



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### EDDC AWARDED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT TO DEVELOP CULINARY ARTS DISTRICT MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS PLAN

ERIE, PA, September 9, 2019:

On August 27<sup>th</sup>, the Erie Downtown Development Corporation (“EDDC”) was among 13 grantees announced as receiving technical assistance awards through the [Healthy Food Financing Initiative’s \(HFFI\) inaugural grants program](#). Funding for the HFFI program is provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. Thirteen projects received a total of \$400,000 in technical assistance awards.

“We are thrilled to be one of only thirteen organizations in the entire country to receive this Technical Assistance support,” said EDDC CEO John Persinger. “This assistance will help us develop an effective management and operations plan for our Culinary Arts District, combat downtown’s USDA-designated food desert, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the district’s planned public market, food hall, community kitchen, and culinary incubator.”

Awardees were selected through a competitive process that was open to eligible fresh food retail projects seeking financial and technical assistance to overcome the higher costs and initial barriers to entry in underserved areas. More than 240 applicants from 46 states, territories and the District of Columbia applied for financial assistance grants with a total request of \$42.5 million. A full list of awardees is available at [www.investinginfood.com](http://www.investinginfood.com).

As the National Fund Manager, Reinvestment Fund administered this inaugural funding round for healthy food retail projects to expand access to healthy foods in underserved rural and urban areas, to create and preserve quality jobs, and to revitalize low-income communities.

“Access to healthy food is about more than making sure all Americans have easy access to nutritious, affordable food—it is also about strengthening local economies and community infrastructure,” said Don Hinkle-Brown, President and CEO of Reinvestment Fund. “The response to this funding opportunity is indicative of the immense need and the innovative approaches communities are undertaking to support equitable access to fresh, healthy food for everyone.”

The EDDC was selected as a grant awardee because its Culinary Arts District will make a transformational impact within one of the poorest zip codes in the country – median income in the downtown core is \$10,800. As a USDA-designated food desert, downtown Erie has lacked a stable supply of fresh, healthy food. Through its public market, the Culinary Arts District will address this community need. The public market, as well as the food hall, community kitchen, and culinary incubator, will also strengthen the local economy and community infrastructure through its partnerships with local vendors and through the new jobs and businesses that it will help create.

To be eligible for assistance, healthy food retail project applicants had to: 1) plan to expand or preserve the availability of staple and perishable foods in underserved areas with low and moderate-income populations; and 2) accept benefits under the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP).

While new at USDA Rural Development, the U.S. Department of the Treasury and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have invested in healthy food projects through Community Development Financial Institutions and Community Development Corporations since 2010. To date, federal support has totaled \$267 million in grants and has leveraged an estimated \$1 billion in additional financing. It has also supported nearly 1,000 grocery and other healthy food retail projects in more than 35 states across the country, revitalizing economies, creating jobs, and improving health.

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#### **About Reinvestment Fund**

Reinvestment Fund is a catalyst for change in underserved communities. We integrate data, policy and strategic investments to improve the quality of life in underserved 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](http://reinvestment.com)

#### **About Erie Downtown Development Corporation**

The Erie Downtown Development Corporation was formed in 2017 by community business and philanthropic leaders to transform downtown Erie, Pennsylvania, through property redevelopment. The EDDC's first projects focus on transforming 100,000 s/f of vacant, underutilized, and blighted buildings into a Culinary Arts District that will feature a public market, food hall, community kitchen, and culinary incubator. Learn more at [www.erieddc.org](http://www.erieddc.org).