



Connected Gainesville

Fact Sheet

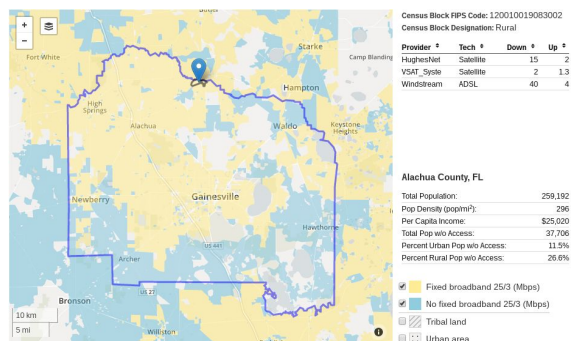
This fact sheet has been assembled by Connected Gainesville, a community initiative to bring affordable, high-speed, broadband internet to everyone in our community. We believe that internet access is a necessity in the 21st century, and that our community lags behind the rest of the state in affordability and connectivity.

In the following document we will outline why we believe our community needs to act on this issue, and recommend steps going forward.

Accessibility

Alachua County residents lag behind the state and country in broadband internet access¹. According to the FCC 15 percent of Alachua County residents can't access broadband internet, more than double the state average of 7 percent.

This does not affect everyone in our community equally. While much of the City of Gainesville is connected to broadband, many of the outlying areas have large swaths of area without:



Affordability

Gainesville is the most expensive city to access broadband in Florida. Compared to St. Petersburg, Gainesville residents are paying \$450 more per year to access broadband internet. This is a serious problem, as 43 percent of people

without home broadband cite “price” as the reason they don’t access it, according to Pew Research.

City	Yearly ²	% Higher
Gainesville	\$1,055.76	
Coral Springs	\$1,054.80	0.09%
Cape Coral	\$983.28	7.37%
Jacksonville	\$923.40	14.33%
Hialeah	\$923.40	14.33%
Tallahassee	\$923.40	14.33%
Fort Lauderdale	\$923.40	14.33%
Port St. Lucie	\$923.40	14.33%
Pembroke Pines	\$923.40	14.33%
Miami Gardens	\$923.40	14.33%
Miami	\$840.00	25.69%
Hollywood	\$840.00	25.69%
Orlando	\$779.88	35.37%
Miramar	\$779.88	35.37%
Palm Bay	\$779.88	35.37%
Tampa	\$779.76	35.40%
St. Petersburg	\$599.88	76.00%
Clearwater	\$599.88	76.00%

¹ Broadband internet access is defined as 25 mbps upload, 3 mbps download, anything below that is considered inadequate for the average family according to the FCC.

² Prices of residential access to broadband internet for all cities above 100,000 in Florida as of the 2010 Census. Yearly prices calculated by standard rate + modem rental cost.



Economic Impact of Broadband Internet

Internet access is the basis, and future, of the modern economy. It drives sales, internal communication, marketing, accounting, taxes, and everything in between. It should come as no surprise then that communities that improve it see large economic gains.

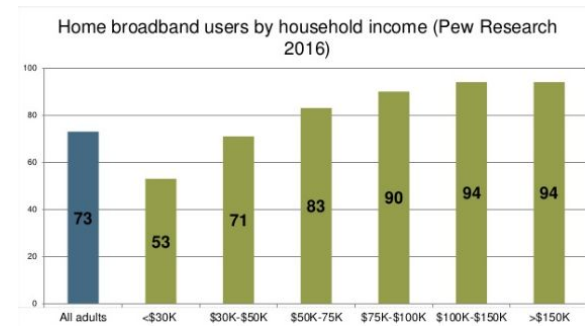
A study by [the Analysis Group](#) found that fiber internet to the home increased per capita GDP in communities by 1.1 percent. The study found cities that connected fiber to the home saw \$1.4 billion in economic gain as a result.

According to a [study by the University of Tennessee](#) Chattanooga's expansion of affordable, high speed internet brought, "incremental economic and social benefits ranging from \$865.3 million to \$1.3 billion while additionally creating between 2,800 and 5,200 new jobs," over **4 years**. These gains were not just seen in the tech sector, but brought in manufacturing jobs like Volkswagen, and helped them to achieve the 3rd highest wage growth in the country in 2014.

Social Impact of Broadband Internet

From how we socialize to how we learn, our lives are becoming more and more digital. Those without access to broadband in their homes face steep obstacles in finding work, educating their children, and communicating with family. America, and Gainesville, is increasingly being divided into those with connectivity and those without.

This "digital divide" is impacting different groups differently. For those living in poverty and from historically oppressed racial groups, the digital divide hits you more than anyone.



According to Pew Research 52 percent of Americans view lack of home broadband as a "major disadvantage" to finding a job. At the same time, 70 percent of teachers assign homework that requires broadband internet access, [according to the FCC](#).



