

Survey Results: Internet Access

 Survey Info - This survey was sent on behalf of the City of Watertown to the FlashVote community for Watertown, MA.

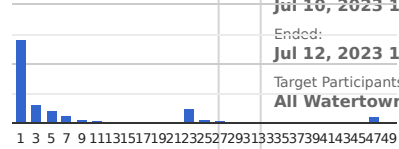
These FlashVote results are shared with local officials

564
Total
Participants

561 of 872 initially invited (64%)
3 others
Margin of error: $\pm 4\%$

Applied Filter:
Locals only
Participants for
filter:
504

Response Time (hours)



Started:

Jul 10, 2023 11:06am EDT

Ended:

Jul 12, 2023 11:02am EDT

Target Participants:

All Watertown

Q1 Think about the computer (such as a laptop) you use primarily at home.

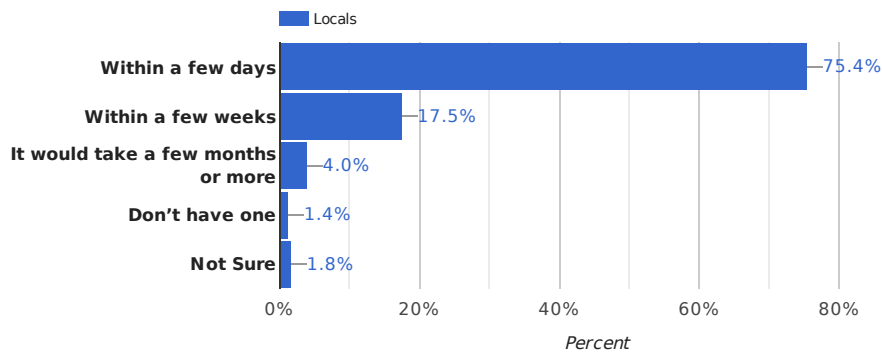
If it were lost or damaged beyond repair, about how long do you think it would take for you to replace it?

(504 responses by)

Options

Locals (504)

Within a few days	75.4% (380)
Within a few weeks	17.5% (88)
It would take a few months or more	4.0% (20)
Don't have one	1.4% (7)
Not Sure	1.8% (9)



Q2 In the last 12 months, which of the following problems have you had in Watertown, if any? (Choose all that apply)

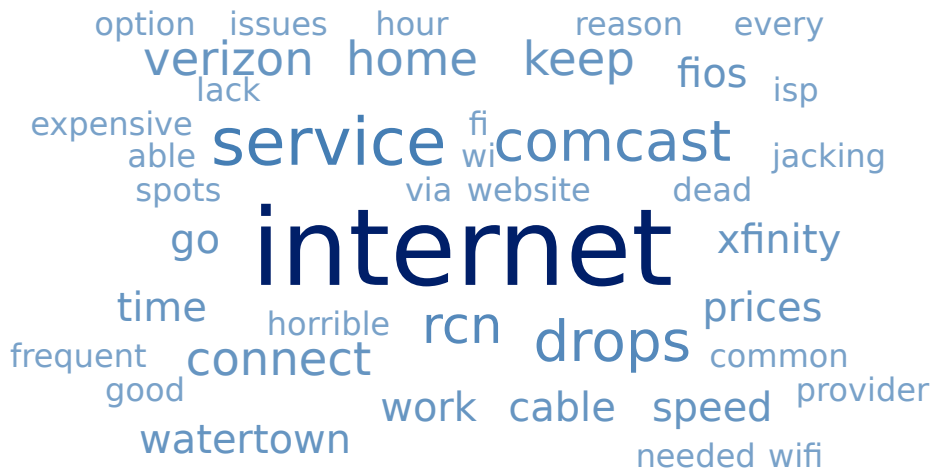
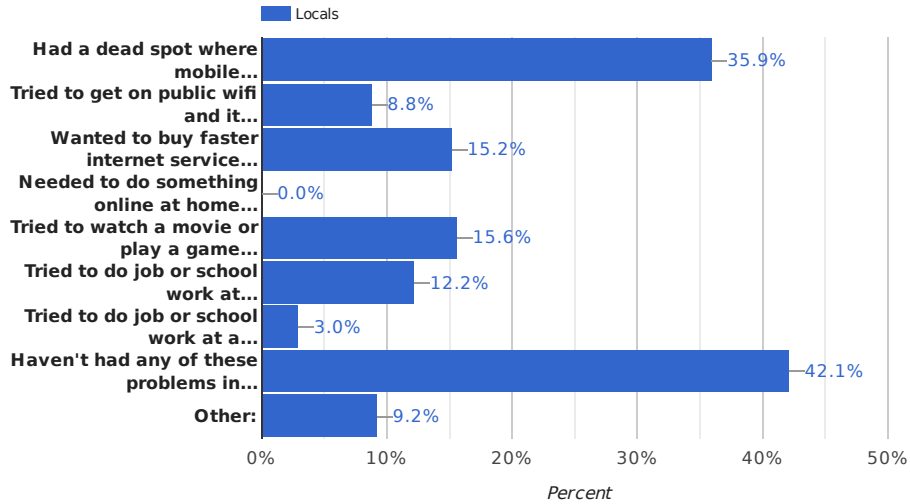
(468 responses by)

