



April 19, 2018

City of Gainesville
ATTN: Ms. Fran Boynton, Senior Buyer
200 E. University Ave.
Gainesville, FL 32601

**Re: Community Broadband Study/2018-66
Bid No. 36261872**

Dear Ms. Boynton:

Cox Communications noted with interest the publication of the above-referenced request for proposals, in which the City of Gainesville is seeking to commission a study to determine how we can make Gainesville the Most Connected City in America. Before the city spends scarce tax dollars on such a study for information easily obtainable for free from one or all local broadband providers, we invite the city to meet with us to clarify its goals, hear what Cox is already doing to meet those goals, and our suggestions on what the city can do, to make that goal a reality.

According to the ITN, the city is hoping to learn how to best connect every household and business in Gainesville. Please know they already are connected. The Cox network in Gainesville includes the following:

- 2,400 miles of infrastructure, more than 800 miles of which is fiber,
- internet packages starting at \$9.95 a month for K-12 families on reduced lunch,
- technological enhancements of \$21.8 million over the last 5 years, with plans to invest \$104 million more by 2020, and
- capacity to offer Gigabit speeds to homes and 10 Gigabit speeds to businesses.

In addition to the Cox fiber infrastructure, AT&T, GRU.com and others also have competitive commercial and residential offerings in Gainesville. In a presentation to the City Commission on Feb. 23, 2017, a GRU.com representative cited a 2009 study that found 99 percent of Gainesville businesses and residents have access to broadband from at least one provider. Gainesville is very well connected from an internet infrastructure standpoint.

The Cox network already provides advanced services to businesses and households. Cox has provided 10 Gigabit business services in Gainesville for many years. When attending the City Commission's Broadband Internet Subcommittee to learn how we can help the city meet its goals, we learned of the City's desire for ubiquitous access to residential Gigabit internet service. Cox is about to meet that goal: by the end of June 2018, every household in the City will be able choose a Gigabit-class broadband service. Gainesville residents have access to the most advanced network in the nation, and Cox will continue to spend millions each year improving and expanding service as demand dictates.

Though networks connecting every household and business in the city exist, we know that some residents choose, for a variety of reasons, not to connect to them. These households tend to be those already disadvantaged by other factors, such as poverty, and represent a true gap in connectivity we believe the city should address. We invite the city to partner in our efforts to increase broadband adoption through our Connect2Compete (C2C)

program for families with K-12 students on free or reduced lunch or who receive government assistance. There are currently hundreds of C2C households in Gainesville benefitting from this low-cost internet program, though we estimate many more families may qualify. Helping increase the number of C2C households would not only move the city toward Most Connected status, it likely would help move Gainesville off the list of cities with the highest income gaps.

One of our strongest, and most easily implemented, suggestions to make Gainesville the Most Connected City in America is for the city to identify an employee who is responsible and accountable for increasing broadband adoption by Gainesville residents and ensuring all residents, especially children, have access to the devices and training they need to succeed in the digital world. This would provide Gainesville with an advantage, as we are not aware of any other community that has such a full-time position. Working with Cox and other broadband providers, educational institutions, foundations, and private individuals, the position could focus on communities and neighborhoods with low adoption rates to get them connected to broadband service.

If the city is seeking to encourage new providers to come to Gainesville, our suggestion is that the city, and Gainesville Regional Utilities, look for ways to lower the burdens on building and operating broadband networks. For example, GRU could reduce the rates it charges for attaching to its poles and its commercial electric rates, both of which are very high compared to other municipalities. As those interested in local economic development have noted in many public forums, this is daunting to any business considering operating in Gainesville. It is especially true for an internet provider, which depends upon electricity to deliver its product to customers. These costs make it more challenging for new providers, whether wired or wireless, to justify building new networks in Gainesville.

Should the city choose to proceed with commissioning the study described in the ITN, Cox would be pleased to cooperate with the vendor to ensure that the study's conclusions fairly reflect the current state of broadband availability in Gainesville. In our view, however, the city's resources would be better spent identifying ways to leverage the existing networks located in the community to increase broadband adoption. If a study is needed, we recommend the city conduct an empirical assessment of the state of broadband in Gainesville and how to lower the cost barriers to new and existing broadband providers.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. As always, we stand ready to work with the city to make sure Gainesville continues to have best broadband service available anywhere in the U.S.

Very truly yours,



Kevin Monroe
Market Vice President
Cox Communications – Central Florida

cc: Hon. Lauren Poe, Mayor
Hon. Helen Warren, At-large
Hon. Harvey Budd, At-large
Hon. Charles Goston, District I
Hon. Harvey Ward, District II
Hon. David Arreola, District III
Hon. Adrian Hayes-Santos, District IV