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Mayor

## City of Newton, Massachusetts Office of the Mayor

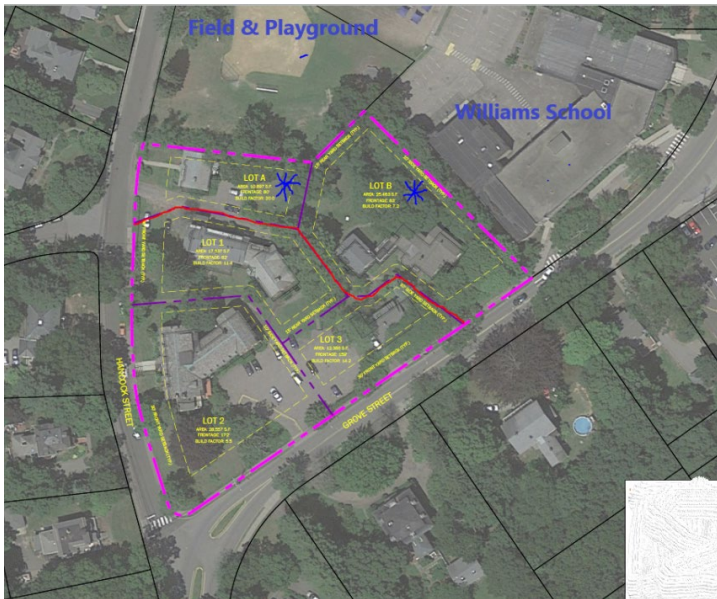
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### Newton ARPA Investment Land by Williams School and to Add Affordable Housing - \$2.45M

I am pleased to submit a request to the City Council to purchase a portion of the Walker Center for Ecumenical Exchange (which went on the market in the spring of 2021).

Located at the intersection of Grove and Hancock Streets in Auburndale, it is directly adjacent to the Williams Elementary School and its playground/ballfield. The land will help us to expand the playground, have flexibility for future school renovations, and allow us to preserve four existing homes for affordable housing (after a City Council Real Property Reuse Committee process).



The Williams School and playground area sit on a constrained site making any future improvements challenging. With this acquisition of a portion of the Walker Center property (lots A and B on the map), we can increase the amount of City land next to the Williams to improve the playground in the near term and provide more options for renovations in the future.

This purchase also allows us to provide permanently affordable family-sized homes. The four houses (Howard, Hume, Harding West and Harding East) total about 7,400 square feet and currently have 14 bedrooms. The affordable housing will be next to an elementary school and playground, in walking distance to three forms of mass transit, and nestled into a residential neighborhood. (Please note that the Walker Center property is located in the Auburndale Local Historic District.)

I will use \$2.45 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for the acquisition.

Public Buildings Commissioner Josh Morse, Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Yeo, Director of Planning & Development Barney Heath and Newton Public Schools staff have been looking closely at the property. The purchase price resulted from a negotiation between the City and the Walker Center after examination of appraisals. The Newton Public Schools and School Committee leadership are very supportive of the acquisition. We kept the Ward 4 Councilors informed about the possible acquisition over the summer and fall during negotiations, and we also held a community meeting of neighbors to discuss the City's interests in the property.

We understand that the Walker Center is working with a team about the future of the remainder of the property; they expect to create a residential project that preserves the existing buildings and likely requires a special permit from the City Council in order to proceed.