

Google treks into smart cities with Sidewalk Labs; BluVision's iBEEK+ can serve as sensor-packed beacon; consumers like IoT for energy savings, says survey; new software for workplace wearables.

By Mary Catherine O'Connor

Jun 15, 2015—Google Launches Sidewalk Labs

Google has launched a new project called Sidewalk Labs, which it describes in a [press release](#) as an "urban innovation company that will develop technology at the intersection of the physical and digital worlds, with a focus on improving city life for residents, businesses and governments." The New York City-based company will create products and services, using Internet of Things technologies and other tools, aimed at boosting energy efficiency, improving public transportation systems and reducing the cost of living in cities, which the United Nations estimates will be home to 66 percent of the world's population by 2050 (54 percent currently live in cities). Dan Doctoroff, the former CEO of financial software and media company Bloomberg LP and, prior to that, N.Y.C.'s deputy mayor of economic development and rebuilding, will serve as Sidewalk Labs' CEO.

Google has not yet disclosed many details about its urban-development spinoff, but in a [post on Google+](#), Larry Page called it a "relatively modest investment" but said that like [Calico Labs](#), a different Google spinoff that is researching anti-aging technologies, Sidewalk Labs holds the potential to have a direct and positive impact on people's lives.

Smart city applications mark one of the core growth areas of IoT technology. Research into wireless sensor networks at [Argonne Labs](#) has evolved into [Waggle](#), an IoT platform that Chicago is evaluating. Mayors from around the globe recently convened in Washington, D.C., to learn about smart city projects during the [Global City Teams Challenge Expo](#).

BluVision Releases iBEEK+ Beacon

BluVision has released a new product, the iBEEK+, a weather-resistant beacon designed for use in commercial or industrial settings. The iBEEK+ is available with a number of optional integrated sensors, including a light sensor, a temperature sensor with accuracy up to 0.2 degree Celsius, a three-axis accelerometer and a magnetometer. It has an estimated six-year battery life when transmitting a universally unique identifier (UUID) at 100-millisecond intervals in compliance with [Apple's iBeacon](#) communication protocol.

The iBEEK+ also supports the Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) Beacon (uriBeacon) protocol and can operate in a dual mode (iBeacon plus uriBeacon). The iBEEK+ is compliant with the Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) 4.1 wireless standard and can operate between -25 degrees Celsius (-13 degrees Fahrenheit) to 65 degrees Celsius (149 degrees Fahrenheit). According to BluVision, it is UV-resistant and compliant with the IP67 standard for water and dust resistance. The beacon measures 5 inches by 5 inches by 2 inches and weighs 7.2 ounces. It is available on the BluVision website for \$49.99. Bluvision also offers a cloud-based beacon-management platform on which users can build and manage apps for iBEEK beacons. The platform supports beacon management with remote provisioning, real-time monitoring and advanced real-time alerts. BluVision has also released an updated software development kit through which businesses can integrate the iBEEK+ into apps they develop in-house.

Research Shows Consumers Most Interested in IoT's Home Energy-Saving Potential

[ThroughTek](#), a machine-to-machine platform provider, has released findings from an online survey it commissioned to poll American adult consumers on their interest in IoT products. Thirty-one percent of the 1,181 respondents said they believe a fully connected home will be achievable in the next year, and 60 percent indicated this would be attainable within the next five years.

The energy-saving potential of IoT products and services for home use is the main draw for 59 percent of respondents, with Millennials leading that group. Home security and home entertainment system user interfaces were also draws among respondents, with 23 percent and 16 percent of respondents showing an interest in those applications, respectively. Cost and security were the two biggest hurdles to adoption that the consumers who were surveyed cited. Eighty-eight percent of respondents reported that they were unwilling to pay more than \$250 for a connected device, while 27 percent noted their anxiety that devices may lack sufficient data security controls to protect their personal data from unauthorized third parties.

ThroughTek commissioned research and consulting group [YouGov PLC](#) to conduct the online survey last month.

APX Labs and Augmate Roll Out Software for Wearables Management

[APX Labs](#)—which makes operating software known as Skylight that runs on smart glasses made by Sony, Epson, Google or

Vuzix (and is designed to be hardware-agnostic)—announced the availability of the latest version of that software, [Skylight R5](#). The software supports new capabilities, including voice command and control, a business process management module called Workstreams, improved high-resolution photo capture, support for Android Wear devices and a planned update for the Apple Watch.

The addition of Workstreams in Skylight R5 allows companies to create workflows in which their users can quickly view and interact with their daily work and drill down to get help whenever they need it.

APX Labs announced the upgrades at the [Augmented World Expo](#) in Santa Clara, Calif., where [Augmate](#), which also makes a software platform for wearable devices used in enterprise or industrial applications, launched a beta version of its Wearable Environment (WE) platform. The WE platform enables a company to provide wearable devices, such as smart glasses, smart watches or movement trackers, to its workforce, and to then manage the data that the devices collect via an Internet browser on a desktop or mobile computer. It can also be used to commission and manage Bluetooth beacons in a workplace. Partners, such as the manufacturers of the hardware devices or software developers whose apps the devices are running, can log into WE securely, Augmate says. Through WE, third-party applications can be installed on commissioned devices over the air, and messages or alerts can be sent to all wearable devices deployed across the workplace network.