



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

Barney Heath
Director
Planning & Development

Cat Kemmett, Planning
Associate

Members

Peter Doeringer, Chair
Kelley Brown, Member
Jennifer Molinsky, Member
Kevin McCormick, Member
Sudha Maheshwari, Member
Chris Steele, Member
Barney Heath, Planning
Director *ex officio*
Lee Breckenridge, Alternate

1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459
T 617-796-1120
F 617-796-1142
www.newtonma.gov

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

May 2, 2022

Members present:

Peter Doeringer, Chair
Kelley Brown, Vice-Chair
Kevin McCormick, Member
Lee Breckenridge, Alternate
Barney Heath, *ex officio*

City Staff: Amanda Berman, Director of Housing & Community Development; Shaylyn Davis, Senior Community Development Planner; Eamon Bencivengo, Housing Development Planner; Malcom Lucas, Nika Sandal, Community Development Planner

Meeting held virtually by Zoom Meeting

1. FY23 Annual Action Plan Public Hearing

Chair Doeringer opened the meeting at 7:02 P.M. Amanda Berman, Director of Housing & Community Development, and Senior Community Development Planner Shaylyn Davis gave a presentation for this item.

Ms. Berman explained that the presentation would detail the allocation of CDBG, HOME, and ESG funds for the period of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. For FY23, the breakdown in funding is proposed as follows:

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	\$1,963,572.00
HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME)	\$1,491,865.00
Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)	\$164,000.00
Total	\$3,619,437.00

Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing accounts for \$1,221,375 or 60% of CDBG funding, and would go towards housing program delivery, housing rehabilitation, and site acquisition and improvements related to the construction of new affordable units for low- and moderate-income households. This would support the team's goals to create, preserve, and rehabilitate safe, decent, and affordable rental and ownership housing and provide financial support to income-eligible first-time homebuyers

In terms of production of affordable units, several projects are already underway Haywood House, a Newton Housing Authority project, will create 55 affordable

City of Newton Planning and Development Board

rental units for seniors earning between 30% - 99% AMI. Construction began in spring 2021 and is expected to be complete in spring of 2023. There is also the Golda Meir House Expansion Project with 2Life Communities, which has 68 affordable rental units for seniors ranging from 30%-99% AMI, including 9 units for chronically homeless adults with disabilities. Construction began in summer 2021 and expected to be complete in fall 2023. Coleman House Senior Housing Preservation Project with 2Life Communities will feature a comprehensive rehab and preservation of 146 existing very low and extremely low-income senior housing units. Construction began in summer of 2021 and is expected to wrap up in fall 2023. NHA also acquired CAN-DO's existing affordable housing portfolio of 33 units spread across 12 scattered site projects in Newton. Tenants include extremely low- and low- income individuals who require a variety of supportive services. Funding supported the debt reduction as part of acquisition and will support rehabilitation of units across the portfolio.

For potential FY23 and future housing projects, the city is working on NHA's housing management portfolio consisting of 57 units at 13 properties (not including the former CAN-DO portfolio). There has also been a pre-commitment of future years' funds for the West Newton Armory, the redevelopment will create 43 units of affordable housing, under development team Metro West / Civico. The pre-commitment of FY24 & FY25 CDBG is \$930,000 and Newton HOME funds of \$118,000, which was approved on 4/12/22.

The down payment assistance program provides financial support for low- to moderate income first-time home buyers purchasing deed restricted affordable units through the provision of a \$10,000 grant. Up to 3 income-eligible homebuyers are estimated to be assisted in FY23.

Rehab of existing units will also be supported, through the Newton Housing Authority and nonprofit housing units. Staff anticipate rehab of 3 homeowner units and 16 rental units (CAN-DO portfolio / NHA Acquisition

Continued education around fair housing laws, regulations and their enforcement will continue as well. Staff will collaborate with the Fair Housing Committee and WestMetro HOME Consortium to increase awareness of fair housing policies and practices.

Human Service

Human Service accounts for \$295,000 or 15% of CDBG funding, to provide grants for a total of fourteen human service projects through 14 sub-grantee agencies during FY23.

The city has three priority areas:

- Enrichment and Care for Vulnerable Youth, Ages 0-18
- Stability and Self-Sufficiency for Vulnerable Adults, Ages 19-61
- Promoting Economic Security and Vitality for Older Adults, Ages 62+

The budget for ESG in 2022 was \$164,708.00. The FY23 recommendation is \$164,000.00.

Architectural Access

Architectural Access accounts for \$95,000 or 5% of CDBG funding, to construct two accessible crossings at the three-way intersection of Langley Road, Warren Street and Chase Street. THIS will entail the removal of material and architectural barriers restricting mobility and accessibility of elderly or severely disabled persons, through public thoroughfares, public buildings, parks and recreational facilities, and nonprofit agencies.

City of Newton Planning and Development Board

5% (\$95,000) of FY23 CDBG funds will fund the creation of two accessible crossings at the three-way intersection of Langley Road, Warren Street and Chase Street.

Program Administration

Program Administration comprises \$403,689 or 20% of CDBG funding for the administration and implementation of the CDBG program, including citizen participation and program delivery. The WestMetro HOME Consortium will continue to work on rehab of existing units, production of new affordable units, and tenant based rental assistance.

