
ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE
NEWS RELEASE



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Kent County Broadband Committee Seeks Community Input

GRAND RAPIDS – Technology is a critical part of education, providing information and staying in touch with loved ones. As technology evolves, access to broadband is important to all households. Kent County staff are working with The Right Place, Inc. and the Kent County Broadband Committee, a group of local community leaders with a common mission of enhancing and expanding broadband access, adoption and use throughout the County for the benefit of local residents and businesses.

The Committee is partnering with Connect Michigan and their “Connected Community” program to examine broadband accessibility in Kent County, and establish a broadband planning process and plan to address the current and future broadband needs. In order to meet their goals, Connect Michigan is asking for the public to complete a survey to recognize existing resources and capabilities currently in place that support the access, adoption and use of broadband technology in local homes and businesses. “Using several audience-specific surveys to gather this information, these results will be used to develop action plans to address recognized needs as part of the recently formed Kent County Broadband Initiative,” said Dan Manning, Community Technology Advisor for Connect Michigan. “Our ‘Connected Community’ program also includes a certification program to formally recognize those communities that excel in their assessment based on their demonstrated success with broadband access, adoption and use.”

Having a baseline is important to moving forward. “Broadband is vital for so many businesses and households,” said Jim Saalfeld, Chair of the Kent County Board of Commissioners. “Because Kent County has such a diverse landscape - urban, suburban and rural, with each having unique infrastructure - knowing current accessibility or potential problem spots will help us plan for the future.”

The jobs market of the future in Kent County relies on robust technology. “Business access to broadband today is just as critical as access to traditional infrastructure like roads, water, and power,” said Birgit Klohs, President and CEO, The Right Place, Inc. “To compete for the high tech jobs and companies of tomorrow, our region needs fast, reliable access to broadband today.”

After a structured evaluation of this assessment, the committee can develop action plans and projects to improve the broadband environment most effectively. The survey is open until May 27 and only takes ten minutes to complete. You can take the survey as a resident, as a business owner or as a designated representative of another organization. The survey is online at <http://connectmycommunity.org/kent-county/> or you can get a hard copy from any township, city or village office in Kent County.

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