

MEMORADUM

To: Cambridge Redevelopment Authority Board

From: Carlos Peralta

Date: 10/16/2019

RE: 2019 Forward Fund Grant Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) working with a Selection Committee consisting of City of Cambridge (the “City”) staff from various departments, held two review sessions on June 21st and September 27th. The sessions were intended to provide the Selection Committee the opportunity to evaluate Forward Fund (the “Fund”) proposals that had been submitted to the CRA by a diverse set of local nonprofit organizations. Nonprofits were asked to propose projects whose goals and objectives are aligned with the action plans detailed in the City’s [Envision Cambridge](#) and the [Community Needs Assessment](#) reports.



Cambridge Community Needs Framework (image from Cambridge Needs Assessment Report)

AWARD TYPES

Organizations were able to submit proposals for one of two available grant types:

- ***Community Infrastructure Capital Grants:*** Awards of up to \$100,000 were offered to applicants seeking assistance for construction, repair, renovation, and/or other capital improvements, such as open space and landscape improvements associated with a civic mission that touches a significant portion of the public population.
- ***Technical Assistance Grants:*** Awards of up to \$10,000 were offered to applicants seeking funding for a feasibility analysis, architectural design, or engineering study to gather preconstruction information and relevant data related to a facility improvement project.

The CRA budget authorized the distribution of up to \$300,000 for 2019. As in previous years, the CRA has reserved the right to allocate funding flexibly depending on the quality of applications received, and to request project modifications or other conditions before disbursement of funds.

EVALUATION PROCESS

CRA staff and the Selection Committee evaluated proposals and made project funding recommendations at two review meetings held on June 21st and September 27th. The 2019 committee consists of the following members:

- Pardis Saffari, Economic Development (Community Development Department)
- Gary Chan, Community Planning (Community Development Department)
- John Nardone, Department of Public Works
- Lillian Hsu, Cambridge Arts Council
- Asuquo Ituen, Inspectional Services Department
- John Ziniewicz, Cambridge Housing Authority
- Nancy Tauber, Kids Council (Human Services Department)
- Carlos Peralta, Cambridge Redevelopment Authority

Project proposals were evaluated and scored based on the following criteria:

Project Related Scoring Criteria:

1. Alignment with the purpose and goals of the Fund and the CRA mission and operating principles
2. Demonstrate a tangible public benefit in an under-resourced area of Cambridge designated by the City of Cambridge [Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas](#)
3. Exhibits a clear narrative of how the project aligns with the action plan of [Envision Cambridge](#) and the [Community Needs Assessment](#)
4. Level of public access and visibility of the project
5. Ability to inspire or inform other community investments

Applicant Related Scoring Criteria:

1. Demonstrated capacity of applicant to successfully implement the project
2. Realistic financial feasibility of the project
3. Financial need of applicant

GRANT RECOMMENDATION

The Selection Committee evaluated seven proposals that were submitted to the CRA before the submission deadlines. Based on the quality of their proposals, the Selection Committee recommends four organizations to receive grants. The selected organizations are local, and own and/or operate facilities that provide support, social services, or resources to the community with the goal of closing the gaps reported in [Envision Cambridge](#) and the [Community Needs Assessment](#). These applicants provided a clear narrative on how their proposed project and organization's mission are aligned with improving the overarching needs stated in the reports.

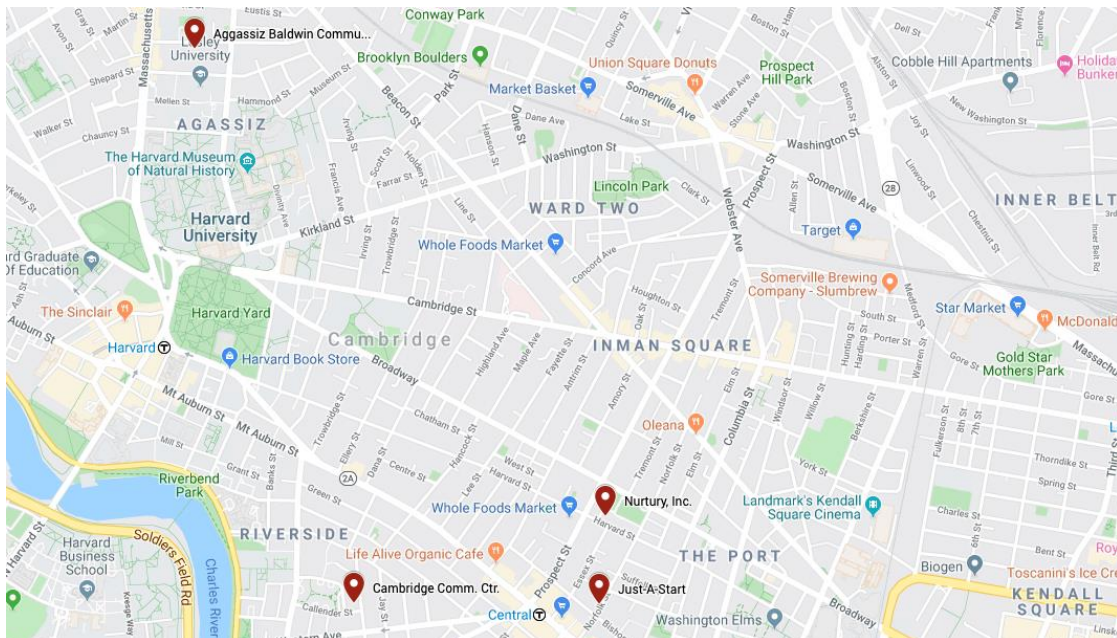
CRA staff with the assistance of the 2019 Forward Fund Selection Committee recommends the following organizations for a Forward Fund grant in the following categories.

