

Apple, Google, Amazon, ZigBee CHIP into Smart Home

Written by Marco Attard
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Four of the biggest names in the connected space-- Amazon, Apple, Google and the ZigBee Alliance-- quietly announce the creation of Connected Home over IP (CHIP), an alliance to bring about an open source IP-based communications protocol for the smart home.



The project also counts Ikea, Legrand, NXP Semiconductors, Residea, Samsung, Schneider Electric, Signify (formerly Philips Lighting), Silicon Labs, Somfy and Wulian as members of the Working Group. The goal, as detailed on a minimalist website, is to "simplify development for manufacturers and increase compatibility for consumers" by further simplifying communications across connected devices, mobile apps and cloud services, as well as define a set of IP-based networking technologies for device certification.

Details of the actual protocol are scant, but the CHIP website does say the goal for the first specification release will be wifi, up to and including 802.11ax (aka Wfi 6), Thread over 802.15.4-2006 at 2.4 GHz, and IP implementations for Bluetooth Low Energy, versions 4.1, 4.2, and 5.0 for the network and physical wireless protocols. Moving further, the CHIP working group will probably embrace other IP-based technologies, such as ethernet, cellular and broadband.

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Further bits and pieces come through blog posts from individual companies. For instance, Apple says it has open sourced "portions" of the HomeKit Accessory Development Kit (ADK) to "accelerate the development of the new universal standard." Meanwhile, Google says it will contribute technologies from the OpenWeave project to help create "a USB-like "plug-and-play" protocol for the home."

The days are still early for CHIP, mind. The working group hopes to release a draft specification by late 2020, together with a preliminary reference open source implementation. One also has to keep in mind the project will not look into unifying smart home user interfaces, but it should level the playing field somewhat, at least in terms of device support.

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