college students and residents can access the internet for free from anywhere across one square mile covering two downtown business districts

Businesses that host a Meraki repeater get advertising on Wireless Ypsi's homepage

Ypsilanti, Michigan is a city of 22,000 on the western edge of the great Detroit region. Like much of the area, the city has struggled to transition its economy from automobile manufacturing to light industry and tourism. It is also home to Eastern Michigan University, which means a healthy chunk of residents are tech-savvy students.

Steve Pierce, a local entrepreneur, and Brian Robb, an engineer with Ford Motor Company, were sitting in a restaurant in downtown "Ypsi" eating hot dogs when the subject of municipal wireless came up. Rumor had it that the local county government had contracted with a wireless provider to deploy county-wide WiFi, but 3 years and tens of thousands of dollars later, there was still no WiFi.

Pierce knew that many local businesses – cafes, bars, and bookstores – offered free WiFi in their establishments. He knew because, as the local networking guru, he was often called when their Linksys routers would go down. "They would just die, and I was always sending them back."

Familiar with failed wireless projects in other cities and with the success of Meraki in San Francisco, Steve wondered if he could beat the county to the punch by leveraging all the backhaul that was already in place, and improve the reliability of the access points at the same time.

Pierce and Robb went to every local business that had cable or DSL and asked if he could install a Meraki Indoor in their window. All but one enthusiastically said "Yes!" and they receive a banner ad on the Wireless Ypsi homepage.

"It took less than 30 days from sitting downtown having a hot dog, to having a fully functional wireless network," Pierce said. Wireless Ypsi is now serving 400-500 people in any given 24 hour period, with 125 access points now spread across two business districts.

Free WiFi from other vendors is available in parts of the city, and the University provides free WiFi but for students and staff only, but Pierce says his research and word-of-mouth indicates people prefer Wireless Ypsi because it's faster and available in more places.



Pierce has since advised three other Michigan cities - Dearborn, Trenton, and Lincoln Park - on how they could establish their own free municipal WiFi networks. "Dearborn's network has taken off like gangbusters," Pierce said, "and in Trenton, they have Meraki [devices] on city light poles and the connection is paid for by the city." Pierce is now advising nearby Wayne County on how to deploy Meraki as well.

