



Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

**City of Newton, Massachusetts**  
Department of Planning and Development  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Telephone  
(617) 796-1120  
Telefax  
(617) 796-1142  
TDD/TTY  
(617) 796-1089  
[www.newtonma.gov](http://www.newtonma.gov)

Barney S. Heath  
Director

**Community Preservation Committee  
Funding Recommendation for  
COVID-19 Emergency Housing Relief Program**

**Date:** May 7, 2020  
**From:** Community Preservation Committee  
**To:** The Honorable City Council  
**Cc:** Her Honor Mayor Ruthanne Fuller

**PROJECT GOALS & ELIGIBILITY** This project provides funding for the City of Newton’s COVID-19 Emergency Housing Relief Program, a joint program utilizing CPA and Federal CARES CDBG funding to provide housing assistance to households negatively impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The City has partnered with the Metro West Housing Collaborative (MWCD) to oversee and administer this temporary program intended to provide much needed assistance and stability to Newton’s at-risk households. The program is available to households below 80% AMI and is anticipated to assist at least 300 households. Applicants will receive 70% of a household’s monthly rent or mortgage payment up to a maximum assistance of \$2,500 per month for three months. This project supports and stabilizes community housing by assisting households which have been directly negatively impacted by the current crisis to remain in their existing homes. While the program is primarily intended to assist rental households, it will also be available to homeowners already living in affordable deed-restricted units. The MWCD has extensive experience in managing and maintaining affordable housing programs and lotteries. The program’s joint funding through the City’s CDBG program ensures that the Community Development and Housing Divisions will be closely involved in the management and development of the program, from drafting the program guidelines and application process to publicizing its availability and overseeing its results. This project is CPA-eligible as the support of affordable housing.

**RECOMMENDED FUNDING** On May 4, 2020, the Community Preservation Committee voted 8-0 (member Peter Sargent absent) to recommend appropriating \$2,000,000 for purpose of supporting Community Housing from the Community Preservation Fund’s FY20 unrestricted reserve, to the control of the Planning & Development Department for a grant to the Metro West Housing Collaborative for the purpose of providing emergency housing relief to income eligible households as stated below:

Uses of Funds		
Direct Assistance for up to 3 months (70% of housing costs per month up to \$2,500 per month)		\$2,312,500
Program Admin Fee		\$187,500
<b>TOTAL USES</b>		<b>\$2,500,000</b>
Sources of Funds	Status	
CPA funding	Requested	\$2,000,000
CDBG Funding	Confirmed	\$500,000
<b>TOTAL SOURCES</b>		<b>\$2,500,000</b>

website [www.newtonma.gov/cpa](http://www.newtonma.gov/cpa)

contact Lara Kritzer, Community Preservation Program Manager

email [lkritzer@newtonma.gov](mailto:lkritzer@newtonma.gov) phone 617.796.1144

## **SPECIAL ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE CPC**

During the CPC's public hearing on this project, members unanimously expressed their support for providing CPA funded assistance to households who are financially struggling from a loss of income or employment due to the COVID-19 situation. Members recognized that many Newton households were cost burdened prior to the emergency, an issue which has only been exacerbated by the current emergency. Discussion during the public hearing focused on how best to focus the CPA funding on the most vulnerable, lowest income households in the community. With this in mind, the CPC conditioned the funding to be used for households below 80% AMI, rather than 100% AMI as is allowed under the Community Preservation Act, and requested that the applicant explore how the funding could be targeted to lower income applicants. The CPC also proposed changes to make the funding more accessible to applicant by extending the application period and allowing households already receiving funding to be eligible to apply. It was noted that this program was an initial attempt to help households struggling at this time, and that additional measures and/or amendments to this program may be needed in the future to continue to address ongoing needs.

## **ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS** *(funding conditions)*

1. The CPA funding is limited to households which are below 80% AMI at the time of their program application.
2. The application deadline will be extended from May 27, 2020 to June 3, 2020 to provide additional time for applicants to learn about and submit funding applications for the initial lottery.
3. The program will be made available to all households which meet the income threshold requirements, irrespective as to whether they are already receiving housing assistance from other sources.
4. The CPC assumes all recommended funds will be appropriated within twelve (12) months after the date of this recommendation. If this deadline cannot be met, the applicants should submit a written request to the CPC to extend that deadline.
5. The release of CPA funds for the project will be governed by a detailed grant agreement between the City of Newton and the Metro West Development Collaborative that includes but is not limited to conditions which are generally agreed upon and required for a CPA-funded housing project including a schedule for the release of funds and the agreed upon procedures for evaluating its success.
6. Any CPA funds appropriated but not used for the purposes stated herein should be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.

## **KEY OUTCOMES**

The Community Preservation Committee will evaluate this project based on its success in using Newton CPA funds to support vulnerable, lower income households in Newton who have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 crisis to remain in their existing housing situation. The successful deployment of this program and anticipated exhaustion of the funds, after assisting at least 300 households, will provide currently needed assistance and stability to Newton's at-risk households.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Revised Proposal Application,
- Design Guidelines and Program Application
- Responses to questions received from Councilors Albright, Laredo and Malakie

The above attachments are also available on the CPC project webpage along with links to additional information not attached to this recommendation. This information is available at:

<http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/cpa/projects/covid19housing.asp>