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housing — can also purchase laptops for \$150 through Comcast.

Since 2011, when Internet Essentials began, Multnomah County — recognizing that \$150 can be a burdensome amount for many families — has dedicated funding to purchase laptops for eligible households in partnership with Comcast.

County commissioner Loretta Smith said the county works with organizations that serve low-income families, such as Head Start or SEI, to identify families who

Comcast subsidizes the cost of the \$150 computers, but the \$9.95 is a price point it set for qualifying families, who can apply for the program either by visiting InternetEssentials.com or calling 1-855-8-INTERNET (1-855-846-8376).

Nicolas Jimenez, senior manager for Internet Essentials, said Comcast works with nonprofits and institutions like libraries all over the country to provide digital literacy training, and the way the program is implemented will vary de-

“About 18,000 families in Oregon and southwest Washington have used the Internet Essentials program since its inception in 2011

might benefit from the gift of a laptop and from reduced-cost Internet access, as well as digital literacy training.

Mari Young, a mother of two who spoke with *The Skanner* in advance of the laptop giveaway, works for a medical equipment company and said she primarily accesses the Internet using her phone, or sometimes borrows her mother's laptop — but connects through the Internet Essentials wi-fi service rather than her phone's data plan.

“A lot of times, [my children] have assignments where they have to research things at home, and we don't have a computer so it's kind of harder to walk to the library or wait around to use a computer,” Young told *The Skanner*.

SEI founder Tony Hopson said most of the families who received laptops Monday were part of the Jefferson High School cluster, with many living in Northeast Portland or East Portland.

According to Rebecca Brown, senior manager of community investments at Comcast, about 18,000 families in Oregon and southwest Washington have used the Internet Essentials program since its inception in 2011. Initially, the program was available only to families with children who qualify for free or reduced lunch.

In August, Comcast partnered with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to offer the program to families in HUD-assisted residences, public housing or Section 8 housing — making 30,000 more households eligible for the program.

pending on what individual communities need.

“We work with nonprofits, with libraries to provide in-person digital literacy training. We work with partners all over the country. The way that work is implemented can vary slightly, but it's all about building awareness of the fact that this program exists, providing training and resources so we can get folks to cross over the digital divide,” Jimenez said.

“The most important part of this effort to me is things becoming actionable, with the training that's necessary and with the families being connected to something that's going to continue,” Hopson said. “We could have three million, we could have ten million folks who've touched a computer. That don't mean that they really know what to do with it and that they're going to follow through and it becomes a part of their life, that the access becomes so real that now they're a better individual with more access to jobs and all kinds of things.”

Before she became the spokesperson for Internet Essentials, she said, Joyner-Kersee created a community center in East St. Louis that included a computer lab to help ensure kids would have the ability to have Internet access for homework — and parents for job applications.

“We're in a global economy. When you talk about that digital divide, if young people do not have access to the Internet to do their homework, you're talking about, really, the diminishment of self-esteem,” Joyner-Kersee said.



PHOTO BY JERRY FOSTER

Matt Dishman Pool Re-opening

The pool and spa at Matt Dishman Community Center reopened at a family night celebration Oct. 21. The Matt Dishman Pool schedule can be found on PP&R's website (<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/60933>) or by calling (503) 823-3673. Recreational swimming, swim lessons, and fitness classes are all available again. Pictured here are Evan Lilly, city commissioner Amanda Fritz, Jesse Porter, Amourie Downing and Christine Hickman.

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Northeast Portland.

The Portland Development Commission held a community forum on the N/NE Community Development Initiative. The goal is to create economic prosperity for longtime residents in the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area.

The interstate corridor had been designated as an urban renewal area in 2001 with the intention of making investments that

displaced the Black residents.

The draft plan acknowledged the massive destabilization of the community and the focus of the remaining urban renewal money to benefit Black community members.

“The investments are ... specifically pointed to ensuring that with the remaining Interstate Corridor economic development resources are primarily directed towards the community of color

they were denied those opportunities through racist policies that were enforced — even, in many respects, into the '80s and '90s here.”

The draft version of the plan calls for \$21.5 million to go towards multi-generational wealth creation and \$10.5 million to create culturally relevant spaces.

The \$21.5 million multi-generational wealth development will be spent on grants and loans.

“It wasn't that people were not savvy enough to get homes, it wasn't that they did not work hard. It was that they were denied those opportunities through racist policies that were enforced — even, in many respects, into the '80s and '90s here

would benefit existing residents and businesses. The corridor is the city's largest urban renewal area. It includes the area north of the Broadway Bridge to Marine Drive, parts of the space extend west into St. Johns neighborhood.

PDC Executive Director Kimberly Branam said the agency made a lot of progress developing business corridors, bringing light rail and increasing livability. The increasing desirability of the area pushed out longtime African American residents for more affluent White residents.

The development agency estimates a 49 percent decrease in the Black population of the area between 2000 and 2013. At the same time, the White population grew by 23 percent.

“What we have not done was benefit those who were the intended beneficiaries, the longtime residents and the business owners there and part of that is that we dramatically underestimated the market forces,” Branam said.

Branam said that PDC had spent more than \$67 million in the area, but that amount was dwarfed by more than \$1 billion being spent by private investment — which

that has been most negatively impacted by the changes,” the plan states.

The money comes from tax-increment funds that are slated for economic and redevelopment purposes. The money needs to be spent between 2016 and 2021, before the urban renewal area expires.

Because they are using tax-increment funds, they can only be spent on the planning and construction of physical improvements. They can't be used for workforce development or employment assistance.

Tory Campbell, the PDC interim economic development director presented the draft plan at the community forum. Campbell talked about strategic ways to use the money to create wealth through property development.

Campbell spoke about fostering multigenerational wealth, the passing down of assets and knowledge down generations. He spoke about wealth inequality as an effect of policies enacted two or three generations ago.

“It wasn't that people were not savvy enough to get homes, it wasn't that they did not work hard,” Campbell said. “It was that

These will support home property development, tenant improvements, the creation of affordable retail space and pathways to homeownership.

The \$10.5 million to create culturally relevant spaces has \$8 million allocated for one or two loans for large signature projects that would create a space to offer culturally significant services, food or entertainment. The remaining \$2.5 million will be awarded as community livability grants for local nonprofit projects.

An earlier version of the plan included a proposal to create jobs by granting or loaning money to businesses that would hire employees from the community. An earlier community forum did not favor this proposal. Members were wary that businesses would not follow the benefit agreement or that the Black employees would leave due to a hostile workplace.

Campbell told *The Skanner News* that community members have been focused on the most direct means of creating wealth.

“It was ... wanting to ensure that the dollars that are being directed to working with individuals and ownership opportunities,” Campbell said.