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Emergency Housing & Utility Relief for Newton Residents

(Addendum added on 1/5/2022)

I am allocating \$1 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to launch a new emergency housing & utility assistance program as a short-term stop gap for those Newton households that continue to struggle with the economic effects of COVID-19.

This program will help address the immediate needs of our neighbors who are struggling to keep up with ongoing, basic housing and utility costs.

While our community members have seen many improvements over the past few months, the pandemic continues to impact our most vulnerable. In late August, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the CDC's eviction moratorium, removing a critical protection that has helped families and individuals be safely housed over the past eighteen months. In early September, the extended unemployment assistance ended for more than 7.5 million Americans which provided income for those who lost their jobs or became underemployed during the pandemic. As the Delta variant continues to plague our economy in different ways, we know that our lowest-income residents have been hardhit.

The City of Newton's Emergency Housing Relief Program supported more than 250 households between July 2020 and August 2021 with emergency housing assistance payments. The program provided up to 70% of an eligible household's monthly rent or mortgage (for those homeowners that reside in deed-restricted affordable units). Using our federal Community Development Block Grant CARES Act (CDBG-CV) and Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, the program awarded more than \$2.8 million in direct financial assistance to these Newton households, all of whom had been financially impacted by the pandemic. Administered by Metro West Collaborative Development, our local nonprofit partner, this critical program was a lifeline for Newton families and individuals.

When we made the decision to wind down the program in the spring, the horizon looked brighter and we were hopeful that households still in need of assistance would easily and quickly transition to the state programs.

Our Health & Human Services and Planning staff have been closely monitoring the situation on the ground, hearing directly from those most affected by the economic effects of the crisis as well as the nonprofit agencies that provide support services to these families and individuals.

Following continued reports of low-income Newton households still struggling to pay their rent and meet other basic needs, I made the important decision to launch this new Emergency Housing &

Utility Relief Program to provide a much-needed bridge of financial support for impacted residents as they continue to seek assistance from the Commonwealth’s RAFT, ERMA, and ERAP programs, as well as other available resources.

The new program will be a partnership of the City’s Health and Human Services and Planning Departments, along with our community partner Metro West Collaborative Development, who administered our initial emergency housing relief program over the past year. Metro West is able to quickly mobilize to provide eligible households with housing assistance, as well as utility assistance for those households with overdue notices.

Our Health and Social Services staff will work hand-in-hand with Metro West to ensure that program participants are concurrently working to access other available resources that meet their immediate needs related to housing stability and other support services. Newton’s Social Services staff will provide individual case management to program participants, helping them navigate housing assistance, and also SNAP, food pantry referrals, fuel assistance, utility discounts, and other local and state resources.

The City’s new COVID-19 Emergency Housing & Utility Relief Program will provide eligible households with up to two months of rental or mortgage assistance – with possible extensions – and up to \$700 of utility assistance, with proof of an overdue notice from the utility company (heat, hot water, or electricity). The program will cover 70% of a household’s monthly rent or mortgage payment, with a maximum monthly assistance amount of \$2,500 per household. For homeowners, those that reside in a deed-restricted affordable ownership unit are eligible to receive mortgage assistance.

Here are a few more of the important details about the program. To be eligible to receive assistance, households must currently live in Newton, have had a negative economic impact caused by COVID-19 (and can demonstrate this financial hardship), and have a total household income at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI) at the time of application and/or recertification to the program. Household income needs to be within the following limits:

Household size	1 person	2 person	3 person	4 person	5 person	6 person
Income Limit 80% of area median	\$70,750	\$80,850	\$90,950	\$101,050	\$109,150	\$117,250

Applicants need to complete an online application. To begin the process, applicants should contact Metro West Collaborative Development, which is administering the program on behalf of the City. Contact Robyn Rufo at: robyn@metrowestcd.org (preferred method) or at 857-999-6532.

The program flyer is available for download in:

- Chinese [简体中文](#)
- Portuguese [português](#)
- Russian [русский](#)

Spanish [español](#)

Free language assistance is available to households with limited English proficiency. Assistance with the submission of the application is also available to those with limited computer access.

ADDENDUM (1/5/2022):

The City had \$418,000 of this funding reimbursed by the Federal Government as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) act.