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**THE NEXT CENTURY CITIES  
YEAR IN REVIEW**

Supporting local officials | Committed to equal access to broadband for every resident

Pictured here:  
Kansas City, Missouri



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Pictured here:  
Aerial view of Sacramento, CA



# CONNECTING EVERY RESIDENT

WHAT DRIVES US DAILY

## **Making Equal Access to Broadband a Reality**

Next Century Cities works alongside communities of all sizes and political stripes to support local officials who are working to expand broadband access and increase adoption. Our members are committed to bringing fast, affordable, and reliable high-speed connectivity within reach for their residents. Find out more about what we do [here](#).

Pictured here:  
Aerial view of Gainesville, FL

# THE TIME IS NOW

At this time last year, our lives were radically different. Getting to work, shopping for groceries, visiting the library, or making a doctor's appointment could hardly be considered risky and probably did not require high-speed connectivity. But here we are, months later, clinging to hope in a pandemic that has yet to complete its wrath.

For those of us with digital citizenship, we are among the lucky ones. Broadband enabled us to adapt as COVID-19 changed the way that we work, learn, and tend to each other. Millions of our fellow Americans, however, who had to grapple with job loss, illness, natural disaster, eviction, or hunger for the first time had the additional misfortune of not being able to get online to find relief.

The highlights and lowlights of 2020 forced us to see each other from new perspectives. The need to take care of one another was tested instead of just being an ideal. All the while, at Next Century Cities ("NCC"), we set out to support and empower local officials. Together, we are working to provide equal access to broadband, a public good as important as electricity. This yearbook highlights local leaders who continue to make inroads in communities nationwide as well as memorable collaborations with NCC.

We are so proud of what we did this year. When members asked for help, we developed resources for town halls, council meetings, and training sessions and, if necessary, prepared public comments for state and federal proceedings. We created a new footprint at the Federal Communications Commission and continually pressured the agency to reconsider broadband policies that fell short of stated goals. We also supported communication between local officials and their members of Congress, helping to convey how broadband access, or the lack thereof, impacts communities. You graciously welcomed us into your hometowns and events. We did the same and showcased your expertise in ours.

Thank you for trusting us with your stories and ambitious dreams for your communities. They are the driving force behind our work. To our allies and supporters who have yet to meet the luminaries in this yearbook, we hope that it sparks ideas for new collaborations.

It is a new day at NCC. We have had an extraordinarily successful year in the face of adversity. But we still need you.

We need your ideas and problem-solving skills. We need your help infusing local insights into national broadband access and adoption strategies. We need your municipality to recommit to NCC membership and our movement to expand broadband access. It is the only way that we will be able to bring reliable, affordable, high-speed internet within reach for every resident in every community.



*Francella Ochillo*  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
NEXT CENTURY CITIES

# Communicating in the COVID-19 Era

## REIMAGINING VIRTUAL STORYTELLING

In a year when so many aspects of our lives moved online in the blink of an eye, virtual communications could not be more critical. As a team we knew that it would be important to maintain consistent communication with members throughout the COVID-19 threat. We also set out to provide space and create new platforms for the broadband community to share pertinent information, especially as it relates to building upon and reimagining connectivity in the face of the pandemic.

Our newsletter is our most frequently published communication medium for our members and other stakeholders. We wanted every issue to be a resource that helped foster community, especially in this time when we are unable to convene in person. Before outlining each issue, we came together as a team and considered how to best utilize the newsletter to share your stories and useful resources, with the end goal of helping residents obtain affordable and reliable access to the internet in addition to the digital tools that they need to thrive in our digital society.

This year the newsletter has taken us from Washtenaw County, Michigan, to Boston, Massachusetts, and everywhere in between. For NCC, like many of you, 2020 will be forever etched in our minds as a year of great adversity and triumph. Thank you all for being part of our journey and allowing us to be a part of yours.



*Brittany Rae Gregory*

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR  
NEXT CENTURY CITIES

# On the Federal Forefront

This year has seen an astonishing number of changes to federal telecommunications policy. Next Century Cities has continued to [highlight](#) what the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) can do to accelerate broadband deployment with meaningful broadband mapping data. Clear, accurate, and granular data about who is and is not connected is critical for determining where resources can be efficiently deployed to connect citizens with employers, healthcare providers, educators, and loved ones. NCC has drafted public comments on the importance of accurate data and welcoming input from local officials, for example ([here](#) and [here](#)). I am looking forward to continuing this work.

Additionally, NCC has [highlighted](#) to the FCC the importance of the Lifeline program as a tool for local officials to connect low-income residents. The Commission effectively reduced the number of providers in the Lifeline program, NCC pushed back on reducing the choices available to consumers, highlighting the absence of traditional providers in certain areas.

NCC weighed-in on other policy issues relating to [pole attachment rules](#), [FCC spectrum policy](#), [data privacy](#), and [network resilience](#), centering the needs of unserved and underserved communities. We have increased our footprint in federal advocacy. For instance, when the FCC considered dabbling in [content moderation](#) online, NCC immediately responded by urging the agency to stay focused on expanding broadband access and increasing adoption. Meanwhile, we have documented challenges and success stories from communities of all sizes, making community level perspectives an essential ingredient of good federal policy.

NCC has also been working diligently to meet with FCC leadership and staff to ensure that local perspectives are infused into federal policymaking. In 2020, NCC met with every FCC Commissioner to elevate local concerns. Community leaders joined our [meeting](#) with the Office of Chairman Ajit Pai to highlight COVID-19’s impact on local communities in addition to new connectivity needs imposed by work from home and distance learning mandates. We hosted member discussions to drive conversation between members and Commissioners [Jessica Rosenworcel](#) and [Geoffrey Starks](#).

We have pressured Congress to help to address gaps in connectivity exposed during the COVID-19 that will likely persist. We will continue to urge them to invest in [digital infrastructure](#) and support broadband adoption programs to help close the digital divide.



*Ryan Johnston*

POLICY COUNSEL,  
FEDERAL INITIATIVES  
NEXT CENTURY CITIES

# Policy is Local

## PRIORITIZING LOCAL AND STATE INITIATIVES

For communities across the country, the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) only increased the need for ubiquitous, high-quality home broadband. State and local governments expedited processes and devoted funding to addressing challenges associated with broadband availability and adoption, but there is additional work that needs to be done to ensure the sustainability of these programs after the pandemic. For instance, innovative and thoughtful use of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding helped to elevate the progress that local governments can achieve when offered the resources to connect their communities. Local and state leaders are focused on the next steps.

A key piece of Next Century Cities' work involves reaching out to local officials and state broadband offices to better understand the unique needs and specific challenges each community and state faces. This year, NCC has expanded on efforts to share the challenges and solutions municipalities in state proceedings, local meetings, op-eds, case studies, and more. We work directly with state broadband offices and local officials as well as residents looking to elevate community-level needs.

For example, in June 2020, NCC filed two letters with the Idaho Department of Commerce asking it to expand CARES Act funded grant opportunities to municipally owned open access networks. NCC submitted a letter to California's Governor Newsom, urging him to open a special legislative session to consider a broadband for all bill and provided recommendations to the California Public Utilities Commission. It emphasized the importance of state level support to local broadband initiatives.

In November 2020, NCC shared a list of recommendations with the New York Commission on Reimagining Broadband Access. That letter encouraged the state to declare broadband an essential service, improve mapping, invest in broadband adoption, and continue extending and expanding COVID-19 relief programs.

Needs exacerbated by COVID-19 were centered in each one of these filings as broadband becomes more important by the day and the pandemic continues and households across the United States are more resource constrained than ever. In 2021, NCC will continue to engage in local and state initiatives by meeting with more local officials within NCC's membership and gathering insights from those who are not. We will also contribute to state-level collaborations and coalition building that influences state policy. By this time next year, we hope to quadruple our state filings and build the relationships with state and local officials who are focused on eliminating obstacles to broadband access.



