



City of Newton, Massachusetts Community Preservation Committee



David B. Cohen
Mayor

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Board of Aldermen
 FROM: Community Preservation Committee
 DATE: 27 April 2005
 RE: **CPC Recommendation For CPA Funding**

PROJECT TITLE: Preservation of the City Hall and War Memorial Historic Landscape (Study)
CPA PROJECT ID: CPA-FY05-1
CPA CATEGORY: Historic Preservation

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

As revised through the packet dated April 12, the applicant, the Parks and Recreation Department, request \$40,650 to secure the services of a landscape architect with expertise in historic landscape preservation (\$650 of the total request is to cover City Law Department’s legal cost). This represents a reduction of \$20,000 from the original funding request that was submitted in October 2004. These services are needed to prepare an historic and existing conditions report, and develop a landscape treatment plan for outlining the phased work and associated costs for the rehabilitation of the historic Olmsted Brothers-designed landscape surrounding City Hall and the Newton War Memorial. If this design work is funded, the applicant plans to return to the CPC, possibly outside of the usual funding round, with a request to fund the implementation of the plan’s recommendations.

FINDINGS

Community Preservation Act (MGL c.44B)

Historic Preservation

MGL c.44B defines an **historic resource** as “a building, structure, vessel or real property that is listed or eligible for listing on the state register of historic places or has been determined by the local historic preservation commission to be significant...” The historic landscape surrounding City Hall is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the City Hall and War Memorial building. A site listed on the National Register is automatically listed on the State Register.

In accordance with §5(b)(2), the design work would provide a scope of work required to **rehabilitate** the historic landscape. Preparing such designs complies with the *US Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*. Recommendation #1 states that “Research of a cultural landscape is essential.” Research is a primary component of this proposal. Furthermore, Recommendation #2 highlights that “the goal of documentation is to provide a record of the landscape as it exists at the present time...” The proposed existing conditions report will achieve this. After the design work is completed, a comprehensive scope of work for the rehabilitation of the historic landscape will be laid out.

Newton Community Preservation Plan

Overarching Goals

1. Contribute to the preservation of Newton’s unique character, boost the vitality of the community and enhance the quality of life for its residents.	Yes
2. Serve more than one CPA category.	Yes
3. Demonstrate the highest cost/benefit value relative to other proposals.	See below
4. Leverage other public and/or private funds.	No
5. Preserve a resource or opportunity that would otherwise be lost.	Yes, see below

6. Create incentives for other private projects to occur.	No
7. Show that a project is the most reasonable available option to achieve the objective.	Yes
8. Demonstrate strong community support.	See below
9. Serve to equitably distribute CPA funds throughout the City.	Yes, see below

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal 3: Projects received during the October funding round included a high CPA request of \$1,000,000 and a low CPA request of \$19,250. With the project revision submitted on 12 April 2005 the CPA cost for this project totals \$40,650 (\$650 of this total is for fees accrued by the City's Legal Department). The relative benefit for this project is the development of a comprehensive treatment plan for the landscape surrounding Newton's City Hall Complex. Designed by the Olmsted Brothers, an internationally renowned landscape architecture firm, this historic landscape played a substantial role in listing City Hall and the War Memorial on the National Register of Historic Places. Extensive documentation of the landscape is included in the proposal, providing of thorough written record of this historic resource.

In terms of CPA cost related to all other historic preservation projects either completed or currently under consideration, this project ranks 10th out of 14 total. The following table illustrates the comparative costs of historic preservation projects.

