

# Revisiting the Digital Divide

How economic development policy and practice  
concentrates technological resources into the  
hands of the few

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It's often much easier to find funding and opportunities for flashy new tech projects than it is for basic infrastructure issues.



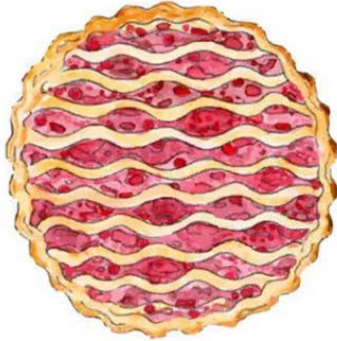


Why does this happen?





**Grow the  
pie**





These policies  
have resulted in  
a concentration  
of wealth into  
the hands of the  
wealthiest.

Small towns and cities are being told they must constantly reinvent themselves.

This happens alongside:

- decreased state and federal funding for necessary infrastructure
- increased competition for the limited grant money
- shrinking tax rolls



The goal of my research is to unwrap the complexities at this intersection of economic development policy, technological advancement, and rural revitalization.



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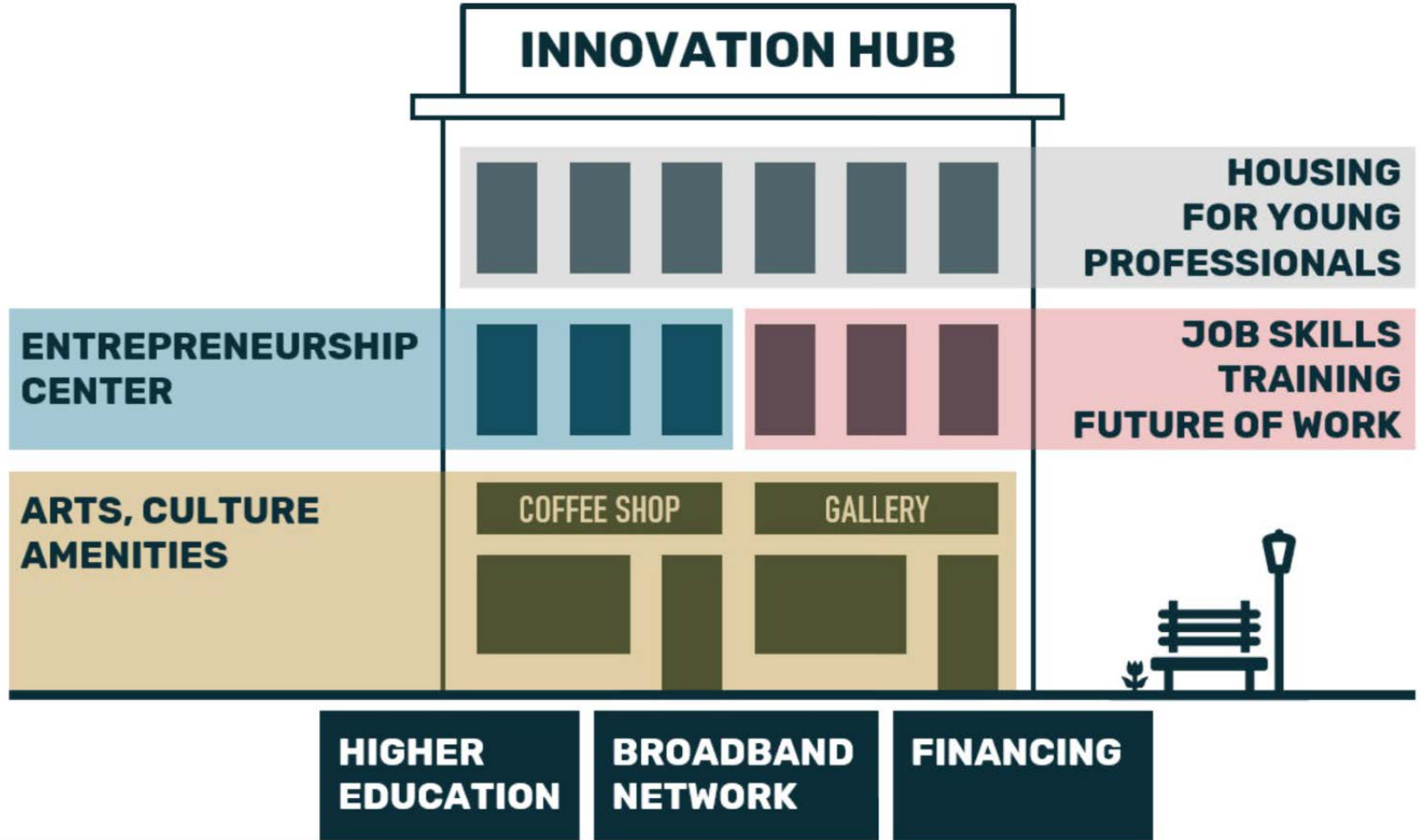
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## There's a catch...

Communities applying need to have:

- existing high-speed broadband
- significant portions of the community in or near Opportunity Zones
- a partnership with a 4yr college or university
- a local non-profit or government that was prepared to raise the matching funds



Who are initiatives like these for?

Economic policies that focus on growth and programs that reward communities with existing resource bases are causing the digital divide to shift.



## Recreating and reinforcing the digital divide

Currently, the digital divide separates those who have access to broadband and digital literacy from those who don't.

A new digital divide is emerging, one that is created by the ability to participate in new formations of the high-tech economy

# Zoning rural exceptionalism

Wherein rural communities are able to leverage economic development policy and the corresponding opportunities to differentiate themselves as a rural player in the new innovation economy.



What do we do about this?

# What exists beyond growth?

Rather than seek limitless economic and population growth, rural communities are better positioned to think critically about sustainability.

Rather than asking about what technology can help us do to revitalize, we should be asking what technology can help us do to sustain and secure the livelihoods of all people.