

He's on the case...
and in your face!

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Local

WiFi! NYC? Not yet

*The rumor is spreading
the word is on
the street*

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From trash cans that call for service when they are full, to parking meters that call police when the time is expired, to high-speed Internet connections in every home and classroom, a fully wired New York City is on the way. But, officials cautioned yesterday, the wired city isn't just around the corner.

"It might happen within the decade, but I don't realistically see it much sooner than that," Councilwoman Gale Brewer said at a City Council hearing yesterday.

Recent industry surveys ranked New York 17th among large U.S. cities in access to high-speed Internet.

In response, Brewer is sponsoring legislation that would create a broadband advisory commission for the mayor and City Council.

"Now New York's own City Council is recognizing there is market failure," said Andrew Rasiej, who unsuccessfully ran for public advocate this year on a platform of universal WiFi access. "The existing Internet providers are neglecting large portions of the city, and they are overcharging New Yorkers as a whole."

Rasiej called yesterday's hearing a sign that the government is finally recognizing the power of technology to drive the economy.

"How does the most successful industrial city in the world transform itself into the most successful information city?" Rasiej asked.

"This is the question."

The answer, it turns out, will incorporate familiar tools such as DSL lines, cutting-edge technologies such as "broadband over power lines," and even some information systems that haven't been invented yet.

A spokesman from Earthlink testified at the hearing that WiFi technology, a wireless Internet connection that many New Yorkers already enjoy in Bryant Park and some coffee shops, is a proven system for delivering Internet connections to millions of people.

Earthlink is currently in the process of building a 135-square-mile wireless network in Philadelphia, one of the first U.S. cities slated to introduce universal WiFi.

But as one industry representative noted yesterday,

"no one is sure if the Philadelphia plan will work." Other options are needed.

One technology that may be effective in dense cities like New York is broadband over power lines, where the Internet connection runs through the same wires that carry electricity.

Some Trump residences already use these lines, and the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission once said the technology "could simply blow the doors off the provision of broadband."

In 1934, the federal government mandated that all homes in the U.S. be wired with a telephone line. Rasiej says the same thinking should now be extended to broadband Internet access.

"Access to Internet is the dial tone of our time," he said.

MOURNING THE GASTONS

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