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Barney S. Heath  
Director

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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** June 5, 2020

**TO:** Councilor Crossley, Chair  
Members of the Zoning and Planning Committee

**FROM:** Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development  
Amanda Berman, Director of Housing & Community Development  
Lara Kritzer, Community Preservation Program Manager

**RE:** **City of Newton COVID-19 Emergency Housing Relief Program Update**

**CC:** Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer  
Planning & Development Board  
Community Preservation Committee  
City Council

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This memo provides a brief update on the status of the Emergency Housing Relief Program.

The program launched on Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, with an announcement from Mayor Fuller via her email newsletter, which has 25,925 subscribers.

The application deadline was three weeks later, Wednesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>. By the close of the application deadline at midnight, Metro West Collaborative Development, who is administering the program on behalf of the City, had received the following:

- 238 applications
- 597 email inquiries and 219 phone inquiries (includes duplication)

All 238 applicants will be entered into the lottery, which is scheduled to take place via Zoom at noon on Wednesday, June 10<sup>th</sup>. The lottery will generate a wait list, which Metro West will use to process applications, determine eligibility, and award assistance. Priority will be given to households at or below 65% AMI.

While the application deadline for inclusion in the lottery has closed, Metro West is still accepting applications for the program. These applications will be placed at the bottom of the wait list and will be processed if funding is available.

### **Outreach / Marketing:**

The program was marketed through numerous community partners and digital and print platforms. Collaboration and coordination with Family ACCESS, who is administering the Newton COVID-19 Care Fund, and the Newton Public Schools English Language Learners (ELL) social workers also proved invaluable to targeting and assisting Newton's low-income population.

Outreach and marketing efforts included, but are not limited to:

#### **Email Newsletters and Outreach:**

- Mayor Fuller's Email Newsletters
- Planning Department's Affordable Housing Listserv (over 1,000 subscribers)
- City of Newton Planning Department Weekly Friday Report Email Blast
- Newton-Needham Regional Chamber Email Newsletters
- School Department email announcement to all Newton Public School families
- Email outreach to non-profit organizations in Newton and surrounding communities serving Newton's low- to moderate-income populations, including but not limited to:
  - Boys & Girls Club
  - Family ACCESS
  - Plowshares
  - Newton Housing Authority
  - Newton Community Development Foundation
  - REACH Beyond Domestic Violence
  - The Second Step
  - Riverside Community Care
  - Barry Price Center
  - YMCA

#### **Websites:**

- City of Newton COVID-19 Resource Webpages:  
[http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/health\\_n\\_human\\_services/public/covid19/default.asp](http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/health_n_human_services/public/covid19/default.asp)
- City of Newton Planning Department's Housing Webpage:  
<http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/hcd/affhousing/default.asp>

#### **Print Flyers:**

- Over 2,000 flyers printed and distributed through the following networks:
  - Grab 'n Go food program
  - Centre Street Food Pantry
  - Newton Food Pantry

- Post 400 Monthly Food Bank
- Senior Center
- Council Bill Humphrey

**Print Ads and Media Publications:**

- Print advertisement in the Newton TAB on Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>
- Newton TAB article from May 20<sup>th</sup>, highlighting the program  
<https://newton.wickedlocal.com/news/20200520/newton-rentalmortgage-assistance-fund-now-totals-25m>
- Boston Globe article from May 20<sup>th</sup>  
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/05/20/metro/newton-city-council-approves-2-million-covid-19-emergency-housing-relief-program/>

**Next Steps:**

On June 10<sup>th</sup>, Metro West Collaborative Development will hold a lottery for all 238 applications that were received by the deadline. The lottery will generate a wait list, identifying the order in which Metro West will begin to process applications, determine eligibility, and award assistance. However, priority will be given to households at or below 65% AMI.

Metro West is still accepting applications for the program, and these will be placed at the bottom of the wait list and will be processed if funding is available once all eligible households on the lottery generated wait list are awarded assistance.

Over the next two to three weeks, staff will work closely with Metro West to monitor whether additional marketing and outreach is needed to solicit additional applications. This decision will be made after an initial phase of eligibility review based on the wait list, as well as the number of additional applications submitted after the deadline.

We anticipate the first wave of assistance will be mailed to landlords and lenders in the first weeks of July.