



August 16, 2010

The Honorable Shaun Donovan, Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Secretary Donovan:

We are writing to follow up on correspondence sent last year dated April 27, 2009 (see attached) in which we requested your leadership in promoting “smart housing” policies to encourage all publicly-supported housing to be cost-effectively connected to broadband service. We again urge that HUD adopt rules and regulations that allow both the construction and operating costs for an affordable broadband network and services to be eligible for all HUD funding programs.

As we’ve previously communicated, we recognize that some HUD programs, including Neighborhood Networks, HOME, and Hope 6, allow for broadband networks to be included in the construction costs or to provide support for technology centers, which is very helpful to introduce residents to digital literacy and high-speed access to the Internet. However, we also know that you, HUD officials in California, and the Obama Administration are committed to advancing self-sufficiency for all Americans, including residents in federally-supported housing. And, all the data about broadband adoption make a compelling case that broadband at home is the most transforming kind of access in enabling families to fully participate in today’s economic opportunities. We think that incorporating broadband availability into HUD-supported housing is critical to helping residents become as successful as possible in a digital world. Further, this strategy is even more relevant today in light of the National Broadband Plan that was prepared and released since we first wrote to you.

We again invite you to become the foremost leader in promoting “smart housing” and urge you to revise HUD rules and regulations to allow the costs for broadband services in both construction and operating budgets. We also ask that you designate and empower an appropriate HUD official to work with us to immediately develop, adopt and promote “smart housing” policies. With your leadership and a directed focus within HUD it is possible to bring the power of broadband access and digital literacy to America’s most disadvantaged citizens. This approach to helping residents in HUD-supported housing acquire 21st century education tools and workforce skills not only will advance self-sufficiency for our nation’s poorest families, but also will enhance America’s long-term global competitiveness.

Sincerely,

Lynn Jacobs
Director
California Department of Housing and
Community Development

Sunne Wright McPeak
President and CEO
California Emerging Technology Fund