Options

Locals (468)

Had a dead spot where mobile phone/data coverage dropped	35.9% (168)
Tried to get on public wifi and it didn't work for me	8.8% (41)
Wanted to buy faster internet service at home but wasn't available	15.2% (71)
Needed to do something online at home but didn't have a device to get online	0.0% (0)

Options	Locals (468)
Tried to watch a movie or play a game at home but couldn't because internet was too slow	15.6% (73)
Tried to do job or school work at home but couldn't because internet was too slow	12.2% (57)
Tried to do job or school work at a City building but couldn't because internet was too slow	3.0% (14)
Haven't had any of these problems in the last 12 months	42.1% (197)
Other:	9.2% (43)



Asking this question via this channel May miss people who are underserved ...

At times I cannot connect to the city website. I can connect to other websites.

Can't afford higher-speed access.

Comcast is horrible

Currently w/ RCN, highest speed. Fearful of Verizon's 5G Home Internet. Rtn'd it.

DRIVING GETTING HORRIBLE WITH TOO MANY BIOTECHS & HUGE CONDO DEVELOPMENTS STOP BEFORE YOU RUIN US

Dead spots I commonly hit are @ intersections Waverly/Orchard, School/ Arsenal, and Belmont/Common

Embarrassing lack of fiber internet

Good options for fast download speeds via cable (RCN & Comcast), no FiOS for symmetrical up/down.

Have had intermittent issues with Comcast Internet just failing for an hour or more (working hr)

Have very unstable internet service from Astound

Home Wi-Fi service dropped for no apparent reason ie. Not weather related

I am able to get FiOS, even though every town around us has had it for decades. Why can't I get it?

I have RCN which overall is pretty good but expensive!

I have xfinity service. there are a lot of dead spots on my way from home to work (Cambridge)

ISP/RCN constantly jacking up prices. Watertown Option?

ISPs keep jacking up the prices

Internet can be very glitchy. Have to reboot the modem/router monthly.

Internet drops frequently

Lack of competition in internet provider choices

Losing internet connection from time to time

Mostly data and voice issues with Verizon and att.

My internet (xfinity/comcast) can be spotty. I used to have Verizon but they're not available in W

Not aware we have public wifi. I'm disabled and elderly-do I have to go somewhere to get it?

Occasionally my internet is unavailable on a random basis. (RCN's fault?) NOTE: ACP customer

Our internet service went down a few times and needed service from our provider.

Prices keep going up too!

Unannounced internet outages in the middle of a workday

Unreliable internet that keeps going in and out. Cannot get ahold of Comcast to fix it. What is gov

Xfinity hasn't trimmed trees surrounding internet lines. Broke and took 2 days to get someone out.

internet connection drops out

please bring fios to watertown!

Want Verizon cable service- can't get it in Watertown

Comcast internet roving slower service than we pay for

I don't have Cable TV.

Internet drops at least once every 2 hours

No internet service in some rooms of my home

Poor mobile/WiFi connection at my house, making tele health appointments difficult

