

# NAPERVILLE PARK DISTRICT

## Monetizing public Wi-Fi to help municipalities

Naperville Park District operates over 137 parks and recreation centers, which are actively utilized year round. However, park users were increasingly asking for public Wi-Fi so that they could make even more use of the facilities.



Customer

Naperville Park District

Location

Naperville, Illinois

### Challenges

- The initial quote for just two parks was much higher than expected, and more than the Park District could pay. They decided to look for solutions that could reduce or offset the cost.

### Solution

- Naperville found Digital Lobby, a RUCKUS Ready ecosystem partner, with an innovative advertising model. Digital Lobby:
- Expanded the initial deployment from two parks to eight in order to create a critical mass of end users
- Provided a turn key end to end managed Wi-Fi service featuring RUCKUS indoor and outdoor APs managed by a SmartZone controller

- Implemented an innovative, multi-dimensional advertising model that fully funded the Naperville Park District Wi-Fi and operating costs

### Benefits

- Naperville Park District patrons are able to spend more time at the park since they can stay connected via Wi-Fi
- The service was deployed at no cost to tax payers
- The RUCKUS Wi-Fi can easily be extended via meshing and can also support IP video and other applications
- Powerful Wi-Fi analytics provide new insights to park management to optimize schedule and resource utilization, and to enhance program marketing activities

- Planning on expanding Wi-Fi services to more parks this year

### Introduction

Created by referendum in 1966, the Naperville, Illinois Park District is an independent municipal agency serving the recreation needs of its residents. The Naperville Park District's mission is to provide recreation and park experiences that promote healthy lives, healthy minds and a healthy community.

The District maintains and operates more than 2,400 acres with 137 parks and facilities and provides more than 1,500 recreational, arts and environmental programs and special events annually. Included within the District's operations are two championship golf courses; a multitude



of playgrounds, trails, athletic courts and sports fields; Fort Hill Activity Center; Knoch Knolls Nature Center; two inline skating and skateboarding facilities; the Millennium Carillon; a paddleboat quarry; historic Centennial Beach; and the beautiful Riverwalk.

### The Challenge

Wireless coverage in many of the parks was spotty or non-existent. Faced with frequent requests for Wi-Fi at its recreational and outdoor facilities, the park district looked into Wi-Fi for Centennial Beach & Rotary Hill, two of its most popular parks. The initial quote was \$72,000 for equipment and Wi-Fi service for the first year alone. This was well beyond their available funding especially since they only expected to see around 4,000 devices during the three-month summer period in which the aquatic facility is most used.

Information Technology Director Omar Sandoval knew the potential price wouldn't fly with the board or taxpayers, so he contacted one of his ISP providers, WOW!, who introduced him to Digital Lobby. They provide a turn key end to end managed Wi-Fi solution

that includes an innovative advertising model to help monetize the network and reduce or eliminate costs to the operator.

### The Solution

In exchange for negotiated advertising assets within specific park district properties, Digital Lobby was able to identify and sign sponsor partners that would fund the project. "Everyone wants Wi-Fi, but not much thought is given to the cost. It's nice to have and can do great things but only if you can justify the return on investment over time," Sandoval said. Naperville Park District was especially pleased that Digital Lobby could offer to fund ongoing service and renewals as well.

For Digital Lobby's model to work, they need to reach a minimum level of end-users. In Naperville's case, this meant that instead of just deploying one or two of the largest parks, they needed to expand the project to a total of 8 locations, including Centennial Grill, Riverwalk Café, fitness facility Fort Hill Activity Center, Knoch Knolls Nature Center, Springbrook and Naperbrook golf courses, and outdoor movie and

"The complimentary Wi-Fi available is a great addition and a service that I am pleased the District can provide to our patrons. It also is a way that people can stay connected to the people and things that are important to them when they're also enjoying recreation time at one of our facilities."

