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Citywide Wi-Fi in Oakwood looks unlikely

Map made to show wireless spots



Oakwood may extend wireless to City Park, but it is giving up its pursuit of citywide Wi-Fi, having tried for a year to work with certain businesses, including AT&T, and seeing no movement.

Citywide wireless Internet doesn't appear likely any time soon in Oakwood.

The South Hall city has checked with consultants, plus AT&T, to see if such an endeavor was possible and has gotten no response from those companies.

The vibe that city officials are getting is that the city is spread out in too many directions for a consolidated Wi-Fi network.

"We're not a compact-type circle where you can have a few spots and cover the town," City Manager Stan Brown said, speaking Friday during the City Council's annual retreat, which took place at the Lanier Charter Career Academy.

"Even if we did, what they're telling me is the cost would be so prohibitive that you'd have to have a grant or something to do it," he added. "Or you'd have to get into the wireless business, where you'd have to figure out some way to recoup that cost."

Brown said talks with companies began about a year ago.

"They don't come back with a proposal, and we're talking about people who have done this work for (such places as) the city of Decatur and Duluth (as part of its) downtown area," he said.

In talking with various cities, "the consensus that I got is if we had a place like our Town Commons ... or the City Park, it's probably not a bad idea," Brown said.

Town Commons is the name for one of the areas mentioned in Oakwood 2030, a long-range plan that contemplates how the city's downtown area might look in that year.

City Park is off Railroad Street between Main and Allen streets. Wireless service is available at nearby City Hall, 4035 Walnut Circle, and the police department next door.

"It's probably a good thing for us to provide (wireless service) for people who are in the park," Brown said.

He showed some frustration about the lack of response from the companies.

"I'm talking to folks who do this for a living," he said. "... Obviously, they don't think enough of (the concept in Oakwood) that it's worth even a pitch to us."

The city has put together a map of wireless locations around town, particularly along the heavily commercial Mundy Mill Road, and where AT&T's U-Verse service is generally available.

"About the best we can do is put some information out there. We could take this map, put it on our website and say this is where Wi-Fi is available," Brown said.

"You might do that. If you've tried and done what you did, and you don't have (any response), there's not much else you can do about (the issue)," Mayor Lamar Scroggs said.