



# Sacred Places Indiana

A program offered by Indiana Landmarks supported by funding from Lilly Endowment granting \$8,000,000 to eligible congregations

**MANY OF THE SACRED PLACES IN INDIANA TODAY** are in fragile physical and financial condition. Those congregations and parishes face declining numbers of congregants and, consequently, inadequate funds for operation, struggling to support the church and ancillary structures. These buildings are architecturally important as repositories of fine art and craftsmanship and visible anchors in their neighborhoods. Additionally, congregations in these historic properties are important community assets, providing services that benefit the public at large. Sacred Places Indiana's combination of training, professional staff assistance, and grants can yield great returns in financial stability and mission-centered outreach for congregations across Indiana.

## TWO PATHS FOR ASSISTANCE

### 1 New Dollars/New Partners Program

Smaller capacity congregations that may need to lay groundwork before undertaking a capital campaign are candidates for the New Dollars/New Partners Program. In this intensive training program, congregations learn how to engage their communities in fresh ways, find new uses for underutilized space, and identify assets for fundraising and financial sustainability. Congregations will pay a modest fee (\$500) to participate and supply 4 or 5 people—a combination of lay and clergy leaders—to take part in four training sessions over a six-month period. At the conclusion of the program, each congregation will be better positioned to fund and sustain its historic properties, laying the foundation to apply for planning grants and capital grants up to \$75,000. New Dollars graduates are also eligible to apply for additional grants through the more competitive Sacred Places Indiana Fund.

### 2 Sacred Places Indiana Fund

Historic churches that have identified significant capital needs, have the support of their judicatories, and are ready to undertake a capital campaign could be candidates for the Sacred Places Indiana Fund. The SPI Fund awards matching grants in a competitive process. Selected congregations must be committed to good stewardship of their historic structures and have demonstrated signs of organizational health including established clergy and lay leadership, clearly defined project goals, stable or growing membership, community engagement, and financial strength and stability. Congregations should be ready to undertake and complete both a capital campaign and construction project within the next two years. The minimum capital grant request for SPI Fund applicants is \$75,000.

## PLANNING & CAPITAL GRANTS

Both paths offer the opportunity to apply for the following grants:

### Planning Grants

- Offered up to \$25,000 with no matching funds required
- May be used to fund consultants (architects, engineers, code and accessibility experts, fundraising counsel, etc.)

### Capital Grants

Offered at two matching levels:

- \$100,000 or less will be offered on a 2:1 match basis (SPI - 2 : Congregation - 1)
- Between \$100,001 and \$500,000 will be offered on a 1:1 match basis (SPI - 1 : Congregation - 1)
- May be used to fund repair or restoration of a building's surfaces, structural systems, facility upgrades (HVAC, accessibility, fire safety, etc.) and significant artistic features

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To apply for either the New Dollars/New Partners Program or the Sacred Places Indiana Fund:

1. The property must be located within the State of Indiana and at least 50 years old.
2. The property must have been originally built to be a house of worship and must be owned by an active community of faith.
3. The congregation must be at least three years old.
4. The applicant must be a religious congregation or closely affiliated nonprofit organization, based in Indiana.
5. The property must possess historical, cultural, and architectural value. Designation as a local landmark or listing on the National Register of Historic Places is not required but is prioritized.
6. The property must be occupied by a congregation that is community-minded and that serves non-members.
7. The applicant must exhibit several signs of positive organizational health, including, but not limited to established senior clergy, stable membership, financial stability, commitment to the historic property and if applicable, support from regional denominational offices.

### **Additional requirements for congregations applying for the Sacred Places Indiana Fund or a capital grant:**

8. The property must have significant repair needs related to structural components, walls, roof, and/or other elements of the building envelope that are integral to life safety. Projects that improve the ADA accessibility of the property or projects that make vacant or underutilized space more suitable for community use are also eligible.
9. Anticipated capital projects must respect the property's historic character and materials and must adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
10. Capital work on the SPI Fund project may not begin until the congregation has been accepted into the program and all capital grant documentation has been reviewed and approved by the SPI Fund staff.

