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**To:** Planning Commission  
**From:** Loren Gordon, AICP, City Planner  
**Date:** April 7, 2022  
**Subject:** Change Memo for the April 7<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission Agenda

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**ITEM 8C – Chase Bank**

The applicant has requested that this item be moved to the commission's next meeting in April. Staff recommends the commission make a motion tabling action to April 28<sup>th</sup>.

**ITEM 9A – Mills Church**

The attached comments were received.



April 7, 2022

To: City Council Members of Minnetonka  
From: Julie Sjodal, St. David's Center

Dear Minnetonka City Council Members:

As the Chief Executive Officer of St. David's Center, located at 3395 Plymouth Road in Minnetonka, I am submitting this letter for public comment at the Planning Commission Meeting on April 7, 2022, in support of the Habitat for Humanity project that is under consideration near Mills Church.

I would like to begin by stating on behalf of St. David's Center, a nonprofit organization with a 60-year history, that we are proud to have our headquarters located in Minnetonka. Our mission is to build relationships that nurture the development of every child and family, and our 450 staff members (teachers, social workers, case managers, and therapists) serve over 4,000 children, families, and adults with special needs across the metro community.

We can achieve this mission because our community has been – and continues to be – deeply committed to the health and well-being of our youngest and most vulnerable citizens. This commitment is evidenced by our tax-exempt status, government funding, corporate and neighborhood support, and the generous donations of individuals.

**It is in this spirit that I submit my public comments today in support of the Mills Church and Habitat for Humanity housing project that is being considered.**

- This is a reasonable project in a suitable location.
- Faith communities often take the role of calling on us to do what is right. Mills Church is giving this land for much less than is valued. They are giving us the opportunity as a community to do what is right.
- If we all said, "Not in my backyard," what would our community look like?
- The right thing is to give our fellow citizens, who have faced struggles that we may not understand, an opportunity for stable and healthy housing in a beautiful community.
- Habitat for Humanity has documented positive outcomes in personal health, economic prosperity, education, and connection to the community among Habitat homeowners. These are all areas we can agree are priorities for our Minnetonka community.



**“Minnetonka is an inclusive community** – a place where all residents, workers, and visitors are welcomed to enjoy the city’s beauty, as well as its quality and dependable public services” (source: City of Minnetonka website).

**Stable, affordable housing is a key determinant of health. The house and neighborhood where one grows up impacts the health, quality, and longevity of one’s life.** Having a safe, decent, stable, affordable home also impacts a child’s success in school.

Conversely, the lack of access to accessible housing is linked to increased physical and mental health problems and may also make it more difficult to fund other necessities such as food, clothing, and transportation.

We support preserving and strengthening the initiative to make Minnetonka an accessible place for **everyone**.

Thank you for your consideration,

Julie Sjoldal

Chief Executive Officer, St. David’s Center for Child and Family Development

**From:** Brian Kirk  
**Sent:** Wed, 6 Apr 2022 19:42:41 -0500  
**To:** Mike Funk  
**Cc:** Loren Gordon;Julie Wischnack  
**Subject:** Fw: Mills Church development proposal

For the Planning Commissions addendum.

Thank you,

**Brian J Kirk** | Minnetonka City Council, Ward 1  
City of Minnetonka | [minnetonkamn.gov](http://minnetonkamn.gov)  
Cell: 952-451-6251

**From:** Carol Johnson [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 6, 2022 1:17 PM  
**To:** Brian Kirk  
**Subject:** Mills Church development proposal

Hi Brian,

I may not make it to the planning commission meeting this Thursday night so wanted to share my support for the proposed development at Mills Church. I listened to the presenters on this development on March 22 and am so impressed with how Mills Church and Habitat For Humanity have worked together to propose many of the suggestions made by neighbors from the LISC listening sessions. I feel the following points are winners: home ownership, affordability at 30% AMI, managed by the owners in the Home Owner Association System, educating first time home owners on home ownership and supporting them in learning the ropes of HOA.

