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Fraunhofer USA Digital Media Technologies Opens San Jose Office

Pioneer of MP3 and AAC technologies plans future Silicon Valley partnerships

SAN JOSE, Calif.— Fraunhofer USA Digital Media Technologies, Audio and Multimedia Division, this week officially opened in San Jose, located at 100 Century Center Court, in the City's famed North San Jose innovation triangle.

The office will house a Silicon Valley-based team focusing on state-of-the-art coding and multimedia real-time system technologies and also allow the organization a closer proximity to existing and potential Silicon Valley and American customers.

According to San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed, the Fraunhofer opening is another testament to San Jose's position as a global gateway for companies around the world. "We welcome Fraunhofer to San Jose and wish the company future success. With San Jose's well-educated workforce, concentration of technology expertise and proven ability to translate knowledge into economic value, Fraunhofer will have the resources to gain a very strong West Coast foothold," Reed said.

Fraunhofer is the largest applied research organization in Europe with a permanent global staff of 13,000 scientists and engineers. Fraunhofer USA Audio and Multimedia Division focuses on technologies that compress audio or video. This includes the MP3 format, originated by Fraunhofer, which made music downloads possible and created the portable music player industry. This was followed by their co-invention of the AAC format popularized by the iPod. Fraunhofer then expanded its work to include video with H.264, particularly for mobile TV applications. Fraunhofer also has developed new technologies to offer high-quality audio codecs for surround sound and VoIP applications.

The relationship between San Jose and Fraunhofer began in April 2005, when San Jose officials met in Munich with Fraunhofer executives during an economic development mission.

Robert Bleidt, Audio and Multimedia Division General Manager said, “Silicon Valley-based technology leaders such as Cisco, Harmonic, and Palm have used Fraunhofer-developed technologies, such as MP3, AAC, and H.264, for years. With the opening of the San Jose office, we will be able to engage with and support our American customers in a more direct manner, expand our market knowledge and relationships, and raise our profile here in Silicon Valley and throughout the West Coast.”

In the opening reception attended by customers, City officials and Fraunhofer German-based executives and catered by downtown San Jose’s Teske’s Germania Restaurant, Erwin Huber, the Bavarian State Minister for Economic Affairs, Infrastructure, Transport and Technology, cited numerous similarities between Bavaria and the region including a commitment to technical progress as the underlying basis for economic growth and competitiveness. “Both are the engines driving growth in their countries. Both have an excellent research landscape with first-rate universities and research institutions. And, both have highly innovative industries with far-reaching similarities,” Huber said. Huber also discussed how good partnership-based relations with the region are a matter of great importance to Bavaria. As an example, Huber cited Minister-President Dr. Edmund Stoiber who visited California in 2005 and held intensive talks with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger about the opportunities for very close cooperation.

Fraunhofer USA Digital Media Technologies, Audio and Multimedia Division, will work in close collaboration with the Fraunhofer Institute for Integrated Circuits IIS in Erlangen, located in Bavaria, Germany. Professor Heinz Gerhaeuser, head of Fraunhofer IIS and one of the key scientists involved in the development of MP3, explained the research areas of Fraunhofer’s largest institute, mentioning not only its work in audio coding, but also its research programs in related areas such as Digital Cinema and the many digital terrestrial and satellite broadcasting systems, such as XM Radio, to which Fraunhofer IIS has contributed or developed.

Harald Popp, head of the Multimedia Realtime Systems department of Fraunhofer IIS said, “We have been successfully performing audio coding research, development, standardization, and world-wide marketing of real-time multimedia technologies for more than 20 years. Through the collaboration with Fraunhofer USA's new branch, we'll be able to quickly introduce our latest technologies such as MPEG Surround, mp3 Surround, AAC Low Delay and Mobile-TV solutions to the American market.”

The Fraunhofer USA Audio and Multimedia Division will be led by Robert Bleidt, Division General Manager, who has over two decades of industry experience in developing new media technologies and businesses. He holds MSEE and MBA degrees and has been with Fraunhofer since 2004.

To learn more about Fraunhofer USA, Inc., please visit www.fraunhofer.org. For further details on Fraunhofer IIS audio and multimedia products and technologies, see www.iis.fraunhofer.de/amm.

About Fraunhofer USA, Inc.

Fraunhofer USA, Inc. is a non-profit research and development corporation, with headquarters in Michigan. It operates through technology centers that are partnered with major research universities in the United States and also with parent research institutes in Germany.

About the City of San Jose's Office of Economic Development

The City of San Jose's Office of Economic Development (OED) is committed to a vital, competitive San Jose economy that increases prosperity for people and companies and enhances City revenues. The Office guides the City's economic strategy, provides assistance for business success, helps connect employers with trained workers, and provides art, sporting and cultural resources to our community. For more information, please visit, www.sjeconomy.com.

About the City of San Jose

From its founding in 1777 as California's first city, San Jose has been a leader, driven by its spirit of innovation. Today, San Jose stands as the largest city in Northern California and the Capital of Silicon Valley—the world's leading center of innovation. The city, the 10th largest in the U.S., is committed to remaining a top-ranked place to do business, work, live, play and learn. For more information, visit, www.sanjoseca.gov.

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