



Kansas City Regional Digital Equity Action Strategy



What does broadband infrastructure and digital services mean for your community?





What does broadband infrastructure and digital services mean for your community?

Economic development?

- Small business start-up
- Attract/retain workforce
- Ensure students are able to learn

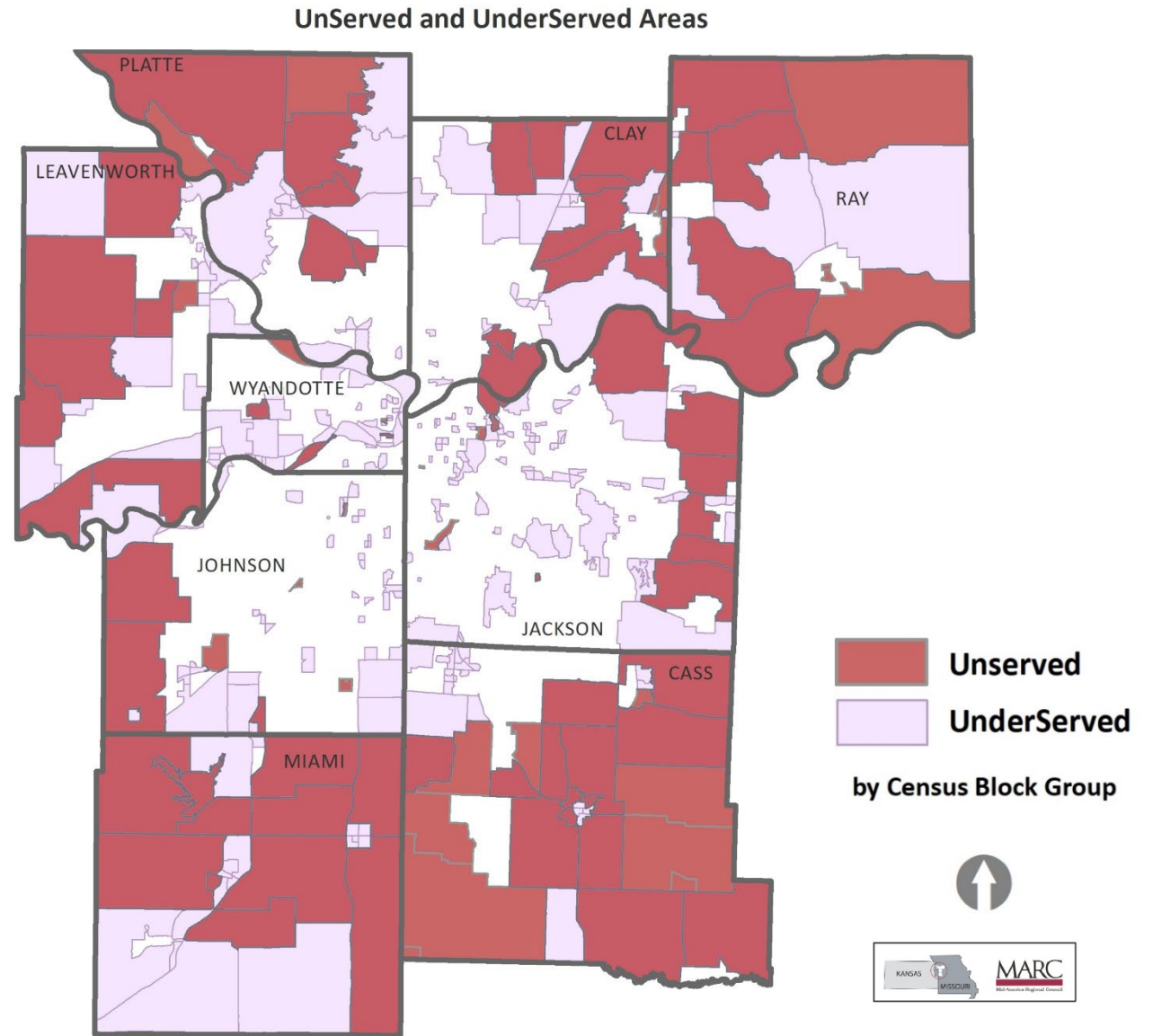
Equity?

