



Real Property Reuse Committee Agenda

City of Newton

In City Council

Wednesday, December 16, 2020

7:00 PM

The meeting will be held virtually on Wednesday, December 16, 2020 at 7:00 pm. To view this meeting using Zoom use this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84276890592> or call 1-646-558-8656 and use the following Meeting ID: 842 7689 0592

Item Scheduled for Discussion:

Referred to the Real Property Reuse Committee

- #65-20 Reuse of the West Newton National Guard Armory (295-19)**
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT submitting on August 7, 2016 a letter recommending that the West Newton Armory located at 1135 Washington Street be evaluated for the purpose of leasing the property for redevelopment as 100% affordable housing or for municipal uses pursuant to Ordinance Section 2-7.
- #65-20(2) Reuse of the West Newton National Guard Armory (295-19)**
JOINT ADVISORY PLANNING GROUP FOR THE WEST NEWTON ARMORY submitting, on November 13, 2020 its recommendations for the use of the West Newton National Guard Armory at 1135 Washington Street, which was declared available for sale or lease on September 17, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Danberg, Chair

The location of this meeting is accessible and reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities who require assistance. If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA Coordinator, Jini Fairley, at least two business days in advance of the meeting: jfairley@newtonma.gov or (617) 796-1253. The city's TTY/TDD direct line is: 617-796-1089. For the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), please dial 711.



Ruthanne Fuller
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Barney S. Heath
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 13, 2020

TO: Councilor Danberg, Chair, Real Property Reuse Committee
Members of the Real Property Reuse Committee

FROM: Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development
Amanda Berman, Director of Housing & Community Development
Eamon Bencivengo, Housing Development Planner

RE: **West Newton Armory Joint Advisory Planning Group (JAPG) Final Report**

CC: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller
Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer
Members of the West Newton Armory JAPG
City Council

On behalf of the members of the West Newton Armory Joint Advisory Planning Group (JAPG), we are pleased to submit their final report to the Real Property Reuse Committee. This report reflects the concerted effort of the nine-member JAPG over a period of eleven months of meetings, interviews with experts, research, and analysis. As stated in the Acknowledgements section of the report by committee Chair Ted Hess-Mahan and Vice Chair Sue Parsons, "The JAPG's work reflects the values of our community, the skills and expertise of its members, and the many voices that contributed to the findings and recommendations contained herein."

The input received from municipal officials and the analysis shared by a State-grant funded affordable housing consultant provided the JAPG with the relevant information needed to determine that 100% affordable housing is the most feasible and best use of the Armory. As detailed in the report, the JAPG unanimously recommends to the Real Property Reuse Committee of the City Council that the City of Newton purchase the West Newton Armory from DCAMM for nominal consideration, for the purpose of providing 100% permanently affordable housing units.

We look forward to discussing this report with you at your December 16th meeting, where our affordable housing consultant, Affirmative Investments, will also present their analysis and findings.

Attachments:

- West Newton Armory Joint Advisory Planning Group Final Report, November 13, 2020 (no Appendix attached)
- To download the entire report, including the Appendix, click here:
https://apps2.newtonma.gov/apps/planning/WNA_JAPG_Full_Report_FINAL_11-13-20.pdf
- The entire report and individual sections of the Appendix can also be found under “Project Resources” here:
http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/current/devrev/hip/west_newton_armory.asp



West Newton Armory
Joint Advisory Planning Group
November 13, 2020

FINAL REPORT

West Newton Armory JAPG Members

Ted Hess-Mahan, Chair

Sue Parsons, Vice Chair

Barry Abramson

Larry Bauer

Kelley Brown

Mitch Fischman

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Jonathan Katz

David Koven

City of Newton Planning & Development Department Staff

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Armory Site Information.....	7
Neighboring Armories.....	15
Possible Municipal Uses.....	16
Input from Experts.....	20
Recommendation.....	32
Appendix.....	38

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank all of the members of the West Newton Armory Joint Advisory Planning Group (JAPG), the staff of the Planning Department, the Mayor, Newton City Council, City Department heads, the Law Department, Affirmative Investments Inc. (AI) and its team of housing consultants, the Newton Historic Commission, the Newton Housing Partnership, the Newton Fair Housing Committee, the Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), the Massachusetts Army National Guard, Engine 6, and other community housing advocates, neighbors, and members of the public who participated in this process. This report, and the concerted effort over a period of eleven months that it represents, would not have been possible without their hard work, creativity, dedication, advocacy, guidance, and assistance, throughout these unusually challenging times. The JAPG's work reflects the values of our community, the skills and expertise of its members, and the many voices that contributed to the findings and recommendations contained herein.

The purchase of the historic West Newton Armory to create 100% permanently affordable housing will provide the City of Newton with an extraordinary opportunity to pursue the City's housing goals and fulfill its obligations to affirmatively further fair housing. Obtaining and redeveloping this historic structure will also allow the City to implement the goals and policies contained in the recently adopted Washington Street Vision Plan, which will enhance the unique village character, vitality, and livability of West Newton. Converting the existing building and site to affordable housing will present some significant challenges, which are acknowledged in this report, but also opportunities to create substantial benefits for our community.

We sincerely hope that the City Council and the Mayor will carefully consider the JAPG's findings and recommendations, and will collaborate, in partnership with a responsible development group, to make this a successful project that all Newton can be proud of.

Ted Hess-Mahan, Chair, West Newton Armory JAPG

Sue Parson, Vice Chair, West Newton Armory JAPG

I. Executive Summary

The West Newton Armory Joint Advisory Planning Group was formed in December 2019 by the City Council's Real Property Reuse Committee for the purposes of recommending whether the Armory should be purchased by the City from the Commonwealth for either 100% affordable housing or a municipal use. The JAPG's nine-members collectively represented a wealth of pertinent professional knowledge that enabled the group to produce a thorough recommendation. This recommendation is the culmination of 11 months of meetings, interviews with experts, research, and analysis.

The input received from municipal officials and the analysis shared by a State-grant funded affordable housing consultant provided the JAPG with the relevant information needed to determine that 100% affordable housing is the most feasible and best use of the Armory. Therefore, the JAPG unanimously recommends to the Real Property Reuse Committee of the City Council that the City of Newton purchase the West Newton Armory from DCAMM for nominal consideration, for the purpose of providing 100% permanently affordable housing units.

The JAPG further recommends that the Mayor and the Planning Department, with the assistance of AI, prepare and issue an RFP seeking proposals to redevelop the West Newton Armory, and enter into agreements with a responsible development team to lease the property, for nominal consideration, and to develop, construct, operate and maintain affordable housing on the site. Pursuant to the special legislation authorizing DCAMM to convey the West Newton Armory to the City of Newton, the use of this property would be solely restricted to permanently affordable housing and related supportive services.

II. Introduction

In the summer of 2018, the City was approached by the Commonwealth's Division of Capital Asset Management & Maintenance (DCAMM) to discern whether the City had an interest in acquiring the West Newton Armory from the State. The Massachusetts National Guard, who operated the Armory for over 100 years, had determined it to be obsolete and no longer desired to keep the Armory under its care and custody. This began the Commonwealth's disposition process in which DCAMM, acting as the State's real property manager offered use of the Armory to other State departments. With no departments seeking its use, DCAMM then entered into discussions with the City regarding conveyance to the City.

DCAMM suggested that the Commonwealth would consider conveyance to the City for a nominal amount in consideration of the City's commitment to develop 100% affordable housing on the site or, alternatively, a fair market conveyance limited to municipal purposes. The City Administration indicated its interest in acquiring the property, subject to a variety of considerations, including an assessment of the feasibility of such an affordable housing project. Since any conveyance by the Commonwealth, including conveyance to a municipality, requires the approval of the State Legislature and Governor, the suggestion of a conveyance to the City was formalized in special legislation. This Special Legislation was sponsored by Representative Kay Khan and Senator Cynthia Creem and enacted by the Governor on August 14, 2020.

The Special Legislation outlines two scenarios under which the City can take control of the Armory (See Appendix #1). Under the first scenario, the City would be given the opportunity to acquire the Armory for \$1.00 if the City restricted the entire use of the building to 100% permanently affordable housing at income levels of 80% of the area median income or lower. The second scenario permits the City to acquire the Armory for a municipal use; however, the acquisition price would not be \$1.00. Under the latter scenario, DCAMM would have the property appraised as restricted for that municipal use and the City would be asked to pay an amount that reflected that type of use. DCAMM has sold other state properties to municipalities for their direct public use; in one case, where the proposed use was a public school, the restricted value was 25% of full and fair market value. The Special Legislation also specifies that if the City chooses not to acquire the Armory for use under either of the two scenarios, then DCAMM will sell the property on the open market.

In June 2019, the Mayor received authorization from the City Council to purchase the Armory from the State under the terms of these scenarios. Also, in June of that year, the Mayor docketed her Notice of Intent to sell or lease the Armory with the City Clerk (See Appendix #2a). This action referred the Armory conveyance process before the City Council's Real Property Reuse Committee.

Under City ordinance, all matters related to the disposition of City owned real property are referred to the Real Property Reuse Committee (See Appendix #2b). As the uses of the

Armory were to be limited by the special legislation and the conveyance amount dependent on the proposed use, the City must determine the use of the Armory prior to its purchase from the State. In order to make a recommendation to the full City Council as to the use of the Armory, the *Reuse Committee* made an “initial determination” that the Armory be made available for sale or lease. Per the Real Property Reuse ordinance, this “initial determination” triggered the creation of a Joint Advisory Planning Group (JAPG).

The JAPG is a citizen-led volunteer group comprised of nine members; five appointed by the President of the City Council and four appointed by the Mayor. As stated in the City’s Ordinance, Section 2-7. Disposition of interests in city owned real property, “It shall be the responsibility of the JAPG to work with the department of planning and development to identify alternatives for the future use of the subject property, including possible continued municipal use.” In the case of the Armory, the JAPG was tasked with working with the Department of Planning and Development to identify the best and most feasible future use of the Armory, including 100% affordable housing or a municipal use. Such a task required the JAPG to frequently meet to share thoughts and ideas, conduct pertinent research, and interview relevant stakeholders and experts to acquire valuable input. The JAPG has finalized its recommendation in this report. The Real Property Reuse Committee will consider this JAPG final report before making its own recommendation to the City Council on how the City should proceed with the opportunity to acquire the Armory.

