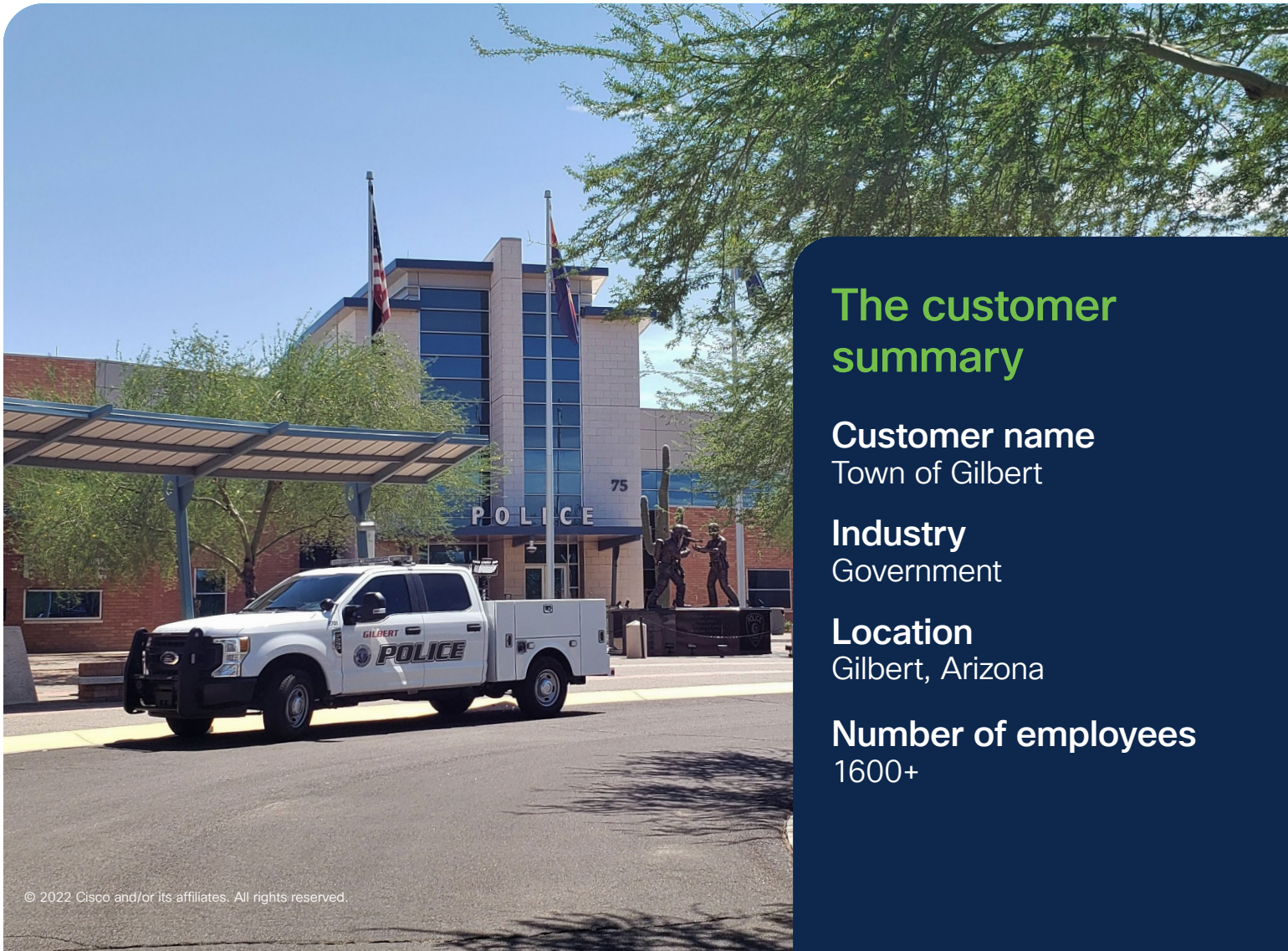ılıılı
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Town of Gilbert

# Gilbert Builds a Smart Community

Resilient, secure Cisco infrastructure helps town deliver on its promise to be the "City of the Future"

## The customer summary

**Customer name**
Town of Gilbert

**Industry**
Government

**Location**
Gilbert, Arizona

**Number of employees**
1600+

## Challenges

- Adapt digital tools to serve rapid population growth
- Connectivity to span 76 square miles of town geography
- Meet expectations of young, tech-savvy residents
- Enable seamless communication, regardless of location

## Solutions

- Cisco® networking infrastructure forms the backbone of town services
- A suite of Cisco security products helps keep critical data secure
- Webex® by Cisco enables collaboration internally and externally

## Results

- Enhanced network availability and security
- Uninterrupted services to 250,000+ residents
- Flexible transition to hybrid work for 1600+ town employees
- "The Best City for Remote Workers" in 2020 in a national survey

### A smart strategy for growth

Southeast of Phoenix, Arizona, in an agricultural area once known as the "Hay Shipping Capital of the World," lies the Town of Gilbert. Covering a geographic area of 76 square miles, the town has seen rapid growth, nearly doubling in size every few years. With a population of more than 248,000 in 2019, the "largest town in the U.S." expects to be home to 300,000 people by 2030.

What's Gilbert's secret? The warm weather, plentiful recreational and cultural activities, and family-friendly focus certainly help, but a large part of their success can be attributed to the town's focus on innovation and technology.

The goal for Gilbert is not just to grow, but to "build smart" with the future in mind.

Gilbert's planners want to create a new type of city, one that connects and engages residents across business, education, and a full range of town services.

