

## Hotspots are a hot item

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Can't access that Blackberry in your office? Have the laptop ready, but you aren't in a hotspot?

Maybe it's not a big deal to some, but to more and more people it's a matter of "deal or no deal."

And developers are taking notice.

Residential, office and even retail projects are making wireless needs a top priority from the outset of development. Providing free internet services or at least ensuring that wireless devices work in offices are more than just an amenity.

For example, Bronk's Corners, ACP Development's Joliet retail and office project at the northwest corner of Illinois Route 59 and Theodore Road in unincorporated Will County—an area soon to be annexed to Joliet—will be fitted with wireless internet service.

"In today's business world, connection to the internet is vital," says Shawn Adams, vice president of marketing for Ardmin. ACP Development is a partnership between Woodridge-based Ardmin Properties and Caton Commercial Real Estate Group of Plainfield.

"It's almost at the same level as electricity—and you're not going to tell someone 'Hey, go out there and get your own electricity hook-up.'"

To that end, Bronk's Corners will feature wireless service already installed for all of the tenants, even for the retail tenants.

"For a retailer, you're looking at personnel changes, inventory changes and that all has to be done online. That's



PHOTO BY DANIEL DUGGAN

**In the near future, wireless areas like the hotspot in front of Daley Center (pictured) will be easier to find. Residential, retail, industrial and office buildings are making wireless connectivity a priority.**

why we see it as so vital."

ACP went to the length of building a broadcasting tower at the entrance of the development. On the assumption that a wireless tower is unsightly, the designers came up with a clever way to spruce it up.

"We thought, lets turn a requirement into a feature," he says. "We turned it into a large steel structure and turned it into a clock tower. The city loved it."

Tenants will pay the developer for wireless service at a rate Adams says will be competitive with other providers. The wireless signal will be broadcast to a receiver in each building, then the signal will be routed to a wall socket for wired connections. In each building, the tenant will then have the

option of a wireless or wired internet connection.

"And we'll have different bandwidth options, so a bank or a high-end user will be happy with the high-end product but then we'll have something that's cheaper for a mom-and-pop user," he says.

The cost of installing the system will be cheaper for the entire project with the economy of scale, compared to having a company install connections in individual buildings at the tenant's request.

### Moving wireless outside

For residents purchasing or renting units from some buildings in the  
*continued on opposite side*

Lakeshore East mixed-use development at Lakeshore and Randolph in downtown Chicago, the cost of wireless is easy to swallow—free.

The six-acre park that's integrated in the development will be entirely linked to a wireless network says Joel Carlins, co-chairman of the Magellan Development Group, which is developing the project.

"We're the first wireless park in the United States," Carlins says.

The club-floor areas in the Shoreham Building will have free wireless internet access as will the Tides Building, which is currently under construction. Also, the Aqua, to be under construction in November, will have free wireless. Such services won't be offered in the office and retail spaces of the development.

Carlins says the free wireless is an amenity that will be a hit with the younger crowd, but also people of all ages who are tech savvy.

"In getting the younger buyers and renters in the 25 to 35 year range, the wireless helps," he says. "We think the technology tracks with that age group."

### **Can you hear me now**

In the office sector, wireless connec-

tions are much more commonplace. But in the newest office towers, even cellular phone reception takes extra effort.

In the 71 South Wacker building, engineers were forced to find a solution to an age-old problem of poor cell phone reception at the core of office towers.

"You just get bad reception in some buildings, others its all right. But in that building, it was horrible, you couldn't even go to the window to get a good signal, it just has to do with the way the building was positioned," says Ali Mehmedi, who was an associate at Environmental Systems Designs when they provided electrical engineering services in the building.

To remedy the cellular phone problem, they built a miniature cellular phone tower into the core of the building. Access points were placed on each floor and connected to the internal cellular antenna.

"Now, you can get a signal anywhere in the building," he says.

As individual businesses and developments are building wireless connections in pockets across the state, the city of Chicago is working its way through an initiative to provide a wireless net-

work citywide.

Ald. Margaret Laurino (39th Ward) is the co-chair with Ald. Ed Burke (14th Ward) for a committee that is overseeing the implementation of a citywide wireless internet system.

She says the initiative is about the city recognizing that access to the internet isn't just a toy for most people—that it should be treated like a utility and distributed to everyone in the city.

"We're very interested in reaching the underserved neighborhoods, especially," she says. "It will be helpful to the parents, schools and businesses. I'm not worried about Lincoln Park and Michigan Avenue. We need to look at the underserved areas, where small businesses need access to the internet."

The city plans to put out a request for proposal by June 1, she says. A date to have the project up and running has not been set.

In the end, Laurino says, it only makes sense that if developers are supplying wireless services the city should too.

"We're at the point where this is a utility, it should be part of our infrastructure." 