Today, the city of Johannesburg joins the Cities Changing Diabetes programme and becomes the first African city to join the global initiative. The addition of the largest city in South Africa as a partner city means Cities Changing Diabetes now brings together six cities across four continents in the fight against urban diabetes.

Johannesburg City Member of the Mayoral Council on Health and Social Development Ms Nonceba Molwele says: “Diabetes is ranked 6th among the top 10 leading causes of death in Johannesburg and represents a significant public health challenge here. Joining Cities Changing Diabetes is an exciting opportunity for us to learn more about what we can do to combat this growing condition. We look forward to learning from the experiences of other cities around the world, so that we can create a more liveable and healthy Johannesburg with fewer people at risk of developing diabetes.”

Cities Changing Diabetes was established in 2014 by founding partners Novo Nordisk, University College London (UCL) and Steno Diabetes Center. The programme aims to tackle the rise of diabetes in cities through three distinct but interconnecting phases: mapping, sharing and action.

In November 2015, the partnership presented findings of first-of-its-kind research that found that diabetes vulnerability in cities is linked to a complex mix of social and cultural factors—responsible for both putting people at greater initial risk of developing type 2 diabetes and subsequently making them less likely to be diagnosed, receive treatment and maintain good health. For example the study findings showed that in Houston many people link diabetes with lower socio-economic status, while people of all economic classes are in fact vulnerable to the condition. In Mexico City, gender roles were linked to increased diabetes vulnerability among women, who sometimes went undiagnosed after neglecting their personal health.

Global research lead David Napier, professor of Medical Anthropology, UCL explains: “We are helping cities to look beyond traditional biomedical risk factors for diabetes to consider why it is that urban inhabitants are at increased risk of diabetes. Working with Johannesburg is significant for the programme as it will provide our first insights into urban diabetes in Africa and crucially, will enable the city to take action for the health of its citizens.”

The programme insights have already informed a decision in February 2016 by Cities Changing Diabetes partner city Copenhagen to establish a new diabetes centre. The centre will enable improved access to diabetes for all citizens including care for vulnerable, hard-to-reach populations identified by the programme’s research efforts. In addition to Johannesburg, Houston, Mexico City and Copenhagen, the cities of Shanghai and Tianjin are sharing insights and taking action as part of the Cities Changing Diabetes programme.
ABOUT CITIES CHANGING DIABETES
Cities Changing Diabetes is a partnership programme to address the urban diabetes challenge. Initiated by Novo Nordisk, the programme is a response to the dramatic rise of urban diabetes and has been developed in partnership with University College London and Steno Diabetes Center, as well as a range of local partners including the diabetes/health community, city governments, academic institutions, city experts (from a variety of fields) and civil society organisations.

To date, the following cities are partners of the programme: Mexico City, Houston, Copenhagen, Shanghai, Tianjin and Johannesburg. The aim of the programme is to map the problem, share solutions and drive concrete action to fight the diabetes challenge in the big cities around the world. For more information, visit citieschangingdiabetes.com

ABOUT NOVO NORDISK
Novo Nordisk is a global healthcare company with more than 90 years of innovation and leadership in diabetes care. This heritage has given us experience and capabilities that also enable us to help people defeat other serious chronic conditions: Haemophilia, growth disorders and obesity.

Headquartered in Denmark, Novo Nordisk employs approximately 41,000 people in 75 countries and markets its products in more than 180 countries.

For more information, visit novonordisk.com, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube

1. Data on file, Cities Changing Diabetes