*Corian Zacher*  
POLICY COUNSEL,  
LOCAL AND STATE INITIATIVES  
NEXT CENTURY CITIES

# A Year of Firsts

Over the course of 2020, Next Century Cities created new pathways to support local leaders and the unprecedented challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. We met members through new platforms, found ways to elevate their stories, and connected with new allies like never before. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic moved the digital divide to the nation's centerstage as countless students, employees, and healthcare workers moved online. Recognizing this renewed focus, our team expanded our capacity and policy portfolio to develop connectivity solutions for one of the most difficult times in recent history.

## Centering Digital Equity

Over the course of the year, the NCC team doubled down our efforts to champion digital equity—an essential part of closing the digital divide and providing fast, affordable, and reliable broadband for all communities. In an increasingly digital world, understanding technology and the power of the internet is more important than ever.

Through webinars, blog posts, and other programs, our team worked to understand and highlight the human impact of the digital divide while introducing the community level impact into policy making conversations. Whether recognizing the efforts of local officials to close the homework gap, a barrier to success for over 16 million students in the U.S., or pressuring the Federal Communications Commission and Congress to support improved broadband data, our member municipalities and NCC's team recognized a growing need to address digital equity.

This summer, for example, our team began the first of several conversations focused on how digital redlining continues to undermine broadband expansion efforts in large and mid-sized cities nationwide. I spoke with allies on a panel discussion that unpacked the history of redlining and its disparate impact on historically underserved communities. Our team continued to explore this topic in follow-up discussions, like the panel hosted by Francella Ochillo, Executive Director, and Corian Zacher, Policy Counsel. NCC also urged the Governor of New York to work with municipalities impacted by digital redlining to explore municipal, mesh, and public WiFi solutions if they are unlikely to be served by traditional Internet service providers.

## Harnessing the Power of a Team

In 2020, our team and our ability to serve our members grew exponentially. Since January, we welcomed a new Communications Director, Dr. Brittany-Rae Gregory. New Federal Policy Counsel, Ryan Johnston, and Policy Counsel for Local and State Initiatives, Corian Zacher, also joined our team. These new team members have become an important part of the NCC family and hit the ground running, finding new advocacy opportunities during these unprecedented times. With expanded capacity, we are better equipped to address member concerns. We have been able to tailor resources for members municipalities, highlighting specific needs and challenges their communities face.

This year, our team hosted a record number of virtual conversations, helped author op-eds for elected officials, and convened conversations with every level of government in person and on digital platforms. It was also documented in a new and improved newsletter, authored and designed by Brittany-Rae, which takes storytelling for our members to the next level. Stories and interviews from local officials now exist alongside pieces from our policy team and guests authors, a first for Next Century Cities. Heading into 2021, we look forward to additional growth opportunities and, most importantly, expanding the resources we provide for our members as we work to close the digital divide.



*Lukas Pietrzak*  
POLICY ASSOCIATE  
NEXT CENTURY CITIES



# A Cross-Country Journey: The Role of Schools & Libraries for the Internet Insecure

From my case study research, I have learned that the prevailing paradigm of private corporate internet service will require more cities to leverage their public libraries and school systems as the critical means of providing both universal internet access and widespread adoption. Despite facility closures from COVID-19 and restricted municipal budgets, public libraries and schools provide a decentralized means of identifying internet insecure families and individuals. This has made feasible the equitable distribution of private or shared WiFi hotspots and computing devices during the 2020 pandemic.

In the cities that I have had the privilege of researching the digital divide (Huntsville, Detroit, and Long Beach), these two institutions have been the fastest means of providing internet access to student learning in a virtual environment and for placing WiFi enabled devices in households that previously were disconnected from the internet.

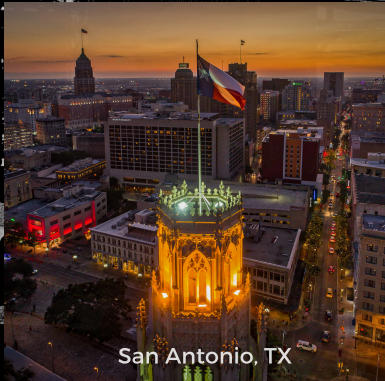
## My Favorite Moment With NCC

Having joined the NCC team this year, my favorite moment was interviewing a local music artist as part of my Detroit case study and being able to capture his personal story and experience with the City's collective digital divide. As a native Detroiter, I have witnessed how structural class divisions effectively make the struggles of those who lack resources invisible. Those disenfranchised populations shoulder the impact of the digital divide but have few opportunities to share the far-reaching impact of disconnectedness in their own words. By capturing Stef Rice's story, it is my hope that my hometown will be able to see beyond statistical realities and observe the real ways in which our digital divide creates barriers for our talented and motivated residents.



*Medvis Jackson*  
RESEARCHER  
NEXT CENTURY CITIES

# COMMUNITY CHANGE MAKERS



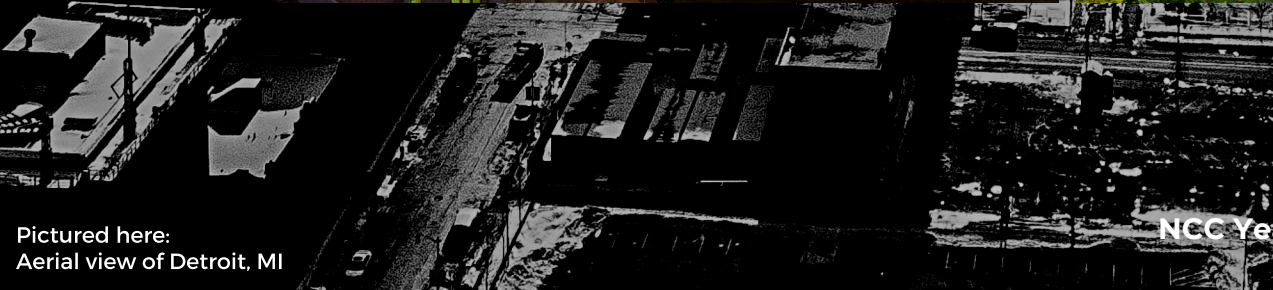
San Antonio, TX



Lexington, Kentucky



Hartford, Connecticut





# MAYORS MAKING STRIDES WITH BROADBAND



**Mayor Andy Berke**  
Chattanooga, Tennessee



**Mayor Jim Coppinger**  
Hamilton County, Tennessee

Mayors Berke and Coppinger have prioritized digital access for all K - 12 school children in Chattanooga and Hamilton County, Tennessee. They helped to found HCS EdConnect, Powered by EPB, a project that will connect approximately 30,000 Hamilton County Public School students to 100mbps symmetrical, at no cost to the family. The commitment is to support all students in the district who receive free or reduced lunch for at least ten years. Both mayors raised money, committed city/county funds to get the project underway, and publicly supported the project. HCS EdConnect has already connected approximately 10,000 students.

# MAYORS MAKING STRIDES WITH BROADBAND



## **Mayor Trey Mendez**

Brownsville, Texas

As Mayor, Trey Mendez has included closing the Digital Divide as one of his main priorities and led the development of a city-wide partnership with seven other anchor institutions.

## **Mayor Wade Troxell**

Fort Collins, Colorado

Mayor Troxell, and the Fort Collins City Council, have helped guide development of an equity program that will not be focused on a reduced rate alone. They have advocated that every household have access to full gig service. While there will be a reduced rate there will not be reduced service. As Chair of the Council Futures Committee, the Mayor has also encouraged and supported equity efforts to include broad reaching support for connection, devices, education, recycling, and cyber-security.



# community advocacy

## **The Community Advocacy Award**

The Community Advocacy Award recognizes local leaders that work with both public and/or private entities to forge partnerships that advance connectivity goals in their respective communities. The community advocate speaks out on behalf of residents to articulate the digital challenges that are unique to the community, prioritizing the perspectives of people whose voices are often marginalized or excluded during critical decision-making processes.