The JAPG was formed and first met in December 2019. City ordinance provides the JAPG with a 180-day period to submit its final recommendation to the Reuse Committee. This period, therefore, was set to expire in May 2019. However, due to the effects of COVID-19, the JAPG requested an extension until November 30, 2020 to submit its final report. This request was granted by the Reuse Committee.

As further detailed later in this report, the JAPG’s consideration of affordable housing as a feasible use was informed by the analysis of an affordable housing development consultant. The consultant, Affirmative Investments, was hired by the Planning Department through a Housing Choice Grant awarded to the City by the Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development’s Housing Choice Grant Program. The Planning Department applied for the grant in the summer of 2019, after being designated a Housing Choice Community, and received the \$200,000 award in early 2020. Soliciting feedback from the JAPG, the Department released a consultant Request for Proposals (RFP) in February 2020. Two proposals were received. An evaluation committee, comprised of Chair Councilor Danberg and Councilor Markiewicz of the Reuse Committee, Public Buildings Commissioner Josh Morse, JAPG member David Koven, and staff from the Planning Department, reviewed the proposals and selected Affirmative Investments in May 2020.

Concurrent to the selection of the housing consultant, the JAPG held regular public meetings to discuss the future use of the Amory based on the group’s expertise, research, presentations by stakeholders and issue experts, and information provided by the staff. The proceeding sections of this report document this process.

III. Armory Site Information

A. History and Use of West Newton Armory Building & Site

Building

First occupied in 1911 by Company C of the 5th Infantry Regiment of the National Guard (known as the Claflin Guards) the structure is described by Candace Jenkins and Susan Abele as follows on The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) – Inventory Form B prepared in 1987 and included in the MHC MACRIS database:

The Newton Armory is a somber structure designed in the Medieval Revival style characteristic of turn of the century armories and used on such major buildings as William Gibbons Preston's First Cadet Corps Armory of 1895 in Boston. This structure is symmetrically designed with a wide arched entry flanked by engaged towers that rise above the crenellated parapet. The first story is rusticated. Windows are narrow slits, adding to the building's image as a fortress.

On the same form the Historical Significance of the structure is described in the following quote:

The Claflin Guard was organized in 1870, taking its name in honor of Newton resident, William Claflin, who was at that time Governor of Massachusetts. In 1871, Nonantum Hall on Washington Street in Newton Corner became the first official home of the Claflin Guard, which was later known for its service during the Boston Fire (1873) and the Spanish-American War. The present Newton Armory was begun in 1910 and dedicated on February 23, 1911. At the time of the dedication, the Claflin Guard had become Company C of the 5th Massachusetts Regiment of the Volunteer Militia.

The building was designed by James Mulcahy and J. E. McLaughlin, in a style similar to that of most other armory's [sic] in the area.

Additional information that applies to the West Newton Armory about the architects and the common design that characterized many of the Commonwealth's Armories of the era is contained in the following excerpts from the Inventory Form B prepared in 1987 by Icon Architects for the Natick Armory and included in the MHC MACRIS database.

The 1911 Natick Armory is one of a small number of armories in the Massachusetts Army National Guard (MAARNG) system that are associated with the Commonwealth's armory building period of 1900-1914. It is nearly identical to the 1910 Hudson Armory (Inventory Form #33) and shares similarities with the other armories from this period including Somerville (1902), Greenfield, Hingham, Hudson, Newton and Plymouth (1910), Milford (1911) and Adams (1914). These armories are extremely similar in appearance with horizontally coursed or rusticated masonry and crenellated octagonal towers flanking the main entrance,

which in some cases rise above the roofline. Most are constructed of brick, while the Adams and Milford armories are built of granite. These armories represent some of the last examples of the popular use of the castellated style in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which was actually rapidly waning by the time most were designed.

...It was designed by the Boston architects, James Mulcahy and James E. McLaughlin, who do not appear to have been partners in a firm although they worked in the same building. Mulcahy's architectural work mainly concentrated on houses and support buildings in the Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, and Dorchester areas of Boston. His last listing in the Boston city directories as an architect is 1913, which may mean that he was much older than McLaughlin. McLaughlin remained listed in the directories until 1957. McLaughlin also designed the South Boston Municipal Building, Boston Trade School, and several houses. He also went on to design the Commonwealth Armory (demolished 2002) in Boston in 1913, in a style that mainly avoided the castellated style as was made clear in the competition specifications.

Much of the information in the National Guard files on its Armories has been transferred to the Massachusetts State Archives. Keith Vezeau at the Archives was kind enough to scan all the material in the file and share it with the JAPG. Although information on the West Newton Armory is sparse, a 1938 data sheet prepared by the National Guard lists the initial valuation of the land when purchased as \$4,200.00. In the same document, original construction cost is listed as \$49,302.10. Archive materials also included a photo of the Armory taken some time between 1921 & 1941 when the Armory was home to Company C of the 101st Infantry Regiment (See Appendix #3b). It is possible that the photo accompanied the 1938 data sheet.

Site

Study of maps and atlases on the City of Newton Historic Maps webpage yielded a rough timeline of the development of the site of the Armory and its surrounds.

1831 map surveyed by E F Woodward & W F Ward

The Boston & Worcester railroad, Washington Street and Watertown Street in the vicinity of the Armory are all shown to be in existence by that time. Cheesecake Brook seems to have a slightly different course than indicated on later maps, an indication that either its exact location was not important to the survey or that its course was modified over the years as abutting land was developed.

1855 map by H F Walling, Superintendent of the State Map

Information shown is very similar to that on the 1831 map with further subdivision of land in the area into smaller parcels. Cross Street appears at this time connecting Washington Street to Watertown Street to the east of the site. The course of Cheesecake Brook appears to loop much closer to Washington Street just to the west of present Armory Site.

1874 Atlases by both G M Hopkins & Co of Philadelphia and F W Beers & Co of New York

A round structure labeled Newton & Watertown Gas Company appears on the map just east of the site in what is presently the rear parking lot of the structure housing Trader Joe's. Land along Washington Street continues to be subdivided into long narrow lots extending from Washington Street to Cheesecake Brook which still appears to run within its natural banks. For the first time the Armory site has been subdivided from a larger parcel as a single lot running from Washington Street north to the brook and owned by L Tolman. (See Appendix #3c)

1886 Atlas published by J D Beers & Co of New York

Except for continued subdivision of land into smaller lots, little has changed in the area around the Armory site.

1895 Atlas published by G W Bromley Co of New York

Several changes are recorded in the immediate vicinity of the Armory site. For the first time, the Newton Street Railway appears on Washington Street along with the Newton Street Railway Stable (the structure now occupied by Trader Joe's). The Armory site is still owned by the Tolman family. Cheesecake Brook appears to have been channeled between stone walls and straightened to eliminate the loop toward Washington Street. Although the brook disappears on from the map for a few hundred feet to the west of the Armory site, this appears to be an error as the brook is completely open to the sky today. The road leading to the round structure now labeled Newton & Watertown Gas Light Co has been named Gasometer Way and has been extended to Cross Street.

1907 Atlas published by G W Bromley & Co, New York

The lot formerly owned by the Tolman family (and the site of the Armory) is now labeled as property of the Newton Street Railway and has small structures located along Washington Street. Gasometer Way has been renamed Gerard Court. The Newton Street Railway Stables has now been relabeled as the Newton Street Railway Car Barn. Cheesecake Brook is shown as a reasonably straight line and exposed to the sky for its entire length in the area.

1917 Atlas published by GW Bromley & Co, New York

The Armory structure appears on the front half of the property formerly entirely owned by the Newton Street Railway Co which now appears as the Middlesex & Boston Street Railway Co. The rear portion of the lot remains in the Street Railway Company's ownership. This suggests that site was purchased from the Street Railway Company. The north/south portion of Gerard Court has been extended to the banks of Cheesecake Brook and renamed Armory Street. (See Appendix #3d).

1929 Atlas published by Roland H Barnes & Henry F Beal of Newton & Waltham, MA

Little has changed in the area except for ownership of parcels of land, notably the round gas works structure still appears but seems to be in the ownership of an individual perhaps suggesting that it is no longer in operation and has been sold. The parcel of land behind the Armory is no longer listed as belonging to Middlesex & Boston Street Railway Company although the Car Barn is still listed in that manner. The Atlas does not appear to show any

street railway lines so it is not clear if the line on Washington Street is still present or if it still in operation. Further research required.

National Guard Use of the Armory

Leonid Kondratiuk, Director of Historical Services in The Adjutant Generals Office of The Massachusetts National Guard, prepared the following list of units stationed at the West Newton Armory from its dedication in 1911 until its closure in 2018 and provided insight into how units and personnel changed over the course of the 100+ years that the Guard occupied the Armory.

Massachusetts National Guard Units Occupying the Newton Armory 1910-2018

1910-1917	Company C, 5 th Infantry Regt
1917-1919	Company A, 11 th Infantry Regt, State Guard
1920-1921	Company H, 9 th Infantry Regt
1921-1941	Company C, 101 st Infantry Regt
1941-1947	Company C, 5 th Battalion, 23d Infantry Regt, State Guard
1941-1947	HHD, 5 th Battalion, 23d Infantry Regt, State Guard
1948-1959	Companies E and K, 101 st Infantry Regt
1959-1975	Company B, 220 th Infantry Regt
1975-1984	Company B, 114 th Medical Battalion
1980-1994	972d Military Police Company
1986-1993	26 th Division Band
1987-1988	Company C, 114 th Medical Battalion
1994-1998	HHD, 211 th Military Police Battalion
1998-2006	HHD, 726 th Finance Battalion
1998-2018	101 st Finance Detachment
2008-2018	65 th Public Affairs Detachment

In the two periods (1917-1919 & 1941-1947) when “State Guard” follows the name of the regiment, the National Guard Units were activated and became part of the Army. They were replaced by volunteers who became members of the State Guard using the Armory as its home base.

