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Barney S. Heath  
Director

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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** December 11, 2020

**TO:** Councilor Danberg, Chair, Real Property Reuse Committee  
Members of the Real Property Reuse Committee

**FROM:** Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development  
Amanda Berman, Director of Housing & Community Development  
Eamon Bencivengo, Housing Development Planner

**RE:** **West Newton Armory Housing Consultant's Final Report**

**CC:** Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer  
City Council

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This memo summarizes the work of the affordable housing development consultant, Affirmative Investments, in producing the attached final report determining that 100% affordable housing is feasible at the West Newton Armory.

Affirmative Investments (AI) was hired by the Planning Department through a Housing Choice Grant awarded to the City by the Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development's Housing Choice Grant Program. The Planning Department applied for the grant in the summer of 2019, after being designated a Housing Choice Community, and received the \$200,000 award in early 2020. After receiving feedback from the 9-member Joint Advisory Planning Group (JAPG), the Planning Department released a Request for Proposals (RFP) in February 2020. Two proposals were received. An evaluation committee, comprised of Chair Councilor Danberg and Vice Chair Councilor Markiewicz of the Reuse Committee, Public Buildings Commissioner Josh Morse, JAPG member David Koven, and staff from the Planning Department, reviewed the proposals and selected Affirmative Investments (AI) in May 2020.

The contract scope of work for AI is divided into two parts: 1.) determination of the Armory's feasibility for conversion into affordable housing (report herein) and, should the City Council see fit to move forward with the purchase of the Armory for affordable housing, 2.) assist the City with the preparation of a Request for Proposals from prospective affordable housing developers. As the first part of the consultant's scope of work coincided with the work of the JAPG, the JAPG had the opportunity to refer to

AI's feasibility analysis to assist in their deliberations as to whether the City should proceed with the purchase of the Armory from DCAMM for 100% affordable housing.

In order to provide the City with a thorough final report, AI conducted an environmental review of the Armory, including a structural analysis, hazardous materials survey, and Phase I assessment; a historic and zoning review; as well as a financial and architectural analysis. In addition, AI solicited valuable input from the JAPG, Newton Historical Commission, Newton Housing Partnership, Newton Housing Authority, and Newton Community Development Foundation. This analysis and outreach influenced the design of possible development scenarios of the Armory that AI was required to produce per the City's RFP scope of work. These scenarios included reuse of the entire existing Armory building, reuse of the front Headhouse and demolition of the rear Fieldhouse, and demolition of the entire building.

The combination of the analysis, outreach, and scenario design conducted by AI led to their conclusion that the development of 100% affordable housing at the Armory is both feasible and an excellent opportunity for increasing the supply of deeply affordable housing in the City. AI supports this opinion based upon several factors:

- The acquisition price of \$1 allows a Developer to meet State and City guidelines on cost per unit
- The site lends itself to an ideal unit count for maximizing the value of the State's affordable housing fiscal resources – 40-50 units.
- Easy access to public transportation and City schools
- Easy access to a range of retail establishments
- Consistent with Washington Street Vision Plan
- Grading at site lends itself to efficient parking and keeping building in scale along Washington Street
- Opportunity to provide deeply subsidized units, affordable to 30% - 60% AMI households
- Endorsed by the Newton Housing Partnership and Joint Advisory Planning Group (JAPG)

The final report incorporates AI's findings and recommendations into an Executive Summary, followed by detail of the development scenarios that have been analyzed for the site, as well as detail on the third-party analyses of the site.

**Attachments:**

- West Newton Armory Feasibility Analysis Final Report by Affirmative Investments

Click here to download report:

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument?id=50284>