

NYC to pull plug on sidewalk internet after porn complaints

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The web-browsing feature of New York City's sidewalk Wi-Fi kiosks will be disabled after critics complained that homeless people were monopolizing them and using them to watch porn, officials said Wednesday.

The consortium that installed 400 LinkNYC kiosks across the city said it will remove web browsing from the kiosks while it works with city officials to explore potential solutions to their abuse.

"The kiosks were never intended for anyone's extended, personal use and we want to ensure that Links are accessible and a welcome addition to New York City neighborhoods," LinkNYC said in a statement.

Natalie Grybauskas, a spokeswoman for Mayor Bill de Blasio, said, "There were concerns about loitering and extended use of LinkNYC kiosks, so the mayor is addressing these quality-of-life complaints head on."

The kiosks will still provide free domestic calls, phone charging and fast Wi-Fi with the user's own device.

Homeless people and panhandlers have been among the most avid users of the kiosks since LinkNYC began installing them eight months ago, charging their phones if they have them and watching music videos on the tablets.

A filtering system is supposed to block inappropriate content but there have been reports of users watching porn and even masturbating in public.

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