



Ruthanne Fuller,  
Mayor

Barney Heath,  
Director  
Planning & Development

Members:

Mark Caggiano  
Eliza Datta  
Chuck Eisenberg  
John Hennessey  
Lizbeth Heyer, Chair  
Kathy Marchi  
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## CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

### Newton Housing Partnership

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July 26, 2020

Honorable Mayor Ruthanne Fuller  
Newton City Hall  
1000 Commonwealth Ave  
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Honorable Mayor Fuller,

On behalf of the Newton Housing Partnership, I thank you for your leadership in calling for an end to racism in Newton and challenging each of us to take anti-racist action to eliminate barriers that prevent Newton from being a city that is welcoming and accessible to all. You said so eloquently that “the killing of George Floyd, and now Rayshard Brooks, has brought to the surface the pain of generations of people of color suffering racism and bias, and unequal access to housing, jobs, education and, healthcare opportunities.”

The Newton Housing Partnership agrees wholeheartedly with your sentiment that we must take action to ensure that “Newton is truly an inclusive, welcoming community where people of all racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds can live and thrive, be safe and secure, feel welcome and be supported”. At our last two meetings, the Partnership discussed specific racist barriers to housing access and affordability in Newton and identified the “up to” 70% local preference in our Inclusionary Zoning Law as a significant racist barrier that must be changed. The intent of this provision is that local residents benefit from City-sponsored affordable housing opportunities; on the surface a compelling policy. However because of Newton’s predominantly white population (approx. 80%), imposing a high local preference perpetuates a racist housing system that gives significant preferential access to white households, while drastically limiting opportunities for people of color to move to Newton.

One specific anti-racist action within our immediate reach is to forgo adopting a local preference for the affordable units at the Riverside project. Because the Inclusionary Zoning Law says an “up to” 70% local preference is allowed, the Partnership voted unanimously at our July meeting that the City can and should adopt a zero local preference for Riverside. This bold action would ensure that people of color have greater access to housing in Newton by opening Riverside’s doors more broadly, and send a strong message that Newton will not perpetuate policies that keep non-white people out of our City.

Thank you for considering our recommendation and for inspiring each of us to take anti-racist action to make Newton truly accessible and welcoming to all.

Sincerely,

Lizbeth Heyer  
Chair, Newton Housing Partnership



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## CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

### Newton Housing Partnership

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CC:

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Councilor Jacob D. Auchincloss  
Councilor Lisle Baker  
Councilor Alicia Bowman  
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