- All children and adults have access

Broadband Infrastructure

Unserved – Speeds
Less than 25 Mbps / 3 Mbps

Underserved – Speeds
Less than 100 Mbps / 20 Mbps



Vision

Every resident in the region has access to the following:

- Broadband internet
- Equipment
- Skills training



Purpose

- Increase awareness for the need for quality, affordable internet services, devices and digital skills.
- Support applications from our region for federal digital equity funds.



Partnerships and Support

- MARC, KC Rising and the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City
- The Kansas City Regional COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund
- An advisory group provided guidance and feedback

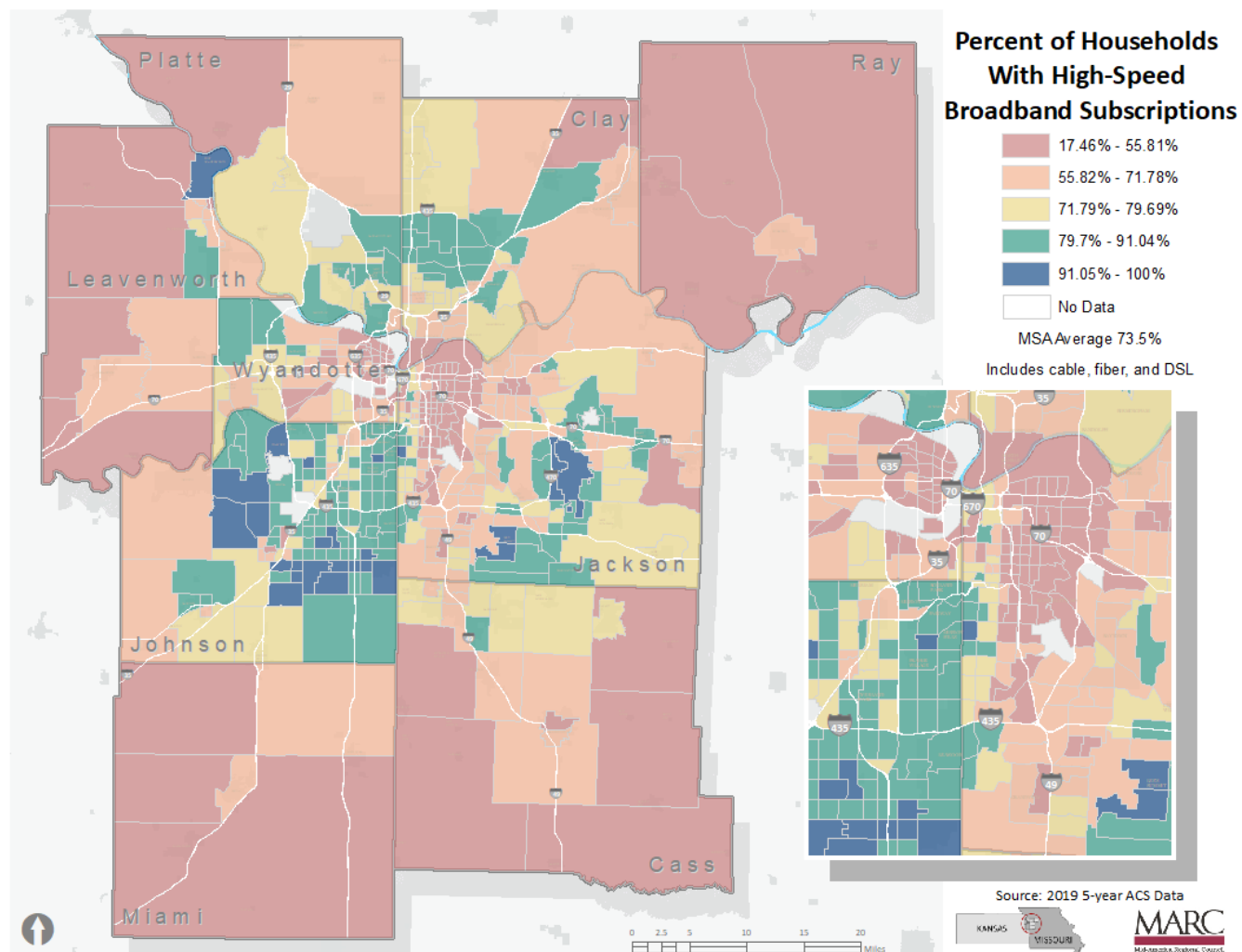


Importance of Addressing the Digital Divide

We use the internet to:

