

Next Century Cities: Supporting Digital Opportunities in Baltimore

February 8, 2021

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Next Century Cities

- NCC is a nonpartisan nonprofit coalition of over 200 member municipalities in 40 states that supports local efforts to provide affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband connectivity.
- We support mayors and other local officials who are working to improve broadband access and adoption.
- All recognize the far-reaching impact that equal Internet access has on economic mobility, educational outcomes, healthcare, aging in place, the ability to participate in our democracy, and boosting local economies.



Advancing Broadband Access *and* Adoption

Access refers to proximity to digital infrastructure that enables high-speed internet connections. Fiber, coax, DSL, or wireless service that meets the 25/3 Mbps benchmark speeds is classified as broadband.

Adoption refers to whether an individual or household subscribes and can benefit from a broadband connection. Affordability, access to equipment, and gaps in digital literacy are among the primary obstacles.

NCC Supports Local Officials Nationwide

City of Seattle, WA

The City uses a municipal network model. Other providers are also available.

Residents view its network as a utility and an investment in the City.

The public awareness campaign, [Upgrade Seattle](#), was helped build public support.

City of Detroit, MI

Residents are served by a variety of [private providers](#).

29.4% of households do not have broadband subscription.

Community advocates developed a digital steward model to intervene.

City officials, philanthropic partners, and community advocates have galvanized via Connect 313.

City of Baltimore, MD

The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated digital inequities.

[41.3%](#) of HH do not subscribe to wireline internet and [31.9%](#) lack a computer.

Maryland recognizes digital equity, not only broadband access, as an issue.

The combination of City and community advocacy coupled with political will and philanthropic resources will be integral for operationalizing digital equity goals.

Working with the State of Maryland to Address Local Connectivity Gaps

- **The State of Maryland's broadband programs focus on rural areas.**
Two-thirds of households that lack internet access or a computer live in metropolitan counties or the City of Baltimore.
- **Connectivity in metropolitan areas continues to lag behind.**
People living on low-incomes, people of color, and people who are elderly are disproportionately disconnected.
- **A statewide approach to connectivity should centralize digital equity.**
Affordability and digital literacy programs are necessary to bridge Maryland's digital divide.

Ways to impact federal broadband policy making at the FCC and in Congress

1. **Meetings with FCC Commissioners and Staff**
 - a. Recently NCC has met with the FCC on:
 - i. Affordability
 - ii. Accessibility to Federal Funding and Discount Programs
2. **Filing Comments with the FCC and other Agencies**
 - a. Comments from [BDEC](#) and [Johnston Square Partners](#) on the Emergency Broadband Benefit
 - b. NCC can include your stories in our filings or help you file your own comments.
3. **Congressional Meetings**
 - a. We want to ensure that our members have as many avenues to have their voices heard as possible including meeting with House and Senate members of Congress.
4. **Expanding our work to the White House**
 - a. President Biden has made broadband a priority. While our focus has not been on the executive branch, we are always looking for opportunities to expand federal footprint by sharing local perspectives that could improve federal policy making.

“Build with, not for...”

Working together, we can help to ensure that all Baltimore residents – including the most disenfranchised – can participate in a digital society.



Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

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