

CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION _____

...title

A RESOLUTION establishing the City Council’s goal to implement Internet for All Seattle, a vision of making broadband internet service accessible, reliable, and affordable to all residents in Seattle.

...body

WHEREAS, The City of Seattle (City) and local internet service providers offer various no-cost and low-cost options for residents and non-profit organizations, but the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the reality of extensive, inequitable, and detrimental gaps in internet access and affordability throughout Seattle; and

WHEREAS, the City’s 2018 Technology Access and Adoption Study reported that, while the number of Seattle households reporting access to the internet where they live has increased by 10 percent since 2014, people living in low-income and populations who are insecurely-housed are nevertheless five to seven times more likely to lack adequate access to the internet than the average Seattle resident; and

WHEREAS, the 2018 Technology Access and Adoption Study, also showed that older residents, those with disabilities, non-White residents and those for whom English is not their primary language are less likely to have internet access to the internet compared with other groups, and 23 percent of residents reported barriers that limit their Internet use, such as cost and slow or unreliable service; and

WHEREAS, lack of access to the internet was highlighted and exacerbated by temporary closures to combat the spread of COVID-19, including Governor Jay Inslee’s emergency order on March 13, 2020 closing all K-12 schools in Washington and Mayor Jenny Durkan’s emergency order on March 12, 2020 temporarily closed libraries and community centers; and

1 WHEREAS, inequities in internet access and affordability can lead to disparate outcomes during
2 a crisis, such as reduced access to relief programs for individuals and small neighborhood
3 businesses and barriers preventing students from participating in remote learning; and

4 WHEREAS, thousands of youth striving to become the next generation of workers need
5 affordable internet access to advance their education, access to information, technical
6 training, and job opportunities; and

7 WHEREAS, the City Council wants to accelerate efforts to provide expanded access to
8 affordable internet in order to prevent a repeat of the problems experienced during the
9 COVID-19 pandemic and to maximize economic opportunities for its residents and local
10 businesses; and

11 WHEREAS, increased internet access will enable more workers to telecommute, which will
12 benefit the environment by reducing harmful carbon emissions and assist the City in
13 meeting its goals to address climate change; and

14 WHEREAS, assumptions about financial risk, competitive challenges, and partnership
15 opportunities associated with municipal broadband warrant a comprehensive update; and

16 WHEREAS, the City's ten-year franchise agreements with communications companies,
17 including Comcast, CenturyLink, and WAVE are up for renewal in 2025, 2026, and
18 2027, respectively, and the time to start planning for universal affordable access to
19 broadband internet is now; and

20 WHEREAS, several cities across the United States have attempted to implement municipal
21 broadband, with limited success due to various constraints, and can therefore provide
22 lessons for Seattle's efforts for universal and affordable broadband internet access; and

1 WHEREAS, Seattle is a global center of technology and innovation with a local economy that
2 relies on internet connectivity and has a vested interest in making affordable and
3 universal access to the internet a basic part of Seattle’s infrastructure; and

4 WHEREAS, the City believes it is vital to expand affordable and reliable access to broadband
5 internet service to all its residents; NOW, THEREFORE,

6 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE, THE**
7 **MAYOR CONCURRING, THAT:**

8 Section 1. The City Council commits to the goal of making broadband internet service
9 accessible and affordable to all residents within Seattle, which can be called Internet for All
10 Seattle.

11 Section 2. The City Council recognizes that limited internet access and slow connections
12 have resulted in inequitable service and disparate outcomes during the COVID-19 emergency.

13 Section 3. The City Council requests that the Seattle Information Technology Department
14 provide to the Transportation and Utilities Committee the reports and plans necessary to
15 implement Internet for All Seattle including, but not limited to, the following:

16 A. Gap analysis: A gap analysis that lists the no-cost and low-cost programs already
17 provided by The City of Seattle and local internet service providers while quantifying the actual
18 lack of access for Seattle residents to affordable internet service, informed by the 2020
19 experience of students in Seattle Public Schools.

20 B. Lessons learned: A brief study of lessons learned since at least 2017 from cities that
21 provide or have provided municipal broadband.

1 C. Action plan: An Internet for All Seattle Action Plan (Action Plan) detailing the steps
2 for how The City of Seattle can help to ensure in an expedited manner universal access to
3 affordable broadband internet service to all residents of Seattle, including but not limited to:

4 1. Partnerships: The strategic partnerships needed to implement the Action Plan,
5 including the business community, Seattle Public Schools, local nonprofits, and City departments
6 including but not limited to Information Technology, Seattle City Light, Seattle Public Utilities,
7 the Seattle Department of Transportation, the Seattle Public Library, and Seattle Parks and
8 Recreation.

9 2. Infrastructure: The infrastructure that must be built to enable universal access
10 throughout Seattle, which could include a combination of public and private systems.

11 3. Resources: A budget estimating the public and private resources required to
12 implement the Action Plan efficiently, which may include experienced consultants to assist the
13 Seattle Information Technology Department.

14 4. Timeline: An ambitious, yet achievable, schedule for implementing the Action
15 Plan including, but not limited to, a Race and Social Justice analysis to ensure equitable
16 distribution of the affordable access and key milestones to track progress that will be reported to
17 the Council and to the general public.

18 5. Evaluations: A plan to implement both a near-term process evaluation to ensure
19 effective implementation of Internet for All Seattle, and a long-term outcomes evaluation to
20 assess the effectiveness of Internet for All Seattle once implemented.

21 a. The process evaluation should provide suggestions for improvements so
22 that corrective action can be taken to maximize the opportunities for successful implementation.