From 1910 to 1975 except for the years when the Armory was used by the State Guard, the Armory served as home for the same Infantry Regiment whose designation changed as recorded in the list. From 1975 until 2018, the units accommodated in the Armory became more specialized and each change in unit designation meant a total change in personnel as well.

During the National Guard’s tenancy in the Armory, portions of the structure were often rented to outside groups for a variety of community uses. Available rental records go back only to 2012. They show uses for youth tennis instruction, gymnastics groups and basketball and volleyball leagues.

One unique use of the West Newton Armory was as an overflow homeless men's shelter in 1990. During that winter, homelessness spiked in the City of Boston, and Boston ran out of beds to meet the need. Newton's Mayor Teddy Mann offered the Armory as a temporary shelter until the mobilization for the impending Gulf War intervened. Homeless people using the shelter were picked up each day in Boston and driven out to Newton and returned by bus to Boston the next morning.

A Newton resident who volunteered at the temporary homeless shelter, recalls the drill shed filled to capacity with neat rows of cots each night of its use. A cadre of doctors and nurses set up examination rooms for the residents. As a volunteer, he recounts learning of the challenges facing the clients who along with housing issues, faced difficulties finding employment without a permanent address or phone. Once the Gulf War began and the National Guard fully occupied the Armory again, the homeless shelter never returned to this site.

On June 24, 2019, the Newton National Guard Armory was decommissioned when it was "declared excess to the needs of the Massachusetts National Guard." The Armory commission "may on behalf of the Commonwealth and the approval of the Commander-in-chief, dispose of an Armory . . . whenever it considers that (its) continued existence . . . no longer suitable or efficiently serves the purposes of the armed forces . . . due to obsolescence or changes in the defense requirements." The final units to occupy the Armory prior to its decommissioning were the MA Army National Guard 65th Public Affairs Detachment and the 101st Finance Detachment.

B. Current Use

Built between 1910 and 1912, the West Newton Armory housed the Massachusetts State National Guard for over 100 years. Due to the changing needs of the National Guard over the past century, armories of this vintage have become obsolete. Like other early 20th Century armories with similar designs throughout the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts National Guard decommissioned the West Newton Armory by transferring management control to the Commonwealth's Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM). The building and grounds of the West Newton Armory are currently vacant.

C. Location / Size / Access

The West Newton Armory is located at 1137 Washington Street, about midway between the village centers of West Newton and Newtonville. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts controls the property. Since it was built in 1910, this T-shaped building served as a training facility for the National Guard, though it has not been used for that purpose and has stood vacant for several years.

The lot size is about 33,000 square feet (all measurements approximate, as sources are not always consistent). The building is sited such that the side setbacks are similar but the setback in the rear is greater than in the front, allowing vehicular access around three sides of the building. There is no existing handicapped access. Most of the site around the

building is paved, with modest landscaping around the “castle” section that fronts Washington Street.

On one side of the property is a Trader Joe’s food market. The other side holds a two-story brick office building.

Gross floor area over three floors is about 30,000 square feet: the lower level is about 13,400 SF, the main level 13,300, and the top level 3,400. The lower level is largely below grade towards the Washington Street front, and as the site slopes down toward the back it is less so. That level includes a firing range and a series of small rooms. The main level includes a large drill hall with a double height ceiling (pitched down toward the side walls) and a series of small rooms at the front. Finally, the smaller third floor has a series of small rooms.

The exterior is largely brick, which is in good condition with some exceptions. The rear roof has a gambrel configuration with asphalt shingles covering the lower sides, while the center above top of the drill hall and front (“castle”) sections both have membrane coverings. A major design challenge if historic preservation standards must be met is the narrow window widths, which would seem to be a difficult match with a residential use. Even if the window dimensions remain as is, the windows will require replacement. The interior systems, electrical and HVAC, will require total replacement, and a sprinkler system would likely be required by the fire code. The JAPG understands that the building has not been subject to flooding.

As further outlined in the housing consultant’s *Hazardous Materials* Report (See Appendix #5a), asbestos and lead paint do exist in the building. However, the presence of these materials was not as prevalent as anticipated, while the levels themselves were lower than expected. Radon was also tested and was found to exist at levels much lower than EPA guidelines. A Phase I Environmental Report was also conducted by the housing consultant (See Appendix #5b)

The building is not on the National Register of Historic Places. The Armory is found on Massachusetts Historical Commission’s MACRIS database (See Appendix #3a).

The site is zoned Business 2.

D. Neighborhood Context

The West Newton Armory, located at 1135 Washington Street, is just east of West Newton Square, a historic square containing mostly older brick buildings, including the West Newton Cinema, coffee shops, restaurants, a wine bar, small independent retail shops, dry-cleaning and hair salons, a CVS pharmacy, banks, the Newton Police headquarters, the Newton District Court, service providers, a small park and some offices. The armory is located .4 miles, a five to ten-minute walk, from the heart of the square.

The immediate neighborhood of the Armory on Washington Street is a busy commercial/retail area and will be getting much busier very soon. The armory is across

Armory Street (a short narrow street) from a two-story Trader Joe's grocery store, commercial office space, and parking lot on one side, next to a two-story office building on the other side and in front of a two-story nursing home and parking lot located to its rear (accessed by Armory Street). In the next few months, a one-story medical marijuana dispensary will be opening on the next block to the east of the Armory.

A six-story, 234-residential unit mixed-use development with 8,318 square feet of retail space immediately adjacent to the two-story office building next to the Armory and extending to Dunstan Street to the west ("Dunstan East") was approved by the City of Newton's Zoning Board of Appeals on July 8, 2020 through a Comprehensive Permit and will likely begin construction in late 2021 / early 2022. Dunstan East was approved as a MGL Section 40B affordable housing development and will contain 59 units of affordable housing and a small community green space that will be open to the public. The affordable units in Dunstan East will be provided with no City of Newton public funds. The rents will be set based on 30% of what households making 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) and 50% of AMI earn. 80% of median income for a family of four in the Newton area is \$96,250 and 50% AMI for a family of four is \$63,950.

In addition to the uses described above, the north side of Washington Street from the armory to West Newton Square is occupied by a mix of small retail and commercial uses, including small office buildings, none of which exceed two stories. A sidewalk runs along this side of Washington Street. As is the case for most of Washington Street from Newton Corner to West Newton Square, the south side of Washington Street has no buildings and for the most part no paved sidewalk (only an unpaved walking path); it faces the Massachusetts Turnpike and the parallel train tracks, both of which are below street level. The north side of Washington Street east of the armory to Lowell Street in Newtonville (about 0.5 miles) is a mix of small retail shops, service providers, larger homes converted to office use, single-family and multi-family homes, and a small apartment building. The streets to the north of Washington Street near the armory are exclusively residential,¹ consisting of mostly single-family homes, with some two-family homes, and a few homes that contain three to four units of housing.

There are two modes of nearby public transportation. Closest to the armory are MBTA buses that run frequently during commuting hours Monday through Friday and hourly during non-commuting hours and on Saturday from Waltham, along Washington Street from West Newton Square to Newton Corner and then into downtown Boston via the Massachusetts Turnpike. There is a bus stop within a few feet of the armory. Although there is currently no crosswalk, pedestrian stop light, or bus shelter for the bus stop, the developer of Dunstan East (Mark Development, LLC) was required by the City to install them as a condition of receiving a comprehensive permit. In addition, the West Newton stop of the Framingham line of the MBTA commuter rail is accessed by a steep staircase on the far side of West Newton Square (about a ten-minute walk). The Newtonville stop of the MBTA commuter rail, also accessed by a steep staircase, is 0.7 miles from the armory, about a fifteen-minute walk.

¹ Dunstan Street currently has some commercial uses, but those will be eliminated when Dunstan East is built.

Washington Street is a four-lane road that serves as a major east-west thoroughfare through Newton. There are no traffic or pedestrian lights for the over half-mile stretch between Chestnut Street in West Newton Square and Lowell Street in Newtonville, but as described above, pedestrian light will be installed across from Dunstan East, adjacent to the armory. In December 2019, the Newton City Council approved the “Washington Street Vision Plan,” which described various goals for Washington Street between West Newton Square and Crafts Street in Newtonville. These goals included enhanced vitality of the village centers, rebuilding Washington Street to convert it to a more attractive and pedestrian and biker-friendly boulevard, including possibly narrowing it to a two lane-road with a third lane for turns, the addition of a bike lane, and landscaping in the middle of the street, and maintaining the diversity of housing stock along Washington Street.

IV. Neighboring Armories

In order to better understand its reuse potential, the JAPG examined the West Newton Armory within the context of neighboring armories throughout the Commonwealth that were similarly disposed of by DCAMM. After requesting such information from DCAMM, the Planning Department received a list of 17 armories in other municipalities that were either sold to the municipality or placed for sale on the open market. The list also included the present-day use of each armory as evidenced in the below table.

