

SPOTLIGHTING

CONNECT 313

ENSURING EVERY DETROIT RESIDENT IS DIGITALLY INCLUDED



Detroit, MI

In Detroit, community members and civic leaders are coming together to provide their city with the greatest tool for success in 2020: fast, affordable, and reliable broadband. The last decade has been the greatest test of unity and perseverance that any municipality has ever faced. After the City filed for bankruptcy in 2013, local officials and community leaders came together and planned for a brighter future. Now, seven years since that difficult time, city officials, the United Way, and countless others are collaborating again to bring every Detroit resident into the digital age. (Continue reading this story on page 2)

Help Improve Broadband Mapping. The FCC has recently released its Second Report & Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for the Digital Opportunity Data Collection process. Next Century Cities seeks your input regarding the largest barriers to connectivity for your community. These responses will help provide, real, local examples of how this will affect federal broadband mapping. You can read the Second Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking at the link [here](#), and fill out NCC's short survey [here](#).

**We want to hear
about affordability
and connectivity in
your community.**

Connect 313, the City of Detroit's Digital Inclusion Program, is being rolled out across the community with the goal of ensuring that every Detroiter is digitally included, improving various aspects of their lives as a result. In a virtual community meeting on July 30th, Joshua Edmonds, the Director of Digital Inclusion for Detroit, outlined his plan to make Connect 313 a central coordinating system for all digital inclusion efforts across the city. Though Connect 313 is not itself an official organization, it is a community coalition, supported by United Way aimed at connecting digital inclusion stakeholders across the region and around the country.



Connect 313 begins to address alarming gaps in technology access across Detroit. What truly drives our partnership is the collective impact efforts to assure the entire city of Detroit will be connected and able to thrive in the 21st Century and beyond.

Dr. Darienne Hudson
President & CEO, United Way
for Southeastern Michigan

On this community call, Dr. Darienne Hudson, the President and CEO of the United Way of Southeastern Michigan spoke to the organization's commitment to connecting Detroit and getting the city "on the map for connectivity." The United Way will be working with the Connect 313 to lead financial operations while also working as a thought partner and lead advocate.

Another supporter, Bartel Welch, founder of Code 313, shared a clear vision for the future of Connect 313. In his view, by 2024, every resident of Detroit should not only have access to a computer and broadband access, but also the digital literacy skills and technology support to utilize these tools. Digital access will allow residents to build a stronger local economy, better education outcomes, and an overall increase in well-being.

For now, the Connect 313 team is focused on tackling the growing digital divide amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The coalition continues to welcome community members, organizations, and supporters. Residency in Detroit is not a requirement to join. Instead, one must simply support the mission to bring every Detroit resident online. Together, the Connect 313 team will ensure that all of Detroit is provided the tools and resources needed to thrive in the digital age.

Next Century Cities is Working for Members



Member Resource Alert (Left). In collaboration with Public Knowledge, NCC has developed a series of fact sheets detailing the benefits of broadband. Check out these resources on [broadband deployment](#) and [telehealth](#).

NCC Members and Supporters

Participate in New York Hearing. On August 3, 2020, New York leaders in the NCC network testified before Governor Cuomo's newly-appointed Commission to improve telehealth and broadband access across the state. City officials from Rochester and Syracuse were among those who shared stories about connectivity barriers in their respective communities.

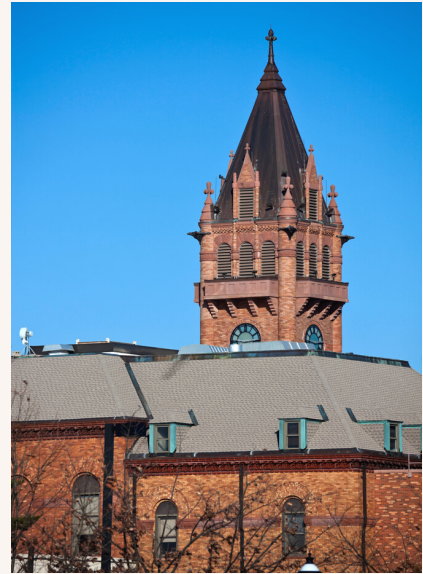


Francella Ochillo Speaks Candidly About the Necessity of Broadband Access During the COVID-19

Pandemic. NCC's Executive Director, Francella Ochillo, participated in the American Association for the Advancement of Science's virtual Responsibility, Human Rights and Law program. During her segment, she discusses the role that digital access plays in connecting and advancing society. She asks listeners to consider what it would take to ensure that every resident in every community has access to broadband.



Hartford, CT



Urbana, IL

NCC Municipalities Are Making the News

Connecticut. On July 28, 2020, Governor Ned Lamont launched the Everybody Learns Initiative. Using state allocated CARES Act funding, \$43.5 million will be used to provide 50,000 laptops, a year's worth of at-home-internet access for 60,000 students, and 200 hotspot sites for public use. Residents of NCC member municipalities **Bristol, Cornwall, East Hartford, Hartford, New Haven, Stamford,** and **West Hartford** could benefit from the state investment in closing the digital divide.

(The State of Connecticut)

Georgia. Governor Brian Kemp signed the Georgia Broadband Opportunity Act into law. Under the new legislation the state Public Service Commission will determine how much electric membership corporations (EMCs) can charge telecommunications providers for broadband attachments to their utility poles. Pole attachment fees have been a significant barrier to broadband expansion in rural parts of Georgia.

