

A Real Net Gain for Apartment Complex

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Residents of a low-income Bronx neighborhood are really getting up to speed on the Internet.

Thanks to a partnership with Verizon, close to 6,000 residents in a complex of apartment buildings in Mount Hope, in the western Bronx, are being wired for affordable high-speed Internet access.

“Our goal is to make sure low-income people have broadband and the training to use it. It’s increasingly becoming something that’s a necessity in our world,” said Rey Ramsey, CEO of One Economy, a nonprofit technology company working with the Mount Hope Housing Co. and Verizon on the project.

Almost 120 units in the 31 buildings run by Mount Hope are already connected. All 1,250 apartments are expected to have high-speed access by March. Residents will have the option of purchasing broadband access from Verizon for \$19.95 a month.

“The cost is significantly lower than they can achieve on their own,” said Shaun Belle, president of Mount Hope Housing Co.

Previously, most Mount Hope residents have had to turn to dialups or PCs at work, school, libraries or local computer centers. Without fast home Internet access, Ramsey said, many are cut off from indispensable resources for business, technology training, job hunting, homework help and health information.

“People use the Internet more consistently with access and speed,” Ramsey said. “The object is to combine technology with a social purpose - helping people participate in this economy.”

Ramsey was joined last week by Rep. Jose Serrano (D-South Bronx), other local elected officials, and Mount Hope and Verizon officials to celebrate the launch of the new system.

Residents who sign on will be registered automatically with the Beehive New York, One Economy’s educational Web site, which offers advice on health care, education, money management and starting up an online business.

Mount Hope will offer computer training courses and at-home troubleshooting assistance. Residents also will have the opportunity to purchase inexpensive computers through Per Scholas, a nonprofit company that sells refurbished PCs.

“We want them to have the same access at home that most Americans have and to integrate computers into their everyday lives,” Belle said.