David Landt and Mills Church have done an amazing job listening to the neighbors and proposing a development with their suggestions. Their mission should be commended for its scope and social justice initiatives: selling land at reduced cost to make it more affordable, registering the original Mtka City Hall on the register of historic places, maybe give the proceeds from land sale to give to native tribes, and maintaining the community Apple orchards. Involving volunteers to help build through Habitat for Humanity makes this a community engagement process.

This development also meets the goals of the Mtka Comp Plan by diversifying the housing supply with town homes and providing housing for families at 30% AMI.

I know there may be some changes as the proposed development goes through the process to be approved, but The components of home ownership, volunteer opportunities, and giving back to the community through Mills Church stewardship and mission are all winners.

I attend St. David's Episcopal Church just to the East of Mills Church and live 3 blocks away from this proposed development.

Sincerely  
Carol Johnson  
12611 Orchard Rd  
Minnetonka, MN

Sent from my iPad

**From:** David Foster-Bolton  
**Sent:** Thu, 24 Mar 2022 09:20:07 -0500  
**To:** Loren Gordon  
**Subject:** Re: Mills church Habitat for Humanity townhomes

> On Mar 24, 2022, at 9:17 AM, David Foster-Bolton [REDACTED] wrote:  
>

> Hello Mr Gordon. My name is David Foster-Bolton and I live at 3624 Plymouth Road and was at the meeting on march 22. I just wanted to let you know our household is in total support of this gift from the Church for affordable housing. I think the city is pretty lucky to get this. The meeting was conducted very respectfully and was very informative and showed the neighbors how much the church had listened and adopted ideas that had come from the earlier meetings 2 years ago. We believe that affordable housing is one of the cities biggest challenges and important issues and although this is a small project it is a start.

> I would like to argue against some of the traffic concerns by many neighbors. We lived on and now next to the Linde lane cul-de-sac with 7 houses and cars in a small area. Recently 2 new houses were built on Plymouth road across the street from us and the Cut-de-sac that's 9 homes in a small area and we do not notice any new traffic from that. ( although on a side note . the city did a horrible job with the water drainage across our home coming off the new houses that are now above grade so there are lakes in the road that is another issue and I am sure with the mills church project the parking lot will be half gone so the runoff will then be smaller). Back to traffic, Our traffic problems on Plymouth road and on Inverness come from cars cutting through from Baker to Shady Oak and the reverse. So maybe speed bumps might help alleviate some of the many concerns about the traffic. Although I believe with some it does not matter, they will always complain. Again we believe this is a great project and thought the meeting was very good. How often do neighbors get to be involved in a project before it goes to the city council. Thanks again. David Foster-Bolton. If any questions from us my no. is [REDACTED]

**From:** GUY DRAKE  
**Sent:** Thu, 7 Apr 2022 11:36:24 -0500 (CDT)  
**To:** Loren Gordon  
**Subject:** Mills Church Proposed Affordable Housing development  
**Importance:** Normal

I'm writing as a neighbor clergy to Mills Church in strong support of their affordable housing project. This proposal is an excellent use of this land and would provide our city with more much-needed low-income housing.

Please vote yes for this proposal!

The Reverend Guy Drake  
He/him/his  
Deacon Emeritus, The Episcopal Church in Minnesota  
St. David's Episcopal Church  
13000 St. David's Road  
Minnetonka, Minnesota  
Church: 952-935-3336, Cell: [REDACTED]

**From:** Holly Bayer  
**Sent:** Wed, 6 Apr 2022 16:06:09 -0500  
**To:** Loren Gordon  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Alternative Site Plan for Mills Church Affordable Housing Project  
**Attachments:** Proposal A.pdf

Hello Mr. Gordon,

The immediate neighbors of this project, on Elm and Inverness, respectfully submitted an alternative site plan to Pastor David earlier this week. We were asked to share it with you to be shared, in turn, with your Planning Commission.

