

Tech Support

Suburbs—the smart ones, anyway—are baiting businesses with Wi-Fi. BY TREY GARRISON

WHY WI-FI? BECAUSE IT CAN ATTRACT BUSINESS, THAT'S why. Municipalities across North Texas are installing free wireless Internet coverage. It's less a draw for large corporations as smaller businesses, but Dallas-area cities are seeing Wi-Fi as one more tool in their economic development arsenal in attracting and keeping business. Houston is considering an ambitious endeavor to provide universal, citywide coverage, and similar programs are under way in geographically smaller markets like Mountain View, Calif. (guess who's there—Google), and Washington, D.C.

The Town of Addison was the first in Texas to provide border-to-border universal coverage, with 95 percent of the town's four-and-a-half square miles blanketed. Access costs about \$17 a month. The same company that "unwired" Addison—RedMoon Inc.—is constructing a border-to-border network in Burleson and has pilot programs running in Southlake, Coppell, and Grand Prairie, with eventual plans to expand citywide.

Flower Mound is another North Texas town making the investment in free access hot spots. Bedford and Keller already have them set up at their town libraries. Richardson has free hot spots now and is considering all-over coverage—a natural fit, given the city's propensity for positioning itself as a high-tech hub. And Plano is currently working on a universal plan as well.

In Dallas proper, where city leaders fight the never-ending battle to recruit and retain businesses and residents, the city is two steps into its own Wi-Fi efforts. Most of the city's public libraries have or are getting wireless access, and in June the city launched a plan to offer wireless coverage in—wait for it—city parks. It's a start.

ADDISON BY THE NUMBERS

4.5
NUMBER OF SQUARE MILES

14,500
TOTAL RESIDENTS

100
WIRELESS NODES OPERATING ON TWO FREQUENCIES

8
MONTHS IT TOOK TO BUILD BORDER-TO-BORDER WIRELESS NETWORK



SEEK AND FIND

Yes, your fancy laptop does a nice job of finding available wireless networks. But 'tis a hassle to boot the thing at every coffeehouse you wander into, isn't it? Not to mention the waste of your precious battery power. Bring on the **Canary Wireless Digital Hotspotter**, which comes in handy for Wi-Fi seekers, especially when on the road. As the name suggests, this gadget detects hot spots. But it also displays the name of the network, whether it's open or encrypted, and the strength of the signal. Your laptop will thank you. (www.canary-wireless.com)

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