

*Department of Planning and Development*  
*REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:*  
Newton Armory Affordable Housing Development  
*DRAFT April 21, 2021*



## **PART I. PROJECT OVERVIEW**

The City of Newton is pleased to offer the attached Request for Proposals for a development partner for the site of the West Newton Armory at 1135-1137 Washington Street in the City of Newton. Once the home of the National Guard, the site has been vacant since 2017 and has been managed since then by DCAMM, the Commonwealth's Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance. By an act of the Legislature, the site has been offered to the City to develop as 100% affordable housing.

The City believes that the site creates an excellent development opportunity to build needed affordable housing for the City. The City is looking for creative ideas and solutions that are sensitive to the community, respectful of the environment and incorporate the City's Washington Street Vision plan (see [here](#)) and the City's Housing Needs Analysis and Strategic Recommendations (see [here](#)).

The following project overview has been assembled from a variety of sources. While the City has no reason to believe that the information provided in this RFP (including all attachments and supplements) is not accurate, the City makes no representations or warranty, express or implied, as to the accuracy and completeness of the information. Prospective bidders should strongly consider undertaking their own review and analysis concerning physical conditions, environmental conditions, applicable zoning, required permits and approvals, and other development ownership and legal considerations.

### *HISTORY OF THE PROJECT*

The West Newton Armory has long been a fixture at its location on 1135 Washington Street. Built between 1910 – 1912, the 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 are obsolete. Following the similar aged armories throughout the Commonwealth, the Massachusetts National Guard has decommissioned the West Newton Armory by transferring management control to the Commonwealth's Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM).

Shortly after assuming management responsibilities of the West Newton Armory, DCAMM offered the City of Newton the right of first refusal to purchase the Armory under two separate options. First, DCAMM would offer the Armory to Newton for \$1.00 if the City restricted its future use to 100% affordable housing. If the City decided against a future housing use, and instead desired the Armory for a municipal use (i.e. police station or library), DCAMM would offer an acquisition price based upon the Armory's appraised value for that particular use. If the City chooses not to exercise its right to acquire the Armory, DCAMM has the option to sell the Armory via a bid process. The terms of this sale are authorized in Special Legislation passed by the Massachusetts State Legislature and signed by the Governor on August 14, 2020, attached hereto as **Attachment A**.

To assess the best option for the Armory, the City Council Property Reuse Committee asked the Mayor and Council to create a Joint Advisory Planning Group (JAPG) and appoint its nine

members. The JAPG, staffed by the City's Planning Department undertook a critical analysis and recommended that the City exercise its option to purchase the Armory for future use as affordable housing.

In November 2020, the JAPG submitted its written report to the Real Property Reuse Committee, attached hereto as **Attachment B**. Following its review of the report, as well as the feasibility report submitted by the City's housing consultant, attached hereto as **Attachment C**, the Committee voted in January 2021 to recommend that the Mayor purchase the Armory from the State for \$1.00 for redevelopment into 100% affordable housing.

On February 1, 2021 the full City Council voted to affirm this recommendation. This RFP is intended to solicit proposals from qualified affordable housing developers to develop the Armory into 100% affordable housing.

### *LOCATION & PROPERTY*

The premises are located at the current address of 1135-1137 Washington Street in the City of Newton, Tax ID # 31007 0027

The total land area of the existing Premises is 33,211 square feet. The property description is included in the Title Report, attached hereto as **Attachment D**, and a recent ALTA Survey is attached hereto as **Attachment E**.

### *ENVIRONMENTAL AND HAZMAT*

The City received an environmental review and a hazardous materials survey as part of the feasibility analysis. The City has engaged Green Seal Environmental to complete a Limited Subsurface Investigation to address the Recognized Environmental Conditions noted in the Phase I ESA.

The hazardous materials survey attached hereto as **Attachment G** tested for Asbestos, Lead, and Radon. Small amount of asbestos and low levels of lead were found, and radon levels were below the EPA action limit. Note that the HazMat study was limited to visual and physical observations and did not study any areas that required demolition (piping in the walls, beneath the floors, etc.).