Our Community's Path Forward

Cities across the country have made strides toward solving this problem with great success. They have done so with a variety of local solutions, but they were always done as a community and through careful discussion with all of the local stakeholders involved.

We recommend following the path of these other cities, beginning by conducting a study of all available solutions. We have outlined eight models that other communities have implemented. We recommend staff review these and others, and come back with a recommendation on what can be studied internally, what is unfeasible, and what should be studied by a neutral expert on the telecommunications business. Once the community has decided what will work best for all stakeholders, a pilot program should be put in place to test before full implementation.

Goals

We believe it is critical to outline the goals of any broadband strategy before investing in it. While better internet connectivity is a goal, we should carefully outline the more specific goals of the endeavor before moving forward. After researching what other cities have put forward as their goals, we recommend the following as a starting place.

Bringing Broadband to Everyone

We should ensure that every resident of our community has access to affordable, gigabit, broadband internet access in their homes.

1 gigabit: \$250/month

Expansion of Free to Very Low Cost Options

Expanding free technology use such as wireless or subsidizing cost for those in poverty we should ensure those that need access the most get it.

Set Gainesville up for Preeminence

We should set up our community up as a model for the rest of country one that will draw in top talent, companies, and students. This should not only prepare our community for today but for the technology of tomorrow. The benefits should be shared across our community, not just those most able to afford it.

Improved Affordability for Consumers

Gainesville currently is the most expensive city to access broadband in Florida. We recommend aiming for the prices of Austin, Texas or lower:

100 mbps: \$50/month

1,000 mbps: \$70/month

High-Speed, Affordable Options for Businesses

Businesses across the country need modern connectivity to conduct their business. We should implement and expand our level of service to compete with other tech cities. Austin, Texas's speeds and costs are a benchmark we recommend aiming for:

100 mbps: \$70/month

250 mbps: \$100/month

Business Friendly Approach

Solutions should improve private sector strength and allow private investment to flourish.

Government regulations drive up costs to do business, which is then passed to the consumer. Research has also shown that competition drives down internet prices. Our goal should be to reduce onerous regulations and reduce barriers to entry for new and existing internet service provider



Successful City Models

Municipal Codes

Implementing a Dig Once Policy

Dig once policies lower the cost of laying the infrastructure for internet by mandating that new roads are built with conduit. This policy has been supported by industry trade groups, the Obama administration, and called a “no brainer policy” by the Washington Post.³

Streamlining Permitting Processes

The city and county may opt to remove barriers and streamline permitting for internet service providers laying infrastructure in the right of way. This would reduce the cost and speed of laying infrastructure, making investment by the private sector more feasible.⁴

Open Publically Funded Infrastructure

Gainesville owns hundreds of miles of conduit. Opening this public infrastructure to the private sector for a reasonable rate would lower barriers to entry and cost of infrastructure construction, increasing competition and driving down prices.⁵

Mandating Fiber Ready Developments

The difficulty of connecting to tenants in existing multi unit buildings is a barrier for new competition. Gainesville could mandate that new developments and retrofitted buildings must have wiring or ducts that allow multiple internet providers to offer services.⁶

Infrastructure

Installing Fiber as Building Blocks to Private Sector Investment

Gainesville may opt to open its existing GRU fiber network to private companies in an “open access” model, allowing them to piggyback on the public investment to provide more service to more areas with more competition. We may also choose to expand the existing fiber network to incentivize private sector broadband investment in those areas.⁷

Expanding Wifi in Public Areas

Free, open, public wifi allows all citizens the right to connect together. Free wifi in public areas allows our neediest citizens, students, professionals, and others to be connected everyday to the internet.⁸

Community Broadband Expansion

Many cities have found that directly connecting their municipal internet to residences and businesses allows them to provide internet that matches the goals of their community. Cities like Chattanooga, TN, and Lafayette, LA saw major economic growth after expanding their broadband networks to offer faster, less expensive service. The City should look into leveraging the upcoming “smart meter” upgrade and smart cities goals that are being studied by the City to assist with this.⁹

Expansion through Private/Public Partnership

The City could move forward with a public/private partnership model, leveraging the strengths of both the private and public sectors to improve connectivity and share risks.¹⁰

³ [Santa Monica, California](#); [Chicago, Illinois](#)

⁴ [Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina](#)

⁵ [Louisville, Kentucky](#); [Nashville, Tennessee](#)

⁶ [Loma Linda, California](#)

⁷ [Huntsville, Alabama](#); [Mount Vernon, Washington](#)

⁸ [New York City, New York](#); [Miami, Florida](#)

⁹ [Chattanooga, Tennessee](#); [Lafayette, Louisiana](#)

¹⁰ [Westminster, Maryland](#); [Champaign-Urbana, Illinois](#)