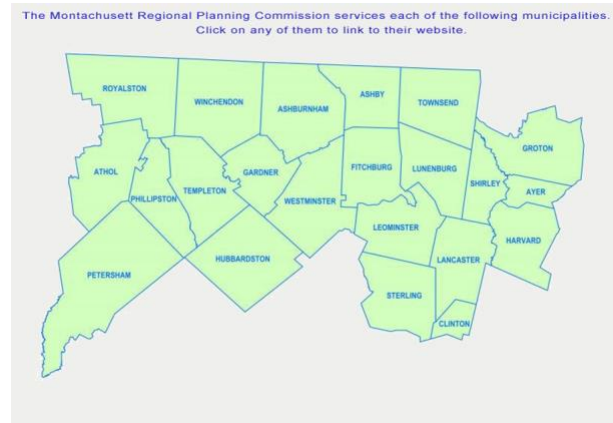


Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
Community Investment Tax Credit Program
NewVue Communities Community Investment Plan 2023-2025

NewVue Communities (NewVue) is proud to present its fourth Community Investment Plan, which is expected to be approved by the Board of Directors at its December meeting. The Plan is based on the Agency's annual operating plan and the work that the Agency has outlined in its 2020-2023 Strategic Plan.

Section 1 - Community or Constituency (ies) to be served by the organization

NewVue's program area includes the 22 communities in North Central Massachusetts (Ashburnham, Ashby, Athol, Ayer, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Groton, Harvard, Hubbardston, Lancaster, Leominster, Lunenburg, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, Shirley, Sterling, Templeton, Townsend, Westminster, and Winchendon). NewVue seeks to collaborate with the cities and towns in our region using our five lines of business: housing development, asset management, community organizing, small business development, and housing and financial services.



According to the most recent Census (2020), the total population for our region is more than 250,000. Currently, NewVue is the most active in Athol, Clinton, Gardner, Fitchburg, and Leominster. These are the largest communities in the region which have a total of 146,000 residents or 58% of the region's population.

Fitchburg was once the wealthiest community in the region. In its heyday, factories in Fitchburg harnessed the power of the Nashua River to make products of the early industrial age. Thousands of homes were constructed within walking distance of the factories. Thus, older areas of Fitchburg contain many triple-deckers and have inadequate parking with little open space. Fitchburg's economy declined, as did many New England mill towns, when cheaper labor was found in the South and later overseas, exporting manufacturing jobs.

Leominster was historically the sleepy twin sister of Fitchburg. Yet for much of the past fifty years, Leominster has been outpacing Fitchburg in population growth and economic outcomes. This was initially because of the plastics industry and more recently because of its superior geographic location. In recent years the plastics industry has adapted to the new global economy by creating products that require skilled workers and provide good jobs in the area. In addition, because of Leominster's superior access to Routes 2 and 190, it is nearly ten to fifteen minutes faster to reach Boston or Worcester. Today, Leominster is the wealthier of the two cities.

Gardner is the former furniture capital of New England. It is about ten miles west of Fitchburg and Leominster and is home to Mount Wachusett Community College. Gardner's real estate values, income and poverty statistics place it between Fitchburg and Leominster.

Clinton, originally part of Lancaster, developed as an industrialized mill town based on the power of the Nashua River. In the 19th and 20th Centuries, Clinton was noted for manufacturing carpets and woven wire. Bigelow Carpets, a family business, had a national reputation and its carpets graced the White House, the Waldorf Astoria, and the SS Titanic. After the Great Depression, businesses closed and moved away. Since the 1970's, other businesses have taken over the mills such as Jabil Plastics, an international company.

Athol, historically known as the “Tool Town”, was another typical New England mill town with two rivers, the Millers and Tully to power the mills. The chopping machine was invented in Athol by Laroy Starrett, who then founded the L.S. Starrett Company, now an international company that continues to make high-quality precision tools and is the largest local employer in the region.

Population and Demographics: The population of North Central Massachusetts has grown, albeit more slowly than the Commonwealth as a whole, over the past decade. The table below illustrates the population of the five largest communities and the region. In general, during the decade the population shifted east, Clinton and Leominster have grown faster than Athol, Fitchburg, and Gardner. It is not clear that this trend will continue post COVID as hybrid work becomes more available.

Municipality	2010 Population	2020 Population	% Change 2010-2020
Athol	11,584	11,945	3%
Clinton	13,606	15,428	13%
Fitchburg	40,318	41,946	3%
Gardner	20,228	21,287	5%
Leominster	40,759	43,782	7%
N.C. MA. Total	236,475	250,531	6%
Massachusetts	6,547,629	7,029,917	7%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census, 2010; U.S. Decennial Census, 2020

Fitchburg, Leominster and Clinton are the most diverse communities in the region.

Fitchburg, Leominster, and Clinton are the most diverse communities in our region. Thirty percent of Fitchburg’s population are people of color. The corresponding figure for Leominster and Clinton is approximately twenty percent. The largest minority group in the region is Hispanic. In Fitchburg more than one in five residents are Hispanic, while in Clinton and Leominster, Hispanic residents make up 17-18% of the population. Athol and Gardner are less diverse. Athol is 88% white, while Gardner is 82% white. The table below illustrates the minority population for each of the five largest municipalities and the region. As a whole, North Central Massachusetts is less diverse than the Commonwealth, while the Gateway Cities of Fitchburg and Leominster are the most diverse within our region. North Central Massachusetts

also has a lower percentage of Blacks and Asians and a higher percentage of Hispanic residents than Massachusetts overall.

