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## Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: Building Healthy Rural Communities in North Carolina

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Article: <https://ced.sog.unc.edu/building-healthy-rural-communities-in-north-carolina/>

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The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust is framing a new place-based initiative around an important question related to the long-term prosperity and vitality of rural communities in the state:

What if rural North Carolina was a healthy place? For example:

- What if fewer people suffered from diabetes?
- What if healthy food was affordable and staying active was easier?
- What if each person in the county had a doctor they knew and who knew them?
- What if grandmothers and pastors and business leaders and teachers all had a say?
- What if we talked about health as critical to the future success of rural North Carolina?

The Trust launched the Healthy Places NC initiative in 2012 with the goal of investing \$100 million in 10-15 economically distressed counties in order to catalyze community-driven efforts to improve health outcomes and the quality of life in target communities. To date, activities are underway in Beaufort, Burke, Edgecombe-Nash, Halifax, McDowell, and Rockingham Counties. Additional counties will be invited to participate over time.

The Trust is engaging participant communities in long-term partnerships over 5-10 years in order to support health improvement activities that are inspired and led by local residents. The Trust is supporting a variety of activities that extend beyond the traditional kinds of health care organizations it has typically funded. These include: enhancing recreational facilities for kids, increasing physical activity and healthy eating habits among residents, making healthy food options more accessible, and creating more spaces that facilitate physical activity.

The Healthy Places NC initiative is intriguing and I look forward to seeing how it progresses. What are your thoughts about the connection between the health of communities and economic development?