City of Dayton announces broadband investment made possible by the Dayton Recovery Plan

Today, the City of Dayton announced it is making an investment of over $200,000 to begin breaking down the digital divide in Dayton neighborhoods.

The initial project, a fiber inventory, is made possible by the Dayton Recovery Plan resulting from federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money granted to the City in 2021.

The "Improving Our Neighborhoods" priority area of the Dayton Recovery Plan includes $55 million of identified investments, of which $ 2.1 million has been allocated to amenity improvements such as the fiber inventory identifying where improvements in digital access need to be made.

"We are excited to take this first step in addressing the digital divide in our neighborhoods and to begin the work to modernize our digital infrastructure," said Jon Rike, Chief Information Officer. "This assessment will provide insight as it relates to modernizing the fiber network in Dayton and identifying opportunities to utilize fiber as an economic development vehicle."

The City has awarded a contract to Apex Advanced Technology LLC of $235,906 to collect and inventory fiber infrastructure assets both inside the existing City facilities and right of way areas. The findings will be used to make data-based decisions regarding future expansion, tracking, and monitoring network changes. The fiber inventory is expected to be complete in the first quarter of 2023.

"From the very beginning we wanted to use the money received (from ARPA) to lead and champion projects that would create long-term transformation for residents and would help disrupt multi-generational poverty," said Dayton City Manager Shelley Dickstein. "By addressing the digital divide in neighborhoods, we have an opportunity to help those most affected by the health impacts of COVID and previous disinvestment."

Of the roughly 58,000 households in Dayton, 42% do not have access to reliable broadband/high speed internet (U.S. 2020 Census). The lack of high-speed internet access can negatively impact economic growth, household income, educational performance,

healthcare access, and employment searches.

The persistence of multiple digital divides — in availability, affordability, digital literacy, and connecting devices — means that Dayton will need multiple long-term strategies to close the gaps, including:

• Finding providers that offer low-cost services
• Connecting digital literacy training with residents
• Making low-cost computers available
• Providing public access community hubs through City of Dayton recreation centers.

Long-term, Dayton's role in addressing digital equity will be as a facilitator, whether as a participant in public/private partnerships for broadband connectivity or in building relationships to address issues such as access to devices and digital literacy training.

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