Municipality	Total Residents	White	Black	Asian	Other	Hispanic
Athol	11,945	88.7%	1.2%	<1%	3.7%	5.6%
Clinton	15,428	76.5%	4.8%	0%	1.1%	20.2%
Fitchburg	41,946	59.6%	7%	2.1%	10%	29.4%
Gardner	21,287	82.1%	2.5%	3.2%	4.7%	8.8%
Leominster	43,782	69.9%	5.9%	2.8%	6.2%	23.3%
NC Mass	250,531	75%	4%	2%	5%	12%
Massachusetts	7,029,917	69.65%	7.03%	7.23%	16.10%	15.75%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census, 2010; U.S. Decennial Census, 2020

Median Household Income and Housing Costs: Leominster has the highest median household income at approximately \$63,300 with Clinton close behind at \$61,000. In the past decade, Athol's median household income grew dramatically to nearly \$58,000 placing it ahead of Gardner at \$55,000 and Fitchburg at \$52,000. All of our larger communities have a lower median household income than Worcester County at \$77,000 and the Commonwealth at \$84,000. Athol saw a dramatic rise in income between 2010 and 2020 of 72% while the rest of the communities had growth of between 36% and 46% which is well below the growth rates for the Commonwealth and Worcester County.

When examining poverty in North Central Massachusetts we see a trend that is similar to the Median Household Income. The five communities where NewVue focuses its work and the five largest communities in the region have a higher poverty rate than the region and Worcester County as a whole. We note that Clinton and Leominster have the highest median household income and the lowest poverty rate of these five largest communities while Fitchburg Gardner and Athol have lower median household incomes and higher poverty rates.

Municipality	2010 Median Household Income	2020 Median Household Income	% Change	2020 % Poverty
Athol	\$33,475	\$57,667	72	11.5%
Clinton	\$44,740	\$61,034	36	9.5%
Fitchburg	\$37,004	\$51,708	38	14.5%

Gardner	\$37,334	\$54,683	46	13.7%
Leominster	\$44,893	\$63,119	40	11%
NC Mass	Not available	\$79,970	N/A	9%
Worcester County	\$47,569	\$77,185	62	9.5%
Massachusetts	\$50,284	\$84,385	68	11.6%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census SF3, 2014 5 –Year American Community Survey

Municipality	2011 Median Single-Family Home Price	2021 Median Single-Family Home Price	% Change
Athol	\$77,500	\$245,000	216
Clinton	\$197,000	\$338,000	72
Fitchburg	\$140,000	\$296,000	111
Gardner	\$127,500	\$285,000	124
Leominster	\$185,000	\$375,000	103
NC Mass	\$187,800	\$360,751	92
Massachusetts	\$285,00	\$510,000	79

Between 2011 and 2021, housing prices in North Central Massachusetts rose faster (92%) than prices overall throughout Massachusetts (79%). In each of our three largest communities, single-family home prices more than doubled from a decade ago. In Athol home prices more than tripled over the past decade, and in Clinton, home prices increased more slowly, by 72%.

Historically, the focus of NewVue is on residents who earn between 30% and 80% of the area’s median household income, adjusted for household size. This means, using the example of a family size of 4 people, we aim to serve households who earn between \$30,000 and \$80,000 per year. For our homeowner clients, these numbers are slightly higher (\$100,000 for a family of four) and for smaller families we aim for a slightly lower income range (\$20,000).

When looking at change in median income, however, median income across Massachusetts rose at a higher rate 68% than Worcester County (62%). In Clinton, Fitchburg, Leominster, and Gardner, median income rose by 36%, 38%, 40%, and 46% respectively. Only Athol reflected a greater rise in median income, 72% over the past decade. This illustrates a gap between rapidly

rising home prices and a more moderate rise in incomes, which means that North Central Massachusetts is becoming less affordable for homeowners.

North of Main Neighborhood: Since 2009, the North of Main Neighborhood has been a special focus of the Agency through ReImagine North of Main, a collective impact project originally funded through the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts. North of Main is one of the commercial hubs of North Central Massachusetts and the cultural center of the region with the Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg State University, several different art galleries, historic districts, and two different community theater groups. Also importantly, the Fitchburg intermodal transit station - with direct train service to Route 495, Cambridge, and Boston - anchors the eastern end of Main Street. However, this residential neighborhood has experienced persistent poverty and needs comprehensive community development to allow the low-income residents of the neighborhood to thrive. With NewVue, current key stakeholders in the partnership to improve the neighborhood include the City of Fitchburg, Fitchburg State University, Fitchburg Art Museum, and Health Alliance Clinton Hospital.

NewVue's North of Main project continues to evolve and NewVue will have an extensive focus on the North of Main Neighborhood over the next few years. We will begin construction of the 68-unit artist-preference Fitchburg Arts Community, continue providing small business support for InTown Fitchburg businesses, engage stewards (residents trained to advocate for and support community priorities), and seek to help homeowners and tenants in the neighborhood with financial counseling and related services. Further, many of our partners are also investing in the area, including the City with a new Library, the University with a new Theater, along with continued growth from the Fitchburg Art Museum and investments from the Hospital. NewVue believes that this neighborhood has great potential for economic growth and development without displacement that will benefit residents, small business owners, and area stakeholders as well. During this period, while many of our partners will be focusing on InTown Fitchburg, it will be important for NewVue to work with residents in the neighborhood.