As a result, tech and health-related companies have been locating here, bringing with them dynamic young workers. Those who make Gilbert their home will find a vibrant community that understands today's demands for digital connectivity, no matter where they work. In fact, the town was recently named "The Best City for Remote Workers" in 2020 in a national survey.

"We work at having an agile environment to pivot as needed," says Mary Goodman, assistant town manager for the Town of Gilbert. "We want to create the city of the future and we've been working toward that long-term vision and plan."

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**Mary Goodman**
Assistant Town Manager, Town of Gilbert

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## The great migration to hybrid work

Investments in technology helped ensure that the Town of Gilbert was prepared to support a transition to a hybrid workforce, which became necessary during the pandemic.

In March 2020, Gilbert pivoted from an office-based to hybrid workspace operation within 48 hours. Two-thirds of Gilbert's employees worked from home, enjoying access to the same resources they relied on in the office while protecting health and the continuity of town services. Today, this model continues, with 40 percent of town employees working in person and 60 percent remaining remote.

"We made sure that we designed scalable solutions, and that we had the technology in place that we could easily ramp up and meet the need of the larger organization as we shifted to a secure, hybrid workforce," explains Dr. Tony Bryson, chief information and security officer for the Town of Gilbert.

For day-to-day work requiring staff meetings and communications, Webex Suite continues to help city workers collaborate seamlessly, regardless of location: home, office, or hybrid.

"We had the Webex Suite in place for collaboration and were able to train our employees and provide them the tools necessary," explains Eugene Mejia, deputy chief technology officer. "Staff quickly made the transition to working at home and have continued doing their jobs."

## Connecting with residents and others

The Town of Gilbert also leverages Webex Meetings to remain close to residents and allow them to participate in City Council meetings open for public participation and discussion. Webex Meetings provides the ability for council meetings to go on just as they did before the pandemic, with council members and residents attending virtually. These meetings are attended by as many as 170 participants at times.

Gilbert also holds regular planning, zoning, and redevelopment commission meetings; and the town's public safety chiefs connect with peers in the region using Webex Meetings and Messaging as collaboration tools.

## Town services embrace digital transformation

Gilbert also ramped up the number of services available online—not only to help protect health and safety, but also to improve convenience for residents. The town created a "one-stop-shop" for online service, allowing residents and building contractors to submit permit applications for review and approval, to pay utility bills, or to request services.

"With processes completed digitally, business can continue as normal. Building permits are granted, construction projects move forward, and the town continues to grow and develop," explains Mejia. "And because work continues at every level, we've been very fortunate to have steady revenue."

And the digital transformation doesn't stop there. Gilbert also provides free, public Wi-Fi in its parks and community spaces.

"If we want to create a connected community, it's critical we allow some of the connections to be available around the clock," says Mejia. "That's where the innovation starts."

Gilbert has focused on creating a seamless experience for customers. "We do exist as a service because of taxpayers, and that's something we keep in mind," Mejia says. "We make sure we're doing everything in their best interests, focusing on areas of top-priority while providing the best value."

## Keeping critical services secure

Cisco solutions make up the backbone of Gilbert's network, which helps keep critical lines of service, such as police, fire, and emergency services operational.

"We had the Webex Suite in place for collaboration and staff could quickly make the transition to working at home."

**Eugene Mejia**
Deputy Chief Technology Officer, Town of Gilbert

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The Town's 30 municipal offices are linked by a Cisco network infrastructure including Cisco Catalyst® Series switches and routers, and Cisco wireless access points, with a suite of security products integrated into Cisco's cloud-native platform, SecureX.

"You have to be forward-thinking and put the appropriate defenses and mitigation strategies in play," says Dr. Tony Bryson, chief information and security officer for the Town of Gilbert. "It's very important that we engage with companies like Cisco that help inform us about how to do things that take away as much risk as possible."

The time-critical and data-centric needs of the police and fire departments also require security and data privacy that meet HIPAA requirements. The entire phone system for the Town operates with Cisco Unified Communications Manager cloud calling and communications to and from any location, and Webex Contact Center Enterprise is the platform for call center inquiries to utilities, courts and police department records.

## Future forward

What's next for Gilbert? A master plan for a fiber optic network is one of the top priorities on Gilbert's roadmap to the future. Various departments are collaborating to make certain there is a connected infrastructure to all buildings and all services. "We look at all of our more than 250 lines of service to see if there are options to digitally transform processes from where they are today," says Mejia. "We envision a fiber infrastructure throughout the Town of Gilbert systems and the entire community—and that journey begins now.

"Focusing on our customers includes taking the time to really innovate and move at the speed of business," Mejia explains. "Making sure we are prepared for the future—a pandemic or the next crisis—started years ago. It's that forward thinking that really put us in the position to succeed."

For Gilbert to thrive, it needs a network that will securely deliver digital services. It needs to enable new ways of working, integrate new services, and reimagine what it means to live and work in a modern city.

Developing a modern city also demands the flexibility and planning to adapt quickly to a crisis, prepare for the unexpected, and leverage the expertise of leading industry partners.

## Product list

- Cisco Catalyst 9300 Series Switches
- Cisco Catalyst Series Routers
- Cisco Enterprise Network Security
- Cisco SecureX™
- Cisco Secure Email
- Cisco Secure Firewall
- Cisco Secure Network Analytics
- Cisco Umbrella®
- Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco Wireless Access Points
- Webex Calling
- Webex Contact Center Enterprise
- Webex Meetings
- Webex Messaging
- Webex Suite

## For more information

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