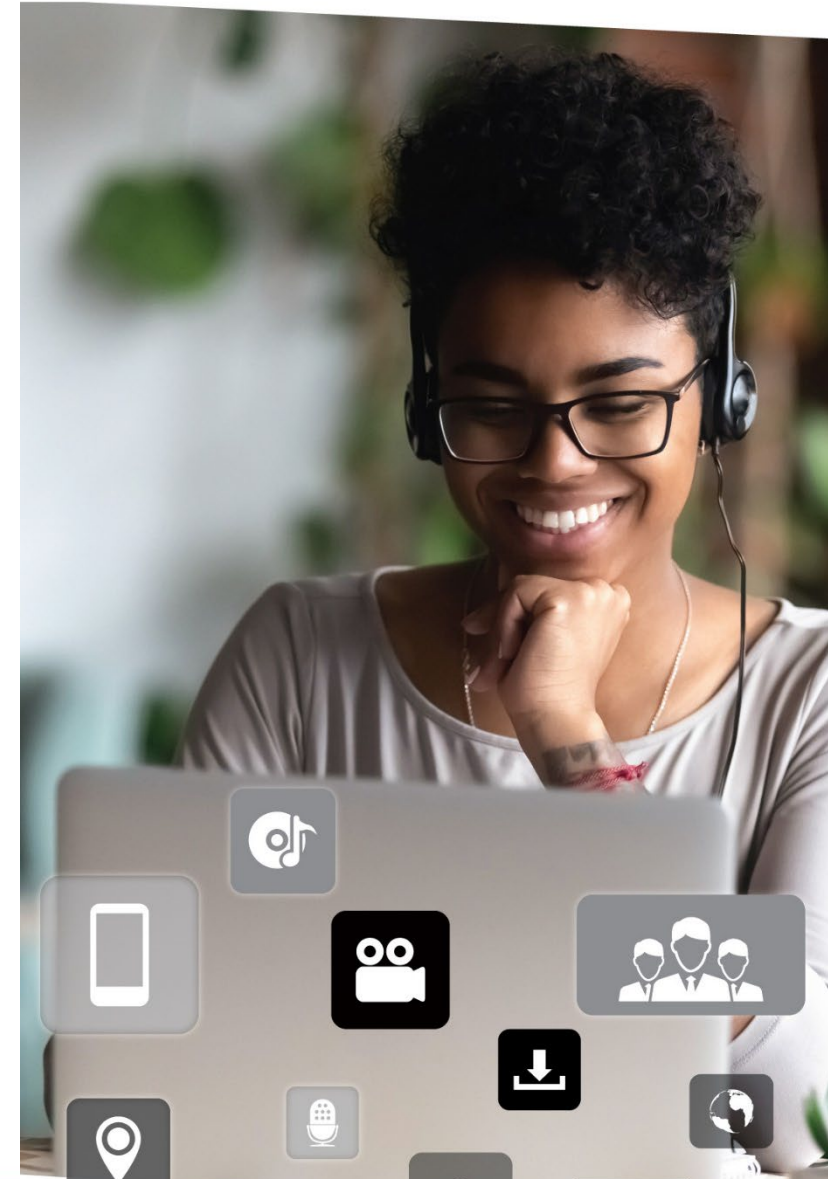
- Apply for a job, business license
- Seek health care advice
- Schedule vaccinations
- Pay rent
- Engage in learning