Impact of COVID on North Central MA: The COVID pandemic changed how many people live and work and this has had an impact on our region as well. We are finding that, with an overall greater availability of remote work for employees in greater Boston, many more new homeowners and renters are looking to move to our region. This has been driving up home prices and rental prices in a way that is unprecedented in our region's recent history. Concurrently, with higher prices, lower inventory, and higher interest rates, current residents are investing in their current homes rather than moving to a new home. As a result, current homeowners are more interested in renovating their homes, making them more energy efficient, deleading them, and undertaking other renovations. Further, with the rise in home prices, more families are purchasing homes that need more work at the time of purchase. We are also closely watching the real estate market, energy market, the Inflation Reduction Act, ARPA funding, and Bipartisan Infrastructure Act to identify how residents can address energy use to keep their home costs lower. Over the first year of this CIP, NewVue intends to carefully watch the real estate market to see what trends emerge. We will assess how we can be involved in supporting environmental sustainability issues for residents of the region. We anticipate working with our environmental

stewards to educate residents about solar, low-energy use appliances, lead remediation, and related investments homeowners can make to improve their properties.

Section 2 - Involvement of community residents and stakeholders

Incorporating resident and stakeholder voices into our work is at the core of our mission “Led by community members of diverse incomes and backgrounds, we develop quality housing, create economic opportunities, and foster civic engagement in North Central Massachusetts.” As such, we prioritize input and analysis from residents, stakeholders, partners, and funders into our community investment plan with the following activities:

- **Board of Directors:** NewVue’s Board includes members of the communities we serve. With newly implemented term limits, over the next three years we will see planned Board turnover and increased recruitment with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- **Community Stewards:** NewVue launched our Community Stewards program in 2018. This is a formal leadership development training program that trains and provides support to residents so that they can join decision making teams in their communities (such as a city commission or non-profit board) and feel empowered to develop and lead initiatives that will improve their communities. While we have trained 250 Stewards to date, an active team of 10-20 Stewards meets monthly to inform the work we are doing and ensure it aligns with resident priorities. For example, Stewards are involved in art projects that are taking place downtown, have sparked numerous environmental initiatives, and advocate for resident services.
- **Strategic Planning:** Initially, the 2023-2025 CIP plan will be directed by the agency’s 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. The agency plans to undertake a new strategic planning process in 2023. We will engage a consultant, conduct focus groups, determine length of plan, and ensure deep stakeholder engagement in this process.
- **Partner Plan and Community Assessment Review:** We regularly review strategic plans and community assessment reports compiled by important partners to ensure that our strategies align and complement the work being done by other key partners in the region.
- **Gateway to Arts and Culture:** Our art stewards provide the intellectual capital to make North of Main a gateway to arts and culture, by supporting each other, developing public art, advocating for arts and culture, and developing additional creative capital. We are also developing the Fitchburg Arts Community to provide affordable housing for artists.
- **Liabilities to Assets:** In order to help communities stabilize neighborhoods by redeveloping deteriorated properties that are considered a blight, our Liabilities to Assets board members from Athol, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, and Leominster meet regularly to inform NewVue’s regional strategy.
- **MACDC Racial Equity Pledge:** NewVue engaged a committee of board and staff who have attended these trainings in response to needs from the community and are bringing their knowledge and findings to work with the agency at the board and staff levels.

Section 3 - Plan goals

Overall vision statement: NewVue Communities envisions healthy communities where residents choose to live, work, and invest. NewVue covers a large and diverse service area that includes urban and rural communities with unique needs. NewVue seeks to tailor our development approach to our region by building and deepening local relationships with residents and stakeholders, exploring strategies to address local needs, listening to resident voices to

understand challenges and opportunities, and collaborating on key projects critical to the local community

Across all programs, NewVue will maintain the following goals:

Goal One: Provide safe and affordable housing for residents in North Central Massachusetts

By 2025, NewVue will have created and/or deepened our strategic relationships with towns, cities, and local residents desiring affordable housing options. According to the HUD, the Fair Market Rents, having not really changed between 2017 and 2020, rose nearly 27% between 2021 and 2022 in the Fitchburg and Leominster area, highlighting the need for affordable rental housing. Similarly, there is pressure to create affordable homeownership opportunities, where prices have risen throughout the region as shown in the chart above.

Low- and moderate-income households and other constituencies will benefit from increased affordable housing availability across all communities in our region. Communities will benefit as a result of stabilized neighborhoods, energy efficient developments and conversion of blighted and abandoned buildings into healthy and safe housing.

Goal Two: Residents Lead: Invest in Resident Leadership and Inclusion in the Region

Competent, knowledgeable, and well-connected community leaders and residents are crucial for the region's economic and social well-being. NewVue actively includes resident voices in neighborhood, public schools, art and culture and housing development planning which is strategically aligned with our mission "led by community members." To achieve equity and inclusion, NewVue will continue to implement a leadership development program that prepares residents to be effective on decision making teams, including NewVue's board and committees, and feel empowered to develop and lead initiatives that will improve their communities and our work. NewVue will also continue to collaborate with the Fitchburg State University Crocker Community Center and Resident Leadership Institute (RLI), with the Center for Community Progress (CCP), Neighborworks America's Community Resident Leadership Institute, and with similar external programs to foster leadership development in our local communities.

