



**Newton Affordable Housing Trust Funding Application
City of Newton, Massachusetts**

October 26, 2023

PROJECT TITLE: West Newton Family Navigation Center and Temporary Housing

PROJECT SUMMARY

1. Project's uses, target population, and housing types

Background and Current Work

Founded by clergy, Newton resident John Arnold Lowell, and other prominent families in 1916, FamilyAid (formerly Travelers' Aid Society) has—over its 100-plus year history—provided education, training and a wide array of social services and temporary and permanent housing to Massachusetts citizens and new immigrants struggling with poverty and housing instability.

A multi-faceted agency, FamilyAid supports its clients with education and training, homelessness prevention and diversion services and stable housing support to create a bridge from temporary to permanent housing. In addition to these services, FamilyAid operates more than 150 temporary and permanent housing units throughout Greater Boston, working in collaboration with the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC). FamilyAid also provides anti-poverty/homeless prevention education and training programs and housing services to families enrolled with Boston Public Schools, Boston Children's Hospital, and the Boston Housing Authority.

Impact

FamilyAid's impact is tangible and long-lasting: it now serves over 5,400 children and parents annually in 33 Massachusetts communities. With FamilyAid's support, client families typically move from temporary housing to permanent housing within 11 months. FamilyAid continues to support its permanently housed families for up to two years as they get back on their feet, with 97% of families maintaining their permanent homes.

Family Navigation Center and Temporary Housing Approach

FamilyAid provides children and parents experiencing homelessness with safe places to live and a path to permanent housing via educational programs, housing search and placement services and connections to vital resources they need to return to a home of their own while providing safe, secure temporary housing. Throughout their time in temporary housing, FamilyAid teaches parents how to address their financial issues, obtain or increase their employment and

overcome the barriers they face to return to stable housing quickly. We also work with parents to obtain appropriate short- and long-term developmental, educational and recreational resources for their children. FamilyAid has run temporary housing in numerous forms since 1977. The agency has successfully run a prototype Family Navigation Center in Brookline's Coolidge Corner, similar to that proposed in Newton, since 2019.

Proposed Family Navigation Center at 1650 Washington Street

FamilyAid's proposed Family Navigation Center will be located within the former Chetwynde Nursing Home at 1650 Washington Street in West Newton. The 1.8-acre site abuts the Warren House playing fields and Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. The building is three stories tall and was an active nursing facility up until eight months ago. FamilyAid will convert the first floor into classrooms, training space and meeting rooms, intake offices, a laundry, indoor play space for children, and a six-bay common kitchen with a dining area. The top two floors will house 42 families, typically occupied by one parent and one to two children. Each of the two residential floors will have a central staffing station, study space for older children, and common areas. No additional buildings will be constructed.

The location offers families several benefits, including walking proximity to transit (bus, MBTA Green Line and Commuter Rail), stores (grocery and pharmacy), daycare and healthcare services.

FamilyAid will maintain a daily onsite presence of certified case managers, housing specialists, educators and service navigators who will help families build the skills needed to achieve self-sufficiency and to find and sustain permanent, stable housing. Additionally, the site will be supported 24/7 by trained FamilyAid resident services and facilities staff.

Prior to opening in Spring 2024, the property will undergo moderate rehabilitation, managed by FamilyAid's project partner, the Planning Office for Urban Affairs of the Archdiocese of Boston. Renovations will include new flooring and wallpaper, the addition of an indoor children's play space, child-safe showers in each dwelling unit, upgrades of electrical HVAC systems, lighting improvements, lead and asbestos removal and updating of existing common, education, administrative, kitchen and dining spaces. New Wi-Fi and security systems, and group and individual educational spaces, and study lounges will be added within the existing structure.

Additionally, the 1.8 acre site will be extensively improved. It will be brought up to city codes and will include an ADA-compliant pedestrian walkway, secure perimeter fencing, dark sky-compliant lighting, additional landscaping and a secure children's playground.

FamilyAid will lease and operate the site for up to 55 years. Once city permits are received, Phase One renovations will take approximately four months.

