

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****June 2, 2026**

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SUBJECT: NEIGHBORHOOD WiFi PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS AND COMPLETION UPDATE**Background:**

The Neighborhood WiFi Program was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide immediate wireless internet connectivity in five Neighborhood Improvement Zones: Stop Six, Ash Crescent, Northside, Rosemont, and Como. The program successfully bridged the digital divide in these lower-income areas, delivering high-quality internet access for remote education, job searches, telemedicine, and other essential services to households that previously lacked affordable connectivity. Since its inception, the program has served over 5,000 unique monthly users at its peak and has cumulatively provided connectivity to thousands of residents who would otherwise have been without reliable internet access.

Achievements:

The program demonstrated the City's ability to rapidly deploy technology solutions in underserved communities and served as a critical precursor to the broader municipal broadband initiative now underway. The Neighborhood WiFi network established the operational framework, community engagement model, and technical architecture that has informed the City's long-term broadband strategy, including the Public-Private Partnership with Sprocket Networks to build a citywide fiber network.

Program Completion:

Staff recommends completion of the Neighborhood WiFi Program based on three factors: the program has achieved its intended goals, usage is in sustained decline, and the enabling funding source is nearing expiration.

The objective to provide wireless connectivity in communities disproportionately affected by the digital divide during the COVID-19 pandemic was accomplished. The network delivered continuous service to five target neighborhoods since 2022. The City's long-term broadband strategy is the municipal fiber network in partnership with Sprocket Networks which is now under construction and will provide a permanent, higher-speed solution. This long-term broadband construction strategy of the fiber network began in January 2025 with over 235,000 feet of construction permitted to date, and residential service is expected to be available in the second half of 2027.

Monthly unique users have declined nearly 60% from a peak of approximately 5,600 in late 2023 to 2,341 in April 2026. . This decline reflects the increasing availability of affordable commercial broadband options and the changing needs of the community as the post pandemic-era demand for emergency connectivity has subsided. A visualization of the usage trend is provided below.

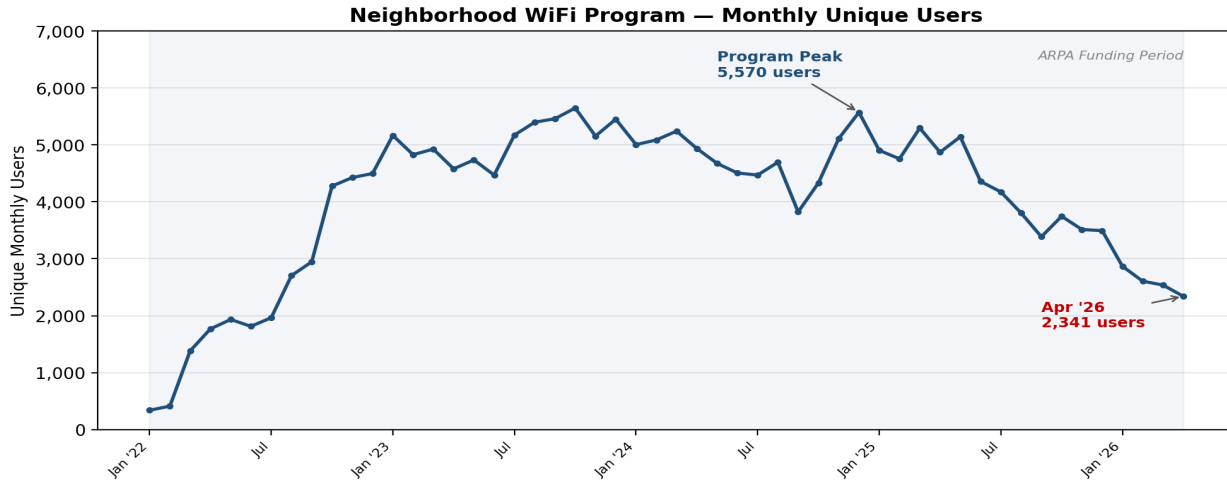


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Federal Funding Expiration. The Neighborhood WiFi Program funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), requires all funds to be fully expended by December 31, 2026. Given that the program's objectives have been met and usage is declining, and the long-term broadband initiative is underway, staff does not recommend identifying alternative funding to sustain the program beyond the ARPA deadline.

Recurring Operational Costs:

The current recurring operational cost for the Neighborhood WiFi Program is approximately \$25,092 per month (\$301,104 annually) for internet circuit connectivity. Two additional cost components consisting of \$180,000 annually for contractor support through ePlus and \$47,000 annually for Meraki licensing have been paid in advance and will not be renewed. The remaining internet circuit costs represent the ongoing expense that would need to be absorbed or reallocated if the program were to continue beyond the ARPA funding period.

Next Steps:

In the coming months, staff will work with the affected neighborhoods to communicate the program's sunset timeline and coordinate with Sprocket Networks on the transition to the forthcoming fiber-based broadband service. The program's remaining ARPA funds will continue to be managed in compliance with U.S. Treasury guidelines through the December 31, 2026 expenditure deadline.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Kevin Gunn at x2015 or kevin.gunn@fortworthtexas.gov.

**Jesus "Jay" Chapa
City Manager**