The public comment period for this plan ends on Wednesday, June 1, 2022, and the submission deadline to HUD is June 30, 2022.

Chair Doeringer then opened the public hearing.

India Arnold, Program Coordinator & Community Coordinator at the Newton Community Development foundation spoke to the power of CDBG on the residence program. The funds help support impactful community events and improve the lives of residents.

Upon a motion by Mr. McCormick and approved unanimously, the public hearing was then closed.

Mr. Heath thanked the Housing team for assembling all of this data and acknowledged all of the hard work that each member put into making the plan possible.

Mr. Brown asked for clarification on whether CDBG funds can be used to acquire new housing units. Ms. Berman said that CDBG funds can indeed be used to acquire a site, but they cannot be used to construct new housing units. A site can be acquired for rehab or demolition and improvement, but they can't directly support the development of new housing. There are ways to support new construction projects, but how the funds can be used is nuanced, so not every project is a good fit for CDBG funding.

Mr. Brown asked if funds can be used for tenant relocation. Mr. Bencivengo explained that some CDBG funding was used for a relocation consultant on the Coleman House project. If tenants are displaced due to demolition of existing homes, the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act kicks in if people are permanently displaced.

Mr. McCormick asked if there is a plan for the long-term maintenance of the unsubsidized units being supported. Ms. Berman responded that there is no funding request or formal plan before them now from the NHA, but there may be one of review in the future.

Chair Doeringer suggested that, as he has in the past, these programs could and should have a stronger emphasis on workforce development and supporting self-sufficiency and financial independence for vulnerable populations. This is a time when such support is especially appropriate because the EDC is interested in working on ways to support storefront businesses, which could help create more jobs and further business diversity and inclusion. These could be good projects for low-income folks to get involved in, and the housing team should consider working with Metrowest and the EDC on this.

Upon a motion by Mr. McCormick, the Board voted in favor of recommending the adoption of the FY23 Annual Action Plan for the City of Newton Housing and Community Development Program and the Westmetro Home Consortium 5-0-1 with Director Heath abstaining.

2. Village Center Zoning Discussion

Mr. Brown asked if staff could comment on where ZAP members stand on the current proposals for Village Center Zoning. Mr. Heath responded that this is one of the most important things to understand to get to the next stage of working on these zoning proposals, and that June 1 will be a meeting to really check in and better understand their thoughts on the substance of the proposal. Staff plan to check in individually with members to take a temperature check. Staff in partnership with Utile have tried to find an approach that works from an economic standpoint and facilitates the desired changes City Council and community members have shared. Some questions still remain but staff would like to better understand how this framework and approach is sitting with ZAP to make sure it is striking the right balance.

Chair Doeringer asked for information about the mapping process. Mr. Heath responded that we have good data from the Pattern Book to work from, but what exists on the ground today is important. The border areas where things transition from commercial to residential are where things could get tricky. Some elements of crowd sourcing from the public will probably be involved, but in terms of the mapping and zoning it's also possible that the actual boundaries might not change all that much, even if the zoning districts themselves do. Block to block discussions and analysis could vary a lot though.

Chair Doeringer also pointed out that what zoning allows for and what uses actually exist on the ground can be starkly different, which can be confusing for folks. Mr. Brown added that to that point, moving towards a more mixed-use focus can give the vitality many people are looking for and allow for change over time.

Mr. Brown asked for more information about the proposal to use the size of the floorplate of 15,000 square feet as a control as proposed in the zoning, because that can be limiting for some uses like lab spaces. Mr. Heath responded that Utile's understanding is that anything over that size floorplate might be too dominating for a village center, and they wanted to have a way to govern the scale of the size of the building per se, but not necessarily the square footage amount.

Mr. McCormick noted that the edge cases are likely to be where there will be a lot of conflict. Ms. Kemmett agreed and said that the community engagement approach will try to do some education work around this topic and will bring in people who actually live in these areas to incorporate their feedback and perspective.

3. Minutes

Upon a motion by Mr. McCormick and unanimously approved, the minutes for April 2 and April 12 were adopted.

4. Adjournment

Before adjourning, Chair Doeringer made the following motion:

"The Planning and Development Board applauds Chris Steele's major contributions to the work of the Board since he first arrived over four years ago. He brought a wealth of knowledge about a wide range of zoning and planning policies in Newton, having been a founder of the Waban Area Council and serving for almost six years on the Economic Development Commission (including two terms as Chair and three terms as Vice Chair). From day one, Chris asked penetrating questions about presentations to the Board,

City of Newton Planning and Development Board

he was an articulate and persuasive advocate for sound planning and development policies, and he was often able formulate recommendations on controversial issues that resulted in unanimous support among Board members.

Chris joined the Board because he felt it was a time when Newton was “working through zoning reform and trying to establish planning frameworks that answer to the needs both of today’s residents and of those who will come after us”. While meeting these goals is still a work-in-progress, the Board is grateful for the legacy of zoning and planning policies that Chris helped to shape.”

The motion was unanimously and enthusiastically approved.

Upon a motion by Mr. Brown and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 P.M.