Low- and moderate-income households and other constituencies will benefit from increased capacity of resident leadership to advocate for and support residents' needs with NewVue programming and in the wider community efforts with partner agencies.

Goal Three: Close the Wealth Gap: Close the wealth gap with programming that creates and expands economic opportunity

North Central Massachusetts has lower incomes and wages than the Greater Boston region and some cities and towns must overcome decades of decline. The increase in housing real estate prices and attraction of our region to homebuyers from Boston, is impacting the availability of affordable homes for current residents, causing low-income residents to stay in their homes that may need repairs. The pandemic and the accompanying increase in awareness related to racial disparities has highlighted the need for NewVue to provide support for small businesses and homeowners of color while recognizing that our entire region needs support. This will be completed through New Vue's small business programs, homebuyer education programs, financial coaching and foreclosure prevention, MassDREAMS, and Get the Lead Out program.

NewVue will also explore whether we can create additional programs in our housing and financial services lines of business to help residents close the wealth gap.

Low- and moderate-income households and other constituencies will benefit from financial stability and mobility, support for first time homebuyers, assistance for homeowners facing foreclosure, as well as small businesses experiencing economic growth and related supports.

Goal Four: Sustainability Matters: NewVue will create the institutional & financial infrastructure that promotes community voice & engagement

Community voice is built into the organization's mission. As described above, in recent years the agency has created several advisory committees for our real estate projects (Fitchburg Arts Community Advisory Committee) and programs (Community Organizing Committee, Homeownership Advisory Committee).

People

- Board Governance: Streamline meeting schedule for board and committees which will include opportunities for engagement with NewVue projects, staff, and the community emphasizing MACDC Racial Equity Pledge, Training and Strategic Planning.
- Staff: NewVue staff team has strong leadership staff in place, regular professional development underway, MACDC Racial Equity Pledge implemented.

Asset Management

- Provide sustainable, safe, affordable housing for low-income residents of North Central Massachusetts.

Revenue

- Improve financial position and raise flexible revenue that can be deployed for strategic and mission critical projects through earned income, renewed and new contracts and grants, and Community Investment Tax Credits. Ensure that program revenue we raise is aligned with CIP and Agency Strategic Plan.

Low- and moderate-income households and other constituencies will benefit from NewVue adopting practices that will support, reflect and empower the community and will ensure assets are well-managed so that NewVue remains a strong provider of regional services.

Section 4 - Activities to be undertaken

Goal One: Provide safe and affordable housing for residents in North Central Massachusetts

Affordable Housing:

- By 2023, break ground on The Fitchburg Arts Community, 68 units of artist-preference housing leveraging over \$40 million dollars in local, state, and federal dollars in collaboration with the City of Fitchburg and the Fitchburg Art Museum.
- Apply for funding to turn two school buildings into 53 units of affordable housing leveraging over \$25 million dollars of local, state, and federal dollars in collaboration with the town of Athol.
- Complete the refinancing and conversion of 470 Main Street to rehabilitate the existing building and create seven additional apartments and improved commercial space.
- NewVue will create a pipeline of three projects including at least one outside of Fitchburg and Leominster.

- NewVue will complete and sell four new homes in 2023 and secure ongoing financing for our Liabilities to Assets program.

Goal Two: Residents Lead: Invest in Resident Leadership and Inclusion in the Region

NewVue Community Steward Program:

- NewVue will offer multiple trainings per year through the Steward Leadership Development Program.
- NewVue will provide stewards with mini grants through our Community Steward Activation fund.
- Community organizing will work with NewVue's other lines of business and other stakeholders to design relevant steward programming.
- Community organizing will motivate and support stewards as they place themselves in decision making roles that will influence policy decisions, resulting in positive outcomes for residents, NewVue, our partners, and the wider community.
- NewVue will explore whether we can continue to fund an outreach team to reach vulnerable populations and residents.
- NewVue will continue to organize and implement a series of Signature Events which will mobilize community residents
- NewVue will continue to create leadership and training opportunities for residents of the region.

Goal Three: Close the Wealth Gap: Close the wealth gap with programming that creates and expands economic opportunity

Small Business Program:

- Provide technical assistance, support job creation and retention, and assist small business owners seeking loan and grant funding.
- In collaboration with Fitchburg State University and the "ideaLab" NewVue will promote our Small Business Assistance Program to entrepreneurs, small businesses, and other individuals interested in starting or expanding a small business or businesses that need help preserving jobs.
- NewVue will continue to focus our efforts on communities that have been left out of the small business ecosystem including business owners of color, LGBTQ+, and women.

Housing and Financial Services:

- NewVue will continue to meet the needs of our clients who require eviction diversion, tenancy preservation, and foreclosure prevention services.
- NewVue will provide bi-lingual financial coaching, homebuyer education, and other training with a special emphasis on low- and moderate-income buyers, people of color, and families that are first generation homeowners in Fitchburg, Leominster, and North Central Massachusetts. This will include promoting the Commonwealth's new MassDREAMS program in Fitchburg and Leominster.
- Explore a partnership with the United Way and Community Reinvestment Act Coalition to provide a voice for housing and financial services in the region.

