

**MAYOR ERIC GARCETTI
CITY OF LOS ANGELES**

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Facebook: [FB.com/MayorOfLA](https://www.facebook.com/MayorOfLA)

Twitter: [@MayorOfLA](https://twitter.com/MayorOfLA)

Instagram: [@MayorOfLA](https://www.instagram.com/MayorOfLA)

Media Archive: LAMayor.org/Photos

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 9, 2020

CONTACT: Communications Office, (213) 978-0741

MAYOR GARCETTI ANNOUNCES FREE INTERNET ACCESS TO RESIDENTS IN FOUR PUBLIC HOUSING COMMUNITIES

Collaboration between City of L.A., Starry, and Microsoft will bring broadband connectivity to 9,000 Angelenos

Eds:

To watch a video testimonial by a HACLA resident sharing how receiving free internet access has helped her family during the pandemic, please [click here](#).

LOS ANGELES — Mayor Eric Garcetti today announced a new initiative to deliver six months of free internet access to residents in four public housing communities across Los Angeles. The product of a partnership between the Mayor’s Office of Budget and Innovation, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA), Starry Internet, and Microsoft Corp., this effort will accelerate the availability of low-cost, high-quality broadband options in local public housing developments for nearly 3,600 units of housing and 9,000 residents.

“COVID-19 has reinforced what was already a clear and unmistakable fact: internet connectivity is not a luxury in our time — it’s an absolute necessity for parents trying to work, students looking to learn, and families and friends seeking to communicate,” said Mayor Garcetti. “With Starry and Microsoft lending their resources and expertise, our city’s public housing residents will no longer find themselves on the wrong side of the digital divide, but fully connected to their classrooms and to the opportunities of the 21st century.”

With so many Angelenos staying safer at home and nearly all students logging into their classes online, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical need to bring reliable and affordable internet access to all Angelenos to support virtual learning, facilitate remote work for employees, and expand telehealth resources.

This heightened need exacerbates the existing challenges for lower income communities already caused by the digital divide. In Los Angeles, Black and Latino households are only one-third as likely as White households to have internet, with the elderly four times less likely to be connected. Over 30% of Watts households do not have a broadband subscription.

This partnership, which builds on the work of the Mayor's monthly Telecommunications and Digital Equity Forum, provides participating public housing residents — many of whom are among the City's lowest income households and most lacking affordable broadband options — with six months of free Starry Connect service. After this initial phase, service will continue for just \$15 a month.

In June 2020, Starry provided free internet connectivity to residents at Mar Vista public housing, committing to provide its Connect service to residents for free until the end of the year. Now, Microsoft's Airband Initiative will provide grant funding to accelerate construction and deployment of Starry's broadband access technology and ultra-low-cost broadband access program to four more HACLA communities in South Los Angeles: Nickerson Gardens, Jordan Downs, Imperial Courts, and Pueblo del Rio. Microsoft's support for expanding affordable broadband through its Airband Initiative is part of its larger equity and social justice commitments to address racial injustice and inequity for the Black and African American community in the United States.

"Broadband is the electricity of the 21st century and powers much of our modern lives," said Brad Smith, president of Microsoft. "But not everyone has access to this vital connection. If we fail to bring it to more people, we risk widening, not closing the digital divide. This partnership with the City of Los Angeles and Starry is an important step towards ensuring that everyone, everywhere can access today's essential online services."

"We built our company on the basic belief that everyone deserves access to affordable, high-quality broadband no matter where you live," said Chet Kanojia, co-Founder and CEO of Starry. "In the United States, standalone broadband costs rank among the highest in the developed world and for many families, remains out of financial reach. If it isn't abundantly clear by now, you can't work and learn from home if you don't have access to affordable, high-quality broadband. We created Starry Connect to provide an ultra-low-cost broadband option to meet the connectivity needs of public and affordable housing communities long ignored by incumbents. Our partnership with Microsoft helps us rapidly expand our Connect footprint in public housing communities and we're proud to kick off this collaboration in Los Angeles. Closing the digital gap is a first critical step to ensuring that all our communities have the opportunity to fully participate in digital life and the benefits it confers."

Accelerating the availability of low-cost broadband options throughout Los Angeles is part of the City's larger Get Connected Los Angeles initiative and builds on Los Angeles' digital inclusion initiatives, including upgrading the computer labs and training centers in HACLA communities. Supplementing those efforts is the L.A. Public Library's Tech 2 Go program, where Angelenos can check out hotspots and devices at local libraries. Anyone can find local free and low-cost internet options and devices by visiting the [Get Connected Los Angeles website](#).

About HACLA

The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) was established in 1938 by City of Los Angeles Resolution No. 1241. HACLA is one of the nation's largest and leading public housing authorities, providing the largest supply of quality affordable housing to residents of the City of Los Angeles. HACLA provides affordable housing to over 83,000 households in its Public Housing and Section 8 departments,

and offers a range of permanent supportive housing programs for homeless households, including: Project-Based, HUD – Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing, Homeless, Tenant Based Supportive Housing, Housing Opportunities for Persons with Aids (HOPWA), Continuum of Care and Moderate Rehabilitation Single Room Occupancy program.

About Starry

Starry launched its Connect program in late 2018 to provide ultra-low-cost internet access options targeted to communities that have long been under-connected and underserved by incumbent providers. Starry Connect partners with owners of public and affordable housing to provide ultra-low-cost, uncapped, true broadband service to residents without the credit checks and cumbersome eligibility criteria required by other providers. By partnering directly with the housing owner, Starry qualifies entire housing communities for participation in the Connect program, removing burdensome paperwork requirements that often deter adoption and creates lengthy wait times for residents. This feature has been praised by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a key driver to expanding broadband access and adoption in HUD-supported housing. Starry is an official ConnectHomeUSA stakeholder through HUD.

About Microsoft's Airband Initiative

Microsoft's Airband Initiative is an effort to close the broadband gap and help communities use new connectivity to improve education, health care, and agriculture, and transform their businesses. In June of this year, Microsoft announced that it would expand the Airband Initiative beyond its rural focus, to U.S. cities confronting some of the largest digital divides as part of its commitment to addressing racial inequity. The Airband Initiative works with the private and public sectors to invest in new technologies, accelerate broadband deployment, and support policy changes with the goal of bringing broadband access to millions of people in the United States. Los Angeles is the first city of this expansion to be announced. More information can be found at aka.ms/airband.

###