

## Background

Research has shown that the way to expand neighborhoods is not just through the creation of more office space, but with development from the ground up, with arts, technology, and culture as a base. Among a creative economy's (creative-based economic clusters that attract dynamic and diverse pools of workers) greatest strengths is the ability to attract other businesses and jump-start neighborhood development. Arts and culture do this by giving local economies a sense of soul. And this is everything, given that "knowledge workers" and "cultural creatives"-an influential group from playwrights and museum curators to software designers and financial analysts-demand vibrant and dynamic settings in which they can work, live and create. Economic development and the digital divide go hand-in-hand for many reasons. Communities with the tools and skills to compete in the digital economy are at a distinct advantage over communities that don't. In many ways, the situation in a given community can build upon itself, for better or for worse. A community with a well-educated, technology-literate population is more likely to attract and sustain new businesses, and these new businesses in turn attract more well-educated, technology-literate people into the area. Conversely, a community that lacks reliable access to technology and the skills to use it is less likely to attract and sustain new businesses that could potentially serve as a catalyst to economic prosperity. Simply put, if communities are to remain competitive in attracting, retaining and developing businesses in today's economy, they must develop modern telecommunications facilities and cultivate a well-trained workforce to stay viable.