11. The congregation must be willing to undertake a capital campaign to raise new money for the matching requirement. Half of the required match must include funds solicited, applied for, pledged, or secured after the congregation's official acceptance into the program.
12. The congregation must demonstrate a need for project funds that exceeds the congregation's typical donor base and membership.
13. The congregation must work with SPI staff to ensure that all program requirements have been met. Recipients are required to:
  - a) Develop a comprehensive scope of work described by permit-ready construction documents with cost estimates produced by qualified building professionals, typically including architects.
  - b) Develop a workable budget and timeline for completing the work.
  - c) Develop a workable fundraising plan.

For more information on how it works and who is eligible, please contact the Sacred Places Indiana staff at [sacredplaces@indianalandmarks.org](mailto:sacredplaces@indianalandmarks.org) or call 317-822-7952 to speak with Director David Frederick.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Both the New Dollars/New Partners and the Sacred Places Indiana Fund grant programs operate on an annual cycle—applications and award notifications occurring once per year.

### **New Dollars/New Partners Program**

1. **Applications are currently being accepted**  
Please reach out to SPI staff to discuss your congregation's readiness to participate. Congregations selected to participate in the program will advance to the steps below.
2. **Notification of acceptance into the program**
3. **Four Saturday training sessions in Indianapolis**  
Sessions will take place beginning in late summer 2026. Each accepted congregation must commit to sending four to five church leaders, including one clergy representative, to the training sessions.

#### 4. **Planning grant submission**

Congregations that have successfully completed the New Dollars/New Partners training program will be invited to complete a planning grant application. The planning grant can be used to fund either a building conditions assessment or a fundraising feasibility study. SPI staff will consult with each congregation about which would be the most beneficial to their project.

#### 5. **Capital grant submission**

Congregations that have successfully completed the planning grant submission (if applicable) are eligible to complete a capital grant request for up to \$75,000. Successful capital grant applications will provide:

- a) Permit-ready documentation describing the scope of work supported by the SPI Fund
- b) Documentation that half of the matching funds have been raised or pledged

After our review team has approved the capital grant submission, the first half of the award is disbursed, and project work may begin. The final half of the grant award is released once the project is completed and the finished work has been reviewed by SPI Fund staff.

## Sacred Places Indiana Fund

Projects must be completed within 18 to 24 months of acceptance into the program.

#### 1. **Applications will be accepted through June 15, 2026**

Applicants will be directed to an online application process open to any historic house of worship. The questions asked in the application address the SPI Fund's core criteria: historic, cultural, or architectural significance; community-serving congregations; project scope and need; readiness; congregational health; and strength of applications. Congregations selected to participate in the program will advance to the steps below.

#### 2. **Notification of acceptance into the program via a grant award letter in September 2026**

Please note capital work on the SPI Fund project may not begin until the congregation has been accepted into the program and all capital grant documentation has been reviewed and approved

by SPI staff. The congregation must be willing to undertake a capital campaign to raise new money for the matching requirement. Half of the required match must include funds solicited, applied for, pledged, or secured after the congregation's official acceptance into the program.

#### 3. **Two-day training session in Indianapolis, November 13-14, 2026**

Each accepted congregation must commit to sending two to three church leaders, including one clergy representative, to the SPI Fund training workshop that focuses on grant processes and requirements, fundraising essentials, and capital project work. Hotel accommodation is provided for congregations outside of the Indianapolis area.

#### 4. **Planning grant submission**

Each accepted congregation may elect to pursue a planning grant to fund either a building conditions assessment or a fundraising feasibility study. SPI staff will consult with each congregation about which would be the most beneficial to their project. In some cases, the SPI Advisory Board may elect to fund both studies.

#### 5. **Capital grant submission**

Congregations that have successfully completed the planning grant submission (if applicable) will be invited to complete a capital grant submission application. Successful Capital Grant applications will provide:

- a) Permit-ready documentation describing the scope of work supported by the SPI Fund
- b) Documentation that one quarter of the matching funds have been raised or pledged

After our review team has approved the capital grant submission, the first half of the award is disbursed, and work may begin on the SPI Fund project. The final half of the grant award is released once the project is completed and the finished work has been reviewed by SPI Fund staff.

If you have questions about which grant to pursue, please contact the Sacred Places Indiana staff at [sacredplaces@indianalandmarks.org](mailto:sacredplaces@indianalandmarks.org) or call 317-822-7952 to speak with Director David Frederick.