(Northwest Georgia News)

Illinois. Governor J.B. Pritzker dedicated \$108.5 million from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) fund to educational initiatives that will benefit students across the state from pre-kindergarten through to the postsecondary level. The state of Illinois also received \$569 million from the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. Portions of these funds will be used to address the existing digital divide in cities and towns statewide including **Carbondale, Champaign, Highland, Jacksonville,** and **Urbana,** all NCC member municipalities. **(The State of Illinois)**

New Hampshire. During a press conference on Thursday, Governor Chris Sununu announced that \$16 million in CARES Act funding would be appropriated to rural broadband expansion projects across the state of New Hampshire. Governor Sununu emphasized the role that broadband plays in participating in society. He said, "Connectivity is part of our utility base now and that has to be as reliable as turning the water faucet on."

Bedford, Hanover, and **Keene** are three New Hampshire based NCC member municipalities.

(New Hampshire Public Radio)

Broadband News



Georgetown, Maine. Why the Founding Fathers would want us all to have fast Internet.

Andy Serwer argues that the nation's widespread inconsistencies in broadband access and reliability directly contrasts the goals of the country's founders. Using his personal experience as an example, Serwer insists that additional consideration must be given to redefining highspeed internet, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Google speed tests, Serwer gets 9-12 Mbps downstream on a good day, and 1 or less upload speed, which has proven insufficient as his family works and attends school from home.

Howard County, Maryland, Schools Use CARES Funds for Devices.

The Howard County Public School System received \$13 million in funding from COVID-19 federal relief grants. The school system will allocate \$11 million of the funding toward the purchase of devices for students and to pay off previously purchased devices.

Broadband funding a matter of establishing information equality.

First Freedom's Rob Miraldi explains why there should be a sense of urgency to establish broadband as a public utility and narrow the widening digital divide.

San Rafael, California Prepares to Launch Free WiFi Network.

A partnership between the City of San Rafael and the Canal Alliance is working to bring community Internet access to 2,000 residents in one of the City's most disconnected neighborhoods, Canal. In addition to providing WiFi access, leaders will publish tutorials to help residents learn to access and use the services.



Did you know?

An estimated 65% of Native Americans living on Tribal lands do not have access to reliable broadband ([Law 360](#)).

Organizations like the [American Indian Policy Institute at Arizona State University](#) and [MuralNet](#) are conducting critical research on broadband access and adoption. Both provide recommendations to address the stark digital divide among Indigenous populations.

[We Need a National Policy on Internet Access.](#) FCC Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel collaborated with former U.S. Secretary of Education, John B. King, Sr. to advocate for modernizing the existing E-Rate program.

[Internet Inequalities in Urban Centers.](#) In a recent episode of “The Indicator from Planet Money,” the podcast hosts discuss the stark digital divides across America and the role that competition plays in perpetuating those disparities.

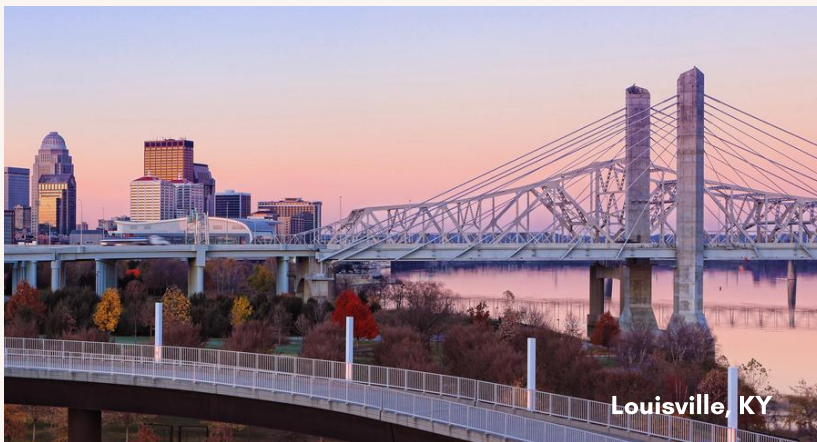
[How States Use Broadband Surveys to Fight for Better Funding.](#) Three States that have recently employed their own broadband surveys sat down with the Gov Tech team to discuss the role that surveys play in obtaining critical funding for broadband expansion.

[U.S. Senators Tim Scott and Roger Wicker introduced the Connecting Minority Communities Act.](#) The Bill would create a pilot program to provide grants to Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) to expand access to broadband and digital opportunity in their communities. Several NCC member municipalities are home to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) that would benefit from passing the Bill into law.

In Case You Missed It

[Report: Adapting Jobs Programs for Today and Tomorrow.](#) Jon Horrigan examined how expanding digital access could help reduce unemployment. In his report, he argues that 80 percent of middle-skill jobs require digital literacy, but more can be done to integrate broadband into job training. According to Horrigan, “[a]ddressing unemployment is as much about adapting workers’ skills to new circumstances as it is about finding jobs.”

[Back to School: A Look at the Internet Access Gap.](#) A recent analysis by the New American Economy Research Fund sheds light on the households that are most likely to suffer as a result of schools moving online in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.



Opportunities for Members

The Louisville Metro Housing Authority (LMHA) recently issued a request for vendors interested in providing internet access for residents of Parkway Place Public Housing. Additional information about the RFP can be found on the [LMHA website](#). Steps for accessing the website are located [here](#). [Dan Farell](#) should be contacted directly with questions regarding the request. The deadline for submissions is **August 25, 2020**.

Apply for the Congressional Innovation Fellowship. Congressional leaders are working to bridge the gap between Congress and the technology industries with the implementation of the mid-career innovation fellowship. Interested applicants can learn more about the fellowship and application process [here](#). Applications are due **August 27, 2020 at 11:59 p.m. ET**.

If you have stories to share, we would love to hear them! Please contact Brittany-Rae Gregory at brittany-rae@nextcenturycities.org.