

## Conduits installed for city's future - - Herald-Times (Bloomington, IN) - May 12, 2000

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In hopes of attracting and retaining high-tech businesses that use advanced telecommunications links, the city of Bloomington has embarked on a program that encourages the installation of fiber-optic cable throughout the city.

Dubbed the **Bloomington Digital Underground Program**, the initiative began with placing underground communications conduits in the city's rights-of-way, allowing for the installation of fiber-optic cables. Some of the projects in which the conduits have been or are being installed include Kirkwood Avenue, the Third-Fifth-Adams project, College Mall Road, South Patterson Drive and Third Street west to Ind. 37.

"Advanced telecommunications infrastructure is an essential component of the information-based new economy," Bloomington Mayor John Fernandez said at a Thursday morning news conference. "Investing in our rights-of-way for the purpose of installing fiber-optics positions our community for economic growth that is driven by the Internet and electronic commerce. It also helps our streets and sidewalks."

Across the country, telephone companies, cable TV firms and others have been installing fiber-optic cables to carry the increasing volumes of voice and data traffic to businesses and homes. The city's program seeks to lower the barriers to entry for competitive telecommunications providers while protecting the city's rights-of-way investments and visual attractiveness.

"We enthusiastically welcome broadband telecommunications providers in Bloomington," Fernandez said. "By providing the infrastructure for these providers to install fiber-optics, local businesses and citizens will be able to take advantage of advanced telecommunications services, enhancing our ability to compete in the global economy."

The city's program will make it easier and cheaper for companies to lay cable than if they were required to dig up city streets and sidewalks. Some of the costs for installing the conduits can be defrayed through lease revenues from the companies who use the conduits, Fernandez said.

The city also will be able to take advantage of advanced telecommunications services provided through fiber-optic cables in the conduits. Examples include sharing data between city buildings or running streetlights through a fiber network.

The city administration is requesting that \$185,000 in funding be approved by the city council to begin the construction of a conduit ring around central Bloomington. The proposed source of the funding is the telecommunications infrastructure fund. The city is partnering with Kiva Telecom, whose conduit route parallels the city's. That will cut down on the cost of new construction and minimize the number of street cuts and traffic disruptions.

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