



Lara Kritzer
Community Preservation Program Manager
City of Newton Planning & Development Department
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

October 20, 2023

I am pleased to submit this proposal to the Community Preservation Committee for a Historic Resources CPA grant for the Second Church in Newton for an exterior fabric restoration project.

Following the pre-proposal meeting in September, we have removed the accessibility component from the grant application. We still aim to implement building modifications to greater meet the needs of a widening number of community users, but those improvements are on a longer time horizon.

The roof and masonry capital expenditure outlined in this application have already been thoroughly reviewed by the Mass Historical Commission and are supported in part by a \$50k grant from the Mass Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF). They have a strict timetable for bidding, contracting and completion of the project by June, 2024. It would be a tremendous assistance to have CPA funds combining with the contributions from the church organization to complete this priority scope of work.

The Second Church in Newton has a long history, dating back to its first meetings in colonial times in 1764. This group of families were the driving force for the initial settlement of the village of West Newton. The current building is the third home for this congregation. A previous building on Washington Street was adapted to become Newton's City Hall from the late 19th century until 1930.

The Gothic Revival structure, located prominently on the hill above the village, is on the National Register of Historic Places. The sanctuary (1916) has excellent natural acoustics and seating for over 300 and is increasingly being used by music groups as a performance space. Over 30 music events are planned between now and June. The Tudor Revival annex, extended in 1938, contains many classrooms and meeting rooms with multiple users (see details at end of this letter).

With roots in the Congregational denomination, Second Church is part of the United Church of Christ. We welcome all, regardless of their faith journey, background, or gender identity. As with many New England churches, the membership and attendance

numbers are now much smaller than in previous decades. The large footprint of the building complex (up to 50,000 sq feet in floor area) far exceeds the needs of the current congregation, yet our facilities serve the community in many ways including as a multi-faith location. We are dedicated to assuring this significant and visible structure continues to be well preserved while welcoming a variety of long-term tenants, cultural organizations, and community events. The congregation has named this vision “Sharing Space”.

To assist in implementing this vision for the future, in the past eighteen months we have engaged professional advice on three aspects of building preservation and adaptation:

- **Preservation:** Lisa Howe of Building Conservation Associates conducted an exterior Building Conditions Assessment in February/March 2023. While the building is structurally sound, priority investments in restoring the exterior fabric of the building have been identified.
- **Access:** David Torrey of Torrey Architecture carried out an accessibility assessment in 2022, and developed drawings for alternate approaches, which have been costed out by PM&C.
- **Performance space:** In April 2023, architects Joslin, Epstein & Picardy worked with a task force and led a brainstorming charette on interior modifications to enhance the space for musicians (including potential staging, lighting and sound system enhancements).

The current proposal represents our commitment to carry out the first of these three types of essential investments. The other two remain in the pipeline and will also be needing significant capital in the future to meet the “Sharing Space” mission of our organization.

The Second Church is seeking CPA funding of \$125,500 to support a total project estimated cost of \$260,600. The remainder of the costs, in addition to the \$50k MPPF grant, will be covered through our own funding which is already in hand (through donations and drawing on the endowment.)

We would be interested in your feedback to know if it would be possible to return to the CPC at a later date, regarding potential support for the other capital investments in the pipeline mentioned above. Additional funding will be essential as part of adaptive reuse of this historic building, with the potential emergence of a superior and an inclusive venue in Newton for musicians of all kinds, welcoming their audiences and participants.

Sincerely yours,

Laura Foote Member, Board of Resources
Second Church in Newton
60 Highland Street, West Newton, MA 02465

Second Church in Newton Sharing space in our building

Music:

Soloists and ensembles performing chamber music, choral, piano, jazz, gospel and global genres have been using our spaces for rehearsals and/or concerts.

- Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra
- Newton Baroque
- New Philharmonia Orchestra
- Jameson Singers
- Youth Pro Musica
- Newton Piano Summit (2022, 2023; planned for March 2024)
 - the following musicians have performed: PUSH- Celebrating Women in Jazz; Harold Charron - Afro-Cuban Jazz Ensemble; Helen Sung Trio; Andrus Madsen; Hidemi Akawai; Dennis Montgomery III; Leo Blanco; Sylvia Barry; Utar Atun.
 - Supported in part by the Newton Cultural Council
- Bay Colony Brass

Other community users:

The following organizations use meeting rooms, classrooms, offices, and the large kitchen in the annex building:

- Second Church Nursery School - non-denominational early childhood education program founded in 1934
- Congregation Dorshei Tzedek - a tenant for over 15 years, using classrooms, offices, and gathering spaces, including a dedicated worship space (the former Chapel Art Gallery)
- Play2Learn, a pediatric occupational therapy practice, working with children and families on a one-to-one basis
- Chestnut Hill Arts Academy
- Alcoholics Anonymous "New Beginner" support meetings
- Al Anon "Steps to Serenity" support meetings
- Girl Scouts Troop 67315 - monthly
- Tuesday Club - Men's Discussion & Social Group
- Volunteer cooking group preparing meals for the Bristol Lodge shelter in Waltham
- City of Newton – (pre-Covid) community meetings including zoning re-design focus groups