Armory	Location	Conveyance	Present Use
Adams	89 Park Street	Private Buyer	Warehouse
Chelsea	113 Spencer Avenue	Private Buyer	Demolished for Affordable Housing
Holyoke	163 Sargent Street	Private Buyer	Vacant
Hyannis	225 South Street	Town	Vacant Municipal Use
Lynn	38 South Common Street	Town	Affordable Housing
Marlborough	358 Lincoln Street	Private Buyer	Vacant
Milford	24 Pearl Street	Town	Youth Center
Natick	93 East Central Street	Private Buyer	Market-rate Housing
Plymouth	76 Court Street	Private Buyer	Market-rate Housing
Somerville	191 Highland Avenue	Private Buyer	Community Arts Center
Southbridge	153 Chestnut Street	Town	Council on Aging
Stoughton	951 Pleasant Street	Town	Town DPW Storage
Waltham	34 Sharon Street	Private Buyer	Vacant
Webster	31 Ray Street	Town	Planned History Museum
Weymouth	25 Rockway Avenue	Private Buyer	Demolished for Market-rate Housing
Whitman	70 Legion Parkway	Town	Vacant Municipal Use
Woburn	286 Main Street	Private Buyer	Market-rate Housing

Using this information as a starting point, the JAPG assigned each member an armory to further research. Such researched involved members finding, to the best of their ability, the year their armory was built, its total size, the year sold by DCAMM, its purchase price, and more specificity on its present-day use. The JAPG summarized its research in an *Armory Matrix* (See Appendix #4).

The *Matrix* reveals that many armories were disposed of by DCAMM in the mid-2000's to both municipalities and private buyers. Sale prices ranged from \$27,000 to over \$2 million. Over half remain vacant or have been converted into market-rate housing, while two have been demolished for the construction of new housing. Of the researched armories, only the Lynn Armory is being pursued for use as affordable housing.

V. Possible Municipal Uses

A. Summary

In addition to using the West Newton Armory for 100% affordable housing and supportive services related thereto, the JAPG also considered various possible municipal purposes for the Armory. The JAPG met with City officials to discuss possible municipal purposes of the property, including Newton's Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Yeo, Public Buildings Commissioner Josh Morse, and City Clerk David Olson. The City's Administration informed the JAPG that it does not envision using the Armory for a municipal purpose or purposes based on prohibitive conversion and maintenance costs and other competing capital project priorities, and/or because the property is not suitable for use by the Newton Center for Active Living ("NewCAL") or the Newton Police Department ("NPD") headquarters.

In response to questions from JAPG members as to whether the property could be used for both 100% affordable housing and other municipal purposes, the Planning Department advised the JAPG that neither the Special Legislation authorizing the transfer of the Armory to the City of Newton nor DCAMM would permit such a combined use for the Armory building or site. The members of the JAPG also asked whether the property could be leased by the City to a private nonprofit or other organization for other possible uses. The Planning Department advised the JAPG that neither the Special Legislation nor DCAMM would authorize the transfer of the Armory to the City of Newton for such purposes.

B. The Public Buildings Commissioner Informed the JAPG that the West Newton Armory Is Not Suitable for NewCAL or NPD Headquarters

The City of Newton's Public Buildings Commissioner Josh Morse came before the JAPG at its January 21, 2020 meeting, to give a presentation concerning the existing condition of the Armory building, as well as possible municipal uses, including for NewCAL and NPD headquarters. Commissioner Morse provided a detailed presentation concerning the building's size, floor plan, mechanicals, heating, plumbing, finishes, hazardous materials, roof, interior, and exterior conditions, security system, and fire suppression system. In May 2019, Commissioner Morse inspected the existing conditions at the Armory in order to determine whether the facility and/or the site could be used for NewCAL or for NPD headquarters. In a letter to the Mayor dated May 6, 2019, Commissioner Morse summarized his observations about and conclusion that the location, size, and appearance of the building, and the land area, accessibility, and available parking at or near the site were insufficient to meet the needs of either NewCAL or NPD. (See Appendix #2b.)

C. The City's Chief Operating Officer and Public Buildings Commissioner Informed the JAPG that the City's Administration Does Not Envision Using the West Newton Armory Building or Site for Municipal Purposes

Commissioner Morse and Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Yeo came before the JAPG at its April 2, 2020 meeting to discuss and answer questions concerning possible municipal purposes for the West Newton Armory. City Clerk David Olson also gave a presentation

and answered questions concerning the possible use of the Armory for storage of the City Archives. At this meeting, Mr. Yeo and Commissioner Morse informed the JAPG that the City's Administration does not envision using the Armory building or site for any municipal purpose or purposes because of the prohibitive acquisition, rehabilitation, and maintenance costs, as well as the lack of possible sources of revenue to cover the rehabilitation, conversion, and maintenance of the Armory building and grounds for such purposes.

Mr. Yeo informed the JAPG that the City's Administration has determined that the West Newton Armory building and site are not suitable for any municipal purpose or purposes, and that acquiring the Armory for 100% affordable housing is the only viable option which would be financially feasible for the City and compatible with its affordable housing goals. Commissioner Morse noted that the cost to rehabilitate the Armory for municipal purposes and bring it up to building code requirements could be as much as \$600 per square foot, or nearly \$20 million, due to prevailing wage requirements. Mr. Yeo noted that the Special Legislation which authorizes the transfer of the West Newton Armory to the City of Newton for municipal purposes sets the purchase price at fair market value, as determined by DCAMM.

As noted below, the Special Legislation authorizing the transfer of the Armory to the City of Newton does not permit the City to lease the property or any portion thereof to private nonprofits or other organization for any purpose other than supportive services for affordable housing on the site. Mr. Yeo noted that even if the purchase price were less than fair market value, the cost for the City of Newton to acquire, rehabilitate, and maintain the Armory building and grounds would be prohibitive. He also noted that the City already owns eighty-eight (88) public buildings occupying almost three million square feet, and that the Administration is not prepared to take ownership of another building for municipal purposes which will not generate revenues to cover its rehabilitation, operations, and maintenance costs.

The only City Department which expressed any interest in using the West Newton Armory was the City Clerk's Office. (See Appendix #2d: July 10, 2019 Letter from David Olson, City Clerk, to Barney Heath, Director of Planning). David Olson, the City Clerk, came before the JAPG at its April 2, 2020 meeting and gave a presentation and answered questions concerning the possible use of the Armory for the City Archives. At this meeting, Mr. Olson submitted a Report by Aaron Cohen Associates Ltd entitled "Strategic Plan for Newton Archives and Records." (See Appendix #2e.) This Report stated that the available archival storage space in the City at the time was 98% full. The Report concluded that the City Archive's total need for archival storage at that time was 6,000 linear feet of shelving, which included archival storage needs over the next twenty years. Mr. Olson, who is also the Chief Elections Official for the City of Newton, noted that with the conversion of the old Horace Mann School to the Newton Early Childhood Education Center, which would eliminate an existing polling location, the West Newton Armory could be used as a replacement polling location.

In response to questions from members of the JAPG concerning the possible use of the Armory for archival storage, Mr. Yeo stated that the Administration has determined that either the former Aquinas College building on Jackson Road or the vacant former Newton Corner Library building were better suited for storing the City Archives than the West Newton Armory. With some City Departments transitioning from paper to digital storage of records, the Administration has concluded that the Armory would be underutilized if used for archival storage. In addition, because climate control is required for archival storage, Commissioner Morse estimated that it would cost the City upwards of \$60,000 a year to maintain an ideal climate for archival storage at the Armory.

D. The Special Legislation Authorizes the Transfer of the West Newton Armory to the City of Newton for Fair Market Value for Uses Restricted to General Municipal Purposes

As discussed above, the Special Legislation passed by the Massachusetts General Court and signed into law by the Governor of the Commonwealth authorizes the transfer of the West Newton Armory to the City of Newton for the purpose of providing either 100% affordable housing and related services, or for general municipal purposes. 2020 Mass. Acts 157 (See Appendix #1). Members of the JAPG asked whether the Armory could be used simultaneously for both affordable housing and for a municipal purpose or purposes, such as the City Archives. The Planning Department, which has met and worked closely with DCAMM regarding the disposition of the Armory, advised the JAPG that neither the Special Legislation nor DCAMM would authorize the combined use of the Armory for affordable housing and general municipal purposes.

It should be noted that Section 1 of the Special Legislation provides that the West Newton Armory “may be conveyed to the city of Newton for nominal consideration **solely** for the purpose of providing affordable units, all of which shall be permanently subject to necessary affordability restrictions.” *Id.*, § 1(b) (emphasis added). It further provides that “[t]he use of the parcel, if conveyed pursuant to section 1, **shall be restricted to providing affordable housing units** and may include supportive services.” *Id.*, § 1(c) (emphasis added). Section 1 expressly provides, however, that notwithstanding its other provisions, “the city of Newton may lease the parcel or portions thereof to other entities, for nominal consideration, and enter into agreements with other entities to develop, construct, operate and maintain improvements to the affordable housing units.” *Id.*, § 1(c). If the City of Newton purchases the property pursuant to Section 1 of the Special Legislation, but does not or ceases to use it solely for affordable housing and supportive services, ownership of the Armory will revert to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. *Id.*, § 1(e).

Section 2 of the Special Legislation provides that the Armory may also be conveyed to the City of Newton for fair market value, as determined by DCAMM, for municipal purposes, “provided that the use of the parcel **shall be restricted to general municipal purposes.**” *Id.*, § 2(a) (emphasis added). If the City of Newton purchases the property pursuant to Section 2 of the Special Legislation but does not or ceases to use it solely for municipal purposes, ownership of the Armory will revert to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. *Id.*, § 2(b).

Members of the JAPG also asked whether the City of Newton would be allowed to lease the property to a private nonprofit or other organization for other uses such as a community center, arts and culture center, or recreation facility. In addition, the Newton Food Pantry inquired as to whether it could lease space in the Armory for its food bank. (See Appendix #2f.) The Planning Department advised the JAPG that neither the Special Legislation nor DCAMM would authorize the transfer of the West Newton Armory to the City of Newton for any purpose other than solely for 100% affordable housing and supportive services or solely for municipal purposes. It should also be noted that the Special Legislation does not permit the City of Newton to lease the property or portions thereof for any purpose not related to the creation of affordable housing and supportive services related thereto.

Consistent with the provisions of the Special Legislation, the Planning Department further advised the JAPG that leasing the property to a private non-profit or other organization, other than for supportive services related to affordable housing on the site, would not constitute a “general municipal purpose,” and that DCAMM therefore would not authorize the transfer of the Armory to the City of Newton for such purposes.

