

Kalispell in top 10 for \$3M tech makeover



Main Street in downtown Kalispell is seen in this Jan. 19, 2020, file photo. (Matt Baldwin/Daily Inter Lake)

By
BRET ANNE SERBIN

Daily Inter Lake
|
July 15, 2021 3:22 PM

Kalispell is a top-10 finalist in T-Mobile's Hometown Techover Contest, a nationwide competition that will award \$3 million in technology improvements to one small, rural town later this summer.

The contest is part of an effort by T-Mobile to invest in "extraordinary communities representing the heart of small-town America," according to a company press release.

The city that wins the grand prize will receive a \$200,000 grant for technology infrastructure, 5G network enhancements, a Little League baseball field refurbishment, a free concert by country duo Florida Georgia Line and one year of free phone service for a select number of residents.

"We have a need for better wireless communications," said Kalispell Mayor Mark Johnson when T-Mobile called city representatives to tell them about the city's spot in the top 10.

The top contenders are judged "based on project feasibility, their need for a network upgrade and town leadership's interest and engagement."

Johnson said Kalispell's population growth and the renovation of the downtown core area have helped the city reach the top 10.

"What they're seeing is investments the community is making in itself," he said.

If Kalispell wins the contest, there would be no obligation for the city to match funding or meet certain requirements in order to reap the benefits of the grand prize.

Even if Kalispell fails to take the top spot, all top-10 finalist cities will receive a \$50,000 grant for a community project. If that's the case, Johnson anticipates the money would go toward the core area.

Kalispell is now up against the Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania; Dunn, North Carolina; Girard, Kansas; Guadalupe, California; Hopkinsville, Kentucky; Tipton, Indiana; Wareham, Massachusetts; Washington, Missouri; and Woodstock, Illinois.

Thousands of American cities were nominated for the contest. But Johnson said Kalispell's nominator remains a mystery. He said he hopes to learn the identity of the person who submitted an application on the city's behalf if the city makes the cut for the top three in the next few weeks.

"Whoever it is, thank you," the mayor said.

Reporter Bret Anne Serbin may be reached at 406-758-4459 or bserbin@dailyinterlake.com.