October 14, 2009 11:43 AM PDT

Using Windows 7 to 'Elevate Miami'

by **Ina Fried**

When new software comes out, usually the more well-to-do get access first, and then eventually it trickles down. However, some of the first to use **Windows 7** will be among those traditionally left behind--including those in some of Miami's poorest areas, many of whom don't even have a home computer.

That's because the city is moving to Windows 7 in several of the computer centers that are part of the **Elevate Miami** project, which aims to equip all of the city's residents with digital know-how, including its vast Spanish-speaking population and the city's most economically challenged areas.

Miami seniors get computer training at one of the city's many centers, this one in a Catholic church and senior center. Miami is moving several of its centers to Windows 7 just as the technology launches.
(Credit: Ina Fried/CNET)

The city is putting Windows 7 machines in five locations, including four of the city's parks and also at the Little Haiti Cultural Center. Two of the centers already have Windows 7 installed, according to city staff.

"By making the latest tools of technology available to the citizens of Miami, the Elevate Miami program hopes to better prepare the Greater Miami community to participate and compete in the new digital society and economy," said James Osteen, the city's assistant director of information technology.

CNET News toured one of the Miami projects last year as part of our **Borders of Computing series**, seeing firsthand as seniors--many of whom had never had access to technology--learned the basics of computing and used the PCs to connect to local friends and family overseas.

Miami wired the first of its city's parks in 2004, planning to slowly roll out the technology. But amid huge demand, the city connected more than 20 parks in that first year and, as of early last year, had more than 40 parks connected with about 300 computers.

"When we've looked in some of our particularly disadvantaged neighborhoods, we see computers in less than a third of houses," City of Miami CIO Peter Korinis said in an interview last year. "We see Internet connections in less than a quarter. Clearly these families and these households are going to have an uphill fight to take advantage of all that a computer has to offer, whether its education or health care or jobs."

Osteen said the city has had a very positive experience with the latest Windows.

"After using Windows 7 for very short period of time we suggested that Microsoft rename the OS to Windows Elevate... because as we used the OS it quickly became apparent that it would elevate security, elevate productivity and elevate performance and in the end elevate the bottom line for our IT Department, our organization and our community," Osteen said.

For those who don't happen to live close to one of the city's computing centers, Windows 7 **goes on sale to the masses on Oct. 22**.

During her years at CNET News, Ina Fried has changed beats several times, changed genders once, and covered both of the Pirates of Silicon Valley. These days, most of her attention is focused on Microsoft. E-mail Ina.