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Chelsea Gets Neighborhood-Sized Wi-Fi Network

By Anjali Athavaley

New Yorkers looking to surf the web while out and about in Manhattan's Chelsea area will have access to a new perk: free Wi-Fi made possible by the neighborhood's resident tech giant.

A new Wi-Fi network sponsored by Google Inc. and **Chelsea Improvement Company** extends from West 14th Street to West 19th Street between Eighth Avenue and the West Side Highway, a coverage area that includes part of the High Line. Dubbed "CICFreeWiFi," the free network is now available and requires users to accept terms of service before accessing the Internet.

Chelsea's nearly neighborhoodwide Wi-Fi builds on efforts by the Bloomberg administration to make the city more tech friendly, even in outdoor spaces. AT&T Inc. currently provides free Wi-Fi service in 20 city parks, and other private companies are laying fiber and opening learning labs that give residents access to computers.

Officials behind Chelsea's Wi-Fi expect the network to be used by businesses and local residents, including those in the Robert Fulton Houses, a New York City Housing Authority project in the neighborhood.

"The people with the best neighborhood WiFi service in the United States are going to be Housing Authority tenants," said **Dan Biederman, president of the Chelsea Improvement Company**. "People strolling are going to have exceptional handheld service."

The ability to access the Internet in public is becoming increasingly important for workers linked to some of the city's start-up tech companies, which have moved away from traditional offices in favor of alternatives that include working outside.