

Apple expected to unveil iPad 3 at event next week

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In this Aug. 23, 2011 file photo, a student unpacks her new iPad at Burlington High School in Burlington, Mass. Apple is inviting reporters to an event next Wednesday, March, 7, 2012, in San Francisco. An image on the invite showing part of an iPad screen suggests it's to announce a new model. (AP Photo/Elise Amendola, File)

(AP) -- Apple is expected to unveil a new version of the iPad at an event in San Francisco next week.

Apple sent out invitations to news media on Tuesday with an image showing part of an iPad screen. The company had been widely expected

to reveal the third version of its popular tablet computer soon, close to the anniversary of the launch of the iPad 2.

The event will take place next Wednesday at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater, where Apple holds larger launch events.

Since the first iPad came out in 2010, sales of traditional computers have slowed in the U.S. and other wealthy countries. Rival PC and phone makers have been unable to mirror Apple's success with their own tablet computers. Apple has sold 55 million iPads so far, about the same as the estimated number of Mac computers in use.

Apple Inc. didn't provide any details on the new device. Various unconfirmed reports speak of a sharper screen and faster cellular broadband options.

It's not known when such a new device would be available for sale. Last year, sales of the iPad 2 began in the U.S. nine days after the announcement.

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