### **Nathaniel Hawkins** **Garrett County, Maryland** ***Awardee***

Nathaniel Watkins currently serves as Chief Innovation Officer for Garrett County, Maryland, the state's westernmost county. Garrett County has a population just shy of 30,000 and is the third most populous county in the state. Watkins works closely with state officials to encourage broadband investment in rural communities. Working closely with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to help with fiber installation in the community, Watkins has been instrumental in connecting residents in rural areas of the county whose hard to permeate terrain have been historically difficult for connectivity.

Additionally, Watkins has helped connect some of the youngest residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, through purchasing cellular hotspots and boosters for students to ensure that they have the connectivity and devices needed to complete their school work. As his nominator says, "He truly cares about the people in our county and it shows in his efforts to get more people connected."



### **Irv Thomae** **Norwich, Vermont** ***Honorable Mention***

Irv Thomae is the District Chair of ECFiber, Vermont's first community-owned-fiber-to-home network. Thomae is a founding member of the cooperative, which was established in 2008 after residents of two dozen East Vermont towns decided to build their own fiber network to connect homes and businesses in the area because tax dollars could not be used to construct the network. As a direct result of their grassroots efforts, over 1,000 miles of road have fiber coverage and approximately 5,000 residents in 22 towns have internet access.

Since 2012, Thomae has served as the chair of ECFiber's governing board. In this capacity, he has advocated to expand connectivity for residents before members of the Vermont Legislature. In addition to his advocacy work, Thomae was instrumental in launching Communication Union Districts in Vermont. Similar to water districts, the state has embraced the CUD model as a viable means for providing universal FTTP broadband. As his nominator says, "Irv's unrelenting advocacy has changed and continues to change the broadband landscape in Vermont."

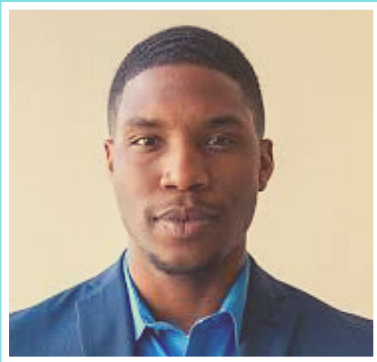


# community activism

## **The Community Activism Award**

The Community Activism Award recognizes local leaders who use their voices to champion issues that are of particular importance to members of unserved and underrepresented communities. The community activist speaks out on behalf of residents before legislators and other decision-making individuals and bodies. Additionally, the activist might use nontraditional methods to reach communities in need in order to uplift resident concerns and operationalize connectivity solutions.

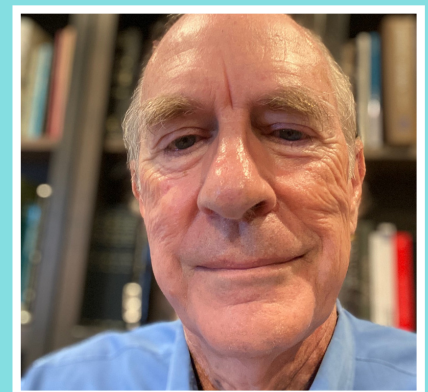
### **Joshua Edmonds** **Detroit, Michigan** ***Awardee***



Joshua Edmonds is the Director of Digital Inclusion for the City of Detroit, Michigan, within the City's Technology and Innovation Department. In this capacity he works with stakeholders across Detroit to develop a citywide digital inclusion strategy. Edmonds is also the founder of Connect 313, a data-driven grassroots network with the goal of ensuring that all Detroiters have access to reliable internet service, digital devices, and digital literacy skills. Connect 313 is truly a community-led organization that focuses on the needs of the most marginalized. With his nontraditional approach to getting residents connected, Joshua is described as an "Intrapreneur" with a history of doing high impact work within multiple organizations" by his peer, Merit's Ryan Fuller.

### **Kim Maxwell** **Norfolk, Connecticut** ***Honorable Mention***

Mr. Kim Maxwell, Ph.D. currently serves as chairman of the Town of Norfolk, Connecticut's Fiber Optic Study Committee. As chairman, he has worked to support a municipal fiber-to-the-home network that will bring access to each resident regardless of their financial standing. In addition to his work on the Committee, Maxwell is President of Northwest ConneCT, a regional advocacy group working to organize a universal gigabit data highway using fiber optic transmission lines.



# digital equity & inclusion

## The Digital Equity Award

The Digital Equity Award recipient recognizes the need to achieve digital equity in their community by implementing programs that address historic gaps in connectivity. The awardee has demonstrated an understanding for how various groups have been affected by policy decisions in addition to community level needs related to broadband access and adoption. In essence, this awardee is a champion for historically overlooked communities, elevating their voices in the efforts to close the digital divide.

### **Monica Rafful Gasparetto - Broward County, Florida, Awardee**



Monica Gasparetto serves as the Bilingual Community Liaison at Broward County Public Schools, but her students know her as a champion for digital equity across her school system and her community. For English learners and students new to the American education system, navigating often complicated processes is already a difficult task. In the age of COVID-19, it is even more difficult. As a community liaison, Monica has worked well beyond her job description to support families as their students continue to participate in distance learning.

In a school district where almost 30% of Broward's 250,000 students speak a foreign language, Monica's skills and passion are a much-needed resource. One of Monica's eight nominations stated simply that she is, "Amazing, kind and the best in her work." Next Century Cities is honored to present our 2020 Digital Equity Award to Monica for working to ensure that her students and their families can benefit from digital opportunities.

## The Digital Inclusion Award

The Digital Inclusion Award is intended to recognize extraordinary efforts to ensure that residents living on the margins are digitally included. This awardee recognizes the urgent need to identify connectivity gaps, leading with expertise and compassion. They understand the need to address access and adoption by promoting infrastructure deployment, affordability measures, and digital literacy. This broadband champion believes that all residents deserve an opportunity to succeed in the digital age.

### **Candelaria Mendoza - San Antonio, Texas, Awardee**



A champion for digital equity and closing the digital divide, Candelaria Mendoza serves as a Smart City Coordinator for the City of San Antonio where she helps with development and implementation of the City's digital inclusion plans. In 2019, San Antonio had one of the largest digital divides in the country. Candelaria pushed the City to undertake a comprehensive Digital Inclusion Survey and Assessment to measure the digital divide and its impacts across the greater San Antonio area. Notably, she has also led the community in founding the Digital Inclusion Alliance of San Antonio and joining the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. Her work has directly led to a \$27.3 Million investment in digital inclusion in the greater San Antonio area, improving the community response to the COVID-19 pandemic compared to most other major cities in the country.

As stated in her nomination, "Ms. Mendoza is the definition of a community change maker. She has been the catalyst for the improvements taking place in our great city and county that will lead us equitably into the future." For all these reasons, we are proud to recognize Candelaria Mendoza with the 2020 Digital Inclusion Award.

# digital innovation

## The Digital Innovation Award

The Innovation Award recognizes local officials who have been instrumental in expanding the built infrastructure and/or implementing new programming in their community to bridge the digital divide. Galvanizing community buy-in and support from local official government is part of this awardees brand. They will operationalize local solutions by helping to create new or adapted existing broadband deployment programs to serve community-level needs. These innovators are willing to tackle the digital divide with new paths to connectivity.

## Becky Lehman Holland, Michigan Awardee

Becky Lehman serves as the Director of Business Services for Holland, Michigan, and has been responsible for the substantial growth of the city's information technology service over the last several years. Holland hosts an open access fiber network that was originally designed to support anchor institutions and essential facilities. When Becky recognized the digital divide between well endowed organizations and small organizations and residents, she took action. In 2015, she developed a plan to make fiber-to-the-premises possible for all residents of Holland. Becky took this work further in 2017 when she led the development of a high-density downtown gigabit network to support residents and businesses. This network had a successful launch in 2018 and continues to be the foundation for further development in Holland to close the digital divide.

