

“Explain the importance of high speed broadband access to town economic and community development.”

I live in southern Brown County, in the Town of Morrison. For me to explain the importance of high speed broadband access to community development will be no comparison to someone living in a much larger city. My community is a farming community. Businesses are not generally popping up in the hamlets of Wayside, Lark, and Morrison. However, high speed broadband can impact rural communities.

Being able to connect to the internet is crucial for many rural Americans. It allows them to buy goods and services that may not be available locally, market their own goods and services to a much larger area, connect remotely with health services, and communicate.

Growing up in a rural community, especially one with so much natural beauty, is a privilege I can attest to. In my town, where high speed internet is limited, it hasn't changed the generations of family that want to stay here. There are days when we have faster service than others, and some of us have learned to adapt. Maybe we finish the project we're working on at school and check emails later. Because we have okay service, it's a liveable future. I feel for the remote communities where they don't have any service. I believe those communities will die. Young people will move away. Many jobs are able to work from home and not pay the overhead of housing workers in big buildings. That will not be possible in those areas. My mom serves as a town supervisor in the town of Morrison, she explained how much harder her job would be if she didn't have high speed internet to perform different aspects of the job. She works full-time as a salon owner and is able to perform tasks for town between appointments, without that opportunity, it would be hard to juggle both jobs.

Studies have found that broadband access led to new businesses in rural areas.

Furthermore, higher levels of broadband are associated with increased median household incomes and lower unemployment levels for rural areas. In addition, broadband has increased levels of civic engagement. Rural citizens are typically more engaged in their communities than urban counterparts. They typically vote more often, are more likely to volunteer, exchange favors with neighbors, and work with community members to fix a local problem. Smaller towns have higher citizen participation because people are more aware of what is going on in their local community due to broadband access. Studies show that communities with high percentages of rural residents who have broadband access showed high levels of civic activity. This is important to keep a town running.

High speed internet does more than just attract civic engagement. It breaks down the barriers of distance and time. Broadband is very beneficial to rural communities. Rural businesses are able to expand their market reach using high speed broadband. It also brings direct access to education and health care for rural residents who are otherwise forced to travel long distances for college courses and medical treatment. High speed broadband is also beneficial to farmers, allowing them to access vital information such as crop prices, weather forecasts, and marketing opportunities.

By developing broadband, rural communities can keep pace with the global economy and prepare citizens for participation and competition in the modern world.

Bibliography

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