### *STRUCTURAL*

The City received a structural report of the existing building as part of the feasibility analysis, and it is attached hereto as **Attachment H**. Overall, the report found that the Headhouse portion of Armory to be in better condition than the Fieldhouse portion of the building. Additionally, the existing foundation of the building is in good shape and could be reused. The basement floor, consisting of 8" thick concrete slab on grade, is in very good condition, with minimal cracks. The structural report notes that the basement could be suitable for parking.

## *HISTORIC*

The West Newton Armory is listed on the State's Inventory of Historic Buildings and is eligible for listing in the National Registers of Historic Places. DCAMM, as part of its disposition process, filed a Project Notification Form with Massachusetts Historical Commission and MHC found that DCAMM's disposition of the project to the City of Newton constituted an adverse effect, see the correspondence attached hereto as **Attachment I**. At MHC's request, MHC, DCAMM, the City of Newton, and the Newton Historical Commission (NHC) entered into consultation about the project. The end result of this consultation was the execution of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between MHC, DCAMM, the City of Newton, and the NHC, a draft of which is attached hereto as **Attachment J**. The MOA stipulates the measures that will be taken to avoid, minimize and/or mitigate the adverse effects.

## *SITE OWNERSHIP*

The City of Newton will retain ownership of the parcel and intends to enter into a long-term ground lease with a developer for \$1 per year.

## *DUE DILIGENCE RESPONSIBILITY*

Prospective proposers should strongly consider undertaking their own review and analyses concerning physical conditions, environmental conditions, applicable zoning, required permits and approvals, water and sewer connections, and other development and legal considerations.

The City of Newton makes no representations or warranties, express or implied as to the accuracy and/or completeness of the information provided in this RFP. This RFP (including all attachments and supplements) is made subject to errors, omissions, prior sale, lease or financing and withdrawal without prior notice, and changes to, additional and different interpretations of laws and regulations.

## **PART II. ANTICIPATED RFP SCHEDULE**

**Issue Date of RFP:** June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

**Site Visit:** June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**End of Q&A Period:** August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

**Submission Date of Responses:** September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Anticipated Interviews:** October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Anticipated Selection Date:** November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### **PART III. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Proposals may include any materials and information that the developer feels are necessary to satisfy as many of the recommended features of the Project description as practicable. After the opening of the Proposals, a developer may not correct or modify its Proposal in any manner unless in response to a written request for the City in its sole discretion.

Complete Proposal shall include the following:

A. Transmittal letter signed by a principal(s) of the developer including all contact information

B. Statement of Qualifications, which includes the following:

- The composition and structure of the Development Team and organization structure that sets out all key members of the development team including but not limited to: developer, architect, and management company, and any other consultants for the proposed development
- Resumes of key personnel on the Development Team
- Three (3) references for each key personnel on the Development Team
- Qualifications of the Development Team as they relate directly to designing, financing, constructing and operating similar affordable housing developments

C. A Conceptual Description of the proposed development that includes:

#### **I. Design Submission**

- Written and graphic descriptions explaining how the proposed design will meet the objectives of this RFP. These documents must describe and illustrate all the program elements and the organization of these spaces within the building
- A Site Plan showing how the proposed design will fit within the immediate context of existing buildings and within the larger context of the neighborhood.
  - The proposed building, existing building footprints, lot lines, streets, street names and any other relevant contextual information is to be included in the plan
  - The site plan is to illustrate the existing building footprint and placement of any new building elements on the site, the general building organization, open space, landscape elements, driveways, curb cuts, fencing, walkways, streetscape improvements. The site plan should coordinate with renderings and/or perspective drawings and aerial views of the project
- Schematic floor plans (at appropriate scale, e.g. 1/8"=1'-0") showing the basement, ground floor, upper floor(s), and roof including approximate unit dimensions and square footage, unit distribution, interior parking, if any, community spaces, amenity areas, and management offices, overall building dimensions, and the gross square footage of the building.
- Building Elevations (at appropriate scale, e.g. 1/8"=1'-0") showing all sides of the proposed building, architectural elements, building height, and notations of proposed materials. Provide floor-to-floor heights and exterior materials.

