


# West Newton Armory Pre-development Funding Request

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CITY OF NEWTON COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

MARCH 9, 2021

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# The West Newton Armory

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- Located at 1137 Washington Street, midway between Newtonville and West Newton.
- Built in 1910 as a training facility for the Massachusetts National Guard, but has not been used by the Guard for several years.
- Comprises approximately 30,000 square feet with a front head house and rear drill shed typical of many armories built in the Commonwealth at that time.

# Armory Acquisition Process

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- In 2018, the Commonwealth declared the Armory a surplus property after the National Guard no longer required it for training purposes. At that time, DCAMM approached the City about acquiring the Armory.
- DCAMM presented the City with two scenarios for the purchase, which were formalized in special state legislation:
  - Reuse as 100% permanently affordable housing for individuals and households at or below 80% AMI. If used for this purpose, the City could acquire the property for \$1
  - Reuse as a municipal use, such as a library or community center. This acquisition price would not be \$1.00. The property would be appraised as restricted for that particular municipal use, and the City would pay an amount that reflected that type of use.
- In June 2019, the City Council authorized the Mayor to purchase the Armory for affordable housing or a municipal use.
- To help the City determine which purpose the Armory should be acquired, the Council's Real Property Reuse Committee created a JAPG in December 2019. The JAPG spent the next 11 months holding regular public meetings to research uses of other similarly aged armories throughout Massachusetts and hear presentations by experts.

# Affordable Housing Consultant

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- The work of the JAPG was supported by the City's housing consultant, Affirmative Investments.
- Because the City is designated as a Housing Choice Community by the State, the City applied for and was awarded a \$200,000 housing choice capital grant from the State to hire AI to conduct a feasibility analysis on affordable housing at the Armory.
- In conducting its analysis, AI considered four scenarios:
  - full preservation
  - partial demo by preserving the front head house and demolishing the rear drill shed for seniors/SN
  - partial demo by preserving the front head house and demolishing the rear drill shed for families
  - full demolition for new construction
- AI found that the first scenario was not financially feasible, but the remaining three were not only financially feasible but also structurally and architecturally feasible

# Final Recommendation and Report

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- In addition to receiving the analysis from AI, the JAPG interviewed the City's Public Buildings Commissioner and Chief Operating Officer to better understand if the Armory could be used for a municipal purpose. Both found the Armory to be insufficient to meet the needs of a City Department or other municipal use.
- In November 2020, the JAPG summarized its findings and the analysis from AI into its final report recommending to the Real Property Reuse Committee that the City purchase the Armory for 100% affordable housing.
- The Real Property Reuse Committee held two public hearings to review the report. In January 2021, the Committee voted to recommend to the full Council that the Mayor purchase the Armory for 100% affordable housing.
- On February 1, the full Council voted to affirm this recommendation.

# Current Status and Future Timeline

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- The City will now begin the process of closing on the property with the State and work with its housing consultant to draft an RFP to solicit proposals from qualified affordable housing developers to develop the Armory into 100% affordable housing.
- It is anticipated that the closing and release of the RFP will occur in summer 2021.
- The Planning Department estimates the Armory is four years away from welcoming its first housing residents as a developer must be identified, secure financing, receive building approvals, and perform the construction.

# CPC Funding Request

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- For the City to achieve the next steps of acquiring the property and issuing its RFP, the City must complete a Phase II environmental assessment, a noise assessment, and execute a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC).
- These steps will be managed by Affirmative Investments.
- The CPC funding request of **\$21,270** will fund the Phase II, which is required by HUD before the City can acquire the property and make the project eligible for federal funds once a developer is identified.

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Thank you