Community Infrastructure Capital Grants (\$100,000)

- Just-A-Start Corporation (\$100,000)
 - *55 Norfolk Street Financial Opportunity Center*
- Cambridge Community Center (\$75,000)
 - *Building Modernization Project*
- Nurture, Inc. (\$22,210)
 - *Connecting Children with Growing: Nurture Outdoor Garden*

Technical Assistance Grants (\$10,000)

- Agassiz Baldwin Community (\$10,000)
 - *Planning & Feasibility for ABC Renovation*



NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue to work with the awarded organizations to finalize all grant agreements and to schedule project follow-ups. The follow-ups will serve as routine project updates to gather information on the construction process.

The CRA has scheduled the third and final project review session with the Selection Committee on December 13th. The deadline for interested organizations to submit a proposed project for consideration will be Wednesday, December 11th.

55 NORFOLK STREET FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITY CENTER

JUST-A-START CORPORATION

\$100,000

Non-Profit Organization 501(c)(3)
Carl Nagy-Koechlin; Executive Director

Project Location: 55 Norfolk Street, Cambridge, MA 02139

Quoted from the Forward Fund Application Form:

“Just-A-Start owns the 55 Norfolk Street commercial space as part of its 8-unit affordable housing property on the site, and it is not currently a site for services or open to the public. Meanwhile, Just-A-Start operates the Financial Opportunity Program out of its offices at 1035 Cambridge Street; the program serves approximately 375 individuals annually through one-on-one financial counseling, workshops, and tax preparation. Program services are currently available to residents of JAS’s properties, students in JAS’s training programs, and other community members who are referred to the program. Transforming the 55 Norfolk Street space into a dedicated Financial Opportunity Center would enable JAS to reach more community members in a more public, transit-accessible setting, while activating a ground floor commercial space in a high foot traffic area.

Services in the Financial Opportunity Center would be available to the community, with particular focus on community members with low to moderate incomes. Programming on site would include one-on-one financial coaching with the program’s accredited financial counselor, workshops hosted by JAS and in partnership with other providers, and free tax preparation. As Just-A-Start’s Community Benefits Fund project includes financial coaching for program participants, the new space would also create opportunities to host Community Benefits mentoring meetings. Additionally, given the site’s proximity to JAS’s Norfolk Street and Bishop Allen properties (40 units collectively), there is the opportunity to hold resident service meetings and to meet with other housing services clients, as well as to host public recruitment sessions for JAS’s careers training programs.

A Community Infrastructure Grant from the Forward Fund would support the design and construction costs of the Financial Opportunity Center. The proposal includes expanding the existing space to add a community room and space for private consultations, and would upgrade the building’s entry to make it ADA accessible.”



BUILDING MODERNIZATION PROJECT

CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY CENTER

\$75,000

Non-Profit Organization 501(c)(3)
Darrin Korte; Executive Director

Project Location: 5 Callender Street, Cambridge, MA 02139

Quoted from the Forward Fund Application Form:

“Our renovation plans focus on addressing three general priorities: accessibility, safety, and efficiency. We will also pay respect to the history of our building by restoring the exterior to its original look when it was built in 1882. Further and most importantly, renovations will meet a pressing need in our community by adding new classroom space in which we will offer full-day pre-school care.