Our "immediate neighbor," group supports the church's desire for affordable housing within our community but we are in strong opposition to the Concept Plans submitted by Habitat for Humanity. We find our concept plan visually fits more agreeably into the existing grade and the overall location. Our historic and natural park surroundings, which lie within a block of the Mills Church property, do not include any structure taller than two stories. Our plan meets, and arguably even extends, the church's goal to fully integrate our new neighbors into our existing community by utilizing a portion of the space as a community area. The shared garden, playground and green space create an enduring physical presence for the new neighbors to be better united with us. The city could also explore sharing in this mission.

Respectfully,

Holly Bayer & Richard Warzecha  
Jeff & Suzanne Nelson  
Joanna & Mel Koenig  
Mike & Kathryn Maciejowski  
Cam Pearsall & Jon Pearsall





1. Buildings facing Baker Rd would **utilize the existing grade** to make what is a three-story appear to be a two-story structure and to **diminish light pollution** from vehicles entering and exiting the neighborhood.
2. Moving entrance towards Baker Road would decrease the impact on Inverness Road neighbors and provide **better traffic flow**.
3. Adding **overflow parking** for residents within their property will reduce inevitable overflow parking on Inverness Road preventing further congestion at the Baker Road and Inverness intersection.
4. Infiltration space **provides natural drainage** sorely needed for decades in this location, preventing run-off/ water pollution from reaching Minnehaha Creek.
5. **Creating green space benefits all**; our new neighbors, the church community and the existing Minnetonka Mills community, including **a new playground**. \*Additional green space which is easily accessed from Minnetonka Boulevard and historic Burwell Park.
6. A community garden (or pickle ball courts) would add enjoyment for **all ages**.




**From:** Michael Wilder  
**Sent:** Wed, 23 Mar 2022 10:47:01 -0500  
**To:** Loren Gordon  
**Subject:** Mills Church property development

Hi Loren,

I really appreciated the opportunity to see the concept plan for the Mills Church property in the neighborhood meeting last night. It was good to see the partnership with TCH4H. I feel like the Mills Church listened and is honoring some of the ideas and input from the neighbors last go around. I'm also overjoyed to hear the old town hall is on the National Registry of Historic Places! That'll be a boon to Minnetonka Mills historic preservation. I just wanted to let you know you've got my support for the concept plan direction.

Best,

Michael Wilder


  
3712 Farmington Road  
Minnetonka, MN 55305

**From:** Nan Drake  
**Sent:** Thu, 7 Apr 2022 10:28:00 -0500  
**To:** Loren Gordon  
**Subject:** Mills Housing Project

Dear Team,

I am writing in support of the housing project for the Mills Church. We are neighbors on McGinty Road East and believe that the vision for this project is totally suitable for the neighborhood. Home Ownership, Habitat for Humanity and neighborhood support will create a creative and supportive opportunity for lower income housing and give a hand up to the lucky people who end up in those homes.

We are members of St Davids and look forward to supporting the effort including volunteering with Habitat for Humanity.

Sincerely,  
Nan Drake  
13512 McGinty Road E  


**From:** Greeley, Timothy  
**Sent:** Mon, 28 Mar 2022 13:26:18 +0000  
**To:** Zoning Requests  
**Subject:** Mills Church

Greetings. On the evening of March 22, 2022, I attended the Zoom meeting about the proposed Mills Church project. I urge you to deny any movement toward allowing the construction of any building other than single family homes on the Mills Church property.

I have lived on Farmington Road for close to 20 years. In that time, I was initially denied a permit to rebuild an oversized garage on its original foundation because it would "change the character of the neighborhood." After two years of attending planning commission meetings where each time I was met with a different set of hoops to jump through, I was granted a variance, conditional use permit, and given a stern warning to not use the garage as a rental space. All this because a structure that is difficult to be seen from any public roadway and all the neighbors were in favor of was going to "change the character of the neighborhood."

Placing a multiunit structure on the corner of Inverness and Baker Roads would surely change the character of the neighborhood, the historic Minnetonka Mills area, and more broadly the character of Minnetonka as a whole. Do not allow this to happen.

