



## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Grand Rapids selected as finalist in 2018 Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayors Challenge



**GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.** – Grand Rapids is one of 35 Champion Cities selected today as a finalist in the 2018 U.S. Mayors Challenge – a national competition that encourages city leaders to uncover bold, innovative ideas that confront the toughest challenges communities face.

Grand Rapids' idea – develop a grassroots-led census initiative to collect real-time data at the household and business level to become a racially equitable city – was among 35 cities that rose to the top of a competitive field of more than 320 applications. As a Champion City, Grand

Rapids advances to a six-month testing phase during which it can refine its idea through community engagement with a grant of up to \$100,000 from Bloomberg Philanthropies.

“We are incredibly grateful to Bloomberg Philanthropies for the opportunity to work with our community to test, learn and adapt our Mayors Challenge idea,” Mayor Rosalynn Bliss said. “We believe this initiative has great potential to move us forward in a significant way as we work to become a more equitable city.”

The City proposes to annually collect, analyze and share the results of a community census through a publically accessible dashboard, empowering city leaders with localized, actionable data on hotspots of

inequality to help deploy health, housing and other resources where they are most needed. This idea came from two brainstorming sessions during which community stakeholders identified the lack of current, granular demographic data in Grand Rapids as a contributor to continued racial disparities found in development, housing, health, employment and environmental issues.

In addition to financial support, Grand Rapids will receive personalized support from innovation experts to test and begin building support for its idea to best position it for implementation and long-term success. The City then will submit a new application to Bloomberg Philanthropies in August based on the refined idea. In October, four cities will receive \$1 million awards and one will receive a grand prize of \$5 million to bring their ideas to life.

Grand Rapids is among 35 cities competing for the grand prize in the Mayors Challenge. A list of the Champion Cities and their ideas is available at [mayorschallenge.bloomberg.org](http://mayorschallenge.bloomberg.org).

The 35 Champion Cities performed the best against four key criteria: vision, potential for impact, implementation plan and potential to spread to other cities. A selection committee co-chaired by former Ambassador Caroline Kennedy and former Xerox Chairman and CEO Ursula Burns and comprised of policy experts, artists and academic, business and social innovation leaders reviewed the applications.

“We received hundreds of bold and creative ideas from cities around the country in response to the 2018 Mayors Challenge, and these 35 really stood out for their potential to improve people’s lives,” said Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and three-term mayor of New York City. “The next six months are a great opportunity for the cities to test their ideas and make them more innovative and effective.”

The Mayors Challenge returns to the U.S. as the first investment in the American Cities Initiative – a \$200 million suite of new and expanded programs that empower cities to generate innovation and advance policy that moves the nation forward.

The 2018 Mayors Challenge builds on the success of previous Bloomberg-sponsored Challenges in the U.S. (2013), Europe (2014) and Latin America and the Caribbean (2016). For more information, visit [mayorschallenge.bloomberg.org](http://mayorschallenge.bloomberg.org) and @BloombergCities on Twitter and Instagram.

#### **About Bloomberg Philanthropies**

Bloomberg Philanthropies works in more than 120 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on five key areas for creating lasting change: arts, education, environment, government innovation and public health. Bloomberg

Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg's charitable activities, including his foundation and personal giving. In 2016, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed \$600 million. For more information, please visit [www.bloomberg.org](http://www.bloomberg.org) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Snapchat](#), and [Twitter](#).

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