In the words of Becky's nominator, "Becky's passion and commitment to broadband development is proven through the success of the system in our community. Without Becky we would not be where we are today." Becky's innovation and leadership make her a natural fit for the 2020 Innovation Award.





# state champions

## The State Champion Award

The State Champion Award honors local officials and community leaders whose impact reaches beyond their immediate community and improves digital opportunities for residents across the state. A State Champion's work does not only bolster broadband connectivity in their own community, it facilitates partnership and collaboration with state and local leaders to create long-lasting and sustainable initiatives that have an expansive reach.

### **Barbara Fuller** **Washtenaw County, Michigan** **Awardee**

Washtenaw County, Michigan, is home to over 367,000 residents who enjoy beautiful walking trails, parks, and recreational activities alongside the Huron River in Ann Arbor. The river weaves into the county and across southeastern Michigan and flows into Lake Erie. The county includes rural and agricultural areas, represented by tassels of wheat in the county seal.

Sharon Township is one of those rural communities. Among its 1,737 residents is Commissioner Barbara Fuller, who has lived on unpaved roads in rural Washtenaw County for over 30 years. Ms. Fuller has served on the Washtenaw County Board of County Road Commissioners since 2013 and currently serves as chair of the Broadband County Task Force. As Chair of the Task Force, Ms. Fuller has worked on a volunteer basis to develop a broadband data collection process, a part of the Michigan Moonshot initiative, which provides accurate, granular connectivity and resident sentiment data. That information is harnessed both for broadband planning and for bolstering grant applications. Data collection efforts like this one are not only essential for securing state and federal funding, but also to establish a model that other communities can adopt and duplicate. We applaud Ms Fuller's efforts to improve information about broadband connectivity needs both in Michigan and across the country.

### **Ben Fineman** **Washtenaw County, Michigan** **Awardee**

Ben Fineman is a digital inclusion advocate and volunteer in Michigan, serving in numerous roles to expand broadband access to the millions of people who remain disconnected. Alongside Barbara Fuller, Ben Fineman serves as vice chair of the Washtenaw Broadband County Task force. Mr. Fineman co-founded the Michigan Broadband Cooperative, where he volunteers as President. He also co-founded the Michigan Broadband Alliance, which expanded on local data collection efforts like the one in Washtenaw County and improved broadband mapping across the state. In describing his work, Mr. Fineman said: "Somewhere along the way I came to realize just how many people don't have access to broadband at home. It's unacceptable to me to see millions of Americans completely lacking the ability to participate in the most basic of online activities, let alone emerging technologies."



# state champions

## Roberta Willis Connecticut *Awardee*



Though Connecticut may be one of the smallest states in square mileage, it is home to over three and a half million people. The state includes both rural and urban areas in which residents experience connectivity challenges. A September 2020 digital divide report for Connecticut found that 23% of Connecticut households and 36% of low-income Connecticut households lack high-speed internet access at home. The report's findings quantify the complaints brought by Roberta Willis' constituents during her 16 years as a State Representative. Residents are desperate for remedies to broadband connections that are slow, expensive, and unreliable.

During Representative Willis' tenure in the Connecticut General Assembly, she brought attention to broadband connectivity challenges in the state, ultimately founding Northwest ConneCT upon her retirement. Northwest ConneCT is a group of town officials and local leaders from 25 communities focused on bringing broadband to their residents through municipal public-private partnerships.

Regional collaborations like Northwest ConneCT are key to improving statewide connectivity and provide an excellent example for state advocates across the country. Discussing her work, Ms. Willis stated, "I have long contended that our government should order the build out of broadband internet access to every address, as it did over the last century with the telephone and electricity service. It is thus absolutely necessary for our communities to step in to find a solution so we can thrive."

Her nominator says, "Roberta still serves on the board of Northwest ConneCT and remains a tireless champion for closing the Digital Divide. You can read more about her work here."

# LOCAL LEADERS

## *Making a Difference*



### **CATHERINE TKACHYK | CHIEF INNOVATION AND PERFORMANCE OFFICER, CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO**

As Chief Innovation and Performance Officer, Tkachyk commissioned a Digital Divide Impact Study that helped gain funding for digital inclusion efforts in the greater Cleveland area. Roy also works closely with the Cleveland Foundation and local stakeholders to identify connectivity issues experienced by residents.



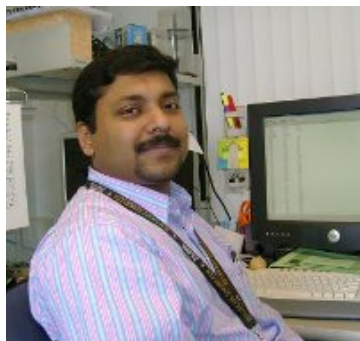
### **STEVEN BUCK | CITY MANAGER, SANFORD, MAINE**

Steven Buck serves as the City Manager for Sanford, Maine, the State's newest city. As City Manager, Buck worked with James Nimon, Executive Director of Sanford Regional Economic Development, to develop SanfordNet Fiber, a 10-gig, 45-mile municipal high-speed fiber network. SanfordNet Fiber is a community-owned dark fiber loop that provides "high speed, low-cost, reliable, open-access broadband/internet network service" to commercial operations in Sanford. Buck is currently working with city administrators on a survey that will aid in expanding the service to residential consumers.



### **DAVID WILLIAMS | TECHNOLOGY MANAGER, PONCA CITY, OKLAHOMA**

David Williams serves as the Technology Director for Ponca City, Oklahoma, and is one of our 2020 Leaders Making a Difference. In Ponca City, David recognized that the digital divide was harming residents across his community and took decisive action to combat this problem. In Ponca City, only 70% of residents subscribe to broadband, a number that is far too low, especially amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. When David was asked to develop a solution, he planned and is now executing a fiber-to-the-home build which will provide residents with a fiber optic system delivering high speed broadband. This undertaking will bring countless residents online. David's commitment to the project is what makes him stand out as one of our Leaders



### **ROBIN ROY | CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER, CUYAHOGA COUNTY, OHIO**

Mr. Robin Roy serves as the Chief Innovation Officer (CIO) for the Board of Elections Information Technology in Cuyahoga County, Ohio where Cleveland is located. Roy has been a member of the Board of Elections Information Technology since 2004 and served as CIO since 2015.

# LOCAL LEADERS

## *Making a Difference*

### **DOROTHY BAUNACH | CEO OF DIGITAL C**

Dorothy Baunach serves as the CEO of DigitalC and is a committed advocate for the people of Cleveland, Ohio. In her hometown, she is better known as a digital equity and inclusion for her neighbors. We are proud to recognize Dorothy as one of our 2020 Leaders Making a Difference through her work at DigitalC, an area nonprofit organization. DigitalC is working hard to secure an equitable digital future for every resident in Cleveland through broadband access, broadband adoption, and digital literacy programs. Their mission is to empower “Greater Cleveland to achieve success through technology, innovation, and connected community.” Her nominator thanked Dorothy for her continued commitment to provide “reliable, high speed Internet access to the un and underserved neighborhoods” of their city. Because of Dorothy’s continued commitment to her Cleveland neighbors and digital equity, we are proud to recognize her as one of our 2020 Leaders Making a Difference.



### **KATHRYN GREINER | CITY ADMINISTRATOR, CONDON, OREGON**

Condon is a beautiful small town with a historic downtown area and views of the Cascade Range nestled in Gilliam County, Oregon. With a population of just under 2,000, residents in Gilliam County experience the many connectivity challenges representative of low-density communities, including high internet prices, dead spots, data caps, and slow and unreliable service.

Kathryn Greiner has worked as City Administrator for Condon for the last 16 years in which she realized the importance of bringing broadband access to the community. Ms. Greiner works overtime to seek out collaborations with leadership from public and private community partners to improve broadband service in her community. Notably, she is the driving force behind a movement to bring fiber to Condon.



