



12/12/17

City of Billings
Public Works Department
22247 Montana Ave.
Billings, MT 59102

Dear Department of Public Works and City Council,

Friendship House of Christian Service is a nonprofit community development agency that has been serving the low-income and at-risk children and families of the south side of Billings for over 60 years. To better meet community need, we are always looking for ways to deepen our impact and serve more clients in order to fulfill our mission.

Friendship House is truly a community gathering place with a rich history of being the very fabric of the south side. We serve the community with a preschool, youth program, teen program, adult education, counseling and meet basic needs such as food, clothing and support for south side residents. Finally, Friendship House builds strong neighborhoods on a daily basis by helping families move forward out of poverty.

We have recently purchased a blighted house across the street from our facility. Our plan is to transform this space into a beautiful, usable parking lot for our fleet of vehicles. Friendship House currently has only on street parking for our fleet of 9 vehicles including five- 15 passenger transportation vans, 2 mini vans, 1 car, and 1 school bus.

Because we transport over 100 children daily and serve more than 1,900 clients annually, we need these vehicles to pick up and drop off kids from the 7 elementary schools we serve with our programming. With limited parking options, employee and program vehicles must park on the street. Because of this, the at-risk kids we serve are left exposed to passing cars (who are often driving too fast) when entering and exiting vehicles. This creates unsafe, potentially deadly situations.

Additionally, when children leave our care with their parents, students will often run in between the parked Friendship House vehicles and out on to the street. Oncoming vehicles have little visibility and little chance to slow down to avoid a collision. We're fortunate to not have had an accident. There have been too many close calls involving Friendship House children. This is where we need your help to approve a variance to make our parking lot a reality.

Reflecting the love of Jesus Christ by fostering renewal, stability, and transformation in the lives of youth and families in South Billings.

Phone: 406-259-5569

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www.FriendshipMT.org



In addition to increasing children's safety, Friendship House vehicles parked on the street are open to vandalism, property and vehicle theft. This has happened numerous times in the past several years because of our inability to lock up our vehicles in a secure parking area. This increases our costs to fix these vehicles that we use to transport children from school and on field trips. Because all of our vehicles are donated, we want to be good stewards and protect these generous gifts.

A secure, designated, beautiful parking lot will protect and better serve our at-risk children and vulnerable adults while entering and exiting from our life changing programs. It will keep the vehicles from vandalism, property and auto theft.

Requiring Friendship House to pave the alley leading past the parking lot places an undue burden on our nonprofit and diminishes our ability to serve clients. Since our vans will only go in and out of the parking lot an average of once per day, we will have no more impact than any other neighbors- and we will take pressure off the already crowded street parking. Paving the alley and the underlying site work is estimated to cost up to \$7,500. By not having this added cost to this community service project, we would be able better serve our community with our limited resources.

I would very much appreciate the Public Works Department and the City Council allowing this much needed variance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rev. Matt Lundgren". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light blue rectangular background.

Rev. Matthew J. Lundgren
Executive Director

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