Chapter 8. Computers and Telecommunications

BACKGROUND

In 1990, the Davis City Council created a task force to investigate the use of advanced telecommunications technologies as a means to reduce traffic (telecommuting and telework), strengthen existing business and attract potential high-tech businesses (economic development), and increase citizen participation in local government (electronic democracy) and improve overall quality of life and opportunity for all. The final report of the task force recommended that the City develop a long-term strategic plan for "information infrastructure and services."

In 1994, building on the work of the task force, the City hired a new Information Technology Administrator who was charged with developing a long term strategic plan. In 1996, the City of Davis joined with the Davis Community Network, UC Davis, the City of West Sacramento, the City of Winters, the City of Woodland, the County of Yolo, Yolo County Library, Yolo County Superintendent of Schools, Davis Joint Unified School District, Davis Community Television and other public and private sector partners in forming the Yolo Area Regional Network (YARN). YARN serves to promote and coordinate the development of regional information infrastructure and services in a manner that most fully benefits the residents of the Yolo County area.

Additional advocates for inclusion of this element in the General Plan included representatives from the City's Davis Community Computer Network and Economic Development task forces and the general public.

Telecommunication infrastructure and services have been identified as important community resources, which are likely to be as important to the continuing economic development of the community as basic infrastructure such as water, sewer and road systems. The recommendations in this chapter represent an important step in telecommunications planning for the City.

GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTIONS

GOAL C&T 1. Encourage development of infrastructure and service to allow all who live, work and study in Davis to utilize new technologies to

communicate with individuals and institutions locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

Policy C&T 1.1 Implement a program of technology, planning, installation and education.

Standards

a.   New residential and commercial development projects should include the infrastructure components necessary to support modern communication technologies such as conduit space within joint utility trenches for future high speed data equipment and flexible telephone conduit to allow for easy retrofit for high speed data systems.

b.   Davis should develop a telecommunications infrastructure that is not dependent on any single medium, but incorporates a variety of media such as wireless and fiber optics as appropriate.

Actions

c.   Designate a formal Technology Coordination function within the City of Davis staff to oversee community-wide information technology development.

d.   Train City staff, appointed officials and elected officials in the use of electronic communications tools, applications, and modern information technologies.

e.   Provide public access computer terminals at convenient sites throughout the city, including non-City sites such as the library, as well as City-owned sites.

f.   Monitor information technology development and city infrastructure issues (both planning and enforcement) at the same level as current monitoring of other building and construction standards.

g.   Promote Davis and the Davis Community Network (DCN) as a site for research and development of new communications technologies and as a testing ground for pilot projects exploring and applying innovative communication services.

h.   Work with other agencies, such as the County of Yolo and neighboring cities, to integrate telecommunication infrastructure planning on a regional basis.

i. Use city right of way as a resource to foster development of a "public utility" telecommunications networking infrastructure to provide high-speed networking throughout the community, and to make the community attractive to information-based businesses.

j. Review any proposed city construction projects involving trenching for opportunities to extend the networking infrastructure.

k. Investigate ways to increase telecommuting possibilities for all residents, including those with low and moderate incomes and diverse cultural needs.

Policy C&T 1.2 Make information regarding city government and decision-making, local services and opportunities to participate in city governance available to Davis citizens in electronic form.

Actions

a. Make appropriate City documents and information regarding City services available for immediate retrieval by means of electronic access and transfer technologies.

b. Take a proactive role in working with other community and governmental agencies on behalf of Davis citizens to encourage providing public information on-line.

c. Provide computer access points, training and print capability to low income and access-limited residents at service sites, City Hall, libraries, the senior center and other public sites.

d. Establish e-mail addresses for all elected and appointed city officials and city agencies.

e. Use electronic communication in citizen input procedures such as electronic mail, websites and news groups.

f. Develop procedures to allow electronic mail and other electronically-submitted documents to be accorded the same status as written materials, except in those cases in which written documents are specifically required by law.

g.   Work with other agencies and organizations to modify the Brown
       Public Meeting Act to promote the development and
       implementation of law and policy that allows open, public electronic
       discussion and serial electronic communication.

Policy C&T 1.3 Encourage educational opportunities regarding science,
       computers and technology for Davis residents.

Actions

a.   Evaluate grant opportunities for defense and military worker
       retraining, and work with the local educational institutions,
       nonprofit organizations and private sector and businesses to pursue
       such funding opportunities.

b.   Support the creation of culture/science awareness days or events.

c.   Assist and encourage the display of science & technology projects in
       publicly accessible spaces.

**GOAL C&T 2. Pursue telecommunications as a means to reduce
transportation impacts that can improve air quality and personal convenience
and reduce dependency on non-renewable resources.**

Policy C&T 2.1 Encourage telecommuting for the City government and
       the community.

Actions

a.   When appropriate, provide connectivity services, training and
       portable computing equipment to City staff who wish to
       telecommute.

Policy C&T 2.2 Encourage major employers in the City to allow
       telecommuting.

Standards

a.   Employers who aggressively and effectively implement
       telecommuting are eligible to receive appropriate incentives such as
       reduction of parking requirements.

Actions

b.   Work with the local Transportation Management Agency to encourage use of telecommuting and alternate forms of transportation (rideshare, public transit).

c.   Encourage the State Department of Personnel Administration to give appropriate recognition and encouragement to telecommuting in collective bargaining policies.

GOAL C&T 3. Develop an awareness that Davis is a city that understands and supports high technology communications.

Policy C&T 3.1 Convey through the City's promotional documents that the city government and community understand and use modern communication technologies.

Actions

a.   Refer to current innovative technology projects in print publications and online.

b.   Use electronic media in city publications and communications.