At the meeting on March 22 the presenter stated that the multiunit structure would add 84 vehicle trips per day to Baker Road. They also stated that the only two homes to be impacted would be in the south east corner of the Baker/Inverness intersection and the adjacent property on Inverness. This assertion is based on the idea that people would use the closest access to Baker Road and Mtna. Blvd as their route. From living and walking the neighborhood at a minimum of twice daily for 20 plus years, I can assure you that people avoid the Baker / Inverness intersection like the plague. Each day Inverness, Farmington, Orchard, and Plymouth Roads are used as short cuts to avoid the semaphores on Minnetonka Blvd. At least weekly I witness people running the stop signs on Inverness because their focus is on avoiding Minnetonka Blvd, not on the fact that they are driving through a neighborhood. The addition of a multiunit structure will only serve to increase the notion that drivers are not in a residential neighborhood. Eighty-four more drivers will use Inverness as a shortcut. This is just one more way the character of the neighborhood will be forever changed. So again, I am asking that you do not support any multiunit development on the Mills Church site.

I could go on and on as to why a multiunit structure is not appropriate to the Mills Church site, but I do want to end with a positive. I was very happy to hear that the former city hall structure would stay and that the homes and empty lot on Elm Street would be developed by Habitat for Humanity and made available as low-income residences. If the city and met council are concerned enough with the supply of affordable homes in Minnetonka, they should provide the money for the infrastructure (sewer, water, Etc.) so that Habitat for Humanity can build single family homes on the Mills Church site. This would retain the character of the neighborhood and abide by the R1 zoning requirements already in place.

Timothy Greeley  
3723 Farmington Road

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wed, 23 Mar 2022 16:27:33 -0500  
**To:** Loren Gordon  
**Subject:** RE: Mills Church Project

Thank you Loren for the feedback.

Brian Burke | [REDACTED]

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**From:** Loren Gordon <[lgordon@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:lgordon@minnetonkamn.gov)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 23, 2022 4:00 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Mills Church Project

Hi Brian,

You're welcome. Glad you are still engaged.

Just for clarity, the LISC CDI process from 2020 was an exploratory study. Those ideas were a result of the LISC panel. The church didn't have a proposal for consideration like they showed last night. Granted, they likely had ideas.

The bike trail is be a Three Rivers Park District lead project. As I mentioned last night, that master plan from 2021 will lead to more detailed designs as the project matures. I was involved in some of the early planning in 2020. The only grade separated consideration at that time was at Hwy 55.

Hope that helps.

Be well!

-Loren

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 23, 2022 10:24 AM  
**To:** Loren Gordon <[lgordon@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:lgordon@minnetonkamn.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: Mills Church Project

Hey Loren – Thank you again for the feedback below. I did attend the meeting last night. First, very happy to see they changed direction from their initial proposal, which in my opinion made no sense.

As I noted on the chat, while I support the HfH mission, I am unclear how this type of project makes sense in this space. That intersection area is a mess in the morning. I personally don't

go out on Minnetonka Road to Baker in the mornings because it is challenging. I get nervous with my kids going on the bike trail down to DQ as I witnessed a head on crash on Minnetonka Blvd a few years ago. Potentially as part of the project they could move the bike trail over/under Baker Road? I am also curious of how close to this site there are any existing townhomes of this type?

A comment I found interesting was that the church indicated they were selling to HfH at a below market rate. HfH representative then said they need to do 2-6 unit buildings on the site in order to maximize the land value. If the church is selling at a discount, could it make sense to build a less dense building while still making the economics work.

Lastly, my gut feeling is still that the church is trying to force something in this space. I am unclear as to their motive. Is their motive to make money? Is their motive to achieve some sort of social agenda? Not questions for you directly. I think they would be better off selling the land at market rate, having a builder put up 3 standard houses that fit the neighborhood, then taking the proceeds to work with HfH in a location that makes more sense.

We will continue following along and attending meetings as they occur.