### **DR. NISHAL MOHAN | FOUNDER, MOHUMAN**

Dr. Mohan is the founder of Mohuman, a social impact nonprofit organization working to find smart solutions to digital equity. Dr. Mohan has also worked as director of the US Ignite Smart Gigabit Communities Program, working with more than twenty-five cities to adopt next gen technologies for smart and connected cities. Before joining US Ignite, he served as an AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow in the Office of the Assistant Director, Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering, at the National Science Foundation. He developed national policies on big data and data science, smart and connected health, and next gen internet technologies and applications for smarter cities. Dr. Mohan also serves on various nonprofit boards, working to bring next generation science and technology to communities across the world.



# THE MISSION AWARD

The Mission Award is presented to local officials who have shown outstanding support for Next Century Cities' mission. Next Century Cities is a membership organization that works with leaders in cities, towns, and counties of all sizes and political stripes. We develop resources to support their work, share their stories in fora that impacts policymaking, and help their communities address obstacles to broadband deployment. Recipients of the Mission Award have shown an exceptional ability to foster the connections, dialogues, and opportunities that promote information sharing, and cooperation as we work to bring fast, affordable, and reliable broadband to every community across the nation.

## **RONDELLA HAWKINS** **Officer, Telecommunications and Regulatory Affairs,** **City of Austin, Texas**

Rondella is the Telecommunications and Regulatory Affairs Officer for the city of Austin, Texas. She is the city's point of contact for fiber projects in Austin, and her office is responsible for managing utility rights-of-way franchise agreements and license agreements with telecommunications and wireless providers. Rondella is also responsible for the implementation of Austin's digital inclusion strategic plan, which works to ensure that all Austin residents have access to the information technology necessary for meaningful participation in a digital society.

Having over 25 year of experience working in local government, Rondella is actively engaged on a myriad of legislative and policy issues that relate to broadband, communications, the maintenance of local rights-of-way authority, and digital inclusions. Rondella also serves in other positions such as the Vice President of the Texas Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, as well as, the Chair of the Next Century Cities Advisory Board in 2020. Rondella is receiving one of the two inaugural mission awards for her continued commitment to the mission, and ideals of Next Century Cities, while also playing a pivotal role in NCC's growth. As chair of the NCC Advisory Board Rondella, challenges the NCC team to continually address how federal and state policy will affect member communities. On numerous occasions, she has joined meetings with policymakers and provided local insights that inform our advocacy work. Rondella's efforts not only to connect the community she is a part of but to work with NCC to connect communities across the nation is proof of her passion for connecting the unconnected. We are grateful for her contributions to NCC.



**"The need for broadband is demonstrated every day during this COVID-19 crisis... This is an urgent wakeup call for the entire nation."**  
*Aldona Valicenti, March 2020*



## **ALDONA VALICENTI** **Chief Information Officer, Lexington Fayette Urban County** **Government, Kentucky**

Aldona is the Acting Commissioner of General Services for the government of Lexington-Fayette Urban County. Aldona has also served as the first Chief Information Officer for Lexington and was reappointed to the position in 2019. Aldona also served as the first CIO for the Commonwealth of Kentucky. In her work with both the City of Lexington, and the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Aldona has worked to make investment in network operations, cyber security, public safety and cloud based systems. She sponsored the Gig for Lex project to bring high speed connectivity to the entire city.

Outside of her government work Aldona served as the President of the National Association of State Chief Information Officers, and served as Vice President of consulting services at CGI, an international IT firm, and Vice President of business development for Oracle Corp. She joined Next Century Cities Advisory Board in 2020 and has been an ardent supporter of NCC's work since its inception.

The breadth of Aldona's contributions to NCC show the many ways in which she embodies our Mission Award. Aldona is always willing to provide key insights from her experiences as a long-time community advocate and offers direction on strategic partnerships that could help expand our reach. She has continually challenged NCC to identify clear objectives and center the voices of local officials in our advocacy. Aldona went through great lengths to facilitate our organizational growth while serving as an ambassador for the local leaders that NCC supports.



# Reflecting on a momentous year

NEXT CENTURY CITIES

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020



On January 23, 2020, Next Century Cities hosted the second annual Opportunities for Bipartisan Tech Policy conference in Washington, DC. Over 180 people attended alongside approximately 140 viewers online. The event brought together Federal Communications Commissioners, local government officials, policy experts, and industry representatives from across the country to discuss technology and telecommunications policy, namely issues related to broadband access.

Throughout the event, panelists and speakers covered topics such as local solutions for broadband access and adoption, broadband mapping initiatives, making smart cities more accessible for those with disabilities, accelerating broadband deployment in Tribal areas, the importance of community networks, and more. One of NCC's signature events, this event marks the beginning of a new year and provides a platform to facilitate conversations amongst policy experts with vastly different viewpoints.

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020



In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Andrew Cuomo established the “Reimagine Commission” to address connectivity challenges faced by residents statewide. On August 3, 2020, community leaders from the Next Century Cities network shared local connectivity challenges in a virtual hearing before the Commission. Local leaders such as Mayor Eddie Sundquist, Jamestown, Dr. dt ogilvie, Special Advisor to the Mayor of Rochester, and Deputy Commissioner Jennifer Tift of Syracuse, have been chief advocates for expanding connectivity to every resident in their communities.

This year has revealed the pressing need for every household, in New York and nationwide, to have access to fast, affordable, and reliable broadband. Next Century Cities submitted a memo of recommendations for the Commission on July 31, 2020, and continues to be a thought partner in expanding connectivity for residents in New York. We will continue to encourage New New York and other states to:

- Declare broadband as an essential service.
- Improve broadband availability data with pricing, input from local leaders, and correction protocols.
- Make funding available for broadband access *and* adoption.
- Invest in digital equity and inclusion programs, especially those developed in response to COVID-19.



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020



In June of this year, our Executive Director, Francella Ochillo, sat down with five broadband changemakers from across the country to discuss COVID-19, connectivity, and closing the digital divide. Together, they explored the causes of America’s persistent digital divide and ways that leaders at all levels could take steps to bring disconnected communities online.

Over the course of five conversations, our team hosted robust dialogues with Majority Whip James Clyburn (SC-06), Congresswoman Yvette Clarke (NY-09), Congressman Jerry McNerney (CA-09), Washington State Broadband Officer Russ Elliot, and South Bend, Indiana’s Chief Innovation Officer, Denise Lin Riedl. Search “Ten Minutes with a Changemaker” on our website to learn more about these conversations.

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020



In December 2020, Next Century Cities (NCC) released a series of six case studies each focusing on community level challenges and success stories across the country. A common thread across all of the case studies is that community leaders are keenly aware of the importance of gaps in broadband access for their residents and working to find innovative solutions wherever they can.

The [Detroit case study](#) juxtaposes a strong history of musical innovations with the stark digital divide that leaves over half the city without a wired internet connection. In [Huntsville](#), broadband infrastructure is widely available. But in a town of technological innovations, many people still lack a home broadband subscription, with 19% of households relying on mobile phones for internet access. For [Long Beach](#) residents, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) has exacerbated existing challenges to increasing home broadband as many residents face housing instability. Medvis Jackson's framing of each of these case studies helps to center community level perspectives.

[Mesa](#) and [Albuquerque](#) both have rich cultural histories and are home to tens of thousands of Native American people. Nationwide, Indigenous communities living in Tribal areas remain disproportionately offline. Lukas Pietrzak's research frames connectivity challenges in and around city limits. Connectivity in [Memphis](#) lags far behind other places, with some of the slowest internet speeds in the country. Brittany-Rae Gregory weaves Memphis' connectivity story together by discussing the institutions that make up the fabric of the community and the people who call it home. The six case studies are great examples of the work that NCC's staff does every day to learn about the community level impact that federal and state policy has on local broadband initiatives. Most importantly, we are committed to elevating how those initiatives ultimately affect residents in each of our member municipalities.

