



**City of Seattle**  
Office of the Mayor

## News

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### **Mayor and UW president announce high-speed fiber broadband partnership**

*Project could extend fast fiber to businesses and homes near UW facilities*

SEATTLE – Mayor Mike McGinn and University of Washington President Michael Young today announced a partnership to solicit private proposals to provide high-speed fiber service to communities surrounding the UW campus. For the first time, Seattle will offer to lease access to its unused “dark fiber” to allow private companies to build broadband networks with speeds up to 100 times faster than is currently available.

They were joined by Ed Lazowska, UW Bill & Melinda Gates Chair in Computer Science & Engineering, and Louise Little of the Greater University Chamber of Commerce in inviting Internet service providers to take part in Gig.U, a new national initiative to spur innovation and economic growth by bringing high-speed fiber to neighborhoods and business districts near 37 universities across the country. UW is a partner in the University Community Next Generation Innovation Project, Gig.U for short.

“The City of Seattle has over 500 miles of unused fiber optic cable. It’s time to fire it up to help our local businesses and creative people innovate,” said McGinn. “Our partnership with UW can allow us to leverage our bandwidth to expand Seattle’s ability to compete in the global economy. By offering to lease the dark fiber, we can also negotiate with companies for better service to nearby neighborhoods who have poor quality service right now.”

“Ultra-high-speed networks drive economic growth and encourage the next-generation of innovation,” said University of Washington President Michael Young. “These networks can spur discoveries that address society’s critical needs, such as healthcare and education. The University of Washington’s partnership with the City of Seattle will accelerate these networks and stimulate businesses, from the University District to South Lake Union, as well as to other parts of Seattle. We are confident that our state will benefit from these new ultra-high-speed networks, and the discoveries that follow.”

The partnership, announced at the University of Washington Medical Center in South Lake Union – a neighborhood that could benefit from the Gig.U project – is kicking off with a national Request for Information (RFI) from service providers and others interested in tapping the City’s

unused high-speed fiber. Providers could lease the fiber from the City, an option that the City has never previously offered. The deadline for responses to the Gig.U RFI is December 2. Based on the response, the City and UW will follow-up with targeted requests for proposals.

Gig.U can allow the City and University to develop a concentrated zone of fiber optic connectivity to act as a platform for innovation in nearby neighborhoods such as the University District, Eastlake, Cascade, and improve service to homes and businesses in South Lake Union. By leasing City fiber, private providers could connect service to residents in those locations. The leases could help the City recover the costs of installing the fiber.

Gig.U is intended to attract service providers who will have greater incentive to invest in areas surrounding universities where demand for fast broadband is high. Fiber-optic cable has much higher bandwidth than most of the existing infrastructure and can handle both extremely high download and upload speeds. While installing all new cables from scratch is expensive and beyond the reach of most service providers, this partnership aims to leverage investment by attracting providers to tap into the City's existing fiber network, which spans more than 500 miles.

"We're inviting companies to come to us with proposals to partner with the City and with the University to improve broadband," added McGinn. "With the added incentive of leasing the City's dark fiber, we hope that providers big and small will see a good opportunity here to develop digital infrastructure."

The University is already wired with high-speed fiber, but building connections to residences and businesses nearby would extend it to off-campus projects. Currently, many neighborhoods are limited by copper phone lines and coaxial cable designed to carry telephone and television signals, which offer only a fraction of the bandwidth needed by today's cutting-edge applications.

The City recently expanded high-speed broadband in Pioneer Square, the city's oldest neighborhood, which is now a hub for tech startups. The City leased empty conduit to service providers, allowing them to pull high-speed fiber through the conduit to serve neighboring buildings and businesses.

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