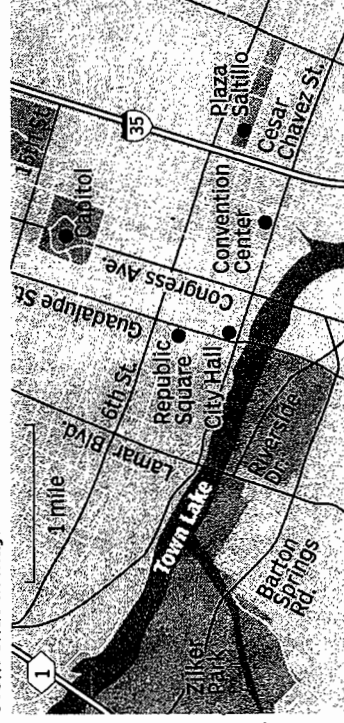


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A very big hot spot

Austin plans to roll out a wireless Internet network that eventually will extend from Zilker Park to Plaza Saitillo and beyond. It's being built for the World Congress on Information Technology but will remain after the event ends in May.



Wi-Fi: Network will be used for research, too

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ultimately, to various city workers, academic and private researchers, and the public.

"This new network can help Austin in several ways: by more broadband Internet access for more citizens, by assisting some city services and by forming a test laboratory for new wireless applications, services and businesses," Austin Mayor Will Wynn said.

Glyn Meek, CEO of the congress' Austin organization, said discussions about building the network have been under way for a nearly a year.

"We always have wanted to leave behind a legacy to the city," Meek said of the congress, which is held in a different city every two years.

The wireless network will be built in three stages. The first, covering lower downtown, will be completed by mid- to late April in time for the technology meeting. It's designed to provide almost continuous broadband Internet access to attendees.

A few dozen interconnected wireless access points, mounted on city light poles and atop buildings, are expected to provide coverage for the entire lower downtown area from City Hall east to Interstate 35 and from Town Lake north to Sixth or Seventh Street.

"Our delegates live and die and breathe by (Internet) connectivity, and this provides them with continuous connectivity for all their stay," Meek

Austin to build free wireless network

System will be set up for tech conference and expanded later

By Kirk Ladendorf

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

The City of Austin plans to create a high-speed wireless network that will deliver free broadband Internet access to parts of downtown Austin, East Austin and Zilker Park.

The city is partnering with Cisco Systems Inc., the largest maker of computer networking equipment, and the World Congress on Information Technology. Cisco will donate nearly \$700,000 worth of wireless networking equipment for the project to the group hosting the international gathering of technology leaders in Austin in early May.

But the network will live on. With Cisco's equipment and engineering assistance, the city's communications and technology management department and Austin Energy will build and maintain the network, which will deliver high-speed Internet access to attendees at the technology convention and,

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said. "Cisco has absolutely stepped up to the plate for this, and so has the city. This has been a great team effort."

The network will use an enhanced version of wireless networking technology that carries data farther and faster than earlier versions of Wi-Fi commonly used in "hot spots."

The downtown section of the network will be built first, followed by expansions into parts of East Austin and to Zilker Park. It's expected to link to existing hot spots at City Hall, Republic Square and the Convention Center downtown and at Plaza Saitillo, Fiesta Beach and East 11th Street in East Austin.

The wireless network will be able to link directly to the city's 300-mile fiber-optic communications network that connects to the Internet.

Parts of the wireless network will be shut down occasionally so researchers or entrepreneurs can test new services and software applications on it.

Peter Collins, the city's chief information officer, says the network is the outgrowth of a few years of discussions between city staffers and technologists at the University of Texas and at technology businesses on how they can best collaborate.

Collins said his current staff can maintain the network without additional spending. Cisco has agreed to help maintain the network for its first few years of operation, he said.

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