

**Questions & Answers
Regarding the Campaign for**



Q. “Is a major renovation and expansion necessary? Couldn’t you just make minor repairs to the top floor for a lot less money?”

A. Bathrooms, a lobby area, a staircase and dressing rooms are part of the necessary additions to make the top floor functional, safe and practical for community use.

Q. “Doesn’t changing the foot print of the building impact its historic value?”

A. In order to make full use of the building, it is necessary to build out from the back. The front of the Mills and the character of the building will be unchanged. It has been part of the Mills history to be adapted to meet the needs of the community, and with the additions, we would be following that tradition. It is important to note that Mills is following guidelines set by the National Historic Preservation office in order to comply and maintain our status on the Register.

Q. “Is a recital hall needed now that Benzie County has new auditoriums at both schools?”

A. Both Benzie County Central and Frankfort schools have been gracious in accommodating the community as much as possible in their performance spaces. However, there is a need for a 150-seat hall which provides more intimate space available for community ensembles that don’t require 500–600 seats. The schools’ needs also take precedence, and a longer running show with rehearsal time and storage needs would be difficult to schedule in the school. Mike Eagan, Band Director of Benzie Central is eager for the Mills renovation because of the community need, as well as the potential for the school to use the recital hall for certain events.

Q. “Couldn’t you build a brand new building with that money instead?”

A. Possibly, but the issue of renovation of a historic landmark would not be addressed if we were to do this, nor would we be able to make improvements to the library and the “Meeting Space.” The Mills has been a center of the community for nearly 100 years and provided a home to the Benzonia library and “Meeting Space”

for 80 years, and needs the improvements and full utilization to prevent deterioration.

Q. “Do we really need two libraries (one new and one expanded) so near each other, when so many more people use the internet today in place of the library?”

A. The renovation and expansion will benefit the library, as a tenant of the Mills, but isn't being done primarily for the library. A town can't have too many good books, good places to meet, or good places to learn. It is true--more and more people come to libraries for free internet access, and with the renovation we will be able to make more stations available to meet this demand. However, despite the time that people spend “online” they still prefer to read books, and circulation at libraries for books remains very high. The Benzonia Public Library attracts people specifically for the special collections and historic items, as well as the complete works of Civil War Historian, Bruce Catton.

Q. “What is your plan for making sure there are enough users/events to support the operating costs of the building once it is done?”

A. We plan to hire an operations manager that will not only make sure all events run effectively, but who will have the responsibility to book good programs and market the building for many potential uses. We also expect that Mills will continue to need operating support as it does now.

Q. “I live in Benzie County, is this going to affect my taxes?”

A. No. The Campaign for Mills Community House is going to be funded through private support from individuals, local businesses and organizations and grants from foundations. Of course we hope you choose to contribute, but it will be your choice, and if you do so, you would be entitled to a charitable tax credit because gifts to Mills Community House are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Q. “How long is this going to take?”

A. We expect the majority of the fundraising to take 2–3 years, and the construction will probably take one year. The more support we receive in the early months, the faster you'll see progress.

Q. “How much is this going to cost?”

A. We are expecting construction costs to be in the range of \$2.6 million. Some donations have already been given toward the goal, and that we feel confident we will be getting the best and most appropriate end result for the investment.

Q. “How can we get a tour and see the plans?”

A. This is one of our favorite things to do! Call us at (231) 882-0591 to set up a tour for individuals or groups.

Q. “How can I donate?”

A. We would love to meet with you personally to discuss the ways your gift can be recognized (please see the Named Gift Opportunities document). If you prefer your gift be kept confidential, that is also possible. By calling (231) 882-0591 or emailing millshouse@i2k.net, you will quickly be in contact with our Campaign Manager, Julie Friley, or volunteer Campaign Chair, Susan Lutes, to help you with your donation.