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News and Noteworthy Details

Monday, November 5, 2012

Durham Named as Top 20 Finalist in Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayors Challenge

City's Idea Selected from Over 300 Submissions to Compete for \$5 million Grand Prize

DURHAM, N.C. – City of Durham Mayor William V. "Bill" Bell today announced that the City has been selected as a finalist for the Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayors Challenge, a competition created to inspire American cities to generate innovative ideas that solve major challenges and improve city life – and that ultimately can be shared with other cities across the nation.

Durham was selected based on its innovative idea to create entrepreneurship hubs in three distressed neighborhoods to positively impact job creation, family stability, workforce training, and overall economic growth in those areas. Submitted by the City's Neighborhood Improvement Services Department's Urban Innovation Center, the proposed project will now compete against 19 other cities across the country for a \$5 million grand prize as well as one of four additional prizes of \$1 million each.

The City's Durham Urban Innovation Center partners with residents to creatively solve community issues by using talent and support from businesses, academic institutions, nonprofits and other health and human service agencies.

"This project presents Durham with an exciting opportunity to be transformative in a unique way which, if executed, could have a very positive impact on Durham in general, and specifically for the people in the selected neighborhoods," Bell said. "To be selected as a finalist from more than 300 submissions across the country speaks volumes about the potential value of this project to Durham and to other cities."

A team from Durham will attend the Bloomberg Ideas Camp, a two-day gathering in New York City in November during which city teams will work collaboratively with each other and experts to further refine their ideas. Coming out of the Camp, the Durham team will have access to additional technical support to prepare their ideas for final submission. Winners will be announced in spring 2013, with a total of \$9 million going to five cities to jumpstart implementation of their ideas.

"Congratulations to Mayor Bell and the City of Durham for becoming a Mayors Challenge finalist. The response to the Mayors Challenge was extraordinary: bold and innovative ideas were submitted from every corner of the country. We look forward to welcoming the Durham team to Ideas Camp," said James Anderson, who directs the Government Innovation Program at Bloomberg Philanthropies.

The 20 finalist ideas were rated on four key criteria: vision/creativity, ability to implement, potential for impact, and potential for replication. A specially-assembled selection committee, co-chaired by Shona Brown, senior vice president and head of Google.org, and Ron Daniel, Bloomberg Philanthropies board member and former managing partner at McKinsey & Company where he is still active, helped select the finalist cities.

About the Mayors Challenge

Mayors of U.S. cities with 30,000 residents or more were eligible to compete in the Mayors Challenge. 305 cities representing 45 states across the country submitted applications by September 14, 2012. The Mayors Challenge is the latest initiative of Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayors Project, which aims to spread proven and promising ideas among cities. Other Mayors Project investments include Cities of Service, Innovation Delivery Teams, and Financial Empowerment Centers. To learn more about the Mayors Challenge, visit <http://bloomberg.org/mayorschallenge>.

About the City of Durham Neighborhood Improvement Services Department

The Neighborhood Improvement Services Department works to preserve and improve quality of life conditions for Durham residents, and to encourage active participation in neighborhood redevelopment and public policy and decision making dialogue. The department is responsible for enforcement of quality of life ordinances and state statutes including the City's Minimum Housing Code; Nonresidential Code; Weedy Lot, Abandoned and Junk Vehicle ordinances; and the State of North Carolina's Unsafe Building Statute. The department's rapid responders, known as the Impact Team, remediate non-compliant housing properties; abate public nuisances, such as litter, graffiti, illegal dumping, and abandoned shopping carts; and conduct neighborhood service projects. The department's Community Engagement staff provides outreach and education to Durham residents and community organizations. Guided by the City's Strategic Plan, the department helps ensure that Durham has thriving, livable