



Free Wi-Fi Program Expands to Mobile Home Communities

City Initiative Creates Equity by Bridging the Digital Divide

JUNE 23, 2021 -- The pandemic exacerbated pre-existing socio-economic inequalities and vulnerabilities, which prompted the Office of Economic Development to consider actions that would promote equity. This effort includes addressing the digital divide by expanding free Wi-Fi reach to the exterior of schools, libraries and City buildings. Recently, the City started offering free Wi-Fi to mobile home parks in the 87507 zip code.

The owner and managers of the Atocha Mobile Home Park (located between Cerrillos Road and Rufina Street), seized the opportunity to embark on this trial project. They voiced concern for young residents who were forced to learn remotely. Managing member Nina Ramirez says, “This effort is paramount in ensuring their equitable access to educational resources.”

The project was inter-departmental, with the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications conducting site visits, the City Attorney’s staff providing reassurance to owners and managers, and the office of Geographical Information System (part of the Information Technology and Telecommunications Department) staff providing technical expertise. Solar panels were installed to sustainably cover the cost of electricity.

Atocha is the first of six potential mobile home park Wi-Fi installations planned in the densely populated Districts 3 and 4. City staff also anticipates installing free Wi-Fi at public housing in the Hopewell Mann area, while continuing to maintain and enhance existing programs.

Mayor Alan Webber: “Everyone in Santa Fe deserves equal opportunities to learn and to earn. Today, access to the internet is a necessity, not a luxury. It’s the job of this City government to help people succeed, whether through the Mayors for a Guaranteed Income project or this free Wi-Fi program. Our purpose is the same: help people live better lives.”

Richard Brown, Community and Economic Development Director: “We have worked closely with our libraries and the Santa Fe Public Schools to increase connectivity and Wi-Fi access. Working with the private sector demonstrates how equity is a collective effort.”

Larry Worstell, Infrastructure Services Manager: “Putting technology at the service of public good is central to our role, and mostly behind the scenes. When you have visited the sites, helping underserved families is uniquely rewarding.”

The free Wi-Fi initiative is funded largely by \$250,000 of CARES Act grant money and City broadband funds.

Managers and owners of mobile home communities in District 3 and District 4 who are interested in the offer of free Wi-Fi for their residents are encouraged to act fast by reaching out to Richard Brown, Community and Economic Development Director, at rdbrown@santafenm.gov.

Information: Liz Camacho, Economic Development and Communication Administrator, excamacho@santafenm.gov