

Church property survey—seeking B&G recommendation April 2026

The Community Connection team seeks support from the Buildings and Grounds Committee for a survey of the church grounds at a cost of \$3,275.

What is the Community Connection project?

In 2025, after discussions dating back to 2022, the Community Connection project was launched at Newton Highlands Congregational Church. Consultants were hired to develop a master plan for the church grounds. The goals of the plan are as follows:

- Improve our church surroundings for our current congregation
- Be and look less forbidding to our Newton Highlands community
- Attract new members to join our NHCC community

The church anticipates a comprehensive reworking of the church grounds that will be implemented over time based on church needs, priorities, and finances.

What has happened so far?

The Community Connection team made cards to collect ideas and wish lists from the congregation. The team also arranged a bulletin board in the church parlor and created an inspirational video with commentary from a range of church members and friends.

The team has also hosted three sessions for the congregation.

Community Connection sessions

- June 1, 2025, Kickoff: Introduced consultants and provided overview of process
- October 5, 2025, Tour of grounds: Distributed maps and collected notes from participants
- October 28, 2025: Feedback session: explained master plan and summarized ideas submitted to date

What are the next steps?

The consultants working on the master plan, Karen Sebastian and David Nauss, have requested a property survey and gotten three price quotes.

Price quotes for professional survey

- Everett Brooks: \$3,275
- Real Map Info: \$5,850
- Other: \$13,000

Using the completed property survey and the ideas submitted by the congregation, the consultants will make schematic drawings. They expect to develop several ideas for the congregation to discuss and build upon.

Why does the church need a property survey?

Making a master plan for the church grounds requires accurate, comprehensive information about the extent of the property and its features. A professional survey will provide this information.

According to the American Institute of Architects, a property survey is “a detailed, professional assessment of a land parcel's boundaries, dimensions, and physical features. It acts as a legal document establishing precise property lines, easements, and existing structures, typically used to verify land ownership and guide construction projects.”

Objectives of a professional survey

- Provide specific information with respect to setbacks, right of ways, elevations, topographical shifts, and other features of the property
- Help the consultants determine how to make the property accessible for those with limited mobility
- Produce a stamped, official document sufficient for permitting and required by any funding entity to which we might apply for grants

Having a professional survey will enable the consultants to ensure that the ideas and schematic drawings they come up with are feasible and can actually be implemented. They will use the survey to turn wish lists into realistic designs. Their designs will generate enthusiasm and lay the groundwork for fundraising.

What is happening in Newton Highlands and how does it relate?

For several years, the City of Newton has been working on plans to improve the commercial section of Newton Highlands (Newton Highlands Village Enhancement Project). In December 2025, Mayor Fuller appointed a working group to evaluate the plans and make recommendations.

The working group is recommending that the project initially focus on making safety improvements. Their top priority is upgrading Rodney Barker Square and narrowing the intersection at Lincoln Street and Hartford Street. These changes will have a direct impact on the church, and they create a time-sensitive opportunity for upgrades to the church grounds.

Summary

The Community Connection team is asking the Buildings and Grounds Committee to recommend an expense of \$3,275 to complete a survey of the church grounds. Once B&G approves the expense, we will go to Council for approval for the funding.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Basemera, B&G representative to Community Connection team

Sally Brickell, Vice Moderator and member of Community Connection team