**92% of all advertised jobs
require some digital skills**



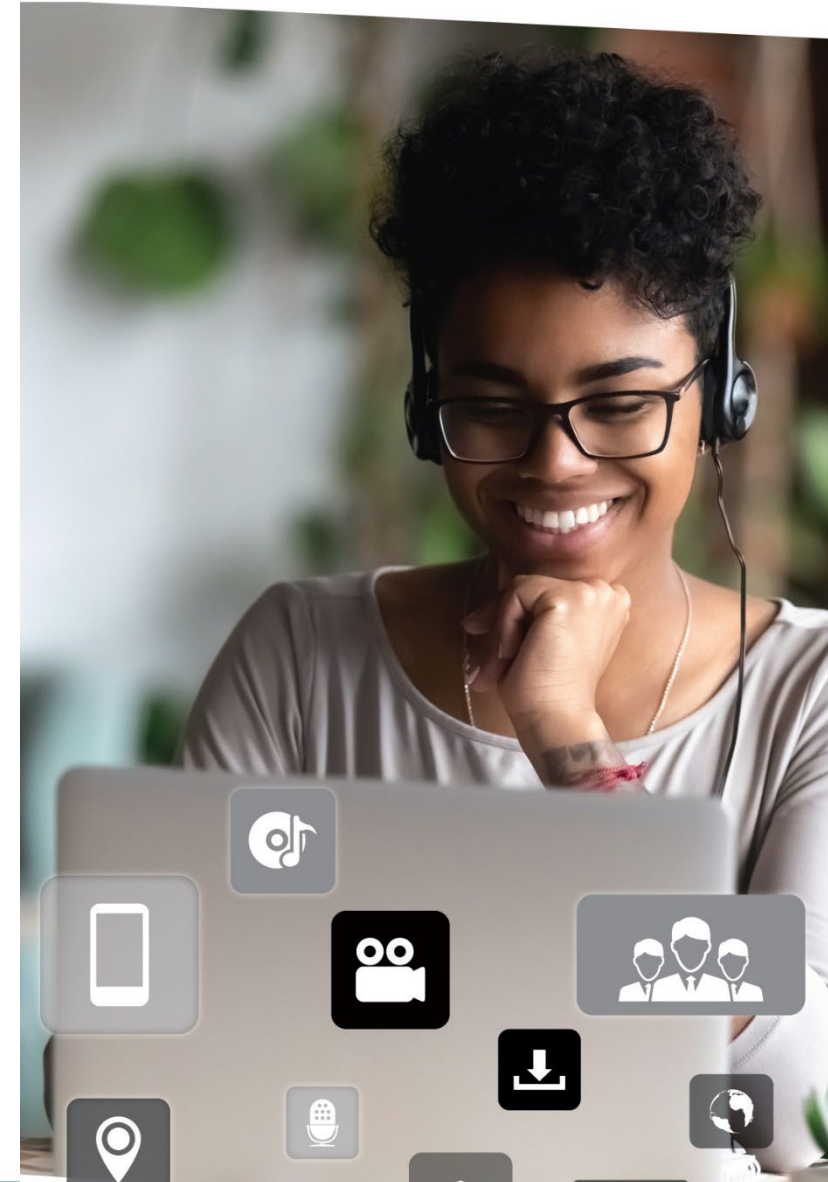
Community Engagement

- **Interviews:** Local government, school and library officials
- **Information Gathering:** Target populations
- **Virtual workshops:** Five sessions with over 100 participants
- **Community workshops:** Seven in-person gatherings



Community Engagement

- **Surveys:** English and Spanish; toll-free number
- **Public Assistance:** Community organizations offered assistance with connections, devices and training
- **ISP Providers Meetings**
- **Listening Tours:** Supported meetings for state broadband offices



Barriers Limiting Digital Access and Adoption

- Lack of service
- Redlining of services
- Limited provider options at higher costs
- Lack of English proficiency
- Lack of skills
- Role of government or private sector?
- Inadequate broadband infrastructure



Opportunities for Digital Access and Adoption

- **Libraries** offer public access computers and public Wi-Fi, computers and hotspots on loan; training and technical support services.
- **Schools** offered devices and connectivity during COVID-19, but continuing to do so is impacted by limited funding.
- **33 Internet Service Providers** - yet over 85,000 households lack an internet subscription or **one of every nine households in the 9-county metro area.**

