

LinkNYC kiosks are a trusted lifeline connecting New Yorkers to services

amny.com/opinion/linknyc-kiosks-trusted-lifeline-connecting-new-yorkers-services/

February 14, 2025

By Kristen Grennan, NYC Mayor's Public Engagement Unit



A LinkNYC kiosk in Manhattan.

Photo courtesy of LinkNYC

In a city as vibrant and complex as New York, it can feel all too easy to fall through the cracks. For countless neighbors, the path to essential resources—like affordable housing, internet, or health insurance—can seem out of reach. But it doesn't have to be this way. At the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit (PEU), we are rewriting the rules of government outreach—meeting New Yorkers where they are, using tools that bridge divides, build trust, and deliver results.

Take Carmen, a senior from The Bronx, who has lived in the same apartment for decades. As rents climbed higher and higher, she found herself worrying that the home she loved would slip away. One day, while waiting for the bus, Carmen glanced at a nearby LinkNYC kiosk—a message flashed on the screen about the Rent Freeze program, which helps seniors like her keep rent affordable. Soon after, Carmen's granddaughter came across a PEU staff member handing out flyers about the same program on a bustling street corner. She called the number on the flyer and connected her grandmother with one of our outreach

specialists. Step by step, Carmen received personalized support to enroll in the program, and today, her rent is frozen at a rate she can afford—bringing her peace of mind and the security she deserves.

Carmen's story is just one example of how PEU uses every tool available to connect New Yorkers to the resources they need. This year alone, PEU knocked on more than 122,000 doors, made over 400,000 phone calls, sent 2.6 million text messages, and partnered with LinkNYC to display vital public service announcements more than 4 million times across the city. With a network of over 2,200 kiosks—located within walking distance of shelters, NYCHA developments, and neighborhoods that need them most—LinkNYC does more than offer free Wi-Fi. These kiosks are a trusted lifeline, where residents can find help they didn't even know existed.

Today, New York City provides free internet to more residents — through the city-funded Big Apple Connect program for public housing residents, 450 public computer centers, and LinkNYC — than any other city in the nation. The administration's digital equity efforts, led by the NYC Office of Technology and Innovation, proved vital for residents of historically underconnected communities in 2024, when the federal Affordable Connectivity Program ended due to a lack of additional funding from Congress, putting thousands of New Yorkers at risk of losing affordable broadband. PEU supported this work by partnering with BronxNet to share information on free and low-cost internet options through LinkNYC, helping families, students, and older adults stay connected in an increasingly digital world.

Our outreach doesn't stop there. This winter, during health insurance open enrollment, PEU is using LinkNYC and text messaging to reach New Yorkers, reminding them of critical deadlines and offering one-on-one support to enroll in health care plans. By combining modern technology with tried-and-true methods—like flyering, canvassing, and community events—we ensure no one is left behind.

Carmen's story reminds us of what's possible when we meet New Yorkers where they are: on the streets they walk, the screens they see, and the phones they hold. In the face of rising rents, digital inequities, and economic challenges, we have the tools to make government accessible and responsive to everyone who calls this city home. Now, we need to keep using them.