Kansas City, Kansas, wins Google broadband nod

March 30 2011, by Glenn Chapman

The Google search page appears on a computer screen in Washington 2010. Google on Wednesday announced it will build its first super-fast broadband Internet network in Kansas City, Kansas.

Google announced on Wednesday that Kansas City, Kansas, had been selected as the site for its first super-fast broadband Internet network.

Nearly 1,100 US towns and cities had competed to be Google's testbed for the ultra high-speed fiber optic network which will move data 100 times faster than what is available in the United States today.

Each home, school, and business in Kansas City will eventually be linked to a "one-gigabyte backbone" for routing digital data. The service is expected to start in 2012.

"We hope to bring this same service to other nearby cities and other markets too," said Google vice president of access services Milo Medin. "This is really the beginning... we are starting here."

Google announced its plan to build an experimental high-speed Internet network a year ago.

Tactics used by cities to be selected by the California technology giant included public rallies, pitches in YouTube videos, creation of Facebook groups, and symbolically taking on the firm's name.

The United States ranked 15th in a study of Internet connectivity in countries worldwide, according to a study released in October by computer networking titan Cisco. South Korea topped the list.

The study affirmed that being ahead of the pack with Internet broadband gave countries an economic advantage and many emerging economies are "leapfrogging" old Internet technologies to go directly to high-speed networks.

The United States was not among the 14 countries that the Cisco-backed study concluded were prepared for the "Internet applications of tomorrow."

Fast and ubiquitous Internet service was described by Google executives as essential to innovation and creativity as well as to connecting people to lifestyle benefits the Digital Age has to offer.

"Speed matters immensely," said Google chief financial officer Patrick Pichette. "We're going to actually experiment to find solutions to make the Internet accessible to everybody."

Google said it planned to offer wired Internet connections to homes at a

"competitive price" with people choosing their own service providers.

Reasons for picking Kansas City included being able to efficiently build the fiber network there and the potential for showcasing services that capitalize on ultra-fast data connections.

Kansas City has a population of about 146,000 people, according to recent census figures.

"Over the past decade, the jump from dial-up to broadband has led to streaming online video, digital music sales, video conferencing over the Web and countless other innovations that have transformed communication and commerce," Google's Medin said.

"We can't wait to see what new products and services will emerge as Kansas City moves from traditional broadband to ultra high-speed fiber optic connections," he said.

The Kansas City project is intended to explore new ways to deploy fiber networks as well as to see what kinds of "bandwidth-intensive killer apps" or services it inspires, according to Google.