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020



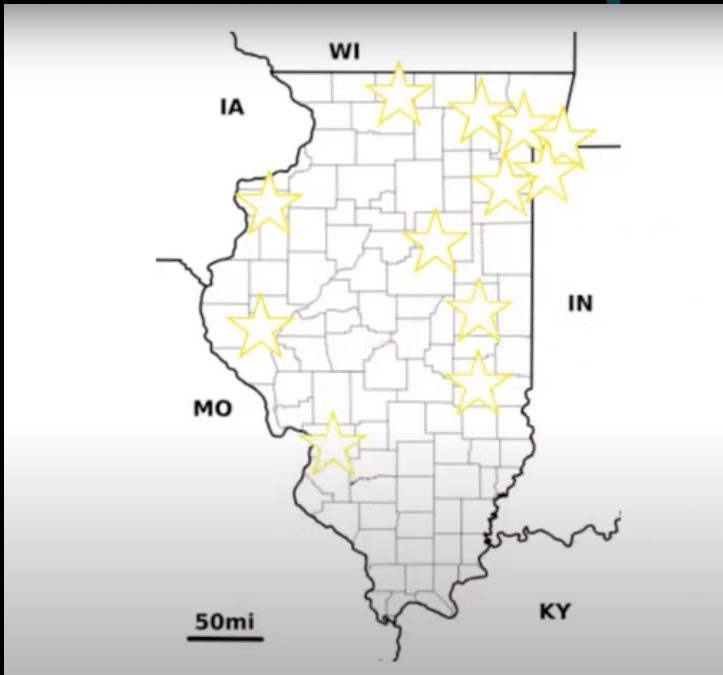
This year, Next Century Cities hosted several meetings for local officials to share connectivity challenges in their own words with FCC officials, including the [Office of Chairman Ajit Pai](#) and [Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel](#).

Members expressed concerns that COVID-19 response measures were not long term solutions. As the need for high-speed connectivity surged and serious gaps in access were revealed unserved and unserved communities needed to retool. Local officials shared plans to expand digital infrastructure and questioned whether using inaccurate data to support rural broadband deployment was the best approach. Some communities did not qualify for federal funding because they were too urban for rural programs, and too rural for urban programs. Their stories also highlighted why current benchmark speeds are not high enough to support multiple connections for remote work and distance learning.

In communities of various sizes, local officials worked through with ISPs, partnering whenever possible to keep students and those working from home connected. Members highlighted the successes in developing their own municipal networks and how they are leveraging assets to keep their students connected. However, some members cited obstacles to municipal solutions, noting that “one touch make ready” and “dig once” policies were an imperative component to bring connectivity within reach for their residents.

There was consensus that it is not only time to revisit current minimum broadband speeds at the Commission, but that the Commission should consider a new standard that mandates symmetrical speeds. Importantly, members noted they are keen to continue collaborating with the FCC. Discussions like these ensure that those at the highest levels of the Commission are aware of the connectivity challenges that communities across the nation face in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020



- **Brown County School District**
- **City of Harvey**
- **Housing Authority of Champaign County**
- **Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois**
- **Mattoon School District**
- **McKinley Park Development Council**
- **Mercer County**
- **Better Together Neighborhood Network**
- **Alliance Palatine School District**
- **Park Forest-Chicago Heights School District 163**
- **Region 1 Planning Council (Winnebago County and City of Rockford)**
- **Village of Flanagan**

In July of 2020, Governor J.B. Pritzker announced the first cohort of communities that were selected for Illinois Connected Communities grant awards. This program was designed to provide funding and expert advice to twelve community organizations across the state that are working to connect residents and close the digital divide.

The inaugural cohort members include local governments, school districts, economic development authorities, and community groups. Together, they hope to connect students, small businesses, and neighbors who are among the 380,000 Illinois residents who still do not have access to fast, affordable, and reliable broadband.

Click [here](#) to meet the new cohort members, and stay tuned as we follow their journey through this innovative program.



## What was your favorite NCC moment from the year?

The NCC team weighed-in with some of their personal highlights from 2020.

"As a proud alumna of Howard University, our nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are near and dear to my heart. This year I had the privilege of authoring an op-ed during National HBCU Week on Next Century Cities' behalf for Blavity titled ["Why I Believe HBCUs Are The Change Agents We Need For Affordable And Accessible Broadband."](#) In the piece, I discuss the opportunities that exist for HBCUs to collect broadband mapping data and support broadband adoption in marginalized communities across the country."

—Brittany-Rae

"This year has had a lot of great moments. It is hard to pick one to highlight, however, I think my favorite moment was the discussion on the Ninth Circuit's decision in *City of Portland v. United States*, which featured Mark Del Bianco. This discussion centered around the challenge to the FCC's 2018 Small Cell Order, and helped to clarify how the decision could impact CC's member municipalities. It was wonderful to be able to discuss potential changes to fees, tower spacing requirements, equipment design, and aesthetics, issues which are not often discussed in a digestible format."

—Ryan

"I find digital equity and inclusion fascinating. Across the country, people access the internet for a wide variety of reasons including school, work, and healthcare, but also to connect with family, explore their identity, and learn more about the world around them. Broadband access should be available to every resident in every part of the U.S., however, too many people are excluded from these experiences simply because of their zip code. This year, I had the [opportunity to connect with Public Knowledge](#) and other broadband allies to discuss the impacts of digital redlining. I have a personal interest in the individual impacts of broadband across the country. Through my graduate work and at Next Century Cities, I strive to find the human impact story in everything we do, and this panel provided me another opportunity to achieve that. Redlining may be a decades old issue in our country, but it is still harming households to this day."

—Lukas

"In July 2020, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Development [announced](#) the first 12 recipients of the Illinois Connected Communities grant program, which distributed \$300,000 in small grants to organizations leading community-wide broadband initiatives. I was awestruck to learn about the incredible amount of time and work that Lukas Pietrzak spent meeting with local officials in Illinois along with the rest of the cohort of organizations working to expand and improve broadband access and adoption across the state.

Collaborations between state and local officials, who understand their residents' needs and ultimately implement solutions are indispensable. Supporting broadband focused community-level initiatives that can provide resources, and share expertise is not only central to our mission, but provides the foundation for comprehensive and effective broadband policy. Lukas's [blog post](#) summarizing the different uses the funding is going toward in each community is an excellent example of the power that small grants have on digital connectivity and equity. Learn more about the Illinois Connect cohort [here](#)."

—Corian

# THIS TIME NEXT YEAR

## WORKING STRATEGICALLY TO EXPAND BROADBAND

### Members of the NCC team talk about what's in store for 2021

As we look forward to 2021, we will continue to advance communications strategies that meet and exceed members' needs. In the new year, we will transition to monthly newsletter in a new, more interactive format. We will also distribute weekly bulletins, short overviews of what is happening at NCC and in the broadband community with a focus on what is most relevant to municipal leaders. Additionally, we will roll out new digital programming to strengthen the inter-municipality relationships, including our inaugural mentorship program for local leaders to connect with one another and regional gatherings that helped shape NCC. Stay tuned for more information about how you can get involved.

