



Engaging the community with a broadband ‘data walk’

by: Jennifer Wilding

January 27, 2023

Swatches of bright red on a map of the Kansas City area were the catalyst for a neighborhood conversation about broadband that included the Kansas City Fed and community partners.

The swatches—in Kansas City’s urban core and the nearby cities of Independence and Lee’s Summit—showed where broadband was available, but residents were not subscribing. The data map and broader report—produced by the Bank and available at [KansasCityFed.org/community/digital-divide](https://www.kansascityfed.org/community/digital-divide)—shed light on Missouri’s broadband needs.

In October, residents of the Wendell Phillips neighborhood in Kansas City participated in a “data walk” conversation, designed to share information about the Kansas City Fed’s broadband research and hear residents’ views on whether the findings were accurate and what the results might mean for the neighborhood. The Bank and partners including aSTEAM Village and the Wendell Phillips Neighborhood Association produced the event. It was held at the offices of aSTEAM Village, a nonprofit that brings science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) learning to Kansas City.

The partners will use the data walk observations to identify actions they could take together or separately—such as further research, policy changes, training, or events—that would meet community needs. The results also will be shared with the public and with policymakers.

The Kansas City partnership is one of four pilot projects in Reserve Banks; the others involve the Atlanta, Philadelphia, and San Francisco banks. The projects are part of a System-wide effort to incorporate community-engaged research.

Learn more about the Kansas City Fed’s community affairs work at [KansasCityFed.org/community](https://www.kansascityfed.org/community).

(Pictured above: Jarede Swinton, a student involved with aSTEAM Village, shared high points from a conversation she led among neighborhood residents. The discussion focused on broadband and why people do or don’t subscribe. Kansas City Fed Senior Community Development Advisor Jeremy Hegle (center) helped coordinate the event. *Photo by Gary Barber*)

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Jennifer Wilding, a community development specialist for the Kansas City Fed, provides communications, engagement, and research for the community development department. Wilding recently served as a beat reporter for [Fed Communities](#), the Federal Reserve System initiative about the Fed's work in communities. She edits the Kansas City Fed's community development newsletter, "[Community Connections](#)" and takes on special projects. Before joining the Kansas City Fed in 2018, she was executive director of Consensus KC, a nonprofit consulting firm specializing in public policy and civic engagement. Wilding holds a B.A. in urban affairs from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She has served as president of the University of Missouri-Kansas City Arts & Sciences Alumni Board, as secretary of the YWCA of Greater Kansas City, and on the board of the National Audio Theatre Festivals. Her hobby is letterpress printing, using a 1,500-pound cast-iron press from the late 1800s. Highlights of her work include: [Disconnected: Seven lessons on fixing the digital divide](#). A layperson's guide to putting broadband, devices and training within reach of a community. [Focus groups with unemployed individuals](#) and with people from nonprofits that serve them, held in Chicago, Detroit, Denver and Kansas City. **About the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City** The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City is one of 12 regional Reserve Banks that, along with the Board of Governors in Washington, D.C., make up our nation's central bank. We work in the public's interest by supporting economic and financial stability. The Kansas City Fed's territory includes Colorado, Kansas, western Missouri, Nebraska, northern New Mexico, Oklahoma and Wyoming. Our headquarters is in Kansas City, with branch offices in Denver, Omaha and Oklahoma City. The Kansas City Fed Community Development Department promotes economic development and public understanding that leads to progress for lower-income individuals and communities. Our focus areas include community development investments, digital inclusion, small business / entrepreneurship, and workforce development.