Currently, our building is not fully handicap accessible. While we have a wheelchair ramp at our main entrance, and another to enter our gymnasium, neither ramp is compliant with current standards put forth by the American Disabilities Act. Our renovation plans address accessibility by establishing ground-level entrances for both the main building and our gymnasium, and installing an elevator that will provide access to all four floors of our facility. To do this, we will remove the entryway from the front of our building and build an addition on the side of our building. This addition will have a ground-level entryway and house an elevator. When the building was originally built the entryway was not located where it currently sits. By moving it, we are able to both restore the building to its original form and provide an accessible main entrance. The new pre-school classroom space will be located on the second floor of this addition, which will be easily accessed via the new elevator.

We will address safety concerns for our building by removing and replacing all of the exterior siding and window frames. Currently, our building has shingles that contain asbestos on the exterior. There is also lead paint on the exterior window frames that needs to be removed and safely disposed of. We will remove all hazardous materials from the exterior and replace it with non-hazardous siding to look exactly how it looked when it was built in 1882.

We will address efficiency in our renovations by re-insulating the entire building and replacing our old, drafty windows with energy-efficient windows. The windows that we install will match the 8 and 12-pane windows that were used to build our facility in 1882. This work will also help us take advantage of a state-of-the-art heating system that we were able to get installed with the support of the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority during a previous phase of renovations.”



CONNECTING CHILDREN WITH GROWING: NURTURY OUTDOOR GARDEN

NURTURY, INC

\$22,210

Non-Profit Organization 501(c)(3)
Suzyann Miller; Director

Project Location: 243 Harvard Street Cambridge, MA 02139

Quoted from the Forward Fund Application Form:

"We propose a gardening space outside our two main entrances to the program that will not only support our children's nutritional values, but engage the children in skill building and the staff in community partnerships. Gardening teaches children where their vegetables come from and provides them with skills to help foster each child's development. We plan to do a multi-dimensional unit with our classrooms incorporating nutrition, health, plant life, and community into our project. The project will build children's cognitive, motor, literacy, math and sensory skills.

In order to develop our children's cognitive development, we will ask them to predict, analyze, and describe the outcomes of their garden. The more open-ended questions give children the development of thought and problem-solving skills. Gardening supports many motor skills in children's development to pour water, collect soil, and carry tools to the garden space. Literacy skills are also an essential part of gardening as children explore languages by signing, pointing, and gaining a greater vocabulary. Math concepts teach children measurements such as measuring the height of the plants or predicting how long it will take the plants to grow. This can lead the children to learn about their own growth - measuring themselves and other things that may grow. Gardening fosters working together and builds children's relationships. While your children are learning a lifelong love of growing things, you are learning more about your children—how they think, what they like and dislike and how capable they really are. Gardening can create a beautiful environment for our center and our community."



PLANNING & FEASIBILITY FOR ABC RENOVATION

AGASSIZ BALDWIN COMMUNITY

\$10,000

Non-Profit Organization 501(c)(3)
Maria LePage; Executive Director

Project Location: 20 Sacramento Street, Cambridge, MA 02138

Quoted from the Forward Fund Application Form:

“ABC is planning to renovate a large part of our main building at 20 Sacramento Street, with our Children’s Programs space being the highest priority. This building houses the Kindergarten Afterschool and is the primary indoor space for the Outback Summer Program. These programs serve over 300 children from all areas of Cambridge annually, and are known for quality. This part of the building gets heavy usage and hasn’t had any major improvement since we started operating programs in 1985. Because this building serves such an important purpose, and because a renovation will cause major disruption to our existing programs, we must be sure we have a well thought out plan and put the appropriate amount of time, energy, and resources into the planning phase. We must ensure that the outcome is a space that accommodates the changing needs of our community, supports our legacy of high-quality programs, and is a community resource so rushing into construction seems unwise.

In order to determine the project scope, and the best course of action, ABC needs to undertake a feasibility study so organizational leadership can make informed decisions. The feasibility study will include the following five aspects:

- 1. Purpose: We must consider and prioritize the current needs and have a vision for the future.*
- 2. Design Concepts and Construction: Using our list of prioritized needs and vision for the future, we must explore and compare design options and assess costs to determine scope. This will involve a thorough assessment of current building systems and building codes.*
- 3. Impact on Program Income: We must be able to financially plan for both the renovation phase, and the years to follow.*
- 4. Financing: We must do a thorough assessment of the fundraising potential of a capital campaign, and explore other funding sources.*
- 5. Logistics: We need to understand the impact to operations during the renovation, and have a plan to relocate programs and staff.”*

