

- classified
- personals
- adult
- news
- culture
- music
- headout
- screen
- food & drink
- performance
- books
- visual arts
- contact us
- advertise
- find a paper
- find Finder
- privacy policy
- xml/rss

For more information, see [\[link\]](#)

recent **News** stories/columns:
10/26/2005

[Get Smart](#)

10/26/2005

Letters to the

Editor:

[LETTERS TO](#)

[THE EDITOR](#)

10/26/2005

NIGHT CABBIE:

[Blood](#)

10/26/2005

Cover Story:

[Polaroids of](#)

[Dorothy](#)

10/26/2005

Murmurs:

[Your Cycle Of](#)

[News.](#)

10/26/2005

[Dancing Lessons](#)

10/26/2005

Q & A:

[Heywood](#)

[Sanders](#)

10/26/2005

Rogue of the

Week:

[Special Forces](#)

[Association](#)

10/26/2005

[One Fine Mess](#)

10/26/2005

Winners &

Losers:

[Jackpots won,](#)

[crackpots](#)

[exposed](#)



NEWS STORY

Enter The Woz

Legendary Apple founder dives into Portland's wi-fi fray.

BY [ZACH DUNDAS](#)

[zdundas at comcast.net](#)

THE WOZ THAT WAS: Apple Computer co-founders Steve Wozniak (right) and Steve Jobs (left), circa 1977. Scroll down 28 years, and now Wozniak is getting involved in Portland's wi-fi future

Over the next few months, at least two companies will battle over who gets to build Portland's city-backed wireless Internet system. Consider the first shot fired.

WW has learned that Steve Wozniak, the iconic 55-year-old co-founder of Apple Computer, will join the board of VeriLAN, a pioneering Portland-based wireless company.

"The Woz," a bearded iconoclast who decades ago helped Steve Jobs construct the groundbreaking early Apples in Jobs' garage, should lend credibility to VeriLAN's bid to bridge the "digital divide" and blanket central Portland with cheap wireless, radio-based Internet access.

"Steve will advise us on how best to roll out this model and make sure the city gets the benefits everyone keeps talking about," says VeriLAN CEO Clive Cook.

Wozniak's link to VeriLAN comes after years of City Hall chatter about creating a wireless (commonly referred to as "wi-fi") system that would operate, at least in part, as a public utility.

The basic idea: The city and other public bodies help a private company build the system by providing free facilities, bureaucratic help and a built-in client base.

In return, the private company guarantees some level of low-cost access for low-income citizens, public services and schools. The system's operator could profit by wholesaling bandwidth to other companies, which in turn could sell premium high-speed accounts to individuals and businesses.

The city-orchestrated brainstorming—which involved the Portland Development Commission, Portland Public Schools, TriMet, various high-tech companies and digital-divide activists—created broad outlines

for bidders to follow in a competitive process that starts on Halloween.

The private operator that wins the job will start by swaddling downtown and the Central Eastside in wireless, with expansion (and cost) to be determined in negotiations with the winning bidder.

VeriLAN is expected to joust with EarthLink, an Atlanta-based Internet provider moving aggressively to win citywide wi-fi business nationally.

The Portland company has national designs of its own. After launching the United States' first private, subscribers-only wireless Internet service in 2003, VeriLAN views public-private efforts as wireless's future.

"This model gives you the anchor tenants—the city, the schools and TriMet—and at the same time creates an open, competitive network," Cook says. "With the separation between the wholesale side and the retail service providers, you retain the benefits of the market."

Wozniak, who was unavailable for an interview, became a free-floating entrepreneur and philanthropist after leaving Apple in 1985.

A selection committee will interview companies gunning for the project Nov. 28 and make a recommendation by the end of 2005. Work on the system is expected to begin next spring.

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY, 10/26/2005
