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Cheyenne Named as Finalist in Bloomberg Philanthropies' 2018 Mayors Challenge

(CHEYENNE) February 21, 2018 – The City of Cheyenne is one of 35 Champion Cities selected today as finalists in the 2018 U.S. Mayors Challenge, a nationwide competition that encourages city leaders to uncover bold, inventive ideas that confront the toughest problems cities face. These 35 urban innovations rose to the top of a competitive pool of more than 320 applications. The Champion Cities will now begin a 6-month testing phase where they will conduct public prototypes of their ideas with grant funding of up to $100,000 per city, a new addition to the Competition this year. 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 will empower cities to generate innovation and advance policy that moves the nation forward.

Cheyenne now advances to the six-month "Test, Learn, and Adapt" phase of the competition. Cities will refine their ideas during this process with up to $100,000, as well as personalized support from innovation experts, to test and begin building support for their urban innovations and submit a new application in August 2018. 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.

"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. The next six months are a great opportunity for the cities to test their ideas and make them even more innovative and effective," said Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and three-term Mayor of New York City.

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 prestigious selection committee Co-Chaired by Former Ambassador Caroline Kennedy and Former Xerox Chairman & CEO Ursula Burns and comprising distinguished policy experts, artists, academics, business executives and social innovation leaders assessed the applications.

As a Champion City, the City of Cheyenne proposes to catalyze its city's core revitalization by matching owners of underutilized commercial properties with entrepreneurs, supported by creative redevelopment incentives.

The innovation would involve creating an online site for linking owners of underutilized commercial properties with redevelopment resources, then matching them with entrepreneurs seeking flexible spaces to try ideas. The online site would also provide opportunities for local investment through equity crowdfunding for packaged projects called "Buildings with a Purpose" helping incubate the business idea and contribute to redevelopment of the building.

A common online site helping to accomplish this would feature:

- Point building owners to redevelopment resources
- Assist entrepreneurs to find resources for business development and enter into challenge opportunities.
- Allow residents to suggest ideas and vote on opportunities.
- Allow for impact investing in Building with a Purpose

Through data gathering and field inspections, a significant number of vacant and underutilized buildings were identified in the core of Cheyenne. Roughly half of those buildings were within two blocks of Cheyenne's Historic Depot, among the most iconic buildings and recognizable features of the city skyline.

"I am thrilled that we will be taking my campaign promise to 'Fight the Blight' to a new and exciting level. Our innovative idea, 'Buildings with a Purpose' will create an online site for linking owners of underutilized commercial properties with redevelopment resources, then matching them with entrepreneurs seeking flexible spaces to try innovative ideas," Mayor Orr said regarding Cheyenne's involvement in the Mayors Challenge. "That Cheyenne, Wyoming was selected as one of 35 cities across the country as a Champion City is not only an honor, but I believe a difference-maker in redeveloping our Original City – that of the West Edge, our Downtown, and Southside."

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 and @BloombergCities on Twitter and Instagram.

About Bloomberg Philanthropies

Bloomberg Philanthropies works in over 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 his personal giving. In 2016, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed $600 million. For more information, please visit www.bloomberg.org or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter.

Media Contact

At A Glance

- The City of Cheyenne is among 35 Champion Cities That Will Embark on a 6-month Testing Phase in Competition for Grand Prize

- As Part of the American Cities Initiative, Challenge Will Invest $17.5 Million in Grants and Technical Assistance to Discover Innovative Solutions to Urgent Local Issues

- Economic decline has resulted in an increase in vacant and underutilized commercial buildings in the city core, most directly impacting approximately 4,800 local residents. The City of Cheyenne will catalyze this area's revitalization by matching owners of underutilized commercial properties with entrepreneurs, supported by creative redevelopment incentives.

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