

## WHY 10,000 LOW-INCOME PHILADELPHIANS MIGHT SOON LOSE ACCESS TO THE INTERNET, TECHNICAL.LY/PHILLY

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After purchasing Clearwire three years ago, Sprint is shutting down the WiMAX network that powers Clearwire's CLEAR internet service so it can focus on LTE, the 4G network that has emerged victorious over WiMAX. Sprint plans to shutter CLEAR on Nov. 6.

If that was too much telecom jargon for you (it was for us, too), keep paying attention because the news means two important things for Philadelphia, including what could be a major blow to efforts to close the digital divide in the city.

1. One less broadband option for an already sparse market.

It's tough news to CLEAR customers like Rachael Spotts, 27, who lives in Chester with her three-year-old and her partner. Spotts, who recently got her master's at Widener University, said she chose CLEAR for wireless internet at home because she didn't feel comfortable signing a contract, the way Comcast and Verizon require you to. She was worried that she would miss a payment and get slapped with late fees. With CLEAR, you pay month to month and if you miss a month, you don't get the service.

"It felt safer," she said.

Plus, CLEAR is cheaper in the long run. (Comcast and Verizon start out cheaper but increase their prices after six months.) Spotts paid between \$50 and \$55 per month for the service.

"It's completely devastating."

KELLY ANZULAVICH, JUMPWIRELESS

Sprint spokeswoman Stephanie Vinge said she did not have numbers on how many CLEAR customers there were in Philadelphia, though Sprint spokeswoman Adrienne Norton did confirm that in Philadelphia, there aren't any comparable services to CLEAR (at the same price point, unlimited data and no contract option). When Sprint sent notices about the shutdown, it notified customers about other broadband options in the area. In Spotts' case, Sprint sent her the number for Comcast's Xfinity service.

2. Ten thousand low-income Philadelphians could lose access to the internet because of a dispute between Sprint and two nonprofits that provide them access. (The number of those affected is 300,000 nationally, according to the nonprofits.)