Oakland Announces Plans To Expand Internet Access

Oakland Housing Authority announces plan to connect nearly 1,200 units at the five largest public housing communities to free high-speed internet by 2024; #OaklandUndivided announces commitment to ensure all 50,000+ Oakland Public School Students - PreK through College - have home computer and internet access for the fourth consecutive year.

OAKLAND - On Saturday, May 6, **California CIO Director Liana Bailey-Crimmins and California Secretary of Government Operations Amy Tong will join Assemblymember Mia Bonta and the #OaklandUndivided (#OU) Coalition, including Mayor Sheng Thao, community partners, local elected officials, and funding partners Amazon, Gilead, and PG&E** to celebrate progress towards digital equity and plans for the year ahead. Oakland Housing Authority and #OaklandUndivided will recommit to universal home computer and internet access for all Oakland public school students for a fourth consecutive year and a new commitment to deploy free public WiFi for residents in Oakland's public housing.

"#OaklandUndivided started as an initiative distributing hotspots and computers, and has evolved into an organization addressing structural barriers to accessing broadband. More importantly, #OakandUndivided does everything with community as its central and core value," explained Assemblymember Mia Bonta. "I am proud to be a part of this coalition in which we all collectively seek to uplift communities most impacted and least connected."

Free Apartment WiFi: A leadership partner in the #OaklandUndivided initiative, Oakland Housing Authority (OHA) will announce plans to connect Oakland's five largest public housing communities to free wireless internet by 2024. In total, the high-speed wireless internet will reach 1,117 households serving families and seniors in addition to common areas and community rooms. OHA Executive Director Patricia Wells explains, "The internet is a 21st-century necessity - essential for all aspects of life including learning, banking, economic opportunity and health and social services access. With this commitment, OHA deepens its pursuit of an Oakland undivided, where students, families, and residents have access to the internet as a utility." The work is already underway as OHA has received over 20 submissions from potential service providers in response to their recent Request for Proposals (RFP).

"Internet access is essential for the success of our families in our digital world," said Mayor Sheng Thao. "We are building more than housing, we are building homes where residents' careers and businesses can grow, and their children can learn. Internet connection is an essential catalyst for economic development."

OHA's announcement scales and institutionalizes the work of another #OU leadership partner - EducationSuperHighway - that has connected 304 households in eleven affordable housing complexes in Oakland to free wireless internet. Oakland is the inaugural city selected for the "No Home Left Offline" campaign announced in 2022.

Citywide Connectivity: Headlined by the Mayor's Office and the City IT Department, #OaklandUndivided continues to make significant strides towards a goal of connecting 90% of the estimated 36,000 unconnected households in Oakland by 2027. #OaklandUndivided will also announce the expansion of long-term solutions to increase broadband across the city, building on the City Council's initial $7.7M investment of CARES Act funding in OakWiFi and the TownLink program to provide public Wi-Fi and digital literacy to residents across Oakland.

Under the leadership of Mayor Sheng Thao and CIO Tony Batalla, the City IT Department has already taken significant steps to fully leverage the unprecedented State and Federal Funding for Broadband Expansion:

- **LATA Grant**: In December, after grant writing and technical assistance from #OU, the [City of Oakland won a $500K Local Agency Technical Assistance gran](#)t from the CPUC to design projects that expand municipal broadband infrastructure and develop a comprehensive broadband strategy.

- **Middle Mile Expansion**: Alongside #OU's diverse coalition of civic and community leaders, Oakland successfully advocated for high-capacity, middle mile fiber infrastructure to be installed along all eligible rights of way in Oakland's most under-connected communities of East and West Oakland. This led Oakland to be **selected as one of only three urban areas for the first phase** of the historic $3.25B investment from SB 156. That investment will provide fiber for expanded broadband access in many of Oakland's most unconnected neighborhoods - West Oakland, Fruitvale, and East Oakland.

- **Last Mile Priority Areas**: #OU led a coalition of advocates across the State to revise the $2B [CPUC's Priority Area Map](#) to increase investment in historically marginalized communities, including East and West Oakland.

#OaklandUndivided has been recognized as a [trailblazer](#) by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance and featured in [Univision](#), [Broadband Breakfast](#), and a leading voice in the [FCC's digital discrimination hearing](#). To see the full list of partners and endorsers as well as opportunities to learn more, volunteer, donate, or join the movement to keep #OaklandUndivided - please visit **www.oaklandundivided.org**.

WHAT: #OaklandUndivided Three Year Anniversary Press Conference and Announcement to Expand Digital Access
WHEN: 12:30 p.m., Saturday, May 6 (time for interviews starting at 12:00 p.m.)
WHERE: Bitwise Oakland - 150 Linden St, Oakland, CA 94607

#OaklandUndivided launched three years ago, shortly after the pandemic began, as a partnership between Oakland Unified School District, The City of Oakland, Tech Exchange, The Oakland Public Education Fund, Oakland Promise, and more than 20 other community partners - including All City Council, The Greenlining Institute, Homies Empowerment, The Kapor Center, Oakland Housing Authority, El Timpano, The Oakland REACH, and the NAACP - to ensure that all Oakland public school students could access online learning. To date, the equity-based, collective impact initiative has distributed over 50,000 laptops and over 20,000 hotspots and responded to more than 20,000 tech response requests. In the 2022-2023 school year, the City of Oakland launched a new website (www.oaklandca.gov/freeinternet), and #OaklandUndivided started a citywide awareness campaign to enroll eligible households in the Affordable Connectivity Plan, a new federal program that provides a $30 per month home internet discount. The campaign began with awareness and enrollment support for OUSD, where all households are eligible because all district schools participate in the Community Eligibility Program.