

# Microsoft, Green Bay Packers launch tech initiative in Wisconsin

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Microsoft is making a move into Green Bay Packers country, expanding its efforts to bring digital connectivity and tech training to small cities and rural areas across the country.

The company announced a partnership with the NFL team Thursday to launch a technology initiative in the Packer's hometown of Green Bay, Wis.

TitletownTech, as it's called, will offer northeast Wisconsin a startup accelerator, venture-capital funding and a training program for existing businesses to create products - all with the goal of boosting [economic development](#) in the city of about 105,000 people and the areas surrounding it.

Microsoft and the Packers are each investing \$5 million in the project over five years.

Green Bay is the second community - after Fargo, N.D. - in Microsoft's TechSpark program, a push to help create economic-development opportunities outside big cities.

"Our hope is that TechSpark will help add to the ways that communities and businesses can work together to address critical economic challenges," Microsoft President Brad Smith said when he announced the program earlier this month from Fargo. The initiative plans to boost economies by bringing in computer-science education, tech advice for

businesses and high-speed internet resources.

Microsoft has set its sights on bringing technology connections to not-so-connected areas. In July, the company proposed an effort to bring broadband internet to rural parts of the country.

That plan makes use of so-called "white-space" technology, which uses dormant television-broadcast channels to deliver internet. Its goal is to bring internet access to 2 million people by 2022.

Microsoft has said it will bring the TechSpark program to four more regions - in Eastern Washington, Virginia, Texas and Wyoming - but has not named the specific areas.

"We've definitely recognized over the last year that we needed to do more in the rural parts of the states," Smith said in an interview Thursday. The company realized it was doing quite a bit of development in [rural areas](#) of other countries but not as much in the U.S., he said.

Microsoft plans to have a major partnership in each of the six TechSpark communities, though probably not with an NFL team each time.

TitletownTech headquarters will be built in the Titletown District, an area just west of the Packers' Lambeau Field, which the team is developing into a destination attraction. The district features a huge park, hotel and restaurants.

TitletownTech's building, which the Packers and Microsoft both have a hand in designing, will be completed in about a year, but the initiative will start up immediately.

"We see new opportunities to use digital technology to drive economic

growth," Smith said.

It will host a somewhat traditional startup accelerator to help emerging companies get on their feet. The venture-capital arm will invest in companies for equity stakes, but Microsoft and the Packers have said that any profits they make will be reinvested into economic development and philanthropic efforts.

The third piece of TitletownTech will invite businesses or specific teams of businesses and provide them with mentors and resources to speed up digital-product development over an 18-week period.

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