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## Smart Grid: 5 Cities Leading The Way

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The nation's electricity industry is in for an overhaul. Power lines spread across the country are finally moving into the digital age with smart grids that provide instant information on energy consumption.

The hope is that people can finally deal with the impending climate crisis by using less energy. So smart grid leaders are creating thermostats that cut off depending on the price of power -- and plug-in hybrid cars to charge at night or even put power back into the grid. Barack Obama's stimulus package contains about \$4.5 billion in grants for smart-grid investments.

Here are five ongoing Smart Grid projects:

**Boulder, CO:** Boulder is aiming to become the world's first [smart grid city](#) by the end of 2009. The city has partnered with Xcel Energy on the \$100 million effort and customers can use the Internet to lower their thermostats or home or change the temperature on their furnace.

**Worcester, MA:** [National Grid](#) will be building a smart grid pilot in Worcester. The pilot, believed to be the largest in New England, will work towards creating a highly reliable modern grid that can provide customers with energy use information, automation, and the ability to control how they use energy.

**Miami, FL:** [Energy Smart Miami](#), an energy initiative here proposes to use federal economic stimulus funds to help spur a \$200 million investment in smart grid technology over the next two years. The initiative will deploy more than 1 million advanced wireless meters to every in Miami-Dade County. These meters will give Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) customers more information and control over their electricity usage while also providing FPL with information that will enhance system efficiency and reliability.

**Austin, TX:** The city of Austin's [Pecan Street Project](#) aims to get people to start generating power from their own homes. "Smart" appliances, like refrigerators that turn off when there's too much load on the grid will also be a part of the project.

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**Chicago, IL:** With the help of the Galvin Electricity Initiative the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) is adopting the [electric grid](#). As with the other cities, the smart grid would use digital technology to collect, communicate and react to data, making the system more efficient and reliable. For example, sensors would help utilities locate problems and fix them quickly.

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