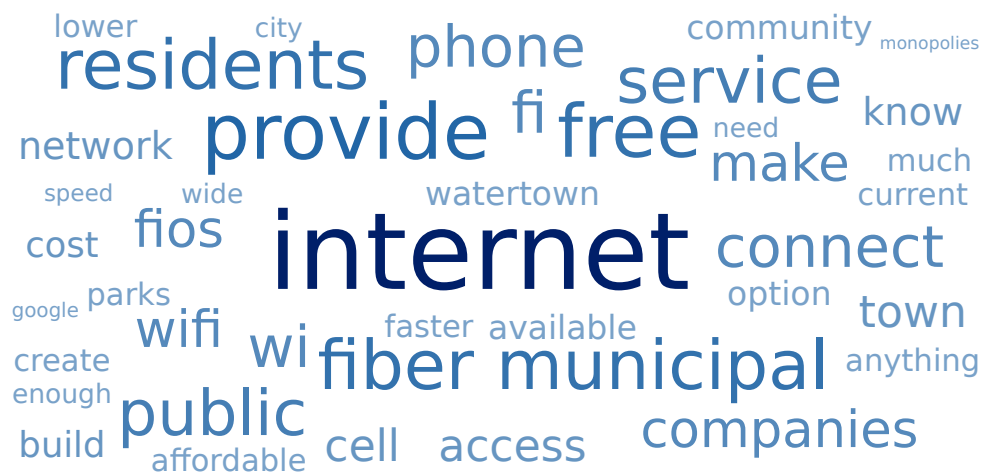
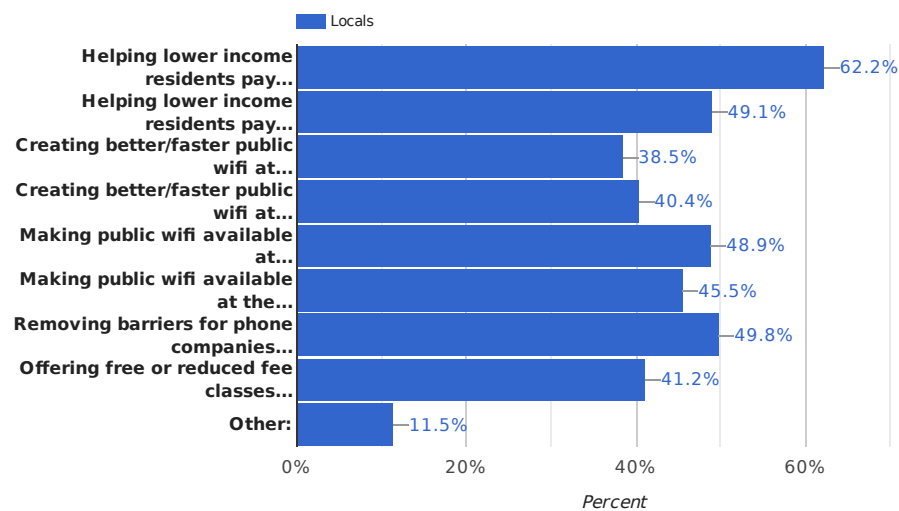
frequent internet drops during work/class that caused some delays

Q3 Which of the following, if any, do think would be a good use of public money? (Choose all that apply, if any)

(468 responses by)

Options	Locals (468)
Helping lower income residents pay for home internet service	62.2% (291)
Helping lower income residents pay for internet connect devices they can use at home	49.1% (230)
Creating better/faster public wifi at the Watertown Public Library	38.5% (180)
Creating better/faster public wifi at Watertown Public Schools	40.4% (189)

Options	Locals (468)
Making public wifi available at public parks and recreation areas	48.9% (229)
Making public wifi available at the Watertown Housing Authority	45.5% (213)
Removing barriers for phone companies to improve mobile phone/data service	49.8% (233)
Offering free or reduced fee classes that teach internet skills	41.2% (193)
Other:	11.5% (54)



All
All of the above. Anything to broaden access to faster, more affordable, more reliable service.
Better free wifi throughout watertown.
Boomboxes & commercial noise are not allowed in our rec/parks. We have enough noise here as it is.
Build a municipal fiber network to offer lower cost connections than current monopolies
Build optical fiber network for Watertown
Community Fiber!
Create a municipal internet service provider

Educated the community on the affordable connectivity program through the FCC.

Eliminating deadspots for hi speed internet

Encourage fiber adoption

Free Wi-Fi to all

Free public Wi-Fi town-wide!

Free to veterans

Get FIOS

Get Verizon FIOS become available in Watertown

Government should either tightly regulate these monopolies—which Markey’s Telecom Act from the 90s

Have free wifi for the whole town.

Having more choices for Internet providers

I am existing ACP customer. (internet).Have to use pre paid plan for phone-google maps limited

I don’t know enough to choose among these. Help lower income residents, pls

I don’t know much about the impact of these different options — just my initial reactions.