E. Conclusion

Based on the information, materials, and advice provided by City officials, the JAPG does not recommend that the City of Newton purchase the West Newton Armory from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for fair market value, as determined by DCAMM, for any municipal purpose or purposes.

VI. Input from Experts

A. Housing Consultant – Affirmative Investments

The JAPG's consideration of affordable housing as a feasible use for the Armory was informed by the analysis of a housing consultant. The consultant, Affirmative Investments, was hired by the Planning Department through a Housing Choice Grant awarded to the City by the Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development's Housing Choice Grant Program. The Planning Department applied for the grant in the summer of 2019 after being designated a Housing Choice Community and received the \$200,000 award in early 2020. Soliciting feedback from the JAPG, the Department released a consultant RFP in February 2020. Two proposals were received. An evaluation committee, comprised of the Councilor Danberg and Councilor Markiewicz of the Reuse Committee, Public Buildings Commissioner Josh Morse, JAPG member David Koven, and staff from the Planning Department, reviewed the proposals and selected Affirmative Investments in May 2020.

Founded in 1983, Affirmative Investments is a Boston-based finance and development firm with a long, successful track-record in helping developers, non-profits, and local governments expand housing opportunities and deliver critical services in low-income communities. Over the course of nearly four decades, AI has facilitated the financing and development of nearly \$850 million of affordable housing, representing over 6,000 units. Therefore, the RFP evaluation committee felt confident in their decision to recommend AI as the consultant for this project.

On account of being hired by the City and managed by the Planning Department, the scope of work for AI is divided into two parts: determination of the Armory's feasibility for conversion into affordable housing and the selection of a developer to create such housing based upon an RFP jointly written by AI and the Planning Department. While the second element of the scope of work, the drafting of an RFP and selection of a developer, is outside the charge of the JAPG, the first element is not. Therefore, the JAPG has relied on AI to share its analysis to assist the JAPG in making an informed recommendation to the Real Property Reuse Committee as to whether the City should proceed with the purchase of the Armory from DCAMM.

This analysis was shared with the JAPG at three JAPG meetings: September 10, October 14, and October 19. Details of the presentation at these meetings are summarized below.

September 10, 2020

AI and the Planning Department Staff had hoped to hold this initial meeting in early August after AI had the opportunity to inspect the Armory from an environmental and basic structural viewpoint. However, due to scheduling and approval delays with DCAMM, AI was not able to gain access into the Armory for these inspections until mid-August. This pushed the first meeting to occur on September 10.

At this meeting, AI was represented by David Ennis, President, Adam Goldstein, Associate Project Manager, and Michael Kaufman, project architect. Mr. Ennis introduced himself, colleagues, and the firm by summarizing their background and expertise in similar projects, as well as outlining their scope of work in conducting their feasibility analysis.

Per their contracted scope of work, AI was responsible for developing four scenarios for determining how affordable housing might be feasible at the Armory. To arrive at these scenarios, AI presented the JAPG with four introductory questions via a power point presentation (See Appendix #5b) These questions included:

1. What to do with the building?
2. What funding sources are available?
3. What population(s) should be served?
4. What level(s) of affordability?

AI offered that there are really only three options for the Armory as 100% affordable housing. It can be left fully intact, it can be partially demolished by keeping the front head house and potentially part of the rear drill shed, or it can be fully demolished. There is a myriad of public funding sources at all levels of government that can be harnessed to convert the Armory into affordable housing. These include CPA funds, HUD funds, such as the Community Development Block Grant and HOME Investment Partnerships Program, the State's Housing Stabilization Fund and Housing Innovations Fund, as well as State and Federal Tax Credits. AI suggested that potential populations living in the Armory could be either families, seniors, or special populations such as formerly homeless, veterans, or individuals with special needs. To ensure affordability, income targeting for these populations would vary between 30%, 60%, and 80% of the area median income. These income levels are pegged to the requirements of the funding sources the potential project might receive.

Following the presentation, the JAPG began a discussion with AI to share thoughts and ask questions. While producing the four possible development scenarios, AI and the Planning Department expressed to the JAPG that population and income levels will not be wedded to any of the scenarios. This is because there is need for affordable housing for all populations in Newton. In addition, AI suggested that keeping these facets open-ended will provide the City with more flexibility to receive developer proposals to the RFP that AI will help draft in Phase II of their contract work. After discussing project costs, AI shared that they are using a total development cost per unit of approximately \$500,000 as their baseline in developing an initial pro forma. This is because State tax credit awards are usually pegged to projects with this cost per unit. There is some flexibility, however, and AI expressed that they may estimate a higher cost per unit as their analysis proceeds.

In concluding their presentation, AI relayed to the JAPG that they will work with the Planning Department to develop the parameters for the four scenarios. It was determined that these four scenarios were to be shared with the JAPG at their October meeting.

October 14, 2020

At this meeting, AI was represented by David Ennis, President; Tara Mizrahi, Vice President; Adam Goldstein, Associate Project Manager; Michael Kaufman, project architect; and Albert Rex, historic advisor. With the focus of this meeting being a discussion of the historic review process involving the Armory, Albert Rex led the meeting with a short presentation followed by questions and answers.

Mr. Rex began by reminding the JAPG that the Armory is not listed on the National Register, although it is eligible for listing. As a result, the building would require the same regulatory review process as structures that are listed on the Register. This regulatory process begins with DCAMM's submission of the Project Notification Form (PNF) to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). At this time, DCAMM may decide to impose historic covenants on the property as part of the transfer of ownership, or it may decide to sell the historic property without such restrictions. Upon receiving the PNF, MHC determines whether the proposed action on the historic structure constitutes an adverse impact. Mr. Rex informed the JAPG that it is likely that MHC will find that a sale of the Armory from the State to the City constitutes an "adverse effect."

The review of the Project Notification Form and the subsequent finding of an adverse effect begins the Mass Historical Commission's deeper review of the property and its potential redevelopment. This process involves consultation with DCAMM and the Newton Historical Commission to explore alternatives that would eliminate, minimize, or mitigate the adverse effect of the proposed transfer or sale of the property, which can result in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The MOA involves an approximately six-month public process that results in a written agreement between the three parties describing the level of alterations that might be performed on the Armory, and the process that a developer must go through to propose and then be granted permission to execute such alterations.

Extensive renovation, partial demolition, and full demolition may all be possibilities as long as DCAMM, MHC, and the Newton Historical Commission feel that a developer has made a good faith effort to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any possible alteration. In addition, a developer must provide an explanation as to why less intrusive alterations are not viable. Mr. Rex acknowledged that MHC may be more accepting of suggested alterations to a property and the signing of a MOA when such an agreement is negotiated with a municipality, rather than a developer. The resulting signed MOA does benefit a developer, however, since the historic preservation concerns and outlined review process are addressed prior to the issuance of an RFP by the City. This tends to make the opportunity to develop the Armory more attractive, as there is more clarity regarding potential project costs and risk.

Mr. Rex said that the opposite is the case for historic covenants. If the City elects not to pursue the MOA public process, DCAMM will place historic covenants on the deed of sale from the Commonwealth to the City. This specifies the level and nature of alteration that would be allowed without any negotiation between the City and MHC. As a result, the onus

is placed on the developer to negotiate with MHC on acceptable alterations. These unknowns may make a resulting RFP unattractive to some developers.

Mr. Rex explained that the redevelopment of the Armory as 100% affordable housing without any alternation to the building is highly unlikely. For example, 2/3 of the volume of the drill shed would need to be retained in order for the redevelopment of the Armory to be eligible for historic tax credits. However, this restriction on the building could likely render housing an infeasible use at the site. This is illustrated in the redevelopment of the Natick and Plymouth Armories. The headhouses of these Armories were retained, while the base of the drill sheds was also retained, albeit with significant changes. As a result, these projects did not receive historic tax credits.

Mr. Ennis then explained that Affirmative Investments would be exploring four scenarios based upon design feasibility and available funding. These scenarios would be presented to the JAPG at their October 19, 2020 meeting and include:

- Retaining the building (both headhouse and drill shed) with substantial alterations. This is not anticipated to be financially viable.
- Two scenarios in which the headhouse is retained and the drill shed is demolished and replaced with new construction.
- Complete demolition with new construction.

October 19, 2020

At this meeting, AI was represented by David Ennis, President; Tara Mizrahi, Vice President; Adam Goldstein, Associate Project Manager; and Michael Kaufman, project architect. David Ennis and Michael Kaufman presented four scenarios for redevelopment of the West Newton Armory into fully affordable housing. The scenarios laid out the architectural and building changes that each would require, along with an estimated unit count, the cost per unit, the populations that could be accommodated, and the financing that may be available. The scenarios were outlined in a presentation shared with the JAPG (See Appendix #5c).

A summary of these scenarios are as follows:

Scenario 1: Uses the existing Armory building, which could potentially qualify for historic tax credits. This could accommodate seniors and/or special needs residents in 33 one-bedroom units at a cost of \$586,252 per unit. AI envisioned 27 underground parking spaces in the basement. AI explained that achieving tax credits in this scenario would be difficult. In addition, this scenario produces the fewest number of units. AI felt that this scenario has limited feasibility.

Scenario 1A: Also uses the existing Armory building with the same number of units and per unit cost as Scenario 1, but does not utilize historic tax credits. Without these credits, AI felt that this scenario is not feasible for affordable housing. AI noted that the Natick and

Plymouth Armories utilized this strategy, but they were developed as market-rate ownership units. This made redeveloping the existing building Armories feasible for those projects, as the developers were able to make a return through the sale of the units.

Scenario 2: Retains the Armory head house and demolishes the drill shed for a mix of some preservation and some new construction. This scenario envisions accommodating seniors and special needs residents in 53 one-bedroom units on four floors, at a per unit cost of \$438,532. A driver of the reduced cost is the parking for 30 parking spaces on-grade, as compared to below. Historic tax credits are not available due to the demolition of the drill shed. AI felt that this is a feasible scenario. It offers the greatest number of units with greater square footage to accommodate a variety of needs. Furthermore, the cost per unit falls below the DHCD target of \$500,000 per unit.

