

# Open access

Hamilton City Council has partnered with Wintec, Environment Waikato, University of Waikato and private company, Velocity Networks Ltd to build an open access, community-owned broadband network around Hamilton city.

The ultra-high speed broadband project offers significant economic benefits to Hamilton's business community and will allow local business to participate more effectively in the wider international economy.

According to Velocity Networks business development manager Shane Hobson, it is expected that this improved broadband network will lead to further economic growth in the city.

"The project will result in a significantly better broadband service being available to a range of commercial, education and community organisations," he said.

Almost anyone in the central city area of Hamilton can subscribe and connect to the network, from businesses to application and internet service providers.

An added advantage of this 'open access' community network is that users are free to purchase services from a range of service providers on the network and are not restricted to only buying services from the network operator, as is the case with many dedicated business telco services.

The project has a number of implementation phases and is expected to be completed within three years.

The fibre network on which this project is being built, began development more than 10 years ago as a network for the crime prevention cameras in the city. Council has contributed funding to the network over this period, but it has also received considerable support from business and individuals in the city. Phase One of the network will be constructed from November 2007 to April 2008, and may cause some minor disruption to businesses during this time.

Velocity Networks managing director John O'Donoghue said the initiative highlighted Hamilton's ability to address and fulfill its own needs.

"This initiative proves that communities don't have to wait for Telecom to deliver future services," he said.

The open access community-owned network has already had connected commercial customers for about six months.

The initial rollout of this network has been funded by a \$3.3 million grant from the Ministry of Economic Development, as part of the Government's Digital Strategy ■