



# CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

## Newton Housing Partnership

July 26, 2020

Honorable Mayor Ruthanne Fuller  
Newton City Hall  
1000 Commonwealth Ave  
Newton, MA 02459

Ruthanne Fuller,  
Mayor

Barney Heath,  
Director  
Planning & Development

Members:

Mark Caggiano  
Eliza Datta  
Chuck Eisenberg  
John Hennessey  
Lizbeth Heyer, Chair  
Kathy Marchi  
Josephine McNeil  
Marva Serotkin  
Stephen Tise

Dear Honorable Mayor Fuller,

On behalf of the Newton Housing Partnership, I thank you for your leadership in calling for an end to racism in Newton and challenging each of us to take anti-racist action to eliminate barriers that prevent Newton from being a city that is welcoming and accessible to all. You said so eloquently that “the killing of George Floyd, and now Rayshard Brooks, has brought to the surface the pain of generations of people of color suffering racism and bias, and unequal access to housing, jobs, education and, healthcare opportunities.”

The Newton Housing Partnership agrees wholeheartedly with your sentiment that we must take action to ensure that “Newton is truly an inclusive, welcoming community where people of all racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds can live and thrive, be safe and secure, feel welcome and be supported”. At our last two meetings, the Partnership discussed specific racist barriers to housing access and affordability in Newton and identified the “up to” 70% local preference in our Inclusionary Zoning Law as a significant racist barrier that must be changed. The intent of this provision is that local residents benefit from City-sponsored affordable housing opportunities; on the surface a compelling policy. However because of Newton’s predominantly white population (approx. 80%), imposing a high local preference perpetuates a racist housing system that gives significant preferential access to white households, while drastically limiting opportunities for people of color to move to Newton.

One specific anti-racist action within our immediate reach is to forgo adopting a local preference for the affordable units at the Riverside project. Because the Inclusionary Zoning Law says an “up to” 70% local preference is allowed, the Partnership voted unanimously at our July meeting that the City can and should adopt a zero local preference for Riverside. This bold action would ensure that people of color have greater access to housing in Newton by opening Riverside’s doors more broadly, and send a strong message that Newton will not perpetuate policies that keep non-white people out of our City.

Thank you for considering our recommendation and for inspiring each of us to take anti-racist action to make Newton truly accessible and welcoming to all.

Sincerely,

Lizbeth Heyer  
Chair, Newton Housing Partnership

1000 Commonwealth Ave.  
Newton, MA 02459  
T 617/796-1120  
F 617/796-1142

[www.newtonma.gov](http://www.newtonma.gov)



---

## CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

### Newton Housing Partnership

---

Ruthanne Fuller,  
Mayor

Barney Heath,  
Director  
Planning & Development

Members:

Mark Caggiano  
Eliza Datta  
Chuck Eisenberg  
John Hennessey  
Lizbeth Heyer, Acting Chair  
Kathy Marchi  
Josephine McNeil  
Marva Serotkin  
Stephen Tise

CC:

Council President Susan Albright  
Councilor Jacob D. Auchincloss  
Councilor Lisle Baker  
Councilor Alicia Bowman  
Councilor Allan Ciccone, Jr.  
Councilor Deborah Crossley  
Councilor Victoria L. Danberg  
Councilor Andreae Downs  
Councilor Leonard J. Gentile  
Councilor Maria Scibelli Greenberg  
Councilor Rebecca Walker Grossman  
Councilor Bill Humphrey  
Councilor David A. Kalis  
Councilor Andrea W. Kelley  
Councilor Joshua Krintzman  
Councilor Marc C. Laredo  
Councilor Alison M. Leary  
Councilor Richard A. Lipof  
Councilor Julia Malakie  
Councilor Christopher J. Markiewicz  
Councilor Brenda Noel  
Councilor Emily Norton  
Councilor Holly Ryan  
Councilor Pamela Wright  
Barney Heath, Director of Planning and Development  
Amanda Berman, Director of Housing and Community Development

1000 Commonwealth Ave.  
Newton, MA 02459  
T 617/796-1120  
F 617/796-1142

[www.newtonma.gov](http://www.newtonma.gov)