—**Brittany-Rae**

Our members are the bedrock of our organization. We need to understand their needs and connectivity barriers in order to close the digital divide. Moving into 2021, the Next Century Cities team will continue to improve the way we support members. Not only will our team answer member questions, but we are excited to help local officials with drafting op-eds, identifying speaking opportunities, and host a growing number of webinars and virtual conversations. As soon as the COVID-19 pandemic loosens its grip, we look forward to resuming in-person events across the country. In 2021, we also look forward to supporting special projects that highlight local efforts to expand connectivity. In 2020, we helped to educate local leaders on how the Census 2020 count could impact digital infrastructure funding in their municipalities. Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, we reiterated the importance of accurate broadband mapping, and launched a campaign to show local and state initiative to correct inaccurate data. Going forward, we will continue to explore and generate resources on addressing connectivity gaps, helping to prepare every community for our digitally-native future. The potential for success in connected towns, cities, and counties is endless, and we are excited to continue serving our members in their broadband pursuits. —**Lukas**

As we move into a new year, federal broadband policy initiatives will continue to grow and diversify. NCC is committed to providing local officials with agency and a voice with members of Congress and at the FCC, highlighting at the federal level how relief efforts are affecting their communities. We encourage members to take advantage of opportunities to weigh-in on federal proceedings with community level challenges they may be dealing with, but have not grabbed national attention —**Ryan**

As we head into the next year, we plan on increasing outreach to local and state officials. In particular, by following and uplifting their work, we will develop a shortlist of cities offering expertise on particular initiatives to inform an ongoing dialogue with state officials. In partnership with local and state officials, we will lead NCC's efforts to develop policies that reflect community needs. Additionally, we will seek out partnerships with state-based organizations that share the goal of connecting every person in the United States with universal broadband so we can work collaboratively and uplift their work. —**Corian**

# THANK YOU FOR THE *memories*

**2020 was an incredibly busy year. Here is the play-by-play (in chronological order) of how we impacted broadband at the local, state, and federal levels of government.**

- [FCC Proposal for 6GHz](#)
- [Local Officials Share Why Broadband Has Been Essential For Emergency Response](#)
- [NCC Meets With The Office of FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks](#)
- [Next Century Cities Files an Ex Parte for Meeting With the Office of Federal Communications Commission Chair](#)
- [Next Century Cities Alongside Allies Implores Congress to Recognize the Importance of Broadband and Support Americans Who Continue to Struggle With Connectivity](#)
- [Lessons from the Epicenter of the Coronavirus Pandemic: How the Digital Divide Has Become a Public Health Issue For Cities and Its Residents](#)
- [Broadband Deployment Strategies and Collaborations with Local Officials](#)
- [Reply Comments about Reallocating Spectrum](#)
- [Using Local and State Broadband Programs to Inform Federal Initiatives to Address the Digital Divide](#)
- [Help Unserved and Underserved Communities By Teaching Them to Build Their Own WiFi Networks](#)
- [Local Officials Are Tackling Connectivity Solutions But Recognize the Need to Do More](#)
- [Next Century Cities Joined Public Interest Spectrum Coalition Allies in Support for Proposals to Expand Unlicensed WiFi for Public Use](#)
- [Form 477 Data Undermines Conclusions in the 2020 Broadband Deployment Report](#)
- [Next Century Cities Weighs-In on the State of Connectivity in the US](#)
- [Expanding Broadband Access in Hanover, NH: Local Insights from a Town Manager Determined to Connect Every Resident](#)
- [Local Officials Share Insights on How Broadband Impacts Population Growth, Economic Development, and Education in Illinois](#)

- [Senate Commerce Committee Discusses COVID-19 and America's Broadband Networks Without Hearing from Local Officials, Critical Stakeholders in Connecting Communities](#)
- [NCC Joins Ask for Federal Support for Municipalities Working to Recover from the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Next Century Cities Explains Why Closing the Digital Divide Should Be a National Priority](#)
- [Local Officials Meet with FCC Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel](#)
- [NCC Files Reply Comments Reiterating the Importance of the Lifeline Program and Pole Attachment Policies that Accelerate Broadband Deployment](#)
- [Next Century Cities Is Focused on Infusing Local Perspectives Into State and Federal Policymaking](#)
- [NCC Files Comments on the Need for Competition in the Broadband Marketplace](#)
- [Next Century Cities and the Broadband Bunch](#)
- [Next Century Cities in an Aspen Digital Roundtable on Broadband Connectivity in the Age of COVID-19](#)
- [Next Century Cities Selected for FCC Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee's Disaster Response and Recovery Working Group](#)
- [Expanding Broadband Access Can Help Local Economies Survive](#)
- [Why Are People Talking About Section 230, Again? Will the FCC Play Role in the Controversy?](#)
- [Next Century Cities Supports the Proposals to Change to the Rules Governing TV White Spaces](#)
- [The Federal Communications Commission Approves and Seeks Comment on New Rules Governing ATSC 3.0](#)
- [The FCC Approves and Seeks Comment on Rules Governing State and Local Approval of Wireless Equipment Modifications](#)
- [Ten Minutes with Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke \(NY-09\) on Why Broadband is Critical for the Well-Being of Communities](#)
- [Ten Minutes with Washington State's Broadband Office on the Need to Invest in Digital Infrastructure](#)
- [Ten Minutes with U.S. House Majority Whip James Clyburn \(SC-06\) on Closing the Digital Divide](#)



- [Ten Minutes with South Bend's Chief Innovation Officer on Mid-Sized City Challenges](#)
- [Ten Minutes with Representative Jerry McNerney \(CA-09\) on the Importance of Broadband Affordability](#)
- [Investing in broadband should be a part of a national economic recovery strategy](#)
- [Next Century Cities Leads Ask for Idaho to Expand Grant Funding Opportunities](#)
- [Next Century Cities Discusses Digital Equity & Inclusion with School Administrators](#)
- [From Independence Hall to the Digital Square](#)
- [City offices, private sector partners, educational institutions, and local nonprofits are coming together to tackle the digital divide in Texas' state capitol.](#)
- [Moving Forward Act Could Provide Local and State Leadership with Much-Needed Resources](#)
- [NCC Files Comments on Proposals to Establish a 5G Fund for Rural America](#)
- [Next Century Cities & Allies Urge the FCC to Open a Rulemaking on 12 GHz Spectrum](#)
- [Technological Solutions to Future Crises Depend on High-Speed Connectivity](#)
- [Connectivity is Essential for Mass Teleworking and We Are Still Searching for Widespread Connectivity Solutions](#)
- [Broadband Funding for Telehealth Initiatives Must Support Urban and Rural Communities](#)
- [NCC Explains Why Broadband Access and Adoption Must be a National Priority at IGF-USA's Annual Conference](#)
- [NCC Presents on How Broadband Can Help Reduce Health Disparities In the Age of COVID-19](#)
- [Digital Redlining and America's Underserved Communities](#)
- [Informing the Newly Minted Voter](#)
- [Broadband Helps Largely Disconnected Populations with Civic Engagement](#)
- [Next Century Cities Supports Day of Action to Extend the Rural Tribal Priority Window](#)
- [A Spotlight on King County, Washington](#)
- [Courts in the Age of Covid: Do Virtual Hearings Ensure Protection of A Parties' Rights?](#)
- [Local Leaders Discuss How New York's Broadband Commission Could Bring Connectivity Within Reach for Unserved and Underserved Populations](#)

- [Census Bureau Ends Counting One Month Early, Local Leaders Understand the Far-Reaching Impact of an Undercount](#)
- [NCC Makes Recommendations for State Lawmakers to Address the Homework Gap](#)
- [Arlington Residents Are Pressuring Local Officials to Explore Public Broadband Options](#)
- [Next Century Cities Welcomes New Member of Policy Team](#)
- [Stillwater has gigabit connectivity, but few choices among providers](#)
- [Connecting with Connexion of Fort Collins, Colorado](#)
- [Networking in Lafayette, Louisiana](#)
- [Next Century Cities Discusses How Digital Equity Programs Could Benefit Hawaii Residents](#)
- [NCC Provides Recommendations for State and Federal Government Entities to Support Local Initiatives](#)
- [NCC files Section 230 Comments and Implores the FCC to Remain Focused on the Millions of Americans Who Still Do Not Have Affordable, Reliable Broadband](#)
- [NCC Urges the FCC to Protect Local Authority Over Pole Attachment Costs](#)
- [Connecting Residents in Boston, MA](#)
- [Connecting Illinois Residents](#)
- [Tele-Inclusivity in the Age of Covid: A Message to the Telehealth Industry](#)
- [Telehealth – Improving the Health and Economic Well-Being of Communities](#)
- [Inequality in broadband access jeopardizes the mental health & well-being of communities coping with COVID-19](#)
- [Next Century Cities Issues a Response to the FCC'S Request for Comment on the Digital Opportunity Data Collection](#)
- [NCC Encourages NY Librarians, Educators, and Lawmakers to Incorporate Digital Equity into Broadband Access and Adoption Strategies](#)
- [Next Century Cities Joins 18 Public Interest Groups in Asking the FCC to Maintain Lifeline Minimum Standards](#)
- [There Is Something Special Happening in Fort Collins that Should Happen in Every Municipality Working Towards Universal Broadband Access](#)
- [Next Century Cities Advocates for the FCC to Reevaluate Broadband Deployment Data Collection Methods and Reporting](#)

