



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES CHICAGO BROADBAND CHALLENGE

City Will Completely Remake its Digital Infrastructure, Providing Access to Underserved Areas, Free Access in Public Spaces, and Affordable Access for the Business Community

Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced today the launch of the Chicago Broadband Challenge, a unique initiative that will engage the public to secure Chicago's position as one of the digital capitals of the country and the city with the greatest availability of ultra-high-speed broadband in the United States. Starting this month, Millennium Park began offering free wireless internet to the public, and as part of the initiative the Broadband Challenge all parks and open spaces in Chicago will eventually offer free internet.

"Chicago will be one of the most connected cities in the world," said Mayor Emanuel. "The establishment of a world-class broadband network in Chicago will create thousands of jobs and dramatically improve educational opportunities, economic development, health care services, and general quality of life throughout the city. We will rely on the ideas and efforts of Chicagoans to not only build this network, but make sure it is customized for our residents and our workforce."

The Chicago Broadband Challenge will be facilitated by a website at www.cityofchicago.org/broadband and will invite the public to participate with ideas and insight as to how the city can best make use of its existing broadband infrastructure and potential uses for a future expansion of broadband access. The conversation will inform the way the City moves forward with its broadband development. Any individual, company, student, non-profit organization or community group is welcome to respond to the



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Broadband challenge, either informally through the website, or as part of the formal responses the city will be soliciting through a request for information.

The City of Chicago is releasing a Request for Information (RFI) today, that seeks to engage private companies, universities, and other organizations to accomplish three main goals: building world-class broadband infrastructure for the city; extending broadband service into underserved areas; and providing free Wi-Fi access in public spaces throughout Chicago.

In driving the building of this infrastructure, the City will first focus on establishing an open, gigabit-speed networks in key innovation areas. The City has identified 15 innovation zones in key commercial and industrial corridors, and will work with the private sector to leverage the existing infrastructure and assets to ensure low-cost broadband is available in these zones with the ultimate goal of extension to all businesses in the City. The City will accomplish this by launching the RFI, and working with private sector service providers to determine best practices and innovative solutions that will allow the low-cost broadband to be developed.

The second goal of the RFI is to expand access to high-speed internet for residents who live in underserved and disadvantaged neighborhoods. Respondents to the RFI will be encouraged to bring solutions forward that will expand access and availability for these communities throughout the city. The City will additionally work with partners like the Smart Chicago Collaborative to develop a comprehensive strategy for digital skills training to ensure that Chicagoans can make the most of broadband access.

Finally, the third element of the RFI will be to implement free Wi-Fi internet service in every public park, plaza or space across the city. The City will start by offering free Wi-Fi in Millennium Park in September, as part of a partnership with SilverIP. This effort will expand to include every public space in the city over the next several years. The RFI will solicit private sector companies, non-profit organizations and other groups that can participate in establishing this connectivity.



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“It is essential that we build a broadband infrastructure network that suits the needs and desires of Chicagoans,” said John Tolva, Chief Technology Officer for the City of Chicago. “By asking for public input and using it to design the best possible system, we’ll insure that Chicago’s broadband infrastructure is not only the fastest in the country, but the best suited to create jobs and drive our economy forward in the 21st century.”

Additional communication about the Chicago Broadband Initiative is available through an email address: chicagobroadband@cityofchicago.org.

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