



CORNING

City of Fairlawn, Ohio

Bringing community broadband home

The Challenge

The City of Fairlawn, Ohio, is a picturesque suburb of Akron with an easy commute to Cleveland. With the city's 7,500 residents paying the lowest property tax bills in Summit County, the community should be ideally positioned to thrive. But in our increasingly connected world, being close to two of the five largest cities in the state isn't enough to entice young people and businesses to choose a Fairlawn ZIP code.

This reality became clear when a new hospital set its sights on Fairlawn and found the existing communications infrastructure to be inadequate for operations. Plus, the mayor's overseas trade show missions sparked the interest of many businesses drawn to Fairlawn's great land, water, and talent – interest that fizzled time and again when business owners realized that the available bandwidth fell short. These losses drove the point home: to appeal to new business and keep existing enterprises local, the city needed an upgrade.

The upgrade needed to be all-encompassing – one that could satisfy the requirements of local businesses *and* the people who live in Fairlawn. Ernie Staten, the city's deputy service director, leads the department responsible for the city's infrastructure, but at home he struggled to maintain viable internet access. Like everyone else in Fairlawn, his connectivity couldn't support both him working and his children playing online simultaneously. Together with the missed hospital opportunity and failed trade shows, stories like Staten's inspired the mayor and other city leaders to seek out an achievable solution.

The Solution

With progress come challenges, and the successful community broadband story tends to have a hero who taps into available resources for help. Staten's job for the city dovetailed nicely with the prospect of a city-run broadband utility – which was certainly a bonus – but Staten earned his superhero cape for educating himself, then the city's leadership on the best path forward for Fairlawn: a fiber network.

“Through my research on network infrastructure, I discovered that an investment in fiber could lead to profit for the community,” Staten said. “In addition to the revenue from sign-ups, this network’s gigabit connection would attract new businesses and their employees to Fairlawn, driving economic development for the city.”

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Ernie Staten, Fairlawn deputy service director

Looking beyond short-term costs and instead seeing the long-term value of a fiber infrastructure alleviated any initial concerns about the network upgrade. From there, Staten put together a blue ribbon committee of community members to bring broadband connectivity to life in Fairlawn. Together, they entered what became a two-year process of compiling and putting out an RFP for the project.

When the proposals came in, Corning’s FlexNAP™ system stood out. The technology enables installers to “tap into” fiber optic cabling running through the city, connecting homes and businesses in a process that’s similar to plugging a lamp cord into an electrical outlet. The approach is much easier and more cost-effective than the traditional method of cutting into the fiber optic cable and fusion splicing fibers at every connection point.

The Impact

Fairlawn’s gigabit network was installed in just 12 months and already has an impressive utility take rate of 40 percent. City leaders immediately seized on the new infrastructure to deliver what was once just a dream for community members: reliable Wi-Fi everywhere in Fairlawn, including 3,000 homes, 300 multidwelling units, and 800 businesses.

“Our new network is transforming the outlook for our community in general, and for my hotel in particular, it’s a game changer,” said Rennick Andreoli, owner of the Hilton Akron/Fairlawn. “Not only are we able to elevate the connectivity we offer to guests, now our day-to-day hospitality operations are more efficient. I call it a win/win.”

For more information about the gigabit fiber project in Fairlawn, visit www.fairlawngig.net or contact 330-668-3300. To schedule a free feasibility study for your community, connect with Corning [online](#) or by calling customer care at 828-901-5000, toll free in the United States at 800-743-2675.



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