

**League of Women Voters of Newton  
EVALUATION**

**Project Name: Newton Homebuyer Assistance**

**Category:** Community (Affordable) Housing

**Location:** city wide

**CPA Request:** \$ 1,057,000, plus \$533,000 remaining from last proposal for total of \$1,590,000, ALL CPA funds

**Description:** This program, which has been funded with CPC dollars as well as federal housing funds since 2004, provides downpayment assistance to low- and moderate-income households buying a home in Newton, in return for restrictions keeping those properties affordable to households in those income levels in perpetuity.

**LWVN Reviewer Notes:**

The LWVN has supported this program every time we have reviewed it since 2003. It is a cost-effective measure for homeownership in a city with little in the way of affordable home buying opportunities.

Within the CPA guidelines, Comprehensive Plan and Newton's Housing and Community Development Plans, the project makes sense. We need more affordable housing in Newton. The LWVN appreciates that these units will be permanently affordable.

It also fits the LWVN's positions supporting small, in-fill affordable housing and housing that supports economic diversity in Newton.

This year, our readers raised a few concerns:

1. In earlier comments to the CPC, the City opposed a small, in-fill development (submitted by a local non-profit) that would have created two units of affordable rental housing this year. This program funds three units over two years. It is also more expensive per unit than the proposal the City opposed. We are perplexed by the City's position on small affordable housing creation in Newton, as it appears to be at odds with itself.
2. Normally, the CPC and the LWVN like to see CPA funds leveraging other funds. This proposal now lacks matching funds from HOME or other programs. We wonder if there are other funding sources that might be tapped.
3. As in the past, part of the funds are applied to pay for City staff to work on the program. (\$15,000 in this case). We have not objected to this in the past, but it appears that this funding is not being used to bring a part-time person to full-time or to add badly-needed staff to the department. Isn't the Homebuyer's Program part of a staff job description currently? If this is the case, should the CPA be used to fund currently budgeted staff?

**Recommendation:**

Despite the concerns raised above, the need for diverse housing in Newton remains strong. Therefore,

**The LWVN Readers support this proposal.**