



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON
ROAD TO RECOVERY PLAN
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 6, 2024

CONTACT

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON ANNOUNCES EXTENSION OF FREE WIFI ACCESS AT PARKS AND SCHOOLS ACROSS THE CITY

Mayor Johnson is closing the digital equity divide by ensuring that Park residents and CPS families have access to high-quality wi-fi at no cost.

CHICAGO – Today, Mayor Brandon Johnson announced the extension of Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) Chicago Connected program and the Chicago Park District's Citywide Broadband and Digital Equity Initiative. Both programs are focused on extending free Internet access to disinvested communities, serving more than 40,000 CPS students and 60 parks across the South and West sides of the city.

"In the 21st century, Internet access cannot be a luxury only available to a few. Access to high-quality broadband is vital for residents in finding and securing employment, connecting with friends and family, and living fuller lives," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "Similarly, students in Chicago Public Schools cannot thrive if they do not have access to the Internet at home. This is an issue of equity, fairness and justice, and I am proud that we are expanding free wi-fi to the communities that need it most."

Chicago Park District's Broadband and Digital Equity Initiative

To increase vital Park resources and expand access and connectivity in areas that are wi-fi deficient, the Chicago Park District launched the Citywide Broadband and Digital Equity Initiative to implement public wi-fi at 60 parks in South and West side neighborhoods. The new infrastructure makes free broadband access available to Park patrons and extends service beyond the perimeter of a park to the immediate community with antenna signals reaching 100-200 yards.

"It is critical that Park families have access to wi-fi and connectivity not just in the parks but in the nearby community. This is why we are so excited to bring these vital investments to families and communities in need," said **Chicago Park District General Superintendent and CEO Rosa Escareño**. "Parks are more than places to recreate, they

are community hubs where residents seek opportunities that improve their quality of life: connecting to friends, applying for a job, and getting homework done. Access to free, public wi-fi furthers that goal by eliminating challenges like isolation as well as educational and economic barriers the digital divide can often contribute to and helps foster connections that are vital to strengthening communities.”

In addition to enhancing the patron experience and making parks even more attractive and functional destinations, wi-fi provides access to educational resources, and employment opportunities, and connects residents to the broader community and world around them. Each park will also be equipped with new digital screens and kiosks that will serve as a portal for information related to parks and other public resources.

The Park District is currently in the first phase of installation, having completed indoor broadband improvements at 27 of 60 park fieldhouses. Beginning in the fall of this year, the District will execute the second phase of the project, focused on outdoor areas of the parks. The third and final phase, scheduled to begin in winter 2025, will refresh existing wi-fi connectivity at 100 additional park locations.

Park locations were selected based on a number of factors, including the prioritization of parks in South and West side communities with limited broadband access and locations with larger fieldhouses and more robust program offerings. In addition, 19 locations are located within 1.5 miles of the [Mayor’s Office of Community Safety Priority Blocks Groups](#).

The parks that will receive wi-fi improvements can be found at the bottom of this release.

Chicago Public Schools’ Chicago Connected

CPS is committed to ensuring that all students receive high-quality digital learning as part of their educational experience. This includes reliable access to wi-fi at school and at home. In line with this commitment, CPS is extending Chicago Connected, the program that provides free, high-speed Internet to thousands of CPS families for the past four years.

“We’re grateful for the generous support from Mayor Johnson and our many partners that is allowing our District to continue providing this critical resource to those families currently enrolled in Chicago Connected as well as our students in temporary living situations,” said **CPS CEO Pedro Martinez**. “This is what it looks like to break down barriers to education for those most in need. Internet service supports learning and parents’ connection to our schools’ faculty and leaders, paving the way for our students and families to succeed.”

This initiative was originally set to expire later this summer, but thanks to a \$4 million grant from Mayor Johnson's Road to Recovery plan, along with cooperation from several business, community and philanthropic partners, free, high-speed Internet service will continue to be available to CPS families enrolled in Chicago Connected through June 30, 2025. The grant, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, is awarded under the City’s Neighborhood Connectivity Program, which is part of a broader effort by the Johnson Administration to increase broadband affordability and accessibility in Chicago communities with the lowest Internet connections.

Similarly, Chicago Connected — a first-of-its-kind program — is part of the City’s overall effort to close the digital divide that disproportionately impacts low-income students. It is one of the largest efforts by any city in the country to provide equitable Internet access to these students and their families.

Since its launch in the summer of 2020, 40,000 CPS families have enrolled in Chicago Connected, and Internet speeds have been doubled to meet their growing needs. Nearly one in three of these families reported having no access to the internet prior to this groundbreaking opportunity.

