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Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower Sets New Mark as City's Tallest Wi-Fi Hotspot

Baltimore, MD – November 24, 2008 – A building that was once Baltimore's tallest is now the city's loftiest Wi-Fi hotspot, thanks to a new wireless Internet system installed by Port Networks for the Baltimore Office of Promotion and The Arts. Though nearly 100 years old, the Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower today offers visual and literary artists 15 floors of state-of-the-art web access throughout their recently renovated studio spaces.

Completed in 1911, the tower was modeled after the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, Italy, and is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Baltimore landmark was designed by Joseph Evans Sperry and built by Captain Isaac Emerson, the inventor of Bromo Seltzer. The tower was originally topped with a 51-foot revolving replica of the blue Bromo Seltzer bottle, which was illuminated by 596 lights and could be seen from 20 miles away. However, the bottle had to be removed in 1936 due to structural concerns.

Similar problems plagued the original network installed during a 2006-7 renovation to deliver Internet connectivity to the building's artists. Engineers from Port Networks performed a thorough analysis of the existing network, and designed an upgraded system that better meets the artists' needs for high-speed file transfer and web surfing.

"Since the upgrade, we've been pleased with the speed and reliability of our network. It's made quite a difference," says Kristin Grey of the Baltimore Office of Promotion and The Arts, which manages the Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower.

Smart Wi-Fi Technology

The new system relies on newly available equipment from Ruckus Wireless, a California company that is pioneering "Smart Wi-Fi," which brings range and reliability to wireless data networks through the use of a software-controlled antenna system. Smart Wi-Fi uses an intelligent, high-gain directional antenna system to enable Wi-Fi signals to be formed, focused and directed over the best performing paths at any given time. Completely adaptive, Smart Wi-Fi technology steers signals around interference, obstructions and obstacles to ensure the unprecedented coverage and consistent performance at range.

All of the ZoneFlex wireless access points installed in the Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower are connected back to a ZoneDirector controller that coordinates which APs communicate with which clients, increasing the overall efficiency of the network.

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"With early Wi-Fi networks, each access point functioned independently, which introduced a lot of inefficiency," notes Carl Peterson, Network Manager for Port Networks. "With the advent of Smart Wi-Fi, we're now in a position to increase network performance by eliminating inefficiency."

Though Smart Wi-Fi offers an immediate benefit in terms of network performance, it holds even greater potential down the road, as clients like the artists at the Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower begin to use Wi-Fi for more demanding networking tasks, like voice, video, digital signage and other bandwidth-intensive applications.

The Internet, Up on the Roof

The in-building Wi-Fi network is connected to the larger Internet through a high-speed fixed-wireless link, also provided by Port Networks. Using point-to-point connections in the Unlicensed National Information Infrastructure spectrum, the company connects clients from rooftop to rooftop. This wide-area wireless network provides clients inexpensive bandwidth together with the security of being far above backhoes, tunnel fires, steam leaks, and other underground hazards.

"Many customers who already have a high-speed data connection from a telecom company turn to us for a redundant connection to the Internet, to protect against a disaster," says Hugh Bethell, Port Networks General Manager. "Others, like the Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower, just skip the expensive telecom lines and move right to a more affordable, higher-performance wireless solution."

In addition to the Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower, Port Networks provides the Baltimore Office of Promotion and The Arts with fixed wireless service at its School 33 Arts Center and was an in-kind sponsor at the city's Baltimore Book Festival earlier this Fall. The company provided free Wi-Fi access for authors, exhibitors, and other attendees at the Festival.

Open to the Public

The public can sample the Wi-Fi network at the Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower, as well as the works of the artists who create there, during the building's upcoming open houses. The next two events are scheduled for Saturday, December 6, from 11 am to 4 pm, and Thursday, January 15, from 5 pm to 9 pm. The tower is located at 21 South Eutaw Street, at the intersection of Eutaw and Lombard streets.

About the Baltimore Office of Promotion and The Arts

The Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts is the city's official events agency and arts council. BOPA coordinates many events such as Artscape and the Baltimore Book Festival, as well offers several arts and grants programs including the Baltimore Mural Program, Free Fall Baltimore and the Creative Baltimore Fund Grants. In addition to the Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower, BOPA manages the Top of the World Observation Level, School 33 Art Center and The Cloisters.

About Port Networks

Port Networks is a privately-held wireless equipment developer and Internet service provider, located in Baltimore, MD. The company was founded in 2003 and serves customers in the marine, residential, and commercial markets.

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