

Google Fiber may be fast, but it takes time to build

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If you live in one of the cities Google may wire for high speed Internet, don't expect it to happen overnight.

Based on the experience of Kansas City, where Google is building its first [high-speed network](#), it could take a couple of years before your home computer is operating at blazing gigabit speeds.

"It's a very physical process," said Joe Reardon, who was mayor of Kansas City, Kan., when that area was selected to be Google's first high-speed installation.

"In order for it to be delivered to us, it means that fiber has to be laid on the ground in the city on rights-of-way or on poles, and you have to get it into the neighborhoods and into the house. It takes time," Reardon said.

On Wednesday, [Google announced](#) the names of 34 cities it would consider for the next rollout of its high-speed networks.

Google picked Kansas City in March 2011 after lengthy meetings with city officials, and didn't begin connecting houses to its fiber optic ring until November 2012.

The main complaint of residents: They couldn't get the service soon enough.

"It does take time," said Google Fiber spokeswoman Jenna Wandres.

"It's probably one of the biggest infrastructure projects these cities have ever seen."

First, the company built a fiber ring around the entire city, then pulled fiber into routing "huts" scattered around the area.

Then crews had to pull fiber out to telecom cabinets on parking strips in every neighborhood of the city. (The service is for houses, not businesses or apartments, unless the apartment owner pays the connection fee for each unit.)

Next, contractors buzzed around town in vans painted with Google's cyber mascot rabbit logo, digging trenches and stringing wire on utility poles.

When all that was done, the company scheduled sign-up periods it called "rallies" - a few weeks for each neighborhood. After that, installers made appointments to string fiber into each home being hooked up.

Google divided Kansas City into 202 "fiberhoods" or neighborhoods, establishing that 180 could actually get fiber. Google won't say how many customers it has, but says there are customers in every neighborhood that has the service.

But as the company rolled out the high-speed hookups, it became clear that some parts of town weren't going to qualify. Lower-income areas, for one reason or another, were slow to sign up. Google wasn't extending service to neighborhoods that didn't reach a threshold of customers that would make it cost-effective to string fiber to them.

And that would leave schools, libraries and other public facilities in those neighborhoods with no fiber connections.

Aaron Deacon, who worked with community groups on signing people up for the service, organized a crowdfunding campaign when he discovered that the sign-up process was part of the problem. Google required a \$10 preregistration payment that it would only take online via credit card.

"Going door to door, I encountered these problems - they didn't have a credit card, or they didn't get paid until next week, or sometimes it was, 'What's the Internet again?' " said Deacon, who has founded a nonprofit called KC Digital Drive.

"We were saying if you think this is valuable and good for your neighborhood, when you sign up, put in an extra \$10," he said. Volunteers used the money for \$10 debit cards for lower income people to sign up.

The result, said former mayor Reardon, is that "the overwhelming majority of our [city](#) as well as Kansas City, Mo., met the thresholds."

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