**Omar Sandoval**  
Director of Information Technology  
Naperville Park District



concert venue Rotary Hill, in order to achieve critical mass. Because of Digital Lobby's no cost offer, the Park District was delighted to expand their deployment.

In return for a three-year contract, with an option to extend it to a total of 10 years, Digital Lobby deployed a variety of RUCKUS indoor and outdoor access points, all managed through their RUCKUS Virtual SmartZone controller in an IaaS environment which is also PCI compliant. RUCKUS, the leading worldwide provider of Wi-Fi equipment for service providers, utilizes patented BeamFlex technology to constantly optimize wireless connectivity for each authenticated device.

Digital Lobby brought in Vack Inc, who has decades of experience designing, installing and operation/maintenance of large multi-site indoor and outdoor networks for municipalities. Vack was able to design and install a robust network throughout the 8 identified

locations in an efficient and cost effective manner, helping to bring the project to life and provide park district users a high performance Wi-Fi experience.

By using RUCKUS, Digital Lobby's equipment and deployment costs were significantly reduced. RUCKUS required fewer access points, and less installation expense, due to their superior wireless performance. The strong Wi-Fi connectivity is also a critical requirement for a successful ad-supported model, since no advertiser wants their name on a bad network connection.

In addition to national and regional brand advertising sponsors, Digital Lobby will also reach out to the local business community to promote their events and offerings within the GoLocal Network, a persistent advertising feature that runs on the Digital Lobby connect screen, or Lobby page. The Naperville Park District also gets to promote their events and programs both directly on the 'lobby pages' as well as within

the GoLocal network. While ads may be targeted based on the location of each Wi-Fi network, the park district's agreement with Digital Lobby prevents the company from selling personally identifying user data to third-party marketing companies or other entities. It also prohibits improper material, tobacco or alcohol ads on the site.

Because Naperville is an affluent community and near a major media market, it is an ideal location for attracting national and local brands and agencies who can use this new Wi-Fi base omni channel platform to reinforce or localize broader marketing activities.

## Results

"I was initially cynical when it comes to Wi-Fi. I felt it went against our mission to get people outdoors," Sandoval said. "But when you see parents and siblings using it and see the potential to stream things like Johnny's first time at bat, it's really cool to see people using something that you worked hard to create."

Naperville Park District has experienced over 45,000 logins since the program's inception earlier this year, and they are seeing typical connection speeds of 60-70 Mbps. This is remarkable given that no onsite signage has been deployed yet and demonstrates the significant demand for in-park Wi-Fi.

In addition to complete network management capabilities and reporting via the SmartZone controller, Digital Lobby uses RUCKUS SPoT location-based services to create footfall traffic analytics that show the crowd at key locations within the park by time and

day. Park staff are using this to identify opportunities for improving facility utilization as well as for simple tasks such as scheduling training during expected down times. Since Digital Lobby's authentication also asks for zip codes, Naperville Park District has an easy way to see where its visitors are coming from and can better target park promotional activities. Looking forward, the park district hopes to create automated alerts to notify staff whenever the crowds exceed a maximum threshold for that location, in order to ensure adequate services and security.

From a Digital Lobby perspective, the results are just as good. Before even investing in the Wi-Fi network deployment and operations, they met with their brand advertising partners to discuss the opportunity and the target market size and characteristics. Based on this, Digital Lobby will earn a strong ROI while delivering a first-class Wi-Fi service for Naperville Parks. Digital Lobby and Naperville Park District are making plans to roll out 8 more locations. Not every location will be as attractive to advertisers, but any operator with a large RUCKUS Wi-Fi network and user base can monetize their investment with help from Digital Lobby.



### About RUCKUS Networks

RUCKUS Networks builds and delivers purpose-driven networks that perform in the demanding environments of the industries we serve. Together with our network of trusted go-to-market partners, we empower our customers to deliver exceptional experiences to the guests, students, residents, citizens and employees who count on them.

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