

# The Los Gatos Opera House

## A Firetide Wireless Instant Network Makes this the Hottest Ticket in Town



### Organization

The Los Gatos Opera House and Town of Los Gatos,  
 Los Gatos, CA  
[www.operahousebanquets.com](http://www.operahousebanquets.com)  
[www.losgatosweb.com](http://www.losgatosweb.com)

### Industry

Hospitality & Municipality



### Challenge

The Opera House wanted Internet access to attract business users, but wiring the historic building would be invasive, unsightly and very expensive. Conventional wireless networks were considered but their signals would be hampered by the building's ornate press tin ceilings. The town also wanted to provide free public Internet access to the park across the street from the Opera House running cables into the park.

### Solution

In less than one day, a Firetide Wireless Instant Network was up and running in the Opera House and in the park. Four Firetide HotPoint wireless mesh routers covered all three floors of the Opera House without interference from the tin ceilings. A fifth router was installed in a bus shelter to extend network coverage to the park across the street. All of the HotPoint routers connected to each other instantly and without wires. Using a single shared DSL connection, they now provide free Internet access for business people and townsfolk alike.

### Hardware

Five Firetide HotPoint wireless mesh routers.

**I**t started with the Los Gatos Opera House and a desire to attract businesspeople for conferences, meetings, and events. The Chamber of Commerce was also interested in attracting visitors to the quaint town of Los Gatos. Only one thing was lacking—Internet access for business visitors.

Running wires through old pressed tin walls and ceilings in the Opera House was not an option. A Firetide™ Wireless Instant Network was the only feasible solution and as a result, Los Gatos became the premier example of what happens when private business partners with the town to deliver free public Wi-Fi Internet access.

### A Full Metal Jacket, As it Were

Built in the early 1900s for opera and musical performances, the historic Opera House has been leased by the nearby Toll House Hotel and primarily used for weekend wedding receptions, bar mitzvahs, and social gatherings. While weekends were booked, the space usually was underutilized during the week. Why not use it to host business meetings, events, and seminars, reasoned the hotel General Manager, Marie Tallman.

“Los Gatos is a perfect place for hosting corporate off-site meetings and events,” she said. “Silicon Valley companies frequently seek out interesting venues, but to compete with other hotels, we had to provide Internet access.” One DSL line was already installed in the first-floor catering office. The first floor is also home to the Opera House business office and a number of retail antique shops. Extending access up to the second floor ballroom, bar, and balcony areas was going to be tough. Running wires up through the walls and floors of a historic building was invasive and extremely expensive. In addition, walls and ceilings of the main venue, the ballroom, are lined in ornate pressed tin. Even if a typical wireless network

could be wired to provide coverage here, it would experience high levels of interference, making access unreliable. There had to be another way.



## Case Study: The Los Gatos Opera House



### Talk in the Town

Meanwhile, the Los Gatos Chamber of Commerce and City Council had been considering deploying a public Wi-Fi network throughout Los Gatos. The public network would also cover the city park, which is located kitty-cornered across the street from the Opera House.

"We were looking for ways to promote Los Gatos as a destination," said Ronee Nassi, Executive Director of the Los Gatos Chamber of Commerce. "We wanted to not only bring more business traffic to town, but also to show off Los Gatos as a wonderful place to shop, dine, meet friends, and live. It's a quaint, charming town but also very much a part of our high-tech world. Public Wi-Fi access is an innovative way to meet visitors' and residents' needs alike."

Firetide proposed a Wireless Instant Network™ based on Firetide HotPoint Wireless Mesh Routers to deliver the required wireless access at the Opera House as well as provide free public Internet access in the adjacent shops and park. With approval from the Opera House owner, work began. In an hour and a half, the network was up and running.

### A Closet. A Bus Stop. A Network.

The first Firetide HotPoint router was plugged into a regular outlet in a closet on the first floor of the Opera House, along with existing telephone and DSL connections. A second Hotpoint was installed in the rafters under the third-floor roof. Two cables run to roof antennas through the HVAC ports; two standard antennas are mounted on the electrical box next to a skylight. The signal comes down through the glass of the skylight into the ballroom, all the way down to the first-floor closet.

Two additional HotPoints are connected via Ethernet cable with two Cisco Access points and mounted in a closet underneath the second-floor stairs leading to the Opera House balcony. This provides round-the-clock access and conducts a great signal to both roof and downstairs units, creating a mesh network.

With the wireless mesh network established at the Opera House, one more HotPoint unit and Cisco access point were installed under the eaves in a bus shelter, located across the



**A HotPoint router and Cisco access point in a bus shelter enable a free public Wi-Fi HotSpot covering nearby shops and park**

street in the park. Because the Firetide Instant Network self-configures upon being plugged in, the HotPoint Routers can plug into any already-existing outlet. The bus shelter HotPoint was covered with a grate for protection and ventilation and provides a line-of-sight clear path to units on the Opera House roof. Now the park and first-floor retail shops share the Opera House's DSL connection with no wiring at all.

### The Beginning of a Public-Private Partnership

"This is one of the first times that private industry has provided free public access," said Wayne Levenfeld, President of Pacific Valley Investors, owners of the Toll House Hotel. "It's great for our business, it's great for Los Gatos, and as other organizations contribute a DSL connection and participate, the network just becomes stronger and more redundant."

The Opera House business and catering offices now use the Firetide Network for all of their Internet access needs as can the retailers on the Opera House's first floor. The Opera House's tin lining, which seemed to be a challenge at first, actually magnifies and strengthens the signal by carrying it from the skylight, runs it down the walls, bounces the signal all over the ballroom, and carries it down to the first floor.

"This project delivers high-tech benefits to a charming, historic town," said Nassi. "Wireless access creates a compelling draw for attracting business meetings and events to a place that offers much more ambiance than the typical large-hotel atmosphere."

Firetide HotPoint Routers are quickly becoming the hottest tickets in town. It's expected that many other Los Gatos businesses will soon join the Firetide Wireless Instant Network. And as they do, they may well create the first "wireless town" anywhere.

[www.firetide.com](http://www.firetide.com)

Toll Free: 877-FIRETIDE (877-347-3843)

Telephone: 808-528-0007

Fax: 808-528-0002

[info@firetide.com](mailto:info@firetide.com)

#### Honolulu Office

928 Nuuanu Avenue, Suite 200

Honolulu, HI 96817 USA

#### Silicon Valley Office

16795 Lark Avenue

Los Gatos, CA 95032 USA

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