Scenario 3: Like Scenario 2, this scenario retains the Armory head house and demolishes the drill shed for a mix of some preservation and some new construction. This scenario accommodates 46 households in a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units with a per unit cost of \$628,178 on five floors. Parking for 57 vehicles is incorporated both on-grade and below. Historic tax credits are not available due to the demolition of the drill shed. This scenario envisions the most square footage. AI felt that this scenario could be feasible, but admitted that more analysis would need to be performed and shared with the JAPG.

Scenario 4: This involves the full demolition of the Armory with all new construction to accommodate 46 households in a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units with a per unit cost of \$601,066 across four floors. Parking for 48 vehicles both above- and below-grade is anticipated. Historic tax credits are not available due to the entire demolition of the building. The new building is envisioned as three stories fronting Washington St., with four stories at the rear. AI found this scenario to be feasible, but admitted that it may not be favored by community stakeholders due to the full demolition of the existing building.

In beginning a discussion with the JAPG for feedback, AI estimated that if the City had to acquire the land, rather than buying it for \$1, the cost per unit could be as much as \$700,000. The \$1 price tag for the land likely creates a scenario where developers will be interested in a RFP to develop the property, which also calculates into the feasibility of an affordable housing development at the site.

Both the Planning Department and AI addressed JAPG questions regarding the process and estimated timeline for receiving the funds identified in the scenarios. The Planning Department explained that affordable housing development at the site could be eligible to receive the City's federal allocation of CDBG and HOME funds, as well as local CPA dollars. The Planning Department agreed that the amount allocated to each of these sources reflected in the four scenarios is appropriate.

AI addressed the process involving State funds. Regarding historic tax credits, the funding is highly competitive. As a result, AI only considers the application of historic tax credits in Scenario #1. Besides historic tax credits, the State also offers Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and a variety of soft debt funding programs. The deeper the affordability of

a project, the more interest from the State in allocating money from these funding programs. The State will likely also favor a project that is being undertaken by a reputable developer and has received local permitting approval from the appropriate body. AI noted that the State holds one and a half funding rounds a year with a big round in January and a mini version in August /September. A quality affordable project may take one and half to two and a half rounds to receive a funding award.

While focusing on the details surrounding potential populations living at the Armory, JAPG members voiced the conflict between parking and open space. If the Armory were to include family units, there would be a greater need for open space at the site. However, this would require more underground parking, which raises project costs. Yet some at-grade parking would be needed to ensure enough spaces for residents and visitors, especially if the Armory were to house senior citizens.

The JAPG also expressed interest in utilizing the head house for supportive services. While the size of the head house may contain more space than needed for the provision of services, JAPG members pointed out that along with office(s) for a resident coordinator, onsite health care services may be a good addition, while consideration should also be given to a fitness center and community room.

In considering AI's presentation in its entirety against the JAPG's charge of determining whether the Armory is a feasible project for affordable housing, the JAPG asked AI if they felt confident in the feasibility of any specific scenario. AI responded by stating that the development of affordable housing at the Armory is a great opportunity, particularly if Scenarios #2 and #3 are pursued. AI continued in saying that they will conduct more analysis, especially on Scenario #3. AI submitted a revised analysis to the JAPG prior to the group's last meeting on November 10, 2020.

The JAPG Chair again emphasized the charge of the JAPG. The JAPG does not decide the specifics of a potential affordable housing RFP or what the final project will be, but rather whether the group believes an affordable housing project is feasible at the site. The process of public hearings at the Real Property Reuse Committee and permitting body enable public discussion and comment on the Armory to continue after the JAPG concludes its work. Furthermore, the reversionary clause in the Special Legislation states that if the City elects to purchase the Armory for affordable housing, but a final project never materializes, the property shall revert to the Commonwealth.

Before adjourning, the JAPG Chair asked for comment from the public. A member of the public encouraged the JAPG to not only consider the feasibility of developing the building, but also focusing on the possible future individuals who will call the Armory home. The stakeholder stated that as there is a great need for affordable family housing in Newton, a focus on the Armory as a residence for families and their needs should be considered.

B. Josh Morse, City of Newton Public Buildings Commissioner

Commissioner Morse came before the JAPG at their January 21, 2020 meeting. The JAPG requested a presentation by Commissioner Morse in order to better understand the physical nature of the Armory. As Public Building Commissioner, Mr. Morse is well-versed in building specifications, features, constraints, and potential adaptability for a variety of types and ages. More importantly, Commissioner Morse had inspected the Armory and summarized his observations in a letter to the Mayor in May 2019 (see Appendix #2b). The purpose of his letter was to determine whether the Armory could be used as site for a Police Headquarters or NewCAL. Commissioner Morse concluded that the building was too small to accommodate either option. The JAPG reviewed this letter prior to the presentation.

Commissioner Morse began his presentation by recapping the possible acquisition scenarios presented to the City by the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM). He then spent time summarizing his observations of the Armory outlined in his letter to the Mayor. This included a discussion of the Armory's size, floor plan, mechanicals, finishes, hazardous materials, exterior condition, and fire suppression systems. Commissioner Morse followed this summary by fielding questions posed by the JAPG. These included the historic nature of the Armory, whether other communities had successfully repurposed similar armories, and what substantial work would be involved in converting the Newton Armory into any use.

Commissioner Morse told the JAPG that there have been several successful Armory conversion projects in other communities, but the Newton Armory may be more challenging. This is due to the age of the building and the fact that the Armory does not meet many current building codes. As a result, even a seemingly minor change in use in the Armory may trigger significant work in order to bring the building up to code. When asked what programmatic needs the Armory could satisfy for the City, Commissioner Morse told the JAPG that because the Armory is a mid-sized building, it offers limited options for municipal uses. It is not small enough for some uses, but also not large enough for other uses such as a police station.

C. Katy Hax Holmes, City of Newton Historic Preservation Planner

Katy Hax Holmes came before the JAPG at their February 25, 2020 meeting. The JAPG requested a presentation by Ms. Holmes to learn about the process of a building being designated as an historically significant building, and the effect that designation could have on the uses the City can put it to.

She explained that whenever a transfer of State-owned property listed in the State Register of Historic Places is proposed, by either a municipal or private entity, the Massachusetts Historical Commission ("MHC") has the obligation to consider whether the transfer would have any adverse effect on the property. While the Newton Armory currently is not on the National Historic Register, Ms. Holmes pointed to the Lynn armory as an example of one that is on the Register. She informed the JAPG that MHC described the Newton Armory in

1987 as a “significant building,” so there is a potential for listing the Armory on the Historic Register. Ms. Holmes noted that anyone can nominate a property for listing on the Historic Register.

Any partial or complete demolition of a site designated as an Historic Property triggers review by the Newton Historical Commission. If a property is listed on the National Historic Register, it will be eligible, after a federal review, for historic tax credits, if it is “commercial,” which includes housing.

Ms. Holmes outlined the following trajectory of the historic process. The City of Newton notifies DCAMM whether the City will purchase the Armory for an affordable housing or municipal use. Special legislation, which will specify whether the Armory is being used for affordable housing or for municipal use, must then be passed by the State Legislature to approve the sale to the City. (Special Legislation was successfully passed on August 14, 2020 to allow the sale of the Armory to the City.)

DCAMM then submits a Project Notification Form (“PNF”) to MHC. MHC comments on the proposed transfer of the property from the State to the City. MHC then conducts its review and determines whether the proposed use will have an adverse effect on the property. MHC’s review findings are outlined in a Memorandum of Agreement, which is signed by MHC and the City. This must be executed before the City leases the Armory to a housing developer. The MOA usually also requires that plans periodically be shared with MHC for review.

The JAPG discussed various scenarios with Ms. Holmes, with the Planning Department adding their knowledge of the process as it has played out in other municipalities. Lynn is a good example of an Armory listed on the State Register of Historic Places that is being developed into fully affordable housing, in this case for veterans. The MHC first found that in spite of “an adverse effect on the historic nature of the site” if it were developed into housing, agreed that if DCAMM and the City of Lynn’s affordable housing agency entered into an MOA, MHC would agree with the project plans. One difference with the Newton and Lynn armory’s - Lynn’s is in its downtown historic district and Newton’s is not.

D. Jonathan Yeo, City of Newton Chief Operating Officer and Josh Morse, City of Newton Public Buildings Commissioner

Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Yeo and Public Buildings Commissioner Josh Morse came before the JAPG at their April 2, 2020 meeting. The JAPG requested that Mr. Yeo and Commissioner Morse share the City’s stance on requiring the Armory for municipal uses.

Mr. Yeo began the discussion by informing that JAPG that the City does not see a municipal use in the Armory now or in the future. Purchasing the Armory from DCAMM for conversion into a municipal use would require the City to pay a cost, that if even if below fair market value, would still be too expensive. With 88 public buildings at nearly three million square feet, the City is not prepared to take ownership of another building that does not generate a cash flow stream to pay for required repairs and maintenance.

The City feels that affordable housing at the Armory is the only option in which the City would obtain ownership of the building as such a use would pay for renovation and operation costs. Commissioner Morse added that there hasn't been a strong appetite in public meeting for conversion of the Armory into the new site for NewCal because of limited accessibility and exterior appeal, as well as the location on busy Washington Street without sufficient dedicated parking.

In response to JAPG member questions regarding whether the City considers the Armory a suitable site for City Archives, Mr. Yeo stated that the City feels that either Jackson Road or the vacant Newton Corner Library building is better suited for City Archives than the Armory. With some City departments are electing to keep their own records combined with the growing trend moving from paper to digital files, the City feels that the Armory would be underutilized if used for archival storage. As climate control is a necessity for archival storage, Commissioner Morse estimated that the City would be paying upwards of \$60,000 annually to heat the Armory if used for such storage.