Education Programs

Each parent must attend onsite education programs and pursue formal matriculated education, training or community service programs based on their eligibility. Parents typically spend 30

hours a week attending classes and other self-sufficiency activities led by professional educators, social work staff and community navigators. Classes include job training and employment preparation, financial literacy classes, housing search, technology education, tenancy skill development, parenting education, adult basic education (ESL, GED/HiSET) and cooking and nutrition education. For example, Newton-Wellesley Hospital has offered to provide on-site job training, with on-site childcare provided in an on-site play space in conjunction with Horizons for Homeless Children.

Housing Placements

FamilyAid typically houses client families within 11 months. Once enrolled with FamilyAid, families learn how to apply for various housing opportunities, including low- to moderate-income and market-rate housing. Under federal and EOHLC guidelines, families retain housing placement opportunities and priorities within their original home communities. It is anticipated that new arrivals to the Commonwealth, will stay longer at the Center – up to two years - as they work through their permanent work visas, and we work with them to obtain employment and permanent housing.

Family Demographics

All 1650 Washington Street residents will be families with children under the age of 18. Eighty-five percent (85%) of FamilyAid clients are single mothers with young children. The majority of children are ages zero to four. Ninety-four percent (94%) are people of color; 34% speak a first language other than English; and the average household income is \$13,500, below 15% AMI. As part of our work providing culturally sensitive education and housing support services, FamilyAid employs multilingual staff, 24/7 translation services, and other technologies to support communications with clients.

School-Age Student Support

Families residing at 1650 Washington Street will have the option to maintain their school-age child's enrollment in their local schools. FamilyAid understands that for each school-age student who attends Newton Public Schools, the Commonwealth's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will provide the City with an initial \$1,000 and an additional \$100 per day per student.

2. Proposed NAHT funding uses and anticipated form (grant, long or short-term loan)

FamilyAid respectfully requests a grant of \$500,000 to partially fund building construction/renovation costs not covered by state funds. To convert this former nursing home into a site that supports the full range of services for homeless families (e.g. converting an industrial kitchen to a six-bay instructional kitchen, creating handicap-accessible walkways and play spaces, upgrading electrical, stormwater, and HVAC systems), construction costs are estimated to be 30% above the value of the property, thereby triggering over \$1.5 M in additional costs to meet environmental and ADA requirements. State and federal funds will be allocated to these projects, necessitating this request and others to help support the funding of direct building renovation costs (see attached capital budget).

3. Special Needs/disabilities populations to be served (if any) and potential support service providers

Across all FamilyAid programs, approximately 15% of our clients present with a physical, developmental, or behavioral disability. The Newton FNC will be fully ADA-compliant to accommodate children and parents with disabilities, including elevator access to all floors, ADA-compliant dwelling units, indoor and outdoor play spaces and walkways, an ADA-compliant kitchen, and classrooms. Moreover, FamilyAid case managers and health navigators will assist family members to access the supportive services they need to achieve independence.

4. How the project will increase the social, racial, and economic diversity of the City of Newton

Based on Emergency Assistance program trends we expect that the population we serve will increase the social, racial and economic diversity of the City:

Ninety four percent (94%) of the extremely low-income children and parents we will serve at the Center are projected to be people of color:

- African American 44%
- Asian/Pacific Islander 2%
- Caucasian 6%
- Hispanic/Latinx 46%
- Multiracial/Other 2%

100% of the families who will be served at the Newton FNC are experiencing homelessness:

- Average household income: \$13,500, at or below 15% Area Median Income (AMI) for a parent with two children
- 85% single mothers
- 50% US citizens
- 50% foreign-born (legal asylees, refugees, migrants or immigrants)
- 34% speak a native language other than English.

5. Any special features and challenges of the project (historic preservation, sustainability, easements, environmental (hazmat and soil), permanent and/or temporary relocation, occupied rehab, etc.)

The former Chetwynde Nursing Home was constructed in the early 1960s with modifications and improvements through the 1980s. Given the cost of the renovations, modern code compliance has been triggered that subsequently required upgrades to the site's ADA compliance, stormwater remediation, HVAC and energy management systems. The community approval process has also resulted in significant and costly site improvement (trash removal siting, landscaping, enhanced perimeter fencing, external lighting, parking) to mitigate abutter's

concerns. We are seeking a combination of state, city, and private funding for these costs and anticipated moderate rehabilitation work that includes bathroom expansions (each room has its own private bathroom, but no shower), family tub rooms, clinic and educational spaces, security and IT upgrades, HVAC improvements, a congregate kitchen and dining area, a structured outdoor play area, new furniture and fixtures for the families, an ADA-compliant walkway, and storm water and phosphorus abatement.