- [Next Century Cities Joins Public Interest Allies in Making Recommendations to Improve NTIA's Internet Use Survey](#)
- [Next Century Cities Reviews Recent Ninth Circuit Decision City of Portland v. FCC](#)
- [Next Century Cities Reiterates the Importance of an Accurate Depiction of Broadband Availability in the FCC's 2021 Broadband Deployment Report](#)
- [Connecting Residents in Arlington, Virginia](#)
- [Closing the Digital Divide to #PlanYourVote](#)
- [A Democracy Without Broadband](#)
- [An Investment in HBCUs is an Investment in America](#)
- [Study Shows That State Funding Programs and Laws That Allow for Municipal Broadband Can Improve Access in Rural Areas By Five Percent.](#)
- [Next Century Cities Urges the California Legislature to Support Local Governments Working to Expand Broadband Access](#)
- [Next Century Cities Files Reply Comments Reiterating the Importance of Accurate Broadband Data and the Need to Improve Data Collection Methods](#)
- [NCC Continues its Dialogue With the FCC, Urging it to Accurately Depict Broadband Availability in its 2021 Report](#)
- [Grooming Tech Talent in One of the Most Disconnected Neighborhoods in NYC](#)
- [Connecting Michiganders Through the Michigan Moonshot Project](#)
- [Broadband Access to Survive. Digital Inclusion to Thrive.](#)
- [Next Century Cities Joins SHLB Coalition Allies in Broadband Mapping Call with FCC Bureau Staff](#)
- [The FCC Adopts Items Increasing Available Mid-Band Spectrum](#)
- [NCC Submits Recommendations to the California Public Utilities Commission and Reiterates the Importance of Supporting Local Connectivity Solutions](#)
- [NCC Reiterates the Importance of a Nationwide Strategy to Expand Broadband Access](#)
- [Next Century Cities Responds to California Governor Newsom's Executive Order on the Digital Divide](#)
- [A Spotlight on Provo, Utah](#)

- [Privacy is a Critical Component of Digital Literacy](#)
- [Protecting Data is an Essential Service of Good Local Government](#)
- [Updating Legacy Systems: Good for Security Good for Privacy](#)
- [NCC Files an Ex Parte With Allies Urging FCC to Keep AT&T Customers Connected](#)
- [The FCC'S Response to the Narrow Remand of Restoring Internet Freedom Order Undermines Universal Connectivity Goals](#)
- [From Picturesque Landscapes to Precision Agriculture; Mapping the Digital Divide in Montana](#)
- [The FCC'S Response to the Narrow Remand of Restoring Internet Freedom Order Undermines Universal Connectivity Goals](#)
- [Broadband Mapping Initiatives Transform Oregon's Digital Landscape to Reflect its Natural Beauty](#)
- [Rescue, Recovery, and Rebuild: Local Officials Weigh in on Broadband's Importance in 2020](#)
- [NCC Highlights Resiliency as a Key Component of Broadband Network Reliability](#)
- [NCC Hosts an Advocacy Training Workshop for Librarians, Essential Partners in Closing the Digital Divide](#)
- [The State of Wisconsin is serious about expanding broadband access, and that starts with accurate data](#)
- [In the Quiet Zone: What To Do When Wireless is Unavailable](#)
- [Connectivity on My Mind: Mapping the Digital Divide Across the State of Georgia](#)
- [Next Century Cities Supports BCA's Calls to Ensure That Residents Affected by Service Shut-Offs Have Access to Fixed Broadband Alternatives](#)
- [Broadband for America Now Highlights Definitive Next Steps in Broadband Policy](#)
- [Looking Toward the Future of Infrastructure with the Siegel Family Endowment](#)
- [NCC Provides Keynote Remarks at Merit Broadband Summit and Highlights Opportunities to Expand Broadband Connectivity in Michigan](#)
- [There are lots of ways that Congress can help to expand broadband. Here are a few places to start.](#)
- [NCC Makes Recommendations to Improve Broadband Connectivity for New York Residents](#)

- [Next Century Cities Provides Keynote Remarks on Increasing Broadband Access & Adoption for Residents in Southeast Queens, New York](#)
- [A Law Student's Perspective on the Many Obstacles to Accessing Broadband](#)
- [Connecting Residents in Oxnard, California](#)
- [America's libraries boost broadband access and use—during a pandemic and beyond](#)
- [Examining Policies and Priorities with the American Libraries Association](#)
- [A Fireside Chat with Christi Buker of the Pennsylvania Library Association](#)
- [A Conversation with the Oil Creek Library District](#)
- [Getting Broadband to Every American Starts with Accurate Data](#)
- [NCC Joins Rainbow Push Coalition Panel Discussion on the Digital Divide & Economic Inclusion](#)
- [Next Century Cities Releases a Series of Case Studies Highlighting Broadband Access and Adoption in Municipalities Nationwide](#)
- [The National Governors Association Identifies Nine Best Practices for States Seeking to Expedite Broadband Deployment and Improve Adoption Rates](#)
- [Who Does the Cost-Benefit Analysis in the FCC's Rulemaking Proceedings?](#)
- [U.S. Senate Confirms a New FCC Commissioner](#)
- [Collaboration is Key: NCC Weighs in on the Importance of Broadband Access to Economic Development in the Bluegrass](#)
- [NCC Encourages State and Local Collaboration on Broadband Programs in California](#)
- [Next Century Cities Joins Allies in Urging Congress to Support Broadband Adoption In COVID Relief Packages](#)
- [NCC Discusses Why Prioritizing Access Over Adoption Is Contributing to the Digital Divide](#)
- [NCC Presents on Why Privacy is an Essential Component of Digital Literacy](#)



# TELLING THE NCC STORY

This year we virtually visited NCC member communities and heard first-hand perspectives from local leaders across the country. Their stories are chronicled in our bi-weekly newsletter.

Continue the NCC story in 2021 by [sharing your own](#).

- January 2020: [NCC's New 2020 Census Kiosk Toolkit](#)
- February 2020: [The Bipartisan Tech Policy Conference](#)
- March 2020: [Broadband Access in the Wake of COVID-19](#)
- April 2020: [Elevating the Importance of Digital Infrastructure in the Age of COVID-19](#)
- May 12, 2020: [Expanding Broadband Access in Hanover, NH](#)
- May 20, 2020: [How a School District in Santa Monica, CA Responded to COVID-19](#)
- June 3, 2020: [Next Century Cities is Working to Keep Members Connected](#)
- June 17, 2020: [What is the cost if we are unable to bridge the digital divide?](#)
- July 1, 2020: [From Independence Hall to the Digital Square](#)
- July 15, 2020: [NCC Counties Are Broadband Innovators](#)
- July 29, 2020: [King County is Focused on Digital Equity | Seattle Passes Internet for All Resolution](#)
- August 12, 2020: [Connect 313 - Bringing Every Detroit Resident Online](#)
- August 26, 2020: [Strengthening Broadband Connections in Fort Collins, Lafayette, and Stillwater](#)
- September 9, 2020: [Broadband Access is Essential to Health and Wellbeing](#)
- September 23, 2020: [Arlington, Virginia is Working to Connect All Residents | Broadband Supports Democracy](#)
- October 7, 2020: [To the Moon and Back: Expanding Digital Access and Equity in Michigan, New York, and Nationwide](#)
- October 21, 2020: [Privacy and Cybersecurity are Critical to Advancing Access and Literacy](#)
- November 18, 2020: [From Books to Broadband: The Critical Role of Libraries in Communities Nationwide](#)



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