I need more informatino on public wi-fi as it is generally not a secure way to connect

If not already available, provide devices that residents can check out from the library

If you want to do anything, reduce internet cost for everyone - especially in Brandon's economy!

Investigating options to make Internet access a utility for Watertown residents

Knowing how and having easy access to the Internet is so important for everyone!

Make internet companies government entities and not profit hungry companies

Making internet service available city-wide for all residents. Years ago there was talk about this.

More competition in ISPs providing internet service. It's more expensive than it should be.

Municipal Broadband

Municipal fiber would be an incredible idea

Municipal internet!

Municipality Internet Option

None of the above - we are all already too connected to the internet and need faster internet!

Providing a public alternative to the current ISP's and leveraging buying power similar to electric

Public fiber optic network for residents

Recently change to RCN for internet and Mint for cell phone and am saving a ton!

Reduce property taxes. If this is federal money, do something that affects the most citizens

Resolve whatever the issue is so I can get FiOS. I expect there would be a good market for that!

Stop rampant development!!! More parks - less condos and biotechs!!!

Teaching media literacy in our schools

The verizon cell phone problem is huge and dangerous..

make providing free public wifi a condition of cell phone service provider licenses

working with phone companies to remove dead spots

Free high speed internet for all residents (like Google Fiber)

I left three items unchecked because I don't have the knowledge to answer them.

Connecting the entire city to Wi-Fi.

Free wifi for entire town residence

Municipal broadband

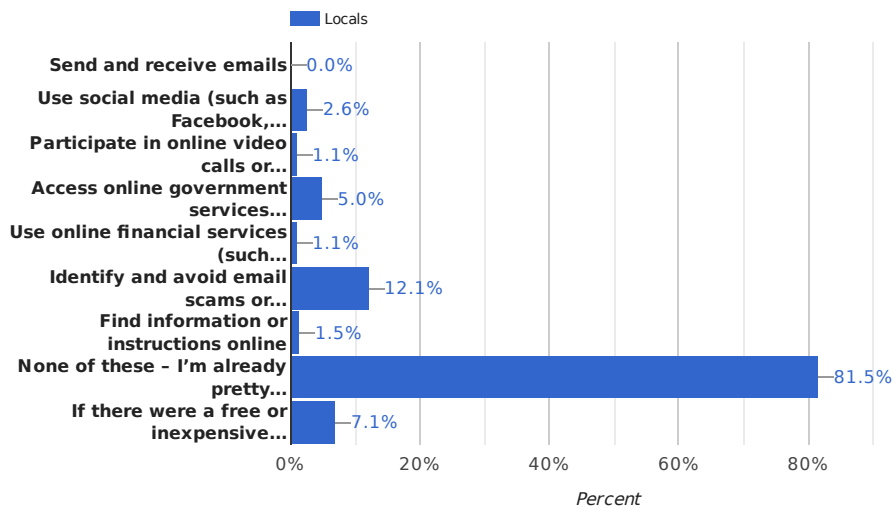
Removing barriers or creating opportunities for new internet companies to provide services here

security concerns for public wi-fi?

Q4 Which of the following would you like to learn how to do better, if any? (Choose all that apply)

(464 responses by)

Options	Locals (464)
Send and receive emails	0.0% (0)
Use social media (such as Facebook, Nextdoor, Instagram, or Tik-Tok)	2.6% (12)
Participate in online video calls or voice calls (such as Zoom or Facetime)	1.1% (5)
Access online government services (such as DMV renewals, signing up for benefits, etc.)	5.0% (23)
Use online financial services (such as online banking and paying bills)	1.1% (5)
Identify and avoid email scams or other online frauds	12.1% (56)
Find information or instructions online	1.5% (7)
None of these - I'm already pretty comfortable doing things online	81.5% (378)
If there were a free or inexpensive local class available, I'd probably take it if it taught me:	7.1% (33)



avoid disability instructions
 google internet like media
 email better iphone
 zoom use business
 search etc skills social
 things website access

"Somewhat" comfortable. But I do all of the above with varying success

Better organisation and use of my internet applications

Better zoom skills, better photo skills with iPhone

Business skills like using Xcel, editing videos, etc.

Cad

GIS, coding

Google apps (docs, home, etc)

Internet access for persons with low or no vision or other disabilities.

