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### ***Downtown Forward Receives Ohio Historic Tax Credit***

**MANSFIELD, Ohio** — Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Development Director Lydia Mihalik announced more than \$86 million in tax credits to support the preservation and revitalization of dozens of historic buildings across the state.

The Downtown Forward project in Mansfield received a \$5 million tax credit from the Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit program. Downtown Forward is a transformational revitalization initiative made possible through the donation of 14 historic Mansfield buildings from the Fernyak family and is a partnership between the Richland County Foundation and Windsor Development.

Windsor Development is an Ohio-based firm specializing in historic redevelopment and community-centered downtown revitalization. The phased project will restore historic buildings, introduce new housing and activate commercial spaces in the heart of the city.

“This is one of the most significant moments for downtown Mansfield in generations,” said Allie Watson, President and CEO of the Richland County Foundation. “The Fernyak family’s extraordinary gift ensures these historic buildings remain community assets while creating new opportunities for residents, businesses, and investment. Downtown Forward represents long-term commitment, thoughtful growth, and belief in Mansfield’s future.”

#### **A Legacy Gift for Downtown Mansfield**

The Fernyak family has played a long-standing role in downtown Mansfield. Their decision to donate 14 buildings reflects a belief in the city’s future and creates a rare and exciting generational opportunity to bring new housing, restore historic spaces, and strengthen the heart of downtown in a meaningfully coordinated way.

“Our family has believed in downtown Mansfield for many years. We felt strongly that the next chapter for these buildings should be guided by an organization focused on the long-term good of the community,” said John Fernyak. “The Richland County Foundation is uniquely positioned to ensure these properties continue serving Mansfield for generations. We’re excited to see new life, new residents, and renewed energy in the heart of downtown.”

#### **What’s Coming to Downtown Mansfield**

Phase One of Downtown Forward will renovate 180,000 square feet and create approximately 102 new apartments in a mix of studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units. Based on standard residential occupancy, the development is expected to bring approximately 150 new residents to downtown Mansfield, significantly increasing daily activity and foot traffic.

The redevelopment will also introduce approximately 50,000 square feet of commercial space, supporting additional retail, restaurant, and small business opportunities in the downtown core.

The multi-million-dollar investment includes architectural restoration, infrastructure improvements, modern building systems, and historic preservation efforts designed to maintain the character of downtown Mansfield while making the buildings viable for long-term use.

Construction is expected to begin in Q3, with completion targeted for late 2027. The project is expected to generate approximately 160 construction jobs during redevelopment and 12–14 permanent full-time operational jobs once the development is stabilized.

“Projects like this only succeed when the community leads the way,” said Alex Dorsey, Founder and CEO of Windsor Development. “We have heard Mansfield loud and clear. Our focus is to preserve the character of these historic buildings, create quality housing, support local businesses, and bring more people downtown every day. We believe this investment will have a lasting impact on Mansfield, helping create a vibrant, walkable downtown that reflects the community’s vision and creates new opportunities for generations to come.”

Downtown Forward is designed as a phased redevelopment effort. Phase I represents the first step in a broader long-term opportunity. The Fernyak family owns approximately 50 properties downtown, creating the potential for continued investment and additional housing and commercial redevelopment over time.

### **A Transformational Step for Downtown Mansfield**

Downtown Forward will restore historic buildings, activate underutilized upper floors and bring new residents to the city center, supporting existing businesses and increasing daily activity and foot traffic, essential components of long-term economic vibrancy.

Mayor Jodie Perry called the project a milestone for Mansfield’s future.

“This investment represents confidence in our city and our downtown,” said Mayor Perry. “Bringing more residents downtown strengthens small businesses, increases vibrancy and builds on the progress already underway. Downtown Forward is exactly the kind of partnership that moves Mansfield forward.”

The donation allows the Richland County Foundation to guide the long-term future of key downtown properties while working with development partners to ensure thoughtful redevelopment that benefits the entire community.

“This is about more than buildings,” said Allie Watson, President and CEO of the Richland County Foundation. “It’s about creating a downtown where people live, gather, and do business. This is exactly what community foundations are built to do: turn meaningful gifts into lasting community benefit. We’re extremely fortunate to have strong partners beside us, years of

community planning behind us, and an extraordinary donor gift that makes advancing our mission possible.”

Additional phases, renderings, and project details will be released as planning progresses.

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**About the Richland County Foundation**

The Richland County Foundation, a not-for-profit 501c3, was established in 1945 as a way for individuals to pool and invest their gifts for the long-term good of Richland County and its residents.

The Foundation helps people in Richland County give back to their community by investing their gifts wisely so that grants can be made to improve the quality of life for all the county’s citizens. Collaborating with donors, the Foundation meets important needs today and plans for a strong future.

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