Goal Four: Sustainability Matters: NewVue will create the institutional & financial infrastructure that promotes community voice & engagement

People

Board Governance:

- Over the next three years, we will see planned Board turnover and increased recruitment to improve diversity, representation, and intellectual capital due to our term limits.
- As hybrid board meetings become a part of our culture, we will reexamine our board member rights and responsibilities, board and committee meeting structure, staff and board interaction, and plan to host board meetings off-site to maximize the time and efforts of our Board members.
- Create a professional development plan for the Board with an emphasis on Racial Equity and Strategic Planning in 2023 with additional themes to be determined in 2024 and 2025.
- Implement the MACDC Racial Equity Pledge in 2023.

Staff:

- Develop office policies that allow NewVue to take advantage of the potential provided by the hybrid work environment while still being a place-based organization that connects effectively with residents who need in-person assistance.
- Round out our hiring with permanent plans for Deputy Director, Asset Management, and Finance.
- Once hired, Deputy Director to define strong professional development plans for staff groups and individual staff.
- Staff to support implementation of the MACDC Racial Equity Pledge.

Asset Management

- Professional capacity increased through staff, consulting, training, and funding applications.
- Refinance and renovate underperforming/aging assets with a focus on completing the renovations at 470 Main Street.

Revenue

- **NewVue** will continue to invest in operations that generate revenue that can be invested back into operations and mission-based programs.
- Continue to maximize the CITC program for annual giving.
- Better integrate programming, fundraising, stewardship, and marketing, including the development of a new website.

Section 5 - How success will be measured and/or evaluated

Data Collection: NewVue has developed a multifaceted client tracking system using Salesforce and Counselor Max. In addition to measuring housing units (rental and homeownership), we have developed our platforms to allow us to track numerous data points, take detailed counseling notes, and create customized reports and dashboards to monitor our programs and outcomes. Through this system we measure deliverables within the plan that are easily counted including the following:

- Housing Services: First-time homebuyers, Homebuyers educated, Foreclosure clients counseled, Homes saved from foreclosure, Evictions diverted, Clients financially coaching, Homes deleaded.
- Small Business: Small businesses assisted, Jobs created and retained, Number and value of loans facilitated.

- Community Organizing: Stewards trained, Stewards in leadership roles, volunteers, volunteer hours.

We will use this system to track demographic information about who we serve to make sure that we are reaching our target populations.

At the organization level, we will use this tool to count the number of partnerships and strategic alliances we join/maintain.

To measure our impact in the North of Main Neighborhood we will use an additional tool called Success Measures, a national evaluation and tracking program administered by NeighborWorks America that tracks resident satisfaction, housing stock, and visual improvements. We completed assessments of the North of Main neighborhood in 2013, 2016, and 2019 by interviewing 200 randomly selected households and taking visual assessments of neighborhood block and home conditions each of these years. The results showed modest yet steady improvement in the neighborhood. This tool will continue to be used for other neighborhood work in the future.

For the goals that are not as easy to measure numerically, such as resident engagement, marketing, and other “soft” but key goals we will record narrative observations, periodically conduct focus groups, and use community scale indicators such as regional housing and economic data. For example, we will assess:

- Whether our development projects have increased the stability of the neighborhoods in which they are located.
- The impact of the activities that our community stewards undertake after we have trained them.
- The impact that our comprehensive community development has on the North of Main neighborhood.
- The impact that the ideaLab and partnerships have on our small business work.
- The impact our partnership with the Fitchburg Art Museum has on the success of the Fitchburg Arts Community including creating an artist culture.
- The quality of the apartments that we manage.

Data Analysis and Utilization

Progress against the Community Investment Plan goals will be presented to the Board of Directors on a quarterly basis through a dashboard that expresses the quantifiable and soft data identified above along with an accompanying narrative.

Benchmarks and both quantitative and qualitative outcome achievements.

Goal One: Provide safe and affordable housing for residents in North Central Massachusetts

- NewVue, in partnership with Athol, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, and Leominster will increase the supply of affordable housing by 144 new apartments and homes developed, 58 apartments and homes renovated, and 145 apartments and homes in the pipeline.
- NewVue will continue to build relationships with other municipalities in the region so that our agency is recognized by communities in the region as one of the key providers in their tool kit for affordable housing development.
- NewVue will convert the pilot Liabilities to Assets program into a permanent program that supports stabilizing neighborhoods in Athol, Clinton, Gardner, Fitchburg, and Leominster.

- NewVue will continue to explore how to make our developments more financially sustainable and more energy efficient.
- 75% of tenants at Fitchburg Arts Community will be artists.

Goal Two: Residents Lead: Invest in Resident Leadership and Inclusion in the Region

- 100 Stewards graduate from the program annually, of which 25% will be BIPOC.
- NewVue's Steward Leadership Development Program will train 85 new community leaders per year to be advocates and decision makers in their neighborhoods and communities.
- In addition to NewVue, the strategies and activities of municipalities and area non-profit organizations will be influenced by the community stewards.
- NewVue will support multiple successful resident-led projects stemming from the Community Stewards program.
- NewVue will organize and implement outreach and education programs that will help us reach residents through paid outreach efforts as well.

