

NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information Contact Pierre A. Clark, Southside Technology Cooperative/Chicago Digital Access Alliance, 312-474-0373

Community Activists, Technology Experts Partner To Launch STC Wireless Network In Bronzeville. First initiative toward organizing South Side digital demonstration community.

The push to change the direction of community development on Chicago's South Side to embrace the power of digital resources and create a community-driven digital infrastructure got a small but important boost on Friday, May 30, 2008 at the Bronzeville Visitor Information Center, 3501 South Dr. M.L. King Drive.

A group of technology specialists and activists installed a “proof of concept” wireless network providing wi-fi internet access for local residents at 35th Street and King Drive in the Bronzeville Visitors Information Center.

Members of The Southside Technology Cooperative NFP, formed by technology activists to deliver technology resources to Southside residents and spearhead the development of the South Side's community-driven digital infrastructure, worked with the Chicago Digital Access Alliance, a citywide group promoting digital excellence and digital demonstration communities in Chicago, and One Economy, an international non-profit offering technology resources, to install the first three wireless access points at the Visitors Information Center.

The network nodes, code-named BMNHA for Black Metropolis National Heritage Area to promote Bronzeville as a historic tourism destination, makes wireless internet access available to anyone with a wi-fi enabled device – computer, laptop, cell phone, personal data assistant device – for a distance of 200 feet from the broadcast access point.

Three network devices are installed at the Visitor Information Center, covering the entire Supreme Life Building at 35th and King Drive and extending across the street as far as the White Castle on the northeast corner and to the 3510 South Rhodes building in the Lawless Gardens complex just east of the Visitor Information Center. The nodes will provide 802.11a/b/g standard wireless access at speeds up to 54 megabits per second. The network concept is called a mesh network, where network access points are arranged and connect to each other in a grid, or mesh, fashion to provide seamless coverage, or a wireless cloud, to any device within the access area.

Additional network devices will be placed in the Lawless Gardens complex to provide wireless access to the estimated 690 apartments and 50 townhomes within the complex. According to project coordinator Pierre Clark, co-founder of the Southside Technology Cooperative NFP and the Chicago Digital Access Alliance Inc., eventually hundreds of nodes will be installed by the STC to provide wi-fi access, on a free and pay-for-use basis, to as many as 40,000 South side residents who are members of the cooperative and hundreds of thousands of people on the South Side who want to log on.

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The network is designed by Norman Montgomery, technology specialist at the University of Illinois at Chicago and an STC co-founder/board member, and Greg Brush of One Economy, a network specialist and expert in the Meraki network technology used to deploy the network.

Harold Lucas, President of the Black Metropolis Convention And Tourism Council, which owns the Bronzeville Visitor Information Center, declared the network launch “a historic first step taken by community residents to develop and implement the empowering digital infrastructure that will allow us to communicate with each other, share information, and link everyone in our communities together.”

For more information about the STC Wireless Network, call Pierre Clark of the Southside Technology Cooperative/Chicago Digital Access Alliance at 773-571-9332 or e-mail pierre@digitalexcellence.net or Harold Lucas of the Bronzeville Visitor Information Center at 773-373-2842, e-mail visitbronzeville@aol.com.