Commissioner Morse continued by saying that rehabbing the property for a municipal use could be \$600 per square foot, or nearly \$20 million, due to the prevailing wage rates being required. This is cost prohibited to the City and would outweigh any revenues generated if the Armory was purchased by the City and leased to a nonprofit. Such a possibility, however, is not permissible under the Special Legislation.

E. David Olson, City of Newton City Clerk

David Olson, Newton's City Clerk was invited to speak to the JAPG at their April 2, 2020 meeting to gain an understanding of any non-housing uses that the City might desire at the Armory.

Mr. Olson's focus was on the City's need for additional storage space for City of Newton archives. Mr. Olson has been looking at how to expand and improve archive storage for ten years, looking at space, accessibility, and climate and fire controls. Most archival documents are stored at the main library, but are spread out beyond the main library. Most documents archived at the library are legislative and mayoral as distinct from departmental. Mr. Olson related that he has considered trying to get everything into a single location, but expanding the library is too expensive and the library has other space needs of its own. Currently, Mr. Olson identifies no ideal centralized alternative within the municipal portfolio.

In his view, Mr. Olson thinks the Armory has potential as an archive storage location, but he was less sure about the cost/benefit analysis, and acknowledged that it would not be inexpensive to convert in light of fire suppression and shelving and renovation costs, and that the total Armory space is larger than what is needed for the City archives. If only the basement space is considered, Mr. Olson points to several good features for archive storage: the slab floor and potential office space that could be created in the front "castle" portion. He also noted that basement access for vehicle pull-up was good.

The JAPG posed several questions to Mr. Olson ranging from the feasibility of combining archive storage with housing in the Armory, to the possibility of the City renting outside commercial space for the archives. Both suggestions are costly: if the City were to combine a municipal use with housing, the City then cannot acquire the Armory from the State for the reduced cost offered. On renting outside storage space, the City Clerk pointed to both its high cost and that offsite storage inhibits quick document retrieval.

F. Jonah Temple, City of Newton Assistant City Solicitor

Solicitor Temple came before the JAPG at their May 27, 2020 meeting. The JAPG requested Solicitor Temple review the City's current and future Chapter 40B Safe Harbor calculations.

Referring to his memo written to Newton's Zoning Board of Appeals on December 20, 2019 and shared with the JAPG before the meeting, Solicitor Temple told the JAPG that there are two main safe harbors that can exempt the City from Chapter 40B requirements: if affordable housing exists on 1.5% of total land area and/or when the City's affordable housing units exceed 10% of total housing units. The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, the entity responsible for approving and maintaining a listing of the City's affordable units, defines affordable housing as occupied by individuals with incomes no more than 80% of the area median income. Solicitor Temple informed the JAPG that as of November 2019, when the memo was being prepared, Newton's affordable housing covered only 1.3% of total land area. In addition, affordable units comprised 8.58% of total housing units, below the required 10% safe harbor threshold.

The upcoming projects of Riverside, Riverdale, and Dunstan East will most likely push the City past the 10% safe harbor threshold. However, Solicitor Temple informed the JAPG that the total number of housing units will soon also increase on account of the 2020 Census. As a result, it is unlikely that the City will remain in safe harbor status when the 2020 Census data is published in 2021.

G. Lizbeth Heyer, Chair of the Newton Housing Partnership

Ms. Heyer came before the JAPG at their May 27, 2020 meeting. The JAPG requested a presentation by Ms. Heyer in order to better understand the City's needs for affordable housing along with the status of affordable housing currently in the City.

Ms. Heyer went over her extensive experience and credentials in affordable housing policy and development. She pointed out that she became Chair of the Newton Housing Partnership (NHP) when the Mayor reconstituted the NHP one year ago, with the mission to advocate for affordable housing in Newton.

Ms. Heyer reminded the group that Newton is a part of the Boston Metro Mayor's Compact, which has the target to create a total of 185,000 affordable units in the region by 2030. Between 2010 – 2014, the region saw an increase of 148,000 new jobs, but the

development of only 32,000 new housing units. This imbalance creates a huge tension between supply and demand, creating our region's housing crisis.

She indicated that the challenge of bringing affordable housing, especially more deeply affordable units is difficult in Newton. Ms. Heyer and the NHP are targeting deeper affordability by bringing in subsidies, working with mission-driven developers to increase affordability to 60-70% of area median income, as well as working with CDC's to get subsidies to lower the affordability to below 60% of area median income.

The Partnership believes the Armory is a great location - near stores, childcare, schools, public transit/robust bus service - for affordable housing. As for Newton, numbers of new jobs have been growing and housing has not kept pace with the job numbers. Average monthly rent in Newton is \$3,000 which would require \$110,000 in income. With the opportunity to acquire the site from DCAMM for \$1 and the possibility to provide subsidies for deeper levels of affordability, the Partnership is anxious to look at the Armory as a prospect for affordable housing. Ms. Heyer thought the local contribution for an affordable project would be 10-20%.

Ms. Heyer then invited JAPG members to comment and ask questions. Some were:

- *What would it take for the Armory to be developed for deeper affordability?*
Ms. Heyer responded that it depended on the affordable levels being targeted:
 - 80-110% could come through market deals and cross subsidies
 - 60-80% could be subsidized through local trust funds, but ineligible for LIHTC
 - 45-60% could come through a low-income tax program (which also cover 50% of capital side of project- one-time payment)

Ms. Heyer indicated that the RFP process would need to speak to the low-income requirement and would need to solicit a developer that knows how to achieve these deeper subsidies. The developer would need to apply for State section 8 subsidies, or local housing authority funding with section 8 commitments.

- *Can Newton really do 45-60% levels of rents?*
Ms. Heyer said it was possible with tax credits with up to 60 units.
- *Is there a 100% affordable housing development that Ms. Heyer could point to?*
Ms. Heyer responded that 2Life Communities' Golda Meir House Expansion Project (68 units being added to the existing Golda Meir House) is almost completely all affordable (8 of the 68 units are un-restricted). Public subsidies for this project include approximately \$3 million of Newton CPA funds and a Federal 202 grant. Also, the Newton Housing Authority received a CPA award and LIHTC funds for the Haywood House project (32 of the 55 units will be designated for seniors with incomes at or below 60% AMI and 23 units will be designated for seniors with

incomes between 81% and 99% AMI). NHA is acting as a non-profit developer to build this project.

- *Is the Partnership focusing on new developments or adding on to existing housing?*
Ms. Heyer thought that using the Armory for family housing was a good idea.
- *What about the need for support services for those in deeply affordable units to successfully remain in their units?*
Ms. Heyer said that was a high priority of the Partnership's and one which the developer needs to think about upfront and early in the process. A good service plan with staffed services on site can make all the difference for the tenants and their families.
- *Should the JAPG direct the consultant to look at what affordable housing needs should be served or be more open-ended on what housing to target? Is this an iterative process with the consultant?*
Ms. Heyer said the building sometimes tells you what the specific target should be, what you can do, and that building constraints help define the reuse ideas.
- *Could the project be a mix of affordable and market housing?*
Ms. Heyer indicated that the Partnership is trying to engage market rate developers to provide a deeper affordability mix for other developments in the city, but also added that the Armory site may be too small for a blended program.

VII. Recommendation

After thorough deliberations based on all of the information collected from numerous sources over the past eleven months, and a feasibility study prepared by AI and its team of consultants, the JAPG unanimously recommends to the Real Property Reuse Committee of the City Council that the City of Newton purchase the West Newton Armory from DCAMM for nominal consideration, for the purpose of providing 100% permanently affordable housing units.

The JAPG further recommends that the Mayor and the Planning Department, with the assistance of AI, prepare and issue an RFP seeking proposals to redevelop the West Newton Armory, and enter into agreements with a responsible development team to lease the property, for nominal consideration, and to develop, construct, operate and maintain affordable housing on the site. Pursuant to the special legislation authorizing DCAMM to convey the West Newton Armory to the City of Newton, the use of this property would be solely restricted to permanently affordable housing and related supportive services.

The acquisition of the West Newton Armory on Washington Street in West Newton presents the City of Newton with a unique opportunity both to obtain a significant historic building, and to increase the critical supply of affordable housing in order to meet the City's housing goals and its obligation to affirmatively further fair housing. In addition, the redevelopment of the West Newton Armory will provide the City with an opportunity to implement some of the applicable goals and policies contained in the recently adopted Washington Street Vision Plan. These goals and policies include, among others, the following:

- Provide a broader range of housing options for all ages, incomes, and types of households
- Support diversity through affordable housing and affordable living
- Ensure availability of accessible units
- Invest directly in affordable housing
- Pursue public-private partnerships
- Use historic preservation as a way to maintain village uniqueness
- Protect historic and iconic buildings
- Preserve the scale of neighborhood areas
- Create gentle transitions between Washington Street buildings and adjacent neighborhoods
- Focus on building form, quality architecture and materials
- Promote energy-efficient, human-scaled, and durable construction
- Link housing and transportation
- Implement smart parking to maintain village scale and mitigate traffic impacts

Consistent with Newton's Comprehensive Plan and the Washington Street Vision Plan, the members of the JAPG strongly urge the Mayor and the City Council to consider the following criteria when determining the City's priorities for creating affordable housing units: evaluating and selecting a responsible development team; building and site design; project costs and sources of funding; historic preservation; the context of the surrounding

neighborhood; accessibility; open space; sustainable design; transportation; parking; and traffic.

Recommended Criteria for Evaluating Development Proposals:

The Mayor and the Planning Department, with assistance from AI, will prepare and issue an RFP seeking a development team to lease the property and develop, construct, operate, and maintain 100% affordable housing at the West Newton Armory. As discussed in greater detail below, some members of the JAPG supported setting specific criteria for determining priorities for affordable housing needs, massing, height, density, and historic preservation of the building. Other members advocated for an RFP with limited and/or flexible restrictions that would give developers the latitude to develop creative proposals that meet the City's affordable housing needs and are in accordance with the goals and policies contained in the Newton Comprehensive Plan and the Washington Street Vision Plan. They were also concerned that an RFP which is too specific or limiting would not attract a sufficient number of competitive bids that would result in a viable project.