Latest technology like AI

Navigate using cloud storage

On Zoom - How to use Google Workspace

Outlook excel google sheets etc word

Powerpoint, how to set up a website, how to create a flyer/program for an event in Adobe

To make things more disability accessible

Very difficult to search for things on city website. How to instructions for various city sites

cutting cable bills

how to better use my iphone.

how to organize email folders on my pc; how to safely store passwords; how to limit spam

more skills. I just know the basic stuff

resume building, interview skills

tips and tricks for avoiding scammers, searching and finding info online more quickly

web design

SharePoint

How to use photoshop

email/social media marketing for small business owners

how to provide remote computer help for older relatives

Get wifi for the whole town. Help low income people pay for cell phone service.

Give us real choice on providers

Good wifi

Have more providers such as Verizon available.

Have we considered a municipal high speed internet offering? I know some towns (Concord, I think?) have public fiber optic. If laying fiber is an impediment, could consider 5G-based service? The Calyx Institute, a non-profit dedicated to educating folks about digital privacy and security, offers paying members a free high-speed internet service delivered via a t-mobile hotspot device. To be clear, I'm not affiliated with Calyx, I just read about this a few months ago and thought it offered an interesting model to explore for a public internet utility. <https://calyxinstitute.org> <https://calyxinstitute.org/membership/internet>

Help seniors get smart phones that are large enough for them to see the icons. Then help them to use it to the library is Senior Center.

I am not sure how to be clearer that having FiOS available would make a lot of sense. And I do not understand why it is not available here. One Verizon employee told me it was because when they were negotiating a contract with Watertown, someone tried to get special considerations. Is that accurate?

I appreciate the idea to not dig up the streets/roads, but it would be so nice to get access to Fios. Both me and my wife work from home and we are dependent upon reliable and fast internet to do our jobs

I believe that computer literacy and internet access are important for equity.

I cannot stress enough how frustrating the mobile coverage (or lack of coverage) is in Watertown. In my home (and the blocks surrounding me) I am unable to make or receive any calls at all unless I have WiFi and a phone that has enabled WiFi calling. This is a safety concern (from a 911 perspective) and also just crazy to be in such a populated city with little to no cellular coverage. It is so frustrating for me and have been complaining for years to Verizon that the lack of service here is so bad. We really need improvements in this space, particularly with more and more people abandoning their home phones for cell phones. We need to improve this at baseline first because internet outages happen all the time and if there are emergencies (like a fire) that cuts off electricity and no mobile coverage people are unable to call 911.

I don't think it's a good idea to provide public internet in parks, buildings, or any other place unless you can encrypt it and make it secure. It would be a waste of money because I would NEVER encourage someone to log on to a public wifi. (People can steal your data and give you viruses through public WIFI.)

I had hope that 5G would have enabled a drop in internet cost in Watertown. Is there still hope?

I had no idea Watertown even had public wifi. Making this known and widespread would be cool. Also holding internet companies accountable for poor service. Additionally, Watertown should ban the use of paper advertisements from internet companies. These immediately go in the trash and are a complete waste of resources. People have the internet they do because they got a deal. And at least my house, we get a lot of adds for internet we already have.

I hate that Verizon has a monopoly in my building on Pleasant St. not understanding how internet service areas are defined.

I have the money and the skills so *I* do not need help with my computer systems. Because you cannot get ahead in this society without good computer resources, I fully support assuring that those who cannot afford these services are assisted by our government. Do we have a one-child, one-laptop program?

I know my mother would benefit from some of those things in the last question - she's in her mid-70's - and I'm sure other folks in her age bracket (in addition to others) would also find those helpful.

I live just a couple of blocks from cell towers in two opposite directions, yet I only get one bar and many dropped calls. This necessitates keeping a landline - a waste of money in my opinion

I support any and all ways we can support members of our community and think it's a worthy investment of tax dollars.

I support maintaining and increasing ISP and mobile provider competition, as well as improved infrastructure, such as buried cable, more cell towers, etc. I don't see much value in education on internet and tech in Watertown.

I think getting access for those who don't have it is top priority, especially for families with school-aged children who need to use internet/devices for their education.

I think there are already direct federal subsidies for people w/ economic barriers to access tech. But - there really needs to be an increase in online access for Seniors/Disabilities/Low income/ESL (esp Public Housing & isolated independent) for support in Voting & Online Applications (Employment/Services etc). Place public computers w/ internet in every housing building, promote use w/ guidance for people whom transportation is a barrier.

I wish there were more choices for internet provider options. Right now I have Comcast/Infinity

I would like to see government efforts and money primarily go to improving equity related to online access.