Goal Three: Close the Wealth Gap: Close the wealth gap with programming that creates and expands economic opportunity

- By 2025, NewVue's Small Business Program will
 - Create/retain 200 jobs, per year.
 - Counsel 100 businesses, per year.
 - Help 15 businesses obtain \$1,500,000 million in financing per year.
- By 2025 NewVue's Housing and Financial Services team will
 - Coach 52 families per year to improve their finances.
 - Educate 250 families per year about purchasing their first home.
 - Help 100 families per year to become first time homebuyers.
 - Ensure that 130 families per year stay in their homes by avoiding foreclosure or eviction.
 - In addition, NewVue will have adapted its housing and financial services program to meet the needs of the region post-Covid by exploring how we can help homeowners stay in their homes, renovate their homes, and make their homes more energy efficient.

Goal Four: Sustainability Matters: NewVue will create the institutional & financial infrastructure that promotes community voice & engagement

- Agency:
 - Strategic Plan process completed in 2023.
- People:
 - Implement an action plan that is consistent with the MACDC Racial Equity Pledge.
 - Implement professional development plans so that each staff member has identified their training needs and created a schedule to obtain recommended training.
 - Deputy Director, Asset Management, and Finance team in place.
- Assets Management
 - Complete renovation of Cleghorn and 470 Main Street.
 - Ensure that our properties remain affordable for our targeted populations and financially stable in an unstable era of high inflation.

- Examine how we can reduce our energy costs and improve the climate under new federal and state legislation.
- Fundraising:
 - Improve financial position and raise flexible revenue that can be deployed for strategic and mission critical projects through renewed grants, new sources, CITC, program fees, and annual appeal.
 - Build a sustainable three-year budget that will allow the agency to thrive.

Section 6 - Collaborative efforts to support implementation

NewVue Communities has many different partners and collaborative relations in the region. Our deepest collaborations are in the North of Main Neighborhood in Fitchburg. NewVue has been the placemaking partner in this collaboration since our Working Cities challenge was launched in 2013. The collaboration has had strong support from MassDevelopment since 2018, first as part of the Transformative Development Initiative and since then as part of the Creative Economies Initiative. Our key partners in the North of Main project are the City of Fitchburg, Fitchburg State University, Making Opportunity Count, the Fitchburg Art Museum, Minority Coalition, Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority, The North Central Development Corporation, representatives of the private sector, MassDevelopment, and UMass Memorial Health Alliance Clinton Hospital.

In addition, this collaborative effort is also improving relationships with multiple community organizations including Highland Baptist Church, The Y, the Sundial Apartments, Growing Places, and many different departments in the City of Fitchburg including the Police Department, Public Schools, Department of Public Works, Parks Department, and Community Development Department, among others.

To assist small businesses, we have a monthly meeting with the City of Fitchburg and the North Central Development Corporation to review the status and needs of each business.

These partnerships enable NewVue to deliver many programs throughout the region including our small business assistance, housing services and leadership development programming.

Housing Services: Our affiliation as a chartered member with NeighborWorks America is a key partnership in our housing services. In addition, local and regional agency partners that support our clients to prevent eviction and other housing services include Making Opportunity Count, the United Way, Spanish American Center, and RCAP Solutions. We recently became part of the MassDREAMS network to help first-time homebuyers purchase their first home and the Homeowner Assistance Fund to help homeowners who might be faced with foreclosure.

Small Business: NewVue Small Business staff work out of Fitchburg State University ideaLab. Another key partner we work with is the North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation, an affiliate of the Chamber of Commerce. As an alternative lender, we place many of our loans with its subsidiary. For the year ending June 30, 2022, we helped 19 businesses obtain loans valued at \$2,477,045. Many of those loans were placed with The Development Corporation.

Regionalization: NewVue has been partnering most closely with the municipalities of Athol, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, and Leominster to explore homeownership and rental opportunities in the region's largest municipalities.

Housing Development: Our housing development team partners with municipalities, including the Cities of Fitchburg, Gardner, and Leominster as well as the Towns of Athol and Clinton. We also partner with the South Middlesex Opportunity Coalition and Making Opportunity Count to provide services for our residents and the Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance for assistance providing shelter to those who are chronically homeless. Of course, we have a strong partnership with the Fitchburg Art Museum and Fitchburg State University around the development of the Fitchburg Arts Community. We partnered with the City of Fitchburg to create both an historic district and a Smart Growth District to create the Fitchburg Arts Community. In addition, our partnership with Massachusetts Clean Energy Center and New Ecology enables us to identify energy efficient improvements for homes that we are building.

Community Organizing Partners: Our community organizing department has many partners who provide training and leadership opportunities for our stewards. Aside from the many steward-led projects, NewVue's organizers partner with Fitchburg State University on the Resident Leadership Institute, InTown Fitchburg, the Fitchburg Cultural Alliance, Fitchburg Cultural Council, Sitka Creations, and the Fitchburg Art Museum to coordinate with our art stewards. For help with our race and equity work we partner with the CHNA 9, Abolitionist Park, Wachusett Area Social Justice Alliance, and Empower Children for Success.