TABLE 1: CPA Project Costs (Historic Preservation)

<i>Project Name</i>	<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Total CPA Funds (for preservation portion only)</i>
Historic Burying Ground Restoration – Phase IIa	05	\$257,395
Newton Corner Library	03	\$236,129
Historic Burying Ground Restoration – Phase I	03	\$188,277
YMCA	05	\$160,273
City Hall – Balustrade	03	\$150,660
Washington Park Lighting	05	\$131,035
City Hall – Lighting	03	\$121,200
City Hall – Windows	03	\$119,400
248 Elliot Street/Linden Green	05	\$63,290
City Hall and War Memorial Historic Landscape (Design)*	05	\$40,650
Brigham House – Phase 1*	03	\$20,000
War Memorial Stairs*	05	\$15,000
Civil War Monument*	05	\$15,000
Historic District Signs	04	\$2,000

*Denotes projects requesting CPA funds to conduct a study or produce design documents in preparation for a larger preservation project.

Goal 5: Designed in 1932, natural processes and human activities have eroded the landscape's original design. Continued neglect could eventually lead to irreversible damage being done to the character defining features of the landscape. The development of a long-term treatment plan will ensure that future generations are able to enjoy, appreciate, and learn from this historic resource.

Goal 8: At the 16 November 2004 Public Hearing held by the CPC, no objections were expressed.

Goal 9: The FY05 applications include funding requests for projects in Nonantum, Newton Corner, West Newton, Newtonville, Newton Upper Falls, Newton Center, Newton Highlands and Waban, as well as city-wide projects. The Olmsted-designed landscape is part of the City Hall Complex, located in Newton Centre.

Historic Preservation Goals

1. Support the preservation and restoration of privately-owned properties that are on the National or State Historic Registers, or that have been landmarked or found to be “preferably preserved” by the Newton Historical Commission.	No
2. Support the preservation and/or restoration of municipally-owned resources that are on the National or State Historic Registers, or that have been landmarked or found to be “preferably preserved” by the Newton Historical Commission.	Yes
3. Encourage protection of resources that retain their historic integrity, in terms of location, context, design, style, workmanship, and materials.	Yes
4. Enable access to the resource by the public.	See below
5. Support the objectives and priorities of local historic preservation organizations, such as the Newton Historical Society, the Jackson Homestead, local historic districts, and other such organizations within the City of Newton.	Yes, see below

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal 4: The historic landscape surrounding City Hall is a municipally-owned resource that is already open to the public. This project will result in a long term treatment plan intended to rehabilitate the landscape according to the original Olmsted designs and therefore does not address issues of accessibility directly. With the overall rehabilitation, however, by definition it will further ensure public access to the landscape, enabling Newton residents to enjoy the park-like atmosphere surrounding City Hall.

Goal 5: This project has received letters of support from both the Newton History Museum and the Newton Historical Commission. In addition, despite being a historic preservation project, the City Hall landscape is a park. As such, it addresses the goal of developing master plans for the coordinated improvement of parks and other facilities, as laid out in the City of Newton Recreation and Open Space Plan 2003-2007

CPC RECOMMENDATION

The proposal is consistent with the CPA criteria and many of the Plan’s goals, as described above. Therefore, the Community Preservation Committee voted unanimously to recommend funding this application to support the rehabilitation of the historic landscape surrounding City Hall and the War Memorial by appropriating and transferring \$40,650 (\$650 to go to the City of Newton Legal Department) to be expended under the direction and control of the Commissioner of the Parks and Recreation Department for purposes of this project as detailed in the application (dated 15 October 2004), subject to the following conditions:

1. Work shall commence no later than 31 December 2005 and shall be completed no later than 31 December 2006 or such other date(s) as may be approved in writing by the Director of Planning and Development. In the event of failure to meet the project start or completion dates as stated herein or as approved by the Director of Planning and Development, any remaining funds in the project account shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.
2. Promptly after substantial completion of the proposed design work, the applicant shall submit to the Community Preservation Committee a final project cost statement.
3. Consideration of CPA funds for future phases will require the demonstration of a good-faith effort on the part of the applicant to substantially leverage other funding sources.
4. Prior to CPC consideration of any subsequent phases of work, the proposed scope of work shall be reviewed and approved by the Public Buildings Preservation Task Force and the Newton Historical Commission.
5. Any portion of the grant not used for the purposes stated herein shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.