

West Newton Cinema Foundation
PO Box 650012
West Newton, MA 02465



January 19, 2024

Mollie Hutchings, Community Preservation Program Manager
(mhutchings@newtonma.gov)
City of Newton Planning & Development Department
1000 Commonwealth Ave., Newton, MA 02459

Dear Ms. Hutchings:

I am pleased to submit the pre-proposal application of the West Newton Cinema Foundation to the Community Preservation Committee for matching funding for a feasibility assessment study of the West Newton Cinema (WNC). The Cinema has been an anchor of West Newton for nearly 90 years and is a part of the historic fabric of the neighborhood and Newton. After a major renovation into multiple screens in 1987, the Cinema has served Newton and the region as an art house cinema, with first-run films, independent and foreign features, and family entertainment for decades.

Economic challenges led the private owners of the theater to sell the theater's real estate. The theater operation has continued under a lease from the new owner with an option for a non-profit organization to repurchase the building. The Foundation was formed for this purpose and has been conducting a fundraising campaign.

A key step is to assess the existing condition of the theater, determine what alterations are needed for a revitalized cultural space centered in film, what kind of rehabilitation will be necessary, and how much it will cost. The Foundation has secured funding for this purpose from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and needs matching funds to conduct the assessment.

The West Newton Cinema is an economic anchor for the West Newton commercial village and an important creative business in the emerging Washington Street Cultural District. The alternative to retaining and re-inventing the Cinema is the demolition of the WNC building, along with the flanking retail commercial buildings. This will eliminate contributing buildings in the West Newton Village National Historic District, further fragmenting the 19th and early 20th century building fabric.

Newton's Community Preservation Act funds could play an important role in saving and restoring this historic asset, by helping to assemble critical information on the feasibility of the rehabilitation of the building.

With regards,

Elizabeth Heilig
President, West Newton Cinema Foundation