- Building Sections, in at least two directions, showing how the building relates to the site and grading, and the relationship of any new and existing building portions.
- Street elevations (at appropriate scale) showing the relationships of the proposed building(s) to the massing, building height and architectural style of adjacent buildings. This should include the proposed Dunstan East project buildings (see [here](#)).
- Perspective drawings drawn at eye-level and aerial views that show the project in the context of the surrounding area.

## **II. Project Narrative**

- Narrative describing the intended population(s) served
- Number of dwelling units proposed by size, level of affordability, and accessibility provisions
- A written description of the bicycle parking, automobile parking, and transportation plan for the proposed development.
- A written description of how the proposed project will satisfy or exceed the Sustainable Development Requirements in the City’s Zoning Ordinance Section 5.13.4 (see [here](#)).
- A preliminary zoning analysis
- Description of how the other matters of City interest described in “Part IV. Project Description” will be addressed.

D. Project Schedule beginning from date of award through permanent loan conversion, highlighting key milestones including but not limited to: permitting, DHCD and other public funding, commencement of construction, length construction and lease up and identification of contingencies that might alter the timing.

E. Project Proforma and description that includes:

- Complete the Sources and Uses and Proforma sheets of Version 4 of the Excel Crosswalk file
- Complete a 20-year operating proforma in a separate excel file that includes Revenue, Vacancy, Expenses, NOI, Debt Service, and Debt Service Coverage Ratio for each year
- Provide written detail of assumptions made in determining sources, uses, rental revenue, operating expenses, and permanent mortgage sizing.
- Banking references

## **PART IV. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The City intends to provide a long-term lease of the Parcel to a developer to design and develop a 100% affordable housing development. The development should include the following:

**Housing.** Per the special legislation governing DCAMM's sale of the property to the City, the parcel must be used exclusively for "low-income housing and related services" defined as housing available to households earning not more than 80 per cent of the area median income, adjusted for household size. Going beyond legal mandates, proposals for rental housing that target households at the deepest level of affordability will be highly preferred. The affordable housing need in Newton is great across all populations and therefore the City has no special preference in terms of resident mix: family, senior (55+ or 62+), veteran, special needs, etc., or any other feasible mix of populations. The mix of units by number of bedrooms or square footage should be in line with the appropriate DHCD guidelines.

**Historic Preservation.** The Newton Armory is on the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth and found eligible for listing on the National Register. Proposals that make an effort to respect the historic building and its character defining features and that incorporate preservation while also producing quality affordable housing will be considered highly advantageous.

**Common Areas (interior).** Proposals should include well defined common areas that provide sufficient space to serve the needs of the intended residents. Proposals should make clear how the use of common spaces will support and improve the quality of life for the residents.

**Supportive Services.** Proposals should note whether supportive services will be provided to the residents, and how these services will improve the quality of life of the intended residents. The project proforma should clearly show how the proposed services will be funded.

**Parking and Connectivity.** Proposals should include adequate parking for the intended residents. The way that vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles and other users access and use the site should reflect a strong transit demand management strategy.

**Open Space.** Proposals should include well defined open space areas, outside of the building and/or on the building, that serve the needs of the intended residents and support and improve their quality of life.

**Design.** Proposals should be consistent with the goals and policies contained in the Newton Comprehensive Plan and the Washington Street Vision Plan. The architectural design of the development should be both appealing and compatible with the Washington Street Vision Plan. Particular attention should be paid to building features that incorporate the principals of "human scale" design from the perspective of Washington Street pedestrians and adjacent neighbors. Proposals should also clearly relay how the design provides for a highly-livable and comfortable environment for the intended residents.

**Sustainability.** Proposals should utilize sustainable design to reduce the use of energy, water, and other natural resources and minimize adverse environmental impacts in both construction and long-term operation. Proposals should meet or exceed the Sustainable Development Requirements in the City’s Zoning Ordinance Section 5.13.4.

**Accessibility.** Proposals should clearly note how the project will be accessible to persons with disabilities, and how the design of the buildings and the site plan comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the rules and regulations of the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board. Consideration should be given to issues of accessibility, adaptability, visitability, and universal design in development of the site plan and the building.