The one-year extension of Chicago Connected will apply to all families who are already enrolled in the program. These families will automatically have their free Internet access extended through June 30, 2025. In addition, students in temporary living situations (STLS), including our new arrival families, may apply for enrollment in Chicago Connected through their schools.

The extension of Chicago Connected is an important step in the District’s mission to improve equity across all aspects of the student experience, including digital learning.

Please see a list of the parks that will receive Wi-Fi upgrades below:

PARK	ADDRESS
Abbott Park	31 E. 95th St.
Altgeld	515 S. Washtenaw Ave.
Austin Town Hall	5610 W. Lake St. Chicago, IL 60644
Columbus	500 S. Central Ave. Chicago, IL 60644
Davis Square Park	4430 S. Marshfield Ave. Chicago, IL 60609
Douglas Park	1401 S. Sacramento Dr. Chicago, IL 60623
Euclid Park	9800 S. Parnell Ave. Chicago, IL 60628
Fernwood Park	10436 S. Wallace St. Chicago, IL 60628
Fuller	331 W. 45th St.
Garfield	100 N. Central Park Dr.
Gately	10201 S. Cottage Grove Chicago, IL 60628
Hamilton Park	513 W. 72nd St. Chicago, IL 60621
Homan Square Park	3559 W. Arthington Chicago, IL 60624
Humboldt Park	1440 N. Humboldt Boulevard Chicago, IL 60622
John Clark	4615 W. Jackson Blvd. Chicago, IL 60644
Kennicott	4434 S. Lake Park Ave. Chicago, IL 60653
Lafollette	1333 N. Laramie Ave. Chicago, IL 60651
Lindblom Park	6054 S. Damen Ave. Chicago, IL 60636
Mandrake Park	3858 S. Cottage Grove Chicago, IL 60653
Marquette	6743 S. Kedzie Ave.
Mckinley	2210 W. Pershing Rd.

Moore	5085 W. Adams Chicago, IL 60644
Moran Park	5727 S. Racine Ave. Chicago, IL 60621
Ogden Park	6500 S. Racine Ave. Chicago, IL 60636
Robichaux Park	9247 S. Eggleston Ave. Chicago, IL 60620
Sherman Park	1301 W. 52nd St. Chicago, IL 60609
Sherwood Park	5701 S. Shields Ave. Chicago, IL 60621
South Shore Park	7059 S. South Shore Dr. Chicago, IL 60649
Washington	5531 S. King Drive.
West Chatham	8223 S. Princeton Ave.
Ada	11250 S. Ada St.
Amundsen	6200 W. Bloomingdale Ave.
Archer	4901 S. Kilbourn Ave.
Avalon	1215 E. 83rd St.
Bessemer Park	8930 S. Muskegon Ave. Chicago, IL 60617
Brainerd Park	1246 W. 92nd St. Chicago, IL 60620
Carver	939 E. 132nd St.
Cooper Park	11712 S. Ada Street Chicago, IL 60643
Cornell Square Park	1809 W. 50th St. Chicago, IL 60609
Edward White Park	1120 W. 122nd St. Chicago, IL 60643
Frank Foster Park	1440 W. 84th St. Chicago, IL 60620
Franklin Park	4320 W. 15th St. Chicago, IL 60623
Galewood	5729 W. Bloomingdale Ave. Chicago, IL 60639
Grand Crossing	7655 S. Ingleside Ave.
Harriet Harris Park	6200 S. Drexel Ave. Chicago, IL 60637
Jackie Robinson Park	10540 S. Morgan St. Chicago, IL 60643
Jackson	6401 S. Stony Island Ave.
Marquette	6743 S. Kedzie Ave.
Meyering	7140 S. Martin Luther King Dr
Martin Luther King	7600 S. Racine Ave.
Nash Community Center	1833 E. 71st Chicago, IL 60649
Oakdale Park	965 W. 95th St. Chicago, IL 60643
Palmer Park	201 E. 111th St. Chicago, IL 60628
Rainbow Beach	3111 East 77th St. Chicago, IL 60649
Russell Square Park	3045 E. 83rd St. Chicago, IL 60617
Samuel Ellis Park	3520 S. Cottage Grove Ave. Chicago, IL 60653
Simons	1640 N. Drake Ave. Chicago, IL 60647
Taylor Park	39 W. 47th St. Chicago, IL 60609
Tuley	501 E. 90th Place
West Pullman Park	401 W. 123rd St. Chicago, IL 60628

###