

Memorandum

To: Newton City Council

From: Ted Hess-Mahan

CC: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller
Barney Heath, Director of Planning and Development
Members of the Newton Fair Housing Committee

Date: March 31, 2021

Re: #96-21 Fair Housing Resolution

As a member of the Newton Fair Housing Committee and its chair for 2020-2021, I wanted to thank you for considering the Fair Housing Resolution honoring the work of the Newton Fair Housing Committee, and allowing me to comment in support of the Resolution at the March 22, 2021 Zoning and Planning Committee Meeting. April is Fair Housing Month, to commemorate the enactment of the Fair Housing Act (the Act) on April 11, 1968, just one week after the assassination of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The purpose and goals of the Act are to end housing discrimination and promote diverse, inclusive communities, and to Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH).

I write to supplement my comments in ZAP with some additional materials and information for your consideration when the Resolution is voted on at the next Newton City Council Meeting on April 5, 2021.

AFFH was part of the Act when it was passed by Congress in 1968. Congress directed the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to make sure that neither the agency itself, nor the cities, counties, states, municipal housing agencies it funds discriminate in their programs. Further, Congress intended that HUD programs be used to expand housing choices and help make all neighborhoods places of opportunity, providing residents with access to the community assets and resources they need to flourish. As a recipient of \$3.5 million from HUD through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds, Newton is obligated to implement the AFFH provision of the Act.

The Resolution honors the important work that the Fair Housing Committee is doing to ensure that the City of Newton fulfills its obligations to provide fair access to housing and equal opportunity for all. Newton is the lead member of the WestMetro HOME Consortium, and is responsible for administering and distributing federal housing funds to the twelve participating communities, and preparing a five-year plan to implement the AFFH provisions of the Act. The Consortium's Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, 2021-2025 (the AI Report), lists several key strategies and actions, including a review of restrictive zoning policies that limit the amount of multi-family and affordable housing in Newton. In addition, Newton is obligated to comply with the recently passed Housing Choice legislation, which requires the creation of at least one by-right multi-family zone close to transit. These actions are essential parts of the City's plan to fulfill its obligations under the AFFH provisions of the Fair Housing Act.

For your convenience, I attach excerpts from the AI Report containing the recommendations for strategies and actions that Newton has undertaken to implement the AFFH provision of the Act, as well as a Memorandum from the Law Department dated February 5, 2021, summarizing the key provisions and effect of the recently passed Housing Choice legislation.

I strongly urge all Members of the Newton City Council to vote for the Fair Housing Resolution in its entirety, and support the important work of the City of Newton and the Fair Housing Committee to ensure that the City fulfills all of its obligations under the Fair Housing Act.

Thank you.