Section 7 - Integration of activities/consistency with community strategy and vision

NewVue's five major lines of business are Real Estate Development, Asset Management, Community Organizing, Small Business Development, and Housing and Financial Services. These programs are all centered around our vision of healthy communities where residents choose to live, work, and invest. We recognize that we need to identify partners who can deliver services not provided by our organization. Every three to five years, NewVue invests its time and resources in surveying the community about needs, trends, and opportunities in preparation for the deployment of its next strategic plan. This process has begun for this CIP and for the 2023-2024 Strategic Plan. By breaking down silos within our own organization, we make sure that the activities become effective strategies with measurable outcomes.

Real estate development is a way to rebuild our neighborhoods. Our housing development efforts restarted in 2000 when we focused on the Cleghorn Neighborhood of Fitchburg. Since then, we have expanded to develop housing in Athol, Gardner, Fitchburg, and Leominster with a goal to develop more in Clinton.

Asset management helps us stabilize the lives of our tenants. By providing a safe affordable place to live, many tenants have been able to live healthier lives. Some tenants need more help and our financial and resident services team links them to other social services and financial support which both helps them and improves the portfolio. Others have used an affordable apartment as a way to save for a down payment so that they could buy their first home.

Our Community Organizing department develops leaders and recruit activists and volunteers. These resident leaders help set the agenda for the neighborhoods in which they live and for the

Agency as well. Community Organizing helps identify cutting edge challenges and opportunities that are taking place in the regions and neighborhoods and supports NewVue's mission to convert liabilities into assets. Employing different types of leadership helps NewVue to address culture and arts, health, and public education. NewVue is creating a broader definition of leader that will align more succinctly with our regional goals and strategies.

Our Small Business department is also operating with a regional approach, focusing efforts on minority, immigrant, and low-income residents in the 22 towns in our region. We have supported a number of small businesses relocating to Intown Fitchburg as part of our commitment to economic and small business development. Our small business program also focuses on farms and the creative economy, both important engines in North Central, MA.

NewVue's Housing and Financial Services Department helps stabilize neighborhoods by attracting new homeowners and helping homeowners stay in their homes. Since it is very difficult to limit homeownership services to one particular area, we provide homeownership services to any person seeking assistance. Similarly, our foreclosure services are not limited by geographic scope. Since the pandemic began, our staff has also focused on helping tenants avoid eviction. The Housing and Financial Services department also works closely with Community Organizing and Housing Development to help design and sell the homes that we develop.

Section 8 - Financing strategy

NewVue has had strong financial performance for the past ten years and has increased its operating net assets every year. The Agency's success has allowed it to create a strong balance sheet, with approximately \$1,700,000 in available cash at NewVue Communities as of our last audit. To help plan for the future, each year the Agency develops not only the next year's operating budget it also develops budgets for three years. This planning process pushes the Agency to consider varying revenue and expense assumptions. In projected lean times, the board tends to approve more conservative budgets. Conversely if revenue projections are strong, the board is inclined to invest more in the Agency.

In order to continue to implement our new Community Investment Plan over the next three years, the Agency will rely on the funding strategies that it has successfully used in the past.

The 2022 budget of approximately \$2,100,000 in revenue represents an increase from the 2021 budgeted revenue of \$1,806,000. The revenue is balanced among government funding, private funding, and earned revenue. For 2022, NewVue budgeted to raise approximately \$790,000 in government funding, \$950,000 in private funding including CITC, and \$363,000 in earned revenue, including developer fees.

As noted, government funding has been the backbone funding source for our housing, financial services, and small business technical assistance programs. Key funders of our housing services work have been HUD and the Massachusetts Division of Banks. In the last few years, we have also received funding to help preserve tenancy through NeighborWorks America's Housing Community Stabilization Program and MassHousing's Homeownership Assistance Fund. In 2023, we will assist with the promotion of down payment assistance through the MassDREAMS program. We have had strong support for this work from many lenders who have been

supportive of our work to increase homeownership. Our small business program has been supported by the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation for many years and at the federal level by the United States Department of Agriculture and the City of Fitchburg's CDBG program. Importantly, NeighborWorks America has been a huge supporter of our work and provides us with expendable funding that can be used to support all of our work. On the private side, NewVue has been supported by a collection of foundations, corporations, and individuals. We have greatly expanded our private fundraising since the implementation of the Community Investment Tax Credit Program.

We are finalizing our 2023 budget now. This upcoming budget will contain a new position of Deputy Director to oversee our programs, fundraising and marketing.

Identifies the level of commitment of other funding sources to implement the Plan

For the past few years, NewVue has consistently used its community investment tax credits. To fully utilize the tax credits we expect to receive, we have identified a sufficient number of funders to take advantage of the program. To raise the \$500,000 to match the 300,000 in tax credits we are requesting for 2023, we have cultivated relationships with approximately fifty (50) donors who we expect to participate. Some of these donors will increase their contributions, as they have found that the program has been very successful. These funders are a mix of corporations, foundations, and individual donors. We will continue to cultivate and steward both our current CITC donors and develop new relationships.

NewVue divides our operating revenue into three large categories: Government grants and contracts, Private grants and contributions, and Developer fees and other project service fees. Our goal is to raise roughly one third from each of these categories. Government grants and contracts can be a steady source of funding once they are secured, but often have stricter oversight. Government grants ebb and flow based on tax revenues, but for most of our programs we have a base of government funding to support our work. During the pandemic, government spending increased and consequently so did our share of government funding.

Private grants and contributions are a critical part of NewVue's financial strategy. We have many strong core funders who support our mission and have historically supported our work, although we do anticipate modest turnover with our donors over time.