6. How this project meets previously recognized community needs/goals details in Newton plans (see list) by providing a brief quote which includes the plan title, year and page number, etc. Applicants do not need to provide a quote from every plan and/or may also list other community benefits not mentioned in these plans

A. *Newton Affordable Housing Trust Priorities, Goals & Guidelines*, updated 2022:

"In setting criteria, the Trustees agree to consider the following: ...

- *Community need for the proposal"* (page 3)

FamilyAid is responding to the Commonwealth's State of Emergency related to the dire need for temporary housing for both Massachusetts residents and migrant families.

- *"Proponent's organizational capacity to facilitate the program or project"* (page 3)

FamilyAid has a long history of leasing and managing temporary housing units and providing high-impact services to families experiencing homelessness in its 150 units of state-supported family shelter. Moreover, the Planning Office for Urban Affairs, our development consultants, have extensive experience developing similar projects.

"The CPA statute also states a preference for the reuse of existing buildings or construction of new buildings on previously developed sites with respect to affordable housing." (page 3)

This project repurposes an existing building on a previously developed site and offers affordable temporary housing to approximately 100 children and parents at a time.

"The Trust's ordinance states that the Trust funds shall be used to create or preserve housing that is affordable to low and moderate households as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), with an emphasis on housing for Extremely Low (30% AMI), Very Low (50% AMI), and Low Income (80% AMI) households." (page 3)

The 42 families served at the Newton FNC all will be under 30% AMI, with average household incomes of just \$13,500.

Grant Requests (page 6)

- *Well-founded approach to the grant program goals*

- *Measurable impact on the affordability and diversity of housing in Newton*

FamilyAid, the largest agency in Greater Boston solely focused on families experiencing homelessness, has among the best outcomes of any homeless services provider in the region: permanent housing placement (64% in 11 months or less), housing retention (97%), and improved overall family stability as measured by improved employment, financial, educational, and health outcomes. Our growing team of Navigators identify resources and create community partnerships that provide workforce training, financial literacy, tutoring and mentoring, developmental assessments, and access to healthcare services.

Extremely low-income families experiencing homelessness from majority BIPOC communities gain access to temporary housing, workforce training, permanent housing search and placement, and other comprehensive services designed to move families from poverty to self-sufficiency.

- *Clearly defined plan to achieve successful outcomes for program activities*
- *Capacity to administer the grant and deliver the services funded by the grant*

FamilyAid exceeds national outcomes across its work in providing prevention programs, temporary housing, housing placement and two-generational services. The agency is considered among the nation's best charities, maintaining the highest ratings by independent national nonprofit evaluators, including Candid/GuideStar and Charity Navigator.

FamilyAid's Newton FNC program is based on its successful Brookline program, in which homeless families achieve permanent housing within 11 months on average, with a 97% one-year permanent housing retention rate. Newly arriving families are expected to be enrolled at the Center for up to years as Family works with them to obtain training, work visas and housing placements. For both populations, FamilyAid's highly-trained, trauma-informed team of social workers and housing specialists are supported by a growing network of community partners who provide workforce training, educational programming, positive childhood experiences, and a multitude of support services to children and parents experiencing homelessness.

- *Ability to leverage the grant funds and to continue the proposed activity beyond the funding period.*

FamilyAid has secured preliminary approval and a commitment of \$5M toward construction costs from the Commonwealth's EOHLC. We are seeking a total of \$7M from the state for this project plus \$3M from private philanthropy, of which \$1.1M is currently committed or pending. A grant of \$500,000 from the Newton Affordable Housing Trust will provide critically-needed funds for renovation costs not covered by the state but, as important, will be a strong indicator of community support that will

inspire additional private philanthropy. Note that this request represents less than 5% of the total cost of the project.

Ongoing operating expenses will be largely covered as part of FamilyAid's contract with the EOHLC to provide temporary housing to families experiencing homelessness.