**Equity and Inclusion.** The respondents should provide opportunities for historically disadvantaged businesses, including minority- owned and women-owned business enterprises (M/WBEs) to grow and enhance their capacity. Proposals should clearly state their plan to include these groups in both design and construction.



## **PART V. COMPARATIVE EVALUATION CRITERIA**

### **1. Demonstration of the Ability to Execute the Project as Presented**

The purpose of this criterion is to assess the extent to which proposals are able to demonstrate organization and qualifications of the development team to deliver a quality project that is able to be developed as described in the project description, based upon the team's professional credentials, experience completing projects similar in scope to the one proposed: City-owned land, preservation components, 100% affordable rental housing, LIHTC, familiarity with DHCD requirements, 40B/Special Permit process, etc.

**Highly Advantageous:** Proposals that most thoroughly and most effectively address all of the above requirements compared with other proposals submitted.

**Advantageous:** Proposals that address the above requirements, but do not address these requirements as effectively and thoroughly as other submitted proposals.

**Not Advantageous:** Proposals that do not offer sufficient detail or do not address all of the above requirements, and/or do not demonstrate experience with other projects similar to the one they propose.

**Unacceptable:** Proposal from teams with no demonstrated experience completing projects similar in scope to the one proposed.

### **2. Financial Feasibility and Project Schedule**

The purpose of this criterion is to assess the feasibility of the proposed development and operating budgets, including the assumptions made in determining sources, uses, rental revenue, operating expenses, and permanent mortgage sizing. Additionally, this criterion will assess the feasibility of the Project Schedule.

**Highly Advantageous:** Proposals contain realistic development and operating budgets, and realistic and conservative assumptions made in determining the project's sources, uses, rental revenue, operating expenses, and permanent mortgage sizing. Additionally, proposals contain a realistic implementation plan and timetable, and a comparably shorter timetable than other proposals.

**Advantageous:** Proposals contain realistic development and operating budgets, and realistic assumptions made in determining the project's sources, uses, rental revenue, operating expenses, and permanent mortgage sizing. Additionally, proposals contain a realistic implementation plan and timetable.

**Not Advantageous:** Proposals contain development and operating budgets or a timetable for implementation that is not realistic.

Unacceptable: Proposal does not contain realistic development and operating budgets, assumptions made are not realistic and the timetable for implementation is not realistic.

### **3. Exceptional Design**

The purpose of this criterion is to assess and compare how the building design and site layout articulates a compelling development vision that addresses the Design, Common Area, Open Space, Parking and Connectivity, Historic Preservation, Sustainability, and Accessibility sections of the project description.

Highly Advantageous: Proposals that most thoroughly and most effectively address the above requirements by presenting a more compelling vision for a well-developed project compared with other proposals submitted.

Advantageous: Proposals that address the above requirements but are not as effective and thorough in covering all aspects of the considerations above as other submitted proposals.

Not Advantageous: Proposals address most but not all of the above requirements.

Unacceptable: Proposals that do not offer sufficient detail or do not address all of the above requirements.

### **4. Affordability, Supportive Services, Inclusion**

The purpose of this criterion is to assess and compare how proposals address the affordability, supportive services, and equity and inclusion sections of the project description.

Highly Advantageous: Proposals that incorporate deep levels of affordability, robust supportive services for the intended resident population, and a significant commitment to equity and inclusion in the design and construction phases as compared with other proposals.

Advantageous: Proposals that address the above requirements, but do not address these requirements as effectively and thoroughly as other submitted proposals.

Not Advantageous: Proposals address most but not all of the above requirements.

Unacceptable: Proposals that do not offer sufficient detail or do not address all of the above requirements.

## ATTACHMENTS

- A. Special Legislation.....See [here](#)
- B. JAPG Report.....See [here](#)
- C. Consultant Feasibility Report.....See [here](#)
- D. Title Report.....See [here](#)
- E. ALTA Survey.....See [here](#)
- F. Phase II proposal and Phase I .....See [here](#)
- G. Hazardous Materials Report.....See [here](#)
- H. Structural Report.....See [here](#)
- I. MHC Adverse Effect Letter.....See [here](#)
- J. Draft MOA.....See [here](#)