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Forest Forward is awarded \$5 million from Communities Foundation of Texas for Capital Campaign

Forest Forward completes half of the campaign goal of \$75.2M

Dallas, Texas – January 30, 2023 - Forest Forward is now fifty percent to its capital campaign goal with the announcement of a \$5 million investment from Communities Foundation of Texas. Forest Forward's campaign to raise \$75,215,000 is underway to support the vision of igniting a just, healthy, and thriving South Dallas. The campaign is on target for the historic Forest Theater to start construction this year, with a goal of holding the grand opening on the 75th anniversary of the Theater in December 2024.

"With this infusion of funding, Forest Forward is strongly positioned as a catalyst for sustainable community and economic development in sunny South Dallas. Our strategy is focused on holistic and inclusive revitalization including arts education, cradle to college support, building of mixed-income housing, and the restoration of the historic Forest Theater. We are elated to receive this substantial investment in support of our work that will create lasting impact for our neighbors. This contribution demonstrates that Communities Foundation of Texas is an advocate and philanthropic leader committed to ensuring residents from all Dallas zip codes benefit from the growth and forward movement happening in Dallas," said **Elizabeth Wattley**, Chief Executive Officer for Forest Forward.

Forest Forward has built a long-term partnership with Dallas ISD and was the catalyst for the creation of the Martin Luther King Jr. Arts Academy, a school with STEAM curriculum that has already seen tremendous growth and re-engagement from local South Dallas families. The restored Forest Theater will be utilized for courses and educational offerings.

"Our grant support to Forest Forward from our W.W. Caruth, Jr. Fund not only helps restore the historic Forest Theater, but also allows them to set a strategic plan that is aligned with our priority of advancing community equity," said **Wende Burton**, Chief Philanthropy Officer at Communities Foundation of Texas. "We are thrilled to invest in this important revitalization initiative, and we are excited about the educational, economic, and cultural opportunities that this project will bring to South Dallas," said Burton.



The Forest Theater renovation and building project will create 66,000 square feet focusing on: 1) 1,000-seat performance hall; 2) 13,000 square foot arts education hub; 3) studio theater; 4) café offerings; and 5) a roof top feature.

“The Forest Theater and South Dallas are a significant part of our city’s history and future. Partnering with Forest Forward on this community revitalization effort and its Purpose-Built Communities model is a direct investment in furthering our vision of a thriving community for all,” said **Dave Scullin**, President and CEO at Communities Foundation of Texas.

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About the history of the Forest Theater

In the early 1940s, South Dallas was an economically thriving, predominately Jewish community anchored by institutions such as Temple Emanu-El. Built in 1949 by Karl Hoblitzelle, founder of the Interstate Theater chain, the Forest Theater was a state-of-the-art community facility. However, the theater was segregated and Black attendees were required to sit in the balcony. Construction of US 175 highway resulted in white flight and redlining policies began to suffocate the neighborhood. In 1956, the theater re-opened to cater to Black residents and the community re-embraced the Forest Theater. Over the years, the theater has hosted several A-list performances from artists such as Erykah Badu, B.B. King, Wilson Pickett, Ike and Tina Turner, Redd Foxx, Prince, and more. In 2008, the theater closed permanently after nearly six decades.

About Forest Forward

Forest Forward is a 501c3 organization that is based in South Dallas and focuses on community revitalization using the Purpose-Built Communities model, with the historic Forest Theater as the anchor. Forest Forward leads holistic revitalization initiatives that aim to improve equity and opportunity in neighborhoods that have faced long-term, historic disinvestment. Drawing from community voices, Forest Forward’s work goes beyond restoration of the Forest Theater to serve as a catalyst to spur equitable development.

About Communities Foundation of Texas

The mission of Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT) is to improve the lives of all people in our community by investing in their health, wealth, living, and learning. CFT works to accomplish this by growing community giving, expanding community impact, and advancing community equity.

With a vision of building thriving communities for all, CFT works locally and across the state with many individuals, families, companies, foundations, and nonprofits through a variety of charitable funds and strategic grantmaking initiatives. CFT professionally manages more than 1,200 charitable funds and has awarded more than \$2.5 billion in grants since its founding in 1953.

CFT is committed to serving and understanding donor needs, expertly handling complex gifts, wisely managing charitable funds, and leveraging its community knowledge to increase charitable impact, in addition to powering several initiatives including the W. W. Caruth, Jr. Fund at CFT, CFT for Business,



Educate Texas at CFT, Emerging Leaders in Philanthropy at CFT, GiveWisely, and CFT's North Texas Giving Day. CFT's North Texas Giving Day raised over \$62 million on a single day in 2022 to help over 3,200 North Texas nonprofits. Learn more at www.CFTexas.org.