Brian

Brian Burke | [REDACTED]

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**From:** Loren Gordon <[lgordon@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:lgordon@minnetonkamn.gov)>

**Sent:** Friday, March 18, 2022 4:22 PM

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Mills Church Project

Hi Brian,

Hope you are well. Some responses to your questions:

- The neighborhood meeting was setup up as zoom for the church to be able to have a neighborhood meeting regardless of the current state of infections. The city planning commission and city council concept plan meetings will be held in-person.
- The church as not yet provided us with the plan they intend to share at Tuesday's meeting. I do expect a plan from them shortly thereafter that will be posted on the project page - [Mills Church | City of Minnetonka, MN \(minnetonkamn.gov\)](#)
- Minnetonka has a variety of single family zoning districts. The most common by far is R-1 which is the 0.5 acre (22,000 sq. ft.) you note. The smallest outright permitted is R-1A at 15,000 sq. ft.
- Last two questions would be for Habitat to answer.

Our city review process is outlined on that project page for concept and formal reviews. Since we are in the concept review stage, no action/decisions will be taken. Just input.

Let me know if you have additional questions.

Regards,

-Loren



**Loren Gordon, AICP** (*he, him, his*)  
City Planner  
City of Minnetonka  
14600 Minnetonka Blvd. | Minnetonka, MN 55345  
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(952)939-8296

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, March 18, 2022 8:15 AM  
**To:** Brad Wiersum <[bwiersum@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:bwiersum@minnetonkamn.gov)>; Loren Gordon <[lgordon@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:lgordon@minnetonkamn.gov)>  
**Subject:** Mills Church Project

Brad & Loren – I am writing in regards to the upcoming Zoom Meeting on this project. I have several questions –

1. Why is the meeting being done via Zoom? For such a significant project, I would request that all future meetings are done in person.
2. I know that the church is trying to force something into that space. I am unclear though how multi-family complexes make sense in this area. Are there other twin homes near this site? Does the city need to change/adjust any zoning ordinances in order to accommodate this project?
3. Minnetonka used to have a requirement that all houses needed to be built on .5 acres. That is what was required when the two houses were completed in front of us 10+ years ago. Has that requirement changed?
4. Is there more details available on this project? Is there a plan showing the layout?
5. We would like to see statistics showing the impact of Habitat for Humanity housing – what is the plan to maintain the houses, do neighborhoods see changes in crime or other factors from these projects? How do these properties look in 5, 10 and 20 years? Can they provide previous projects that were built that we can visit?

It feels like the church continues on trying to force their agenda into a neighborhood in which it doesn't make sense. Does the city want this type of project in the heart of Old Minnetonka, next to the Burwell House, the bike trail and other community gathering areas? I appreciate that there is a collective of people that has the desire to support this type of housing, but this is not the appropriate location.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention in providing feedback on the above questions.

Brian & Nicole Burke

**Brian Burke** | 



**From:** [Loren Gordon](#)  
**To:** [Susan Thomas](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: Mills Church development proposal  
**Date:** Thursday, April 7, 2022 3:27:49 PM

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**From:** Sally Bressler  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 7, 2022 2:57:31 PM  
**To:** Loren Gordon  
**Cc:** Julie Wischnack  
**Subject:** Mills Church development proposal

Dear Mr. Gordon,

I am writing in support of the concept plan for the development proposed by Mills Church that is up for consideration by the Planning Commission this evening. This project addresses a crucial need in our community by seeking to provide housing for families at 30% AMI. It is evident from the presentation on March 22 that Mills Church and Habitat for Humanity have listened carefully to feedback from neighbors and the resulting concept plan admirably demonstrates their dedication to social justice and community engagement. The Mills Church community deserves a lot of credit for their foresight and willingness to push forward a plan that will bring the benefits of home ownership to families who would not otherwise have that opportunity. I hope that this project will move forward with the support of the Planning Commission and the City Council.

Sincerely,

Sally Bressler  
2465 Crowne Hill Rd.  
Minnetonka, MN 55305