



For Immediate Release

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**WAYNE COUNTY FOUNDATION RECIPIENT OF
LILLY GIFT VII COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP GRANT**

The Wayne County Foundation has received a Community Leadership Grant of \$150,000 as part of the seventh phase of Lilly Endowment Inc.'s Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow (GIFT VII) initiative. With the grant, the community foundation will support Neighborhood Development and Community Revitalization (NICE! Program) and Main Street/Downtown Initiatives.

The Wayne County Foundation is one of 84 foundations in Indiana receiving grants through this round of GIFT VII grantmaking. Lilly Endowment created GIFT in 1990 to help local communities in Indiana develop the philanthropic capacity to identify local needs and challenges. It launched GIFT VII in 2018 and made available a total of \$125 million to help foundations strengthen their leadership capacities in the towns, cities and counties they serve. Lilly Endowment expects to make additional GIFT VII grants in the coming months.

“The Community Leadership Grant is a great opportunity to support Wayne County through the work of *Forward Wayne County (FWC)*. This award will allow *FWC* to support neighborhood development activities, Mainstreet projects and workforce development programs through workshops and grantmaking,” said Rebecca Gilliam, Executive Director of the Wayne County Foundation.

As part of GIFT VII, the Wayne County Foundation was awarded a planning grant of \$75,000 in 2019 to convene local stakeholders to identify, prioritize and assess opportunities and challenges in and around Wayne County. In March 2020, the Wayne County Foundation was invited to apply for a GIFT VII Community Leadership Grant to implement strategies and activities identified during the planning period.

“With the Planning Grant, *FWC* launched a countywide survey to better understand residents’ experiences and observations related to early childhood development, neighborhood environments, and quality of place. Overall, the community survey revealed a population that loves where they live, and are optimistic about the future, despite concerns about creeping blight and a lack of recreational activities. Projects that focus on Neighborhood Development and Community Revitalization and Workforce Development and will harness this energy and work towards addressing community needs.”

The \$150,000 investment from Lilly Endowment will allow FWC to respond in an informed way to the expressed priorities of Wayne County residents, and to monitor, evaluate, and report on current and future programs. We are planning work on the following:

- **Neighborhood Development and Community Revitalization:**
 - Implement Neighborhood Involvement and Community Engagement (NICE!) Program
 - Neighborhood Involvement and Community Engagement (NICE!) Program Grant
 - Grants for funding Downtown Projects
- **Workforce Development:**
 - Workforce Development Program Use Campaign Grants for funding Career Readiness Programming
- **Measuring Success:**
 - Dashboard Implementation

“We appreciate Lilly Endowment’s continued support of Wayne County and are excited about the work that we will be able to do with this generous grant,” said Acacia St. John, Program Manager of Forward Wayne County.

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The Wayne County Foundation exists to foster and encourage private philanthropic giving, to enhance the spirit of community and to improve the quality of life in the Wayne County, Indiana, area now and for future generations.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly, Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. Although the gifts of stock remain a financial bedrock of the Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders’ wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion. The Endowment funds significant programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion. However, it maintains a special commitment to its founders’ hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana.