

Chicago unicorn SMS Assist to open Naperville office with space for 400 employees

By Ally Marotti | September 5, 2018 10:10 AM

Chicago-based technology company SMS Assist said Wednesday it plans to open a second Chicago-area office in Naperville, with room for up to 400 employees.

Launched in 1999, SMS Assist connects property managers with subcontractors to address maintenance issues. Clients include residential rental company Invitation Homes and [JPMorgan Chase](#), and SMS Assist has more than 20,000 vendors — electricians, snow removal services, plumbers and the like — in its network.

SMS Assist has begun hiring for the office, starting with customer service roles, CEO Taylor Rhodes said. The office is set to open with about 30 employees at the beginning of October.

“This is a chance for us to diversify and reach into new talent pools,” Rhodes said. “Growth is a good problem to have, but growth requires you to figure out space and talent pools.”

Rhodes told the Tribune this spring that the company planned to hire more than 100 people this year, and he said Wednesday that it has added at least that many employees in 2018 to date.

Some of those new employees will help with product and tech development, moving SMS Assist toward its next step: predictive analytics. The goal is to partner with companies that deploy sensors in buildings and gather data that can be used to predict if equipment might break.

The company’s software development team will remain downtown, Rhodes said. Its current 800 employees take up three floors in the building formerly called the [John Hancock Center](#), and it recently hired a new chief human resources officer to help manage growth. The employees at the Naperville office will be focused mainly on working with the subcontractors and companies that use SMS Assist’s technology.

SMS Assist is one of Chicago’s unicorns, an industry term for privately held companies valued at \$1 billion or more. The company landed the status after [raising \\$150 million in new funding](#) in 2016.