



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION AGENDA

**Work Session - American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Engagement Plan Session
COUNCIL MEETING WILL BE ONLINE ONLY**

Due to the COVID-19 precautions, the Council Meeting will be held online and is planned to be cablecast on Verizon 21, Comcast 71 and 996 and streamed to www.greenbeltmd.gov/municipaltv.

Resident participation:

Join Zoom Webinar

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212643573?pwd=eElzRHNIYStHUU9lZTQ2dVB5WWVpdz09>

Join By Phone: (301) 715-8592

Password (if needed): 117305

In advance, the hearing impaired is advised to use Video Relay Services (VRS) at 711 to submit your questions/comments or contact the City Clerk at (301) 474-8000 or email banderson@greenbeltmd.gov.

Monday, December 20, 2021

8:00 PM

Work Session Packet

American Rescue Plane Act (ARPA) Engagement Plan Session

Suggested Action:

Reference: Greenbelt ARPA Community Engagement Plan

Agenda

- Introductions
- Council Discussion
- Questions and Answers
- Other Items

City Council Work Session Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: December 20, 2021

Submitted by: Shaniya Lashley-Mullen

Submitting Department: Administration

Item Type: Work Session Item

Agenda Section: Work Session Packet

Subject:

American Rescue Plane Act (ARPA) Engagement Plan Session

Suggested Action:

Reference: Greenbelt ARPA Community Engagement Plan

Agenda

- Introductions
- Council Discussion
- Questions and Answers
- Other