The members of the JAPG agree that development proposals should be required to satisfy some or all of the following general criteria:

- Affordability levels, types of units, and accessibility that serve the population(s) with the highest priority needs, consistent with the City's housing goals
- A financially feasible project that results in efficient use of public funding sources for affordable housing and historic preservation, and a per unit cost no more than other affordable housing projects in Newton
- Results in a physically and programmatically viable project
- Appropriate scale, height, and physical character for the neighborhood
- Includes quality architecture, landscaping, and materials consistent with new development
- Provides sufficient off-street parking so as not to adversely affect the availability of on-street parking in the area
- Preserves the historic character of the existing structure to the extent that it is feasible

Affordability:

The Planning Department, the Newton Housing Partnership, and community housing advocates advised the JAPG that there is a need for affordable housing at all eligible income levels. Some members of the JAPG advocated for prioritizing the creation of units for low income households, while others would support a mix of housing units affordable to low - and moderate-income households at 30%, 50%, and 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). It should be noted, however, that units affordable to households earning 60% or more of AMI would not be eligible for Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs).

Target Population:

The Planning Department advised the JAPG that there is a critical need for affordable housing for all types of low-and-moderate-income households, including families, individuals, seniors, people with disabilities, chronically homeless persons, and veterans,

among others. Members of the Newton Housing Partnership and community housing advocates expressed their support for prioritizing the creation of affordable housing units for low-and-moderate-income families.

Members of the JAPG had diverse opinions concerning the types of residents who should be served by affordable housing at the West Newton Armory. A plurality of members of the JAPG recommend leaving the determination of priorities for affordable housing needs to the discretion of the Mayor and the Planning Department. Other members of the JAPG advocated for the creation of affordable housing units for families with children. Still other members would support creating a mix of affordable housing for families, individuals, seniors, people with special needs, veterans, chronically homeless persons, and/or other types of households. Some members of the JAPG observed that the location of the West Newton Armory near public transportation and various amenities within walking distance might also be appropriate or ideal for seniors.

Some members of the JAPG were concerned that the location of the West Newton Armory on Washington Street, a busy thoroughfare running alongside the MBTA Commuter Rail and the Massachusetts Turnpike, on a site with limited open space, would not be appropriate or ideal for families with young children. Finally, several members urged the City to consider the impact of the nearby, recently approved Dunstan East Chapter 40B affordable housing project on the neighborhood in setting priorities for affordable housing needs at the West Newton Armory.

Scale, Massing, and Height:

AI presented four scenarios for converting the West Newton Armory into 100% affordable housing, including: (1) using the existing building, with or without modifications that would make the project ineligible for historic tax credits; (2) preserve the head house (*i.e.*, the “Castle”), and replace the drill shed with new construction containing units designed for seniors and/or residents with special needs; (3) preserve the head house and replace the drill shed with new construction containing units designed for families; and (4) demolish the existing structure and replace with new construction containing units designed for families. Of the scenarios presented, AI determined that converting the existing building to 100% affordable housing was not feasible, but that the other scenarios replacing the drill shed with new construction or demolishing the entire building and replacing it with new construction were feasible. Of course, AI’s study, while persuasive as to feasibility, should not cause the City to rule out any scenario until presented with more detailed proposals by qualified developers.

For purposes of determining feasibility, AI limited the height of new construction to no more than five stories. Members of the JAPG were evenly divided among three different recommendations for ensuring the appropriate scale, massing, and height of any new construction. Three members of the JAPG recommend limiting the height of new construction to no more than four stories. Three other members would not place any restrictions on height. The remaining three members of the JAPG recommend that the appropriate scale, massing, and height of new construction is consistent with the context of the neighborhood, including the street scape.

The six members of the JAPG who recommend either limiting the height of new construction to four stories or maintaining the neighborhood context expressed their desire to ensure that the scale, massing, and height of new construction would not overwhelm the neighborhood area. The members of the JAPG who do not recommend limiting the height of new construction expressed their desire to allow greater height in order to optimize the cost-efficiency and physical and programmatic viability of the project. One member also suggested that allowing greater height could maximize open space that could be used for recreation for residents in family housing.

Preservation of the Historic Character of the West Newton Armory:

Converting the West Newton Armory, which is an historic resource in West Newton, to 100% affordable housing presents a number of significant challenges. As noted above, AI advised the JAPG that converting the entire existing building to 100% affordable housing, was not seen as a feasible option. Among other things, in order to convert the existing building to housing, the narrow windows in both the head house and drill shed would need to be widened to comply with building code requirements, and numerous modifications to the existing drill shed would be required, such as the addition of dormers and skylights. Such modifications would require approval from the MHC and the Newton Historic Commission, and would make it unlikely that the project would qualify for historic tax credits.

Seven members of the JAPG agree to recommend: (1) that the head house of the West Newton Armory should be preserved, with modifications required to comply with the building code; and (2) that the drill shed should be demolished and replaced with new construction. The two remaining members would be open to total demolition of the existing structure and replacement with new construction. One member of the JAPG who would agree to recommend the demolition of the drill shed and replacement with new construction was still open to the possibility of preserving the entire structure, with modifications required to comply with the building code, even if such modifications would make the project ineligible for historic tax credits.

Project and Per Unit Costs/Public Funding Sources:

AI's feasibility study was based in part on the assumption that the cost of converting the West Newton Armory to 100% affordable housing would rely heavily upon federal, state, and local funding sources, including some blend of federal and state historic tax credits, state LIHTCs, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development funds, Community Development Block Grants, HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) Grants, and/or Community Preservation Act funds. Some members of the JAPG expressed concerns whether a disproportionate amount of City funds would be allocated to this project if the per unit costs of creating 100% affordable units at the West Newton Armory were to exceed the cost of similar affordable housing projects in Newton. Several members of the JAPG pointed out that in the conceptual phase of a project a 20% contingency is typically carried.

Parking and Traffic:

The JAPG recommends that there be sufficient available off-street parking, which may include shared parking, in order to avoid adverse impacts on neighboring residential streets.

Public Transportation:

The West Newton Armory is located on MBTA bus routes with express bus service to and from downtown Boston, and within a half mile of the West Newton MBTA commuter rail station on the Framingham-Worcester line. Some members of the JAPG expressed concerns as to whether public transportation would continue to be sufficient to serve residents of the project if the MBTA cuts back on service on bus and commuter rail routes.

It should be noted that the BlueBikes bike sharing system (formerly known as Hubway) will conduct a two year pilot in Newton and nearby communities where the public can pick up and return rental bicycles from specific locations known as “docks,” and that one of five BlueBikes docks in Newton is located in front of the West Newton Armory on Washington Street and another dock is located in West Newton Square on Waltham Street.

Open Space/Recreation:

The JAPG recommends sufficient open space for recreation for various populations, including families. Other members of the JAPG who are residents in the immediate neighborhood area noted that the adjacent Dunstan East Chapter 40B project would include public open space along the Cheesecake Brook. In addition, the Davis Playground, Halloran Field and Sports Complex, Gath Pool, and the West Newton Playing Field, are all located within a half mile to one mile of the West Newton Armory.

Supportive Services:

Members of the JAPG observed that there is enough room for supportive services related to affordable housing, to the extent that having such services or space therefor on-site are deemed advisable, in the head house and basement of the West Newton Armory.

Other Comments:

One member of the JAPG noted that both the City Archives and a nonprofit food pantry had expressed interest in using unused space in the West Newton Armory. On Thursday, November 5, 2020, JAPG Chair Ted Hess-Mahan, Newton Planning Director Barney Heath, Newton Housing Development Planner Eamon Bencivengo, Newton Director of Housing and Community Development Amanda Berman, Newton Assistant City Solicitor Andrew Lee, DCAMM Acting General Counsel Martha McMahan, and DCAMM Project Manager Warren Madden, participated in a ZOOM meeting to discuss the West Newton Armory. Attorney McMahan confirmed that, pursuant to the special legislation authorizing the sale of the West Newton Armory to the City of Newton, it could be used either for 100% permanently affordable housing and related supportive services, or for a municipal purpose, but not for both.

Some members of the JAPG also asked what would happen if the City of Newton purchased the West Newton Armory for 100% affordable housing but was unable to redevelop the property for that purpose for some reason. Attorney McMahon confirmed that under the special legislation, ownership of the West Newton Armory would then revert back to the Commonwealth. She also confirmed that the City of Newton would not be allowed to resell the West Newton Armory under such circumstances, but that DCAMM would be willing to work with the City of Newton to amend the special legislation if the city was interested in using it for a municipal purpose.



VIII. Appendix

- 1) Special Legislation Enacted by the Governor on August 14, 2020
- 2) Real Property Reuse Information
 - a. Real Property Reuse Process Flow Chart
 - b. Public Buildings Commissioner's Armory Observations Letter to Mayor on May 6, 2019
 - c. Mayor's Notice of Intent to Sell or Lease the Armory with the City Clerk
 - d. City Clerk's Letter of Interest to Director of Planning on July 10, 2019
 - e. Strategic Plan for Newton Archives and Records Report by Aaron Cohen Associates Ltd.
 - f. Newton Food Pantry Inquiry
- 3) Historical Resources
 - a. West Newton Armory MACRIS Database Information
 - b. Photo of Armory as home to Company C of the 101st Infantry Regiment (1921 – 1941)
 - c. 1874 Atlases by both G M Hopkins & Co of Philadelphia and F W Beers & Co of New York
 - d. 1917 Atlas published by GW Bromley & Co, New York
- 4) Neighboring Armories Matrix
- 5) Materials from Housing Consultant, Affirmative Investments (AI)
 - a. AI's Hazardous Materials Inspection Report
 - b. AI's Phase I Environmental Report
 - c. AI's September 10th Powerpoint Presentation to JAPG
 - d. AI's October 19th Powerpoint Presentation to JAPG
 - e. AI's November 6th Updated Analysis and Plans to JAPG