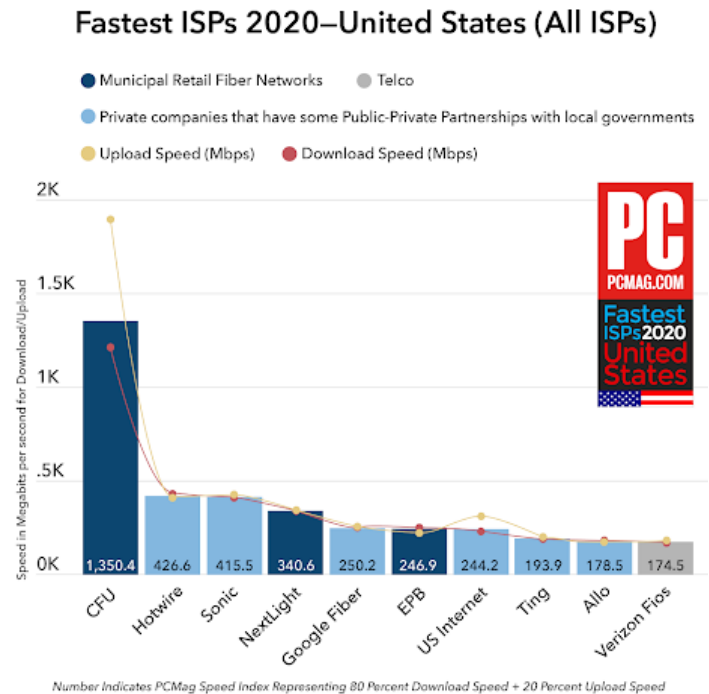# SNAPSHOTS OF MUNICIPAL BROADBAND
A much-needed part of America's digital ecosystem.

Municipal networks in the United States have proven that when dollars are invested in publicly owned information infrastructure, they often return value back to the community several times over. These networks are directly accountable to the community and have proved themselves for more than 20 years in some cases, [bringing lower prices to households](#) than the large private providers. Municipal networks and partnerships account for 9 of the top 10 fastest broadband networks in the nation.

Fastest ISPs 2020–United States (All ISPs)

- Municipal Retail Fiber Networks
- Telco
- Private companies that have some Public-Private Partnerships with local governments
- Upload Speed (Mbps)
- Download Speed (Mbps)

CFU 1,350.4 · Hotwire 426.6 · Sonic 415.5 · NextLight 340.6 · Google Fiber 250.2 · EPB 246.9 · US Internet 244.2 · Ting 193.9 · Allo 178.5 · Verizon Fios 174.5

Number Indicates PCMag Speed Index Representing 80 Percent Download Speed + 20 Percent Upload Speed

Municipal Network Success Stories

Bristol, Tennessee: Offering residential fiber service since 2005, the network [saves city electric customers $6 million a year](#) thanks to the installation of smart grid hardware and services.

Conway, Arkansas: Conway has been offering locally accountable broadband service for 25 years, with more than 50% of businesses and 75% of city households signing on. Despite a sharp upswing in usage with the onset of the pandemic, Conway's forward-thinking [approach to reinvestment](#) meant no interruptions in service.

Chattanooga, Tennessee: The municipal broadband utility EPB Fiber [has returned almost $2.7 billion](#) on an original investment of $220 million over the last ten years. It launched an historic program to connect 17,000 households of students facing income challenges to free high-quality Internet access for ten years using city-owned fiber. [It earns top marks from Consumer Reports](#) in user satisfaction.

East Central Vermont Fiber: Cooperation between 31 member towns has seen more than 1,000 miles of fiber laid in pursuit of bringing future-proof connectivity [to thousands of households with poor or no connectivity options today](#). A true grassroots effort, EC Fiber connects schools in 22 towns and provides service where the market has refused to go.

Fairlawn, Ohio: FairlawnGig has [brought economic development](#) and real estate value since launching in 2017. Dozens of businesses have stated that the city broadband network was either the reason they moved to Fairlawn or the reason they have been competitive. One of the region's Chief Economic Officers credits FairlawnGig with driving development in a local business park with 800 jobs and $85 million in promised investment.

Longmont, Colorado: [Named the fastest broadband network in the country](#) in 2018, Longmont's NextLight network has 58% of residents signed up despite competition from Comcast and Lumen.

Reedsburg, Wisconsin: Reedsburg began connecting its public schools and utility substations all the way back in 1998, but almost immediately businesses began asking to join. Reedsburg brought gigabit Internet access to residents (for just $45/month), and [has begun expanding to surrounding communities](#) that have been asking for service.

Utah's UTOPIA cities: 15 cities have signed on with this publicly owned and operated open access network, which despite restrictive state laws, has succeeded in bringing world-class speeds and robust competition to more than 100,000 homes and businesses across the state. UTOPIA struggled for many years but has righted the ship, is expanding to a waiting list of communities excited for the service, and [earns high marks from locals for its value and service.](#)

Wilson, North Carolina: The first gigabit community in the state thanks to its citywide fiber network, Wilson has continued to bring value to residents while also serving as a pioneer. The network now helps run fiber training classes at the local community college, offers $10/month, 40 Mbps symmetrical Internet access connections to public housing households, developed an [innovative pay-ahead option](#) for households with poor credit, connects the biggest employers in the community, [created the Gig East Exchange](#), and has lured many companies to town to take advantage of the network.

Opponents of Municipal Broadband [Mostly Get It Wrong](#)

The handful of "failed" municipal networks commonly trotted out by ideological opponents demonstrates a lack of understanding and a disregard of important context. In Provo, Utah, it was the cable lobby itself that pushed through a state law that was [not only anti-competitive but forced a riskier wholesale model onto the network,](#) causing the financial instability that led to its struggle.

Mooresville and Davidson, North Carolina were forced to contend with higher-than-expected costs left behind by a bankrupt private cable system which had seen little investment in decades, and yet [still managed to bring faster speeds and more savings](#) to residents by offering affordable service tiers that forced competitors to lower prices.

Burlington, Vermont's municipal network problems came from well-documented mismanagement at the city level which was indeed a problem, though the network continues to serve the community. The track record of municipal networks has some failures, but claims about many failures inevitably recycle the same few networks out of more than [600 tracked by ILSR.](#)

Contrast this with the track record of private monopoly ISPs. [Frontier spent years disinvesting in rural and low-income areas](#) in Minnesota, West Virginia, and Ohio, eventually leaving hundreds of thousands of households hanging while positioning itself for bankruptcy. The company [was also sued by the FTC](#) for misrepresenting its speeds and overcharging subscribers. It isn't just the companies that went bankrupt — consider the $283 million AT&T took from the FCC just for Mississippi while [not actually meeting local needs](#), its [redlining of Cleveland](#), or [overcharging of Washington D.C.](#)