



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

News Release

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Montgomery County and Main Street Connect Launch Initiative Aimed at Closing the Digital Divide for Low-Income and Special Needs Residents of Main Street Apartments in Rockville

[Montgomery County](#) and nonprofit [Main Street Connect](#) today announced a joint initiative that will offer low-income and special needs residents of the newly opened Main Street Apartments in Rockville access to free, high-speed home internet.

Founded in 2017 by Jillian and Scott Copeland, Main Street Connect was inspired by the Copelands' son, Nicolas, who has developmental disabilities. Like many parents with similar situations, the Copelands' search for long-term housing for Nicolas produced very few options in which he could thrive. Hoping to alleviate similar situations for other families, the Copelands started Main Street Connect with a mission to create affordable and inclusive housing that offers residents—of all abilities—the opportunity for dynamic opportunities and community engagement.

“Affordable access to the internet is crucial and the need for a safe and reliable connection is more important than it has ever been,” said Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich. “With the help of our partners, we are excited to bring robust internet connectivity and home Wi-Fi to eligible residents of Main Street Apartments at absolutely no cost. We believe that the internet should be accessible for everyone and we are happy to be working with Main Street Connect to offer it to their residents, many of whom depend on the internet to work, learn and grow.”

The project brings together Montgomery County and Main Street Connect with technology leaders [Plume](#) and [Positron Access Solutions](#). Montgomery County will be providing symmetrical speeds of 50 Mbps+ (upload and download), as well as internet bandwidth to support Wi-Fi service in all public areas in the building. Plume, a leading smart home experience company, will provide an enhanced home Wi-Fi offering to residents free of charge. That service includes strong, consistent Wi-Fi coverage, online security, parental and access controls and 24/7 customer service. Positron, a leading enabler of high-speed internet services over in-building coax or telephone pairs, is providing the broadband access equipment necessary for residents to connect to Montgomery County's free internet.

The pilot project, which will impact 60 to 70 units in the building, aims to address digital equity within the Main Street Apartments community. Digital equity means everyone—no matter their socioeconomic background—has equal access to the technology necessary to participate in all aspects of society. For low-income households especially, access to the internet can be a burden when added to the costs of rent, childcare, food and other necessary expenses.

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“Main Street Connect was created on the founding principles of affordability, inclusivity and sustainability,” said Jillian Copeland. “This project combines these principles with the best technology on the market to provide support, dynamic programming and an affordable place to live, belong and thrive.”

Libby Wolfensperger, VP of People at Plume, said: “Safe, reliable home Wi-Fi is essential. Plume is focused on improving the connected home experience for everyone. We are honored to offer our smart home system to the residents of Main Street and take a small step toward digital equity in the U.S.”

Pierre Trudeau, president and CTO of Positron Access, said: “Our GAM access solution can provide broadband internet services of up to 1Gbps using the existing in-building coaxial or telephone wiring, thereby eliminating the need for additional construction and related costs associated with installing new fiber to every door. We are very pleased that the County was able to reuse the coax cabling to offer a fiber-like user experience to the tenants of Main Street Apartments, and we are very proud to be a part of this first Montgomery County digital equity initiative.”

Montgomery County’s Department of Technology Services is looking to learn from the pilot project and develop additional opportunities to expand the availability of no cost/low cost internet solutions in the near future.

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