

City of Newton



David B. Cohen  
Mayor

## City of Newton, Massachusetts Community Preservation Committee

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Board of Aldermen  
FROM: Community Preservation Committee  
DATE: 28 January 2004  
RE: **CPC Recommendation for CPA Funding**

**PROJECT TITLE:** HOUGHTON GARDEN RESTORATION PHASE IV  
**CPA PROJECT ID:** CPA-FY04- 5  
**CPA CATEGORY:** Recreation<sup>1</sup>

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant, Newton Conservation Commission, requests \$90,000 to be used to complete the installation of the remaining 710 linear feet of the new black ornamental steel fence and two new gate sets with granite posts. The applicant plans to apply for \$50,000 from the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund, which, if granted, would be used in whole to reimburse the CPA fund. The fence will serve to define the edge of the property and secure the site against vandalism, dumping, and entry of motor vehicles. In addition, the new fence will be a significant upgrade to the existing chain link fence that will add to the visual beauty of the park. The gates will improve pedestrian access and will also improve vehicular access for maintenance contractors. The location of the gates will also improve the park's linkage to the adjacent Webster Conservation Area and the MDC Hammond Woods Reservation.

#### FINDINGS

##### Community Preservation Act (MGL c. 44B)

This proposal meets the criteria established under MGL c.44B for the following reasons:

1. Houghton Garden complies with the definition of recreational use under §2 which includes, but is not limited to "... the use of land as a park . . ." Houghton Garden, although originally designed as a garden for a private estate, is now used as public park and provides passive recreation opportunities.
2. The project complies with §5(b)(2), which allows the CPA to fund the preservation of land for recreational use. This project would install a new black ornamental steel fence around the perimeter of the property, which would protect the park from vandalism, dumping, and unauthorized entry of motor vehicles.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the application states that the project falls within the open space and historic preservation funding categories, the project better meets the definition for recreational use. Open space is more focused on land in its natural state, while recreation includes community gardens and parks. If the project were categorized as historic preservation, the Act would only allow funding to preserve or restore an existing historic feature (which the fence is not) or a rehabilitation which would meet with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The Standards require that "Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken." and "Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence." This project would not meet either of these standards. Therefore, it is most rational to categorize this project as recreation.

**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, see below |
| 3. Demonstrate the highest cost/benefit value relative to other proposals.   | See below      |
| 4. Leverage other public and/or private funds.   | Yes, see below |
| 5. Preserve a resource or opportunity that would otherwise be lost.  | Yes            |
| 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.   | Yes            |
| 9. Serve to equitably distribute CPA funds throughout the City.  | See below      |

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal #2: Although this specific request is categorized as recreation for purposes of CPA funding, it is the last part of a larger multi-phase historic preservation project to restore the park features and original design intent.

Goal #3: Projects received during the November funding round included a high CPA cost of \$375,000 and a low CPA cost of \$20,000. The CPA cost for this project is \$90,000 (\$40,000 grant and \$50,000 loan). The relative benefit for this project is to define the edge of the property and secure the site against vandalism, dumping, and entry of motor vehicles.

Goal #4: This funding request leverages \$10,000 in private donations and, if granted, will include a Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund grant of \$50,000.

Goal #9: The November round of applications includes funding requests for projects in Nonantum, Newton Corner, West Newton, Newton Center, Chestnut Hill, and Newton Highlands; this project is located in Chestnut Hill.

**Recreation Goals**

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| 1. Address the needs targeted in the <i>Recreation and Open Space Plan</i> and take advantage of other opportunities to meet the recreation needs of the residents of the City.            | No             |
| 2. Meet the recreation needs of the greatest number of residents possible.   | No             |
| 3. Meet the greatest variety of recreation needs possible.   | Yes, see below |
| 4. Serve passive as well as active uses. Finding ways to balance the range of recreational opportunities and serve the diverse recreation needs of the community is a priority of the CPC. | Yes            |
| 5. Preserve sight lines consistent with open space. . . . Decisions about scale and placement should be made with the objective of enhancing or enabling open views.                       | Yes, see below |
| 6. Access for disabled residents should be included in plans wherever possible.  | Yes, see below |

Additional comments on selected goals:

Goal #3: Houghton Garden serves the community as a passive recreation amenity that is enhanced by walking paths, benches, and vistas into the garden.

Goal #5: The completed fence will preserve sight lines into the garden due to the style and design of the fence which is very open.

Goal #6: The phased restoration of Houghton Garden significantly improved access for disabled residents through properly graded and surfaced pathways and accessible gateways.

### **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 complete the installation of the remaining 710 linear feet of the new black ornamental steel fence and two new gate sets with granite posts by appropriating and transferring the requested \$90,000 to be expended under the direction and control of the Director of Planning and Development for purposes of funding a grant for \$40,000 and a loan for \$50,000 as detailed in the application (submitted 1 November 2003), subject to the following conditions:

1. The portion of this appropriation that is a loan for \$50,000 shall be repayable upon receipt of a grant from the Massachusetts Preservation Project Fund, or other such funding.
2. As proposed, no more than one plaque/sign shall be installed on the fence. The sign shall recognize private and public funding sources, including the Community Preservation Fund. The final design of the sign shall be approved by the Chestnut Hill Historic District Commission.
3. Work shall commence no later than 31 December 2004 and shall be completed no later than 31 December 2005 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.
4. Any portion of the grant not used for the purposes stated herein shall be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.