Finally, we seek to generate revenue from our developer fees and other earned income. This revenue tends to be variable, based on our development pipeline and readiness to proceed. Because our rents and incomes are lower than those closer to Boston, our projects tend to have less debt. This has meant we have not been able to rely upon a distribution from our properties to pay for operating costs.

Funding Source	2021 Amount	Typical Range (last 5 years)
Total NewVue Revenue	\$2,050,399	NA
Government Grants and Contracts	52%	26% to 52%
Private Grants and Contributions	39%	33% to 45%

Developer Fees, project reimbursements	9%	9% to 41%
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NewVue allocates expenses across five lines of business, management, and general. In 2021, the total expenses were \$1,838,760.

Housing Services	Small Business	Asset Management	Housing Development	Community Organizing	Total Programs	Management/ General
352,863	319,561	95,783	531,002	206,981	1,506,190	332,570

Section 9

History, Track Record and Sustainable Development

This section must address two additional topics.

- 1) *Record or listing of examples demonstrating the CDC's history and track record of past practices and approaches implementation of proposed activities in the Plan.*

Many of the activities in the plan have been improved and adapted from our founding in 1979 when we responded to an economic crisis that cost over 1,000 jobs in the Cleghorn Neighborhood of Fitchburg. NewVue has always had a strong economic development and neighborhood revitalization focus to its work. The organization's commitment to resident-driven success was one factor leading to our 1996 affiliation with NeighborWorks.

About twenty years ago, the agency brought together housing services, community organizing, and housing development into a resident-driven revitalization plan for lower Cleghorn that fundamentally changed the character of the neighborhood by renovating 27 apartments and building 9 homes (with 11 units).

With a winning model in hand, the organization expanded the three-pronged strategy to the City of Leominster's French Hill Neighborhood and to Fitchburg's North of Main Neighborhood. In Leominster, NewVue purchased a dilapidated old factory and converted it into 40 LEED certified apartments

Before we started revitalizing the North of Main community, we contacted and spoke to all 700 households in the neighborhood to introduce the organization and to identify resident priorities. Residents wanted a safer, more walkable neighborhood that was well-maintained, affordable housing, and offered child-friendly spaces. We engaged a slew of partners to address these priority needs. We have now built 57 apartments, 9 single-homes and 2 two-family homes in North of Main with 68 apartments and one single family home in the pipeline.

Since 2020 when our last strategic plan started, the Agency has built 39 apartments and completed three single-family homes. We are in the midst of completing renovation of 27 apartments and adding two new apartments to the Cleghorn neighborhood and we are in the process of closing on 68 apartments of the Fitchburg Arts Community. Simultaneously, we have expanded our housing services department. In the last three years we have helped 318 clients purchase their first home, coached 133 families, and helped 286 clients stay in their home by avoiding eviction or foreclosure. NewVue has also continued to invest in economic development.

Over the past three years, NewVue has helped 258 businesses create and retain 488 FTE jobs. We helped 90 small businesses borrow \$5,081,220 during this time period and helped 66 small businesses receive \$1,512,908 in grants. Finally, over the past three years we continue to invest in residents by training 259 new stewards.

Our Board of Directors is a high performing board which is demonstrated by our completion of the 18-month national *Excellence in Governance program* developed by BoardSource and NeighborWorks America; we recently completed a refresher course as well. This performance-based training strengthened the board to envision new strategies that will enable us to deliver on regional promises while staying true to our mission.

2) *Narrative and examples of the Plan's consistency with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles (see Exhibit 5).*

Consistency with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles. Listed below are the Commonwealth's sustainable development principles and NewVue Investment Plan alignment with these principles.

- 1) **Concentrate Development and Mix Uses:** We rarely (if ever) build in green spaces. Most of our work is developing core city neighborhoods.
- 2) **Advance Equity:** Our plan is designed to improve the equity between the poorer neighborhoods and residents, and their wealthier counterparts.
- 3) **Make Efficient Decisions:** We apply this principle to our Agency by prioritizing smart growth decisions that are planned for well in advance and are based on data often reviewed by third parties prior to our ultimate decision.
- 4) **Protect Land and Ecosystems:** All of our projects are designed to meet this objective. Many of our projects clean up land that was once contaminated.
- 5) **Use Natural Resources Wisely:** Our projects meet this objective. All of our larger projects are certified Green through Energy Star, Enterprise Green Communities or LEED.
- 6) **Expand Housing Opportunities:** We support this goal through all our activities. We build houses for residents of all incomes and focus our development in core city neighborhoods that are near transit and services. All of our housing fits within the character of the neighborhoods.
- 7) **Provide Transportation Choice:** Our projects are all designed to be near public transit and to encourage walking. Specifically, we advocate for communities in North Central Massachusetts to rebuild sidewalks so that residents can walk to downtown and commercial areas.
- 8) **Increase Job and Business Opportunities:** The mission of our Small Business Department is to help local businesses create and retain jobs in underserved markets.
- 9) **Promote Clean Energy:** Our developments encourage reduction of energy and promotion of clean energy. We are also training future homeowners how to reduce energy use, which will save them money in the process.
- 10) **Plan Regionally:** As indicated throughout our CIP, NewVue is actively engaged in regional planning initiatives, and a multi-stakeholder, regional approach is now our standard practice.