



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

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Agenda Item Number: 2.

Agenda Date: 10/23/2018

In Control: Innovation and Technology Committee

DEPARTMENT: Office of Innovation

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Jose De La Cruz, Chief Innovation Officer

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City-wide

SUBJECT: Briefing on San Antonio Housing Authority digital inclusion initiatives.

SUMMARY:

Jo Ana Alvarado, SAHA's Director of Innovative Technology, will provide a briefing on the organization's long-term, innovative strategy to increase internet connectivity for low-income residents using solar mesh technology. The presentation will include an update on SAHA's recent award of \$100,000 from the Mozilla Smart Community Networks challenge, their plans in utilizing their award to provide broadband access to Cassiano Homes, the challenges that need to be addressed, and overall concepts to provide broadband access to all SAHA communities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

San Antonio ranks as the 15th worst connected city in the United States out of cities with 100,000 or more households. The lack of connectivity has a jarring impact on low-income residents, as it creates an impediment to economic and social mobility. Some 79% of applicants utilize online resources to apply for a job, and 8 in 10 middle-skill jobs requiring digital literacy. The lack of internet access impacts earning potential and can make entering the workforce difficult. Additionally, low-income students are unable to access the internet which puts them at a disadvantage academically. Given the proliferation of new technological tools in the classroom and workforce, greater partnerships and innovative solutions to expanding broadband access are necessary to help expand economic growth and improve the quality of life for low-income San Antonioans.

ISSUE:

To help residents in becoming self-sufficient, SAHA is taking a comprehensive approach to bridge the digital divide. Through its ConnectHome program, the agency offers digital literacy classes, broadband access, as well as computer devices. Recently, SAHA has identified solar mesh technology as an affordable and sustainable

strategy in expanding broadband access to low-income residents. By winning a \$100,000 award from the Mozilla Smart Community Networks Challenge, the agency has set its sights on expanding coverage for the Cassiano Homes development. This includes broadband sharing between schools, cities, counties and other local government entities. As SAHA continues to look for outside resources, the agency would also like to determine how its strategies align with both committee and city goals to build digital equity.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for briefing purposes only.