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**Reinvestment Fund and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Name Durham, NC, One of 50
Invest Health Cities**

Durham to join innovative, national program to improve health in low-income neighborhoods

Durham, NC, May 17, 2016—The city of Durham has been selected by Reinvestment Fund and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to take part in the new *Invest Health* initiative. *Invest Health* is aimed at transforming how leaders from mid-size American cities work together to help low-income communities thrive, with specific attention to community features that drive health such as access to safe and affordable housing, places to play and exercise, and quality jobs.

The team from Durham was selected from more than 180 teams from 170 communities that applied to the initiative. The Durham, NC, team is composed of leaders in public health, community development, and community organizing, including Reinvestment Partners, East Durham Children’s Initiative, Durham County Department of Public Health, City of Durham Community Development, and Duke University. The Durham Team will address violence as a health issue, focusing on neighborhood stabilization and trauma-based social services to reduce violent crime in local neighborhoods.

“This initiative will lead to greater resources and coordination to improve neighborhoods and reduce violence in Durham. We seek to intervene in the cycle of trauma caused by violence for individuals and the community,” said Peter Skillern, Executive Director of Reinvestment Partners, the lead agency for the Durham team.

According to the RWJF County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, Durham is the second most violent county in North Carolina, with a violent crime rate of 648 per 100,000, compared to 355 for the state. Violence has lasting health effects on victims and the community. While direct victims of violence suffer significant health consequences, indirect exposure from living in violent neighborhoods creates trauma and stress, which has been linked to chronic illness. The Invest Health program has the potential to fundamentally transform the way Durham improves opportunities to live healthy lives by addressing the drivers of health including jobs, housing, education, community safety and environmental conditions.



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“With a long history in community development finance, we are excited to help create a pipeline to channel capital into low-income communities through public and private investments,” said Amanda High, Chief of Strategic Initiatives at Reinvestment Fund. “Our goal is to transform how cities approach tough challenges, share lessons learned and spur creative collaboration.”

Over the next 18 months, *Invest Health* teams will take part in a vibrant learning community, have access to highly skilled faculty advisors and coaches who will guide their efforts toward improved health, and receive a \$60,000 grant. Durham will also engage a broader group of local stakeholders to encourage local knowledge sharing. Learning from the program will be synthesized and disseminated through the [project website](#).

“Public officials, community developers, and many others have been working in low-income neighborhoods for years, but they haven’t always worked together,” said Donald Schwarz, MD, MPH, MBA, RWJF Vice President, Program. “*Invest Health* aims to align their work and help neighborhoods thrive by intentionally incorporating health into community development.”

Durham’s projects will explore a broad range of ideas from removing vacant and substandard housing that is contributing to blight and disinvestment to implementing trauma based strategies to prevent violence. Project teams will travel to Philadelphia for a kick-off meeting on June 7th and will meet regularly to share lessons learned throughout the 18-month project. A full list of awardees and more information is available at www.investhealth.org.

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About The Reinvestment Fund

Reinvestment Fund is a catalyst for change in low-income communities. We integrate data, policy and strategic investments to improve the quality of life in low-income neighborhoods. Using analytical and financial tools, we bring high-quality grocery stores, affordable housing, schools and health centers to the communities that need better access—creating anchors that attract investment over the long term and help families lead healthier, more productive lives. Learn more at reinvestment.com.

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are striving to build a national Culture of Health that will enable all to live longer, healthier lives now and for generations to come. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at www.rwjf.org/twitter or on Facebook at www.rwjf.org/facebook.