I'm glad to see Watertown making an effort to ensure that everyone in our community has internet access and skills.

I'm worried that people like me can answer these questions because we have online facilities easy to reach and have competence using them. How will other people show that they need service, public availability, lessons, etc if they don't have

access, or good access, now? This is a key problem with this Flash Vote. Doesn't make sense for most issues that require participation in/viewing of meetings, emails, documents. I hope other means of testing/questioning the population are in order.

If there are major carriers (e.g. fios) that don't serve Watertown it would be great to get those. I am not sure about what would most meet the needs of lower income and less internet savvy residents, but would like us to ask them and take their lead.

Internet drops frequently

It would be awesome to have greater access to Internet companies that didn't cost so much. Between Internet and cable, we pay \$150/month and we don't watch TV!! We're always searching for other ways to get basic news stations without going thru RCN.

It would be great to have more options to select an internet service provider.

It would be nice to have access to fiber optic services in Watertown

It's great that the city is considering how to improve connectivity for our residents!

Lack of access is so catastrophic today in terms of public services and employment , we really need to be laser focused on closing that gap before we work toward improvements at a broader scale

Less regulations, lower the cost of internet services especially to seniors.

Look into partnering with local universities to acquire their decommissioned laptops then repurpose them for low-income members of the community. I work in IT at Harvard Business School, and I know the computers we decommission are still plenty fine for several more years. We send most to a third-party recycling facility, but it would be really great if we could set aside some for local communities. I'd guess that some of the technicians would volunteer their time to prepare the computers (wipe drives, install Windows, etc.) for non-HBS use. If I recall correctly, Microsoft has licensing options for nonprofits or NGOs to help with this.

Love the survey! Happy to answer more.

Make FIOS available

Many low income folks only have their cell phone to do all of there business. Trying to do more complicated things are difficult to do this way. Phone apps are not as good in many cases. Helping any folks whether low income, elderly or just uninitiated to have computer literacy and access is key for these folks. Any access to this is important. Having help at these sites available for these folks is great too. Make more available and let people know it is available.

More options for cable and internet. xfinity and RCN are not up to par. Thanks!!

More public access to high-speed internet is good for everybody!

Municipal internet to control the costs

My cell phone Wi-Fi at home , thru TMOBILE, is about B- Or C+. Lots of freezing when wind blows, etc. Does not at all match the astronomical home prices.

My experience has been positive to date.

My street is the only one that cannot access FiOS. It should be available on all streets if the town has a contract.

Need Verizon Fios

No

No

No

No its fine. Money can be spent on roads and services that are accessible to all residents and not just a subset.

No, I think school and public housing would be the priorities in building high speed internet access. Allowing for greater vendor access to our city like FiOS can also help drive down cost for many residents by increasing competition.

Please let us get fios!

Provide ongoing support services for internet users at the Housing Authority and Senior Center, as well as at the library. Provide regular information classes for scam avoidance at these locations also.

Provide tablets or equivalent to Watertown school students.

Residential internet service in Watertown is too slow and too expensive, particularly upload bandwidth. Numerous economic opportunities would open up if residents had higher up link speeds available to them.

Some towns are starting to provide their own internet services. The benefits of being in control of and offering an alternative to for profit companies seems valuable. It would provide another option which would serve the people of watertown, allow for

control of pricing, availability, and access.

Stop using proprietary networks like Facebook to make announcements and organize.

Teaming up with the senior services to help internet/technology feel less intimidating and more accessible.

Thank you for looking into this important equity issue

Thank you for trying to improve internet access in skills for everyone in Watertown!

Thanks for asking!

Thanks for asking. Please publish/disseminate survey results, along with any follow-on decisions.

The East end of Watertown is a fiber desert! The lack of FTTH service in Watertown is a huge disadvantage compared to surrounding communities as more folks work from home and use higher-bandwidth applications for leisure. I know that the Legislature has significantly handicapped municipal broadband networks due to lobbying from incumbent providers, but this should not prevent the city from looking into either the feasibility of such a network or partnering with an existing provider to subsidize or smooth permitting for the construction of the network and provide vouchers for low-income residents to get connected.

The avalanche of information available online is a great resource for so many things. That said, we've got to teach media literacy and introduce some skepticism and sophistication into how people process information they get online. The business model for much of our current information ecosystem is to drive engagement by making people angry and scared. Our civil society and democracy won't survive unless we get better.

