

INVEST HEALTH

Strategies for Healthier Cities

A Project of the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*
and *Reinvestment Fund*

MISSOULA INVEST HEALTH

For immediate release

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Missoula Invest Health Awarded \$75,000 Technical-Support Grant to Advance Health Equity; Housing Solutions City one of 10 Selected by Reinvestment Fund

June 19, 2019 – Missoula is one of 10 U.S. cities awarded a \$75,000 grant and 12 months of technical support from Reinvestment Fund to advance health equity in the city.

The grant will further two principal goals in Missoula: developing financeable housing projects that promote health equity; and advancing and aligning community investment systems to obtain funding for those projects.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, health equity is defined as giving every person the opportunity to “attain his or her full health potential,” with no one “disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or other socially determined circumstances.” Health inequities are reflected in differences in length of life; quality of life; rates of disease, disability, and death; severity of disease; and access to treatment.

Many authoritative studies suggest that housing disparities correlate with health disparities. The Reinvestment Fund grant, awarded to Missoula Invest Health and administered by the Missoula City-County Health Department, will advance work on citizen-led appropriate housing solutions for Missoula, according to Missoula Invest Health team leader Lisa Beczkiewicz, health promotions supervisor at the Health Department.

“This award reflects the shared vision and progress made to develop policies, strategies,

and systems, reflecting community voice, to ensure that all Missoulians have equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives,” said Beczkiewicz.

Other members of the Missoula Invest Health core team are Laval Means, planning services manager for the city’s Development Services department; Karen Myers, chief mission integration officer for Providence Health and Services Montana; Kaia Peterson, assistant director of NeighborWorks Montana; and Susan Hay Patrick, chief executive officer of United Way of Missoula County.

A larger Missoula Invest Health steering committee includes representatives of the University of Montana, Missoula Interfaith Collaborative, and more than 20 community partners from the public and private sectors.

The grant is the third that Missoula Invest Health has received since 2016 from Invest Health, a project of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Reinvestment Fund that brings together diverse leaders from mid-sized U.S. cities to develop new strategies for increasing and leveraging private and public investments to accelerate improvements in neighborhoods facing the biggest barriers to better health. A goal of the initiative is to transform the way local leaders work together to create solution-driven and diverse partnerships. Missoula Invest Health focuses on three Missoula neighborhoods: Northside/Westside, River Road, and Franklin to the Fort.

“The Invest Health team is giving voice to Missoulians whose needs go unrecognized and unmet because they’re unknown,” Mayor John Engen said. “We can’t claim to be a great community if we’re not seeking out those without access to a bully pulpit and learning their challenges and seeing the opportunities they see.”

He cited increased awareness of health equity within current city-county policies; a new, interactive local Community Health Map; “Good to Be Home,” a housing and health rehabilitation grant awarded by Providence St. Patrick Hospital to NeighborWorks Montana to improve housing conditions at homes in targeted neighborhoods; new sidewalk investments; and the inclusion of community resident voice in city development policy, plans, systems and programs.

“The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Reinvestment Fund continue to recognize the innovative, on-the-ground work happening in Missoula,” Engen said. “It’s our hope that these efforts make life better for all Missoulians and, by extension, many more people around the country.”

Beczkiewicz said the Reinvestment Fund grant will help Missoula Invest Health focus on exploring effective, public-private housing partnership models, hiring a health equity coordinator, “and creating the right incentives and partnership structures to leverage the expertise and scale of developers, while meeting the affordability and health goals of our community.”

The other selected city teams, from 23 applicants, include Akron, OH; Grand Rapids, MI; Greensboro, NC; Hartford, CT; Lansing, MI; Napa, CA; Riverside, CA; Roseville, CA; and Spokane, WA.

Reinvestment Fund is a \$1.2 billion federally certified community development financial institution (CDFI) that brings together individual investors, banks, public officials, private foundations and faith-based and community organizations to invest in communities.

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