FamilyAid has a history of successful fundraising for major initiatives. Agency revenues have grown from \$9M in 2019 to \$19M in 2023 to meet the crisis of family homelessness over the past four years, of which 25% is derived from philanthropy annually. During that time, the number that FamilyAid prevented from homelessness, sheltered, housed, and stabilized grew from 1,600 children and parents in 2019 to more than 5,400 last year.

- *Preference may be given to non-profit organizations that demonstrate their ability to provide needed and effective services to Newton residents.*

Families will be assigned to the Navigation Center by the EOHLC based on available rooms and proximity to their home community, which includes Newton.

FamilyAid has many close connections to the Newton community and will build on those ties to bring comprehensive educational and support services to families residing at FNC. To date, we have secured commitments from Newton-Wellesley Hospital, Newton Public Schools, Newton Food Pantry, and Family Access to provide trainings and services. FamilyAid's President, Chief Advancement Officer, and Major Gifts Officer are all longtime Newton residents.

B. Newton Consolidated plan 2020-2025

"Helping homeless persons (especially chronically homeless individuals and families, families with children, veterans and their families, and unaccompanied youth) make the transition to permanent housing and independent living, including shortening the period of time that individuals and families experience homelessness, facilitating access for homeless individuals and families to affordable housing units, and preventing individuals and families who were recently homeless from becoming homeless again." (page 195)

FamilyAid's two-generational approach to solving family homelessness mirrors the above goals. The Newton Family Navigation Center will shorten the time that a family remains homeless and improve their long-term ability to stay out of the homeless cycle by providing a full suite of on-site educational opportunities, training, and supportive services for every member of the family.

7. Any required federal, state and/or local permits, and explain how the permitting will be completed

All state statutes and municipal ordinances apply other than zoning ordinances. The City's planning office has approved FamilyAid's Dover application and its Inspectional services department has approved minor waivers to pre-existing conditions as the property is improved to support its change in use (attached).

Preliminary approval of site renovations along with a commitment of \$5M already have been obtained from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. In addition, The Planning Office for Urban Affairs for the Archdiocese of Boston (POUA) is overseeing FamilyAid's compliance with all applicable City ordinances and permitting requirements from the Department of Inspectional Services, the Disabilities Commission, Conservation Commission, and Department of Planning. FamilyAid is committed to ensuring that codes are met, consistent with the requirements of municipal, state, and federal codes.

8. Anticipated project timeline which includes permitting, funding commitments, construction period, and lease-up or unit sales phases

7/26/23	15-year lease signed with four 10-year options to renew, non-disturbance clause, and right of first offer to purchase
11/1/23 – 3/1/24	Phase 1 construction: Interior renovations and furnishings completed
3/1/24 - 5/31/24	Families move in
4/1/24 – 6/30/24	Phase 2: Exterior renovations and environmental mitigation work completed (ADA-compliant walkway, stormwater and phosphorus abatement)
2025	Phase 3: Upgrade HVAC system (delay due to supply chain challenges)

9. Project sustainability features and ratings (PHIUS, LEED, Enterprise Green Communities, etc.)

To be determined, based on funding availability.

10. Acquisition stage and terms (offer/P&S/deeded) and if acquisition is to a related party

N/A. FamilyAid signed a 15-year lease agreement on July 26, 2023 with property owner East Washington Realty Trust. This agreement includes four 10-year lease extension options and the right of first offer, should the owner decide to sell the property.

11. Any other information that would be useful to the NAHT in assessing the application

The FamilyAid Board of Directors envisioned the creation of several comprehensive Family Navigation Centers as part of a multi-year strategic plan approved in 2022. The timeline for

creation and development of the West Newton Family Navigation Center has been accelerated at the request of the Commonwealth because the demand for services for homeless families has reached unprecedented levels over the past year.

Part of this demand is driven by the combination of the third most expensive rental housing in the country, the lack of affordable housing stock, and the economic losses incurred by low-income families during the pandemic. The demand also is impacted by the growing number of legal asylum-seeking and refugee families arriving to the Commonwealth. To address this humanitarian crisis, the state must add emergency units and expand shelter capacity. The Family Navigation Center is a short- and long-term answer to this crisis, so planning and renovations are moving ahead rapidly.

We are grateful for the positive response from the City of Newton and its residents to this project and the families it will serve. We welcome the Newton Affordable Housing Trust's participation in this critically important response to the family homelessness crisis.