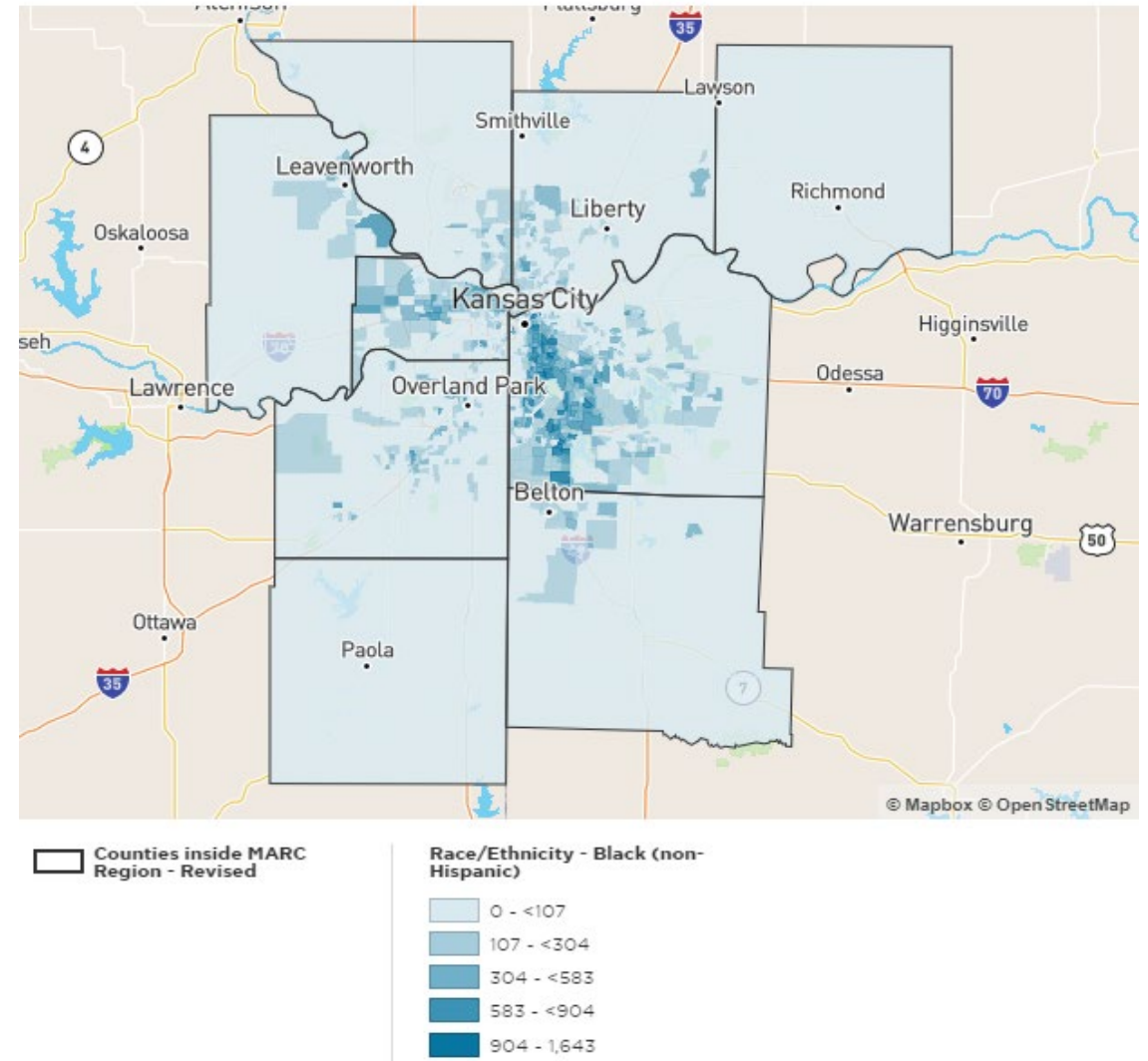


Special Populations

Looked at numbers, locations and specific digital needs of:

- Veterans
- Older adults
- Disabled persons
- Hispanic persons
- Black persons
- Low-income households
- Families with young children
- Persons with Limited English Proficiency

Black (non-Hispanic) Population



Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2017-2021

Recommendations for Local Governments

- **Recognize that:**
 - Digital skills is an economic development imperative
 - Digital access, adoption and skills are an equity issue
- **Support investment** in broadband infrastructure and affordable subscriptions
- **Consider partnerships** with ISP providers (public right-of-way, access to structures, public Wi-Fi)



Recommendations for Local Governments

- Promote **Affordable Connectivity Program** (federal low-cost)
- Expand **public Wi-Fi** locations
- Donate unwanted equipment to **PCs for People**
- Integrate **digital training** and technical support into local government human services and parks and recreation



Next Steps

- **Collect feedback**
- Encourage states to **incorporate regional findings** and recommendations into their plans
- Work with community stakeholders to **identify steps** and implement recommendations
- **Support collaborative grant applications** to the two states



Discussion

- The availability of broadband infrastructure is an important economic development objective. What do you think is most important to your jurisdiction to achieve economic prosperity?
- There are many possible ways that cities and counties could support broadband infrastructure. What steps do you think are most appropriate for you to consider?
- What steps might be appropriate for your community to take, working with community partners, to help your residents with no internet or devices or in need of skills training?

