

 English





# Pharr

## Pharr to Close the Digital Divide; Announces Launch of Citywide Broadband Internet Service Network




Today, after years of preliminary research, advocating for funding, and working with local families to test service enhancement outcomes through a pilot project, the City of Pharr announced the future launch of TEAMPHARR.NET; the city's fiber-optic cable broadband internet network service.

Pharr Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D. made the announcement during a press conference.  English ed the project via a historical video that highlighted the city's years' long efforts to enhance internet broadband connectivity throughout the community. [View the video here.](#)


“For too long, Pharr families have lacked access to one of the now basic and necessary utilities in life – Affordable, high-speed broadband Internet,” announced Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez, M.D during the press conference. “These days, the internet is our lifeline; It connects us to the everyday world, it keeps us teaching and learning through virtual means, and it gives us access to opportunities that are beyond our normal reach,” he continued. “As your city leaders, we have been working towards a viable solution and are pleased to finally announce that we will soon be launching TEAMPHARR.NET,” added Hernandez.



The project, TEAMPHARR.NET, will install 2.1 million feet, or 398 miles of fiber-optic cable to 24  English business accounts. The network will provide an internet speed of 1 gigabyte – fast, reliable, accessible, and affordable for Pharr families. The project has been undergoing a preliminary network study these last few weeks and is expected to start building its core as Part of Phase II in this project. Subsequent phases will be used to build the network in the south part of the city, the mid part of the city, and the north part of the city. Eventually, the entire city will be lit-up and “ready” for use by June of 2022.

The City of Pharr has been leading the effort to bridge the digital divide for families for many years. In 2017, the City of Pharr, in collaboration with Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District, Region One Education Service Center, the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, and private entities such as BBVA Compass bank, announced a pilot project, Pharr Life Net, that brought free internet access to 50 families in their homes. The City of Pharr invested \$90,000 in the household study on external devices and equipment for each home, and \$100,000 was invested through the Federal Reserve Partnership with BBVA Compass used for a financial impact feasibility study.



“This is something we have been working towards in Pharr for years, and when the pandemic  English ght many issues and challenges regarding lack of internet connectivity not only in our area but across the nation,” stated Hernandez. “Our incredible team of advocates, employees, and partners are pleased to announce that we now have a solution to close the digital divide in Pharr,” he said.

Now a priority for both state and federal legislators, the nation is scrambling to work towards a solution with many Americans relying on the internet for work, school, and everyday life during the COVID-19 pandemic. Just this week, President Biden announced his \$100 billion dollar proposal to close the digital divide during his remarks to the joint session of Congress.

Special guests and dignitaries providing remarks during the announcement included Texas State Senator Eddie Lucio III, Texas Workforce Commissioner Representing Labor Julian Alvarez, Jordana Barton, Vice-President of Community Investments for Methodist Healthcare Ministries, Dr. Eduardo Cancino, Interim Executive Director for Region One Education Service Center, Dr. Narciso Garcia, Superintendent of Vanguard Academy, Xavier Salinas, Superintendent of Hidalgo ISD, Sylvia Ibarra, Interim Superintendent of Valley View ISD, Eddie Anaya of Valley Interfaith, and Marco Lopez, community organizer for internet access with LUPE.


The response to the city’s announcement was overwhelming and supportive as all remarks pointed to the fact that this service will no doubt become a model for the region, state, and nation as all eyes turn to closing the digital divide and connecting our communities to a fast and reliable broadband service.



“This is the future, this is what is ahead of us,” exclaimed Senator Eddie Lucio III during his remarks. “Thank you to Mayor Hernandez and the City of Pharr for working on a solution that will address the needs of our students, our workers, and our community,” said Lucio.

“What you have put together here Mayor, will be replicated in other parts of the state and country; I can assure you of that,” said Texas Workforce Commissioner Julian Alvarez. “Our communities need this infrastructure and I applaud you for bringing the future now and working towards closing the digital divide,” he added.

“We look forward to investing in and working together with the City of Pharr as we explore how best to support your efforts in closing the digital divide,” said Jordana Barton, Vice-President of Community Investments for Methodist Healthcare Ministries. She added, “The digital divide has real-world consequences for communities as we’ve seen throughout the pandemic, which made it clear how critical closing the digital divide is to the well-being of economic opportunities to communities.”

“I congratulate the City of Pharr on this accomplishment and look forward to the enhanced  opportunities it will provide to students in Pharr,” stated Dr. Eduardo Cancino, Interim Executive Director for Region One Education Service Center. “This is not a Pharr project, this is a model for the entire region and we thank you for providing our students throughout Region One this opportunity,” he further stated.

During his closing statement, Mayor Hernandez reiterated, “We are doing this as a service to our community because we cannot let our Pharr families remain behind in this digital world.” He concluded by saying, “We are proud of this venture and creative solution that we hope can be a model for other communities to follow, so that they too, can help bridge the digital divide.”

The City of Pharr would like to thank all partners in this venture as the project phases begin throughout the city.

***View the entire***

***announcement at*** <https://www.facebook.com/cityofpharr/videos/838694546742784>.