The internet should be a utility - it's a communication tool that is necessary for everyday, much like landline phone once were.

There are limited options only through the large media corps. It would be nice to have choices in the smaller local business option for internet/cable. Also please do not put high output wifi signals, or more 5G, dishes or antennas into our neighborhoods. TY!

There is limited mobile service for Verizon near my house. It has been a problem (near North Beacon and Charles River). It extends to the new Arsenal complex. I've called and been told it is exactly on the edge of where the range would max out. A new tower is needed. It would be great if it could be part of the new structures in the Arsenal. Also wifi should be made widely available to the community for free at public spaces

Townwide internet service. Elderly aunt lives in Shrewsbury and has option for internet thru town. It is easy to call and get a live IT person to troubleshoot problems. Important for people who aren't comfortable online. Also, offer multi-lingual classes.

Upstream bandwidth from RCN is awful, and we need it more than ever if working from home. A municipal fiber deployment would allow residents to have a fast, stable, inexpensive connection that we control and isn't behind a profit motive.

Use the modern technical tools like text and social media to improve city services...e.g. more processes online and elimination of winter parking ban as you can use ad hoc notices via multiple platforms. Look at Somerville for this.

Using Zoom is increasingly important. Anything that helps residents to use it would be a real service.

Very upset the FIOS is not available!

Watertown needs better access and choice to lower priced internet for all. Comcast and RCN are too large companies that have us cornered.

We live near Victory Field/DPW/Whitney Hill and some friends/family have trouble with cell data at our house. We have T-Mobile and have no problems, but others (Verizon, primarily) have trouble.

We need to improve the aging infrastructure for internet in private homes in Watertown. It has a lot of problems and I don't think it was designed to bear the load that it currently supports with so many people working from home.

What barriers does the phone company claim are preventing better internet service? Are these real barriers, or just their way around rules working for the public good?

When I moved from Somerville I was surprised to see my portion of Watertown was just outside of RCN coverage area, giving me just one ISP option. It would be great to have multiple options, and it would be great also to have gig speed+ internet as an option. I would love if the town itself created an ISP but I know that's an unreasonable hope ☺

Why not have fast, affordable municipal broadband?

Would be great if we had better internet options. RCN is so expensive and very spotty

Would love to learn to format financial data in Excel!

all for removing barriers for comm companies (but not at the expense of impacting resident personal property / real estate)

free public wifi citywide

if wanting to do training sessions, there are a lot of residents that could lead/help. But it needs to be nights or maybe weekends for most of us as we are working during the day.

it would be helpful to have Verizon FIOS available as an option in Watertown

remove black/dark cellular data next to watertown public works facility. the stretch from the rotary to the light (orchard street) is really bad for ATT for sure. the block of mount auburn, chester street, washburn st and Otis st is really bad for Verizon. you definitely have a guyrere in term of cellular reception in watertown. thanks for reading.

wifi so i could work in a park would be great! (wfh worker)

Consider implementing municipal broadband service

Free public co working space for all Watertown residents

I Want to see google fiber, Verizon Fios or other fiber based home internet service available in Watertown

Offering more Wi-Fi hotspots and laptops at the library.

There are so many dead spots on the east end of town and the companies say there is nothing that can be done. The neighborhoods (and those who work from home) would benefit greatly with more reliable connectivity. I can't even go on a walk on the river without dropping a call.

Watertown's website needs a radically improved search function.

For years I have been subjected to price gouging by Comcast because they were the only broadband provider at my address. Things are better now that rcn offers service here, but the ridiculous price hikes every year or two, and intransparent pricing and packaging are awful. I would welcome a public option from the town, even if it was more expensive than the promotional "first year" pricing in the private sector, in return for price stability and reliability. The quality of service for me offered by Comcast and rcn is poor for the cost.

I don't think the town should be in the business of helping residents with what is essentially a utility at this point. What would be far more helpful is better options for obtaining broadband service. The cable companies largely have a monopoly, and rates continue to increase while the service provided remains the same for the most part.

If you're thinking about free, public wifi, it should be available citywide.

More and more services are inaccessible to older adults who don't have computers or computer skills - eg., the RMV!

Take care and provide more services for the middle class tax payers ,we are the only reason you j ave a job

Teach internet safety for browsing and for securing data, etc.

There should be public wifi available to all residents and more options for internet service. Why does Watertown not have FIOS?

Would love for Fios to be an option in town

[Additional survey reports](#)