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MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS VERIZON ACCOUBTABLE TO CONNECT HALF A MILLION NEW YORK CITY HOUSEHOLDS TO BROADBAND

Under the terms of the agreement, Verizon will build out Fios connectivity for New Yorkers, prioritizing the least-connected communities and NYCHA residential buildings

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced an advancement in tackling the digital divide in New York City by ensuring that Verizon builds out its FiOS footprint to 500,000 additional households, making high-speed fiber broadband available to more New Yorkers.

The agreement secured by Mayor de Blasio addresses disparities faced by low-income and New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) families across the city. Due to the corporation’s previous failure to connect many buildings, large portions of New York City neighborhoods are under an effective monopoly, with only one cable and broadband provider, risking lower speeds and higher costs. Under the settlement, Verizon is compelled to prioritize the least-connected Community Districts and ensure connectivity for every NYCHA residential building. The City began proceedings against Verizon due to the telecom’s failure to meet the terms of its cable franchise agreement, inked under the Bloomberg administration, to build out its Fios network.

“Internet access is an economic right in New York City, no matter your ZIP code. Tech giants will not stand in our way to deliver high-quality broadband to New Yorkers – they must be a part of the solution,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “COVID-19 has further exposed the inequalities in internet access while changing the way New Yorkers work, learn, and live. We will continue to hold any corporation that fails to deliver on its promise to New Yorkers accountable.”

As New York City charts a path to recovery, broadband is no longer a luxury, but an essential service to maintain health, receive an education, and access employment. In addition to ensuring Verizon will build out its network, the City continues to accelerate the NYC Internet Master Plan to systematically close the digital divide.

“As we plan an equitable recovery for New York City, closing the digital divide remains more urgent than ever,” said **Deputy Mayor for Operations Laura Anglin**. “The Internet has the power to connect New Yorkers to social services, jobs, school and more. This settlement and the Internet Master Plan will ensure New Yorkers of all walks of life can access quality broadband.”

“This settlement will make sure that Verizon builds out its fiber footprint more equitably throughout New York City — especially in low-income communities that have historically been underserved by internet service providers,” said **DoITT Commissioner and Citywide CIO**

Jessica Tisch. “This agreement attacks that unfair imbalance, and recognizes that high-quality internet is a necessity, not a luxury.”

"The New York City Internet Master Plan makes clear the need for more options in parts of the five boroughs that have been historically underserved by industry. This settlement will lead to more choice for New Yorkers, particularly those most vulnerable to the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic," said **John Paul Farmer, New York City Chief Technology Officer.** "With a focus on COVID-priority neighborhoods and an eye on racial equity, the City is working in unprecedented ways with large companies, small startups, and community-based organizations to increase choice, lower costs, and put New York City on the path to universal broadband."

“If you are a child who needs access to an online class or a senior who wants to see a loved one, you know better than most how vital internet access is to daily life,” said **Corporation Counsel James E. Johnson.** “We resolved this case so that more New Yorkers will have access to a vital tool. The pandemic has underscored this critical need. This resolution could not be more timely.”

Many of the neighborhoods that have the most to gain from this settlement are Community Districts that are hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic; with low median household incomes; and fewest options, if any for affordable broadband, including:

- Bronx 2 (Hunts Point, Inwood)
- Bronx 5 (Fordham/Morris Heights, Mount Hope, University Heights)
- Brooklyn 16 (Brownsville, Ocean Hill)
- Bronx 7 (Bedford Park, Fordham, Jerome Park, Kingsbridge Heights, Norwood, University Heights)
- Manhattan 9 (Hamilton Heights, Manhattanville, Morningside Heights)
- Brooklyn 12 (Borough Park, Kensington, Ocean Parkway, Midwood)
- Manhattan 3 (Alphabet City, the East Village, the Lower East Side, Two Bridges, Chinatown)
- Brooklyn 9 (Crown Heights, Prospect Lefferts Gardens, Wingate)
- Manhattan 12 (Inwood, Washington Heights)
- Brooklyn 4 (Bushwick)
- Queens 12 (South Jamaica)

At a minimum, Verizon will make connections available to 125,000 additional households in these Community Districts, which means that if a resident requests paid FiOS service, Verizon will be required to make it available generally within seven days.

The terms of the settlement call for Verizon to report quarterly on their progress, and the City will make public the list of newly eligible households that were previously ineligible for FiOS or broadband service. The lawsuit and its settlement highlight the City’s commitment to holding franchisees accountable to meet their commitments to the public. The City’s franchise team will be closely monitoring Verizon’s performance for any slippage from the terms of this agreement and is prepared to ensure serious consequences for failure to perform. The settlement is subject

to approval from the NYC Franchise and Review Commission and the Public Service Commission.

Many New Yorkers lack internet connections at home and others have only limited broadband service. Today's settlement will ensure that 500,000 households that previously lacked Verizon broadband access because of a corporate failure to invest in the necessary infrastructure will have the option of fiber broadband, and create critical cost competition in areas where today only one provider exists.

This settlement is complementary to other City-led efforts underway to achieve the goal of universal broadband, including the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion & Equity's efforts announced in July to extend new low cost internet service options to 600,000 underserved New Yorkers, including 200,000 NYCHA residents, over the next 18 months. New Yorkers need more from the companies that serve them – they need affordable service options. At a time when nearly a third of New Yorkers do not have home broadband, New York City's Internet Master Plan has made the single largest capital investment by any municipality in the country to end the digital divide. The City will soon be releasing a solicitation for new open-access infrastructure and will engage new and existing broadband companies in serving New Yorkers with high-quality, affordable internet service options. It is critical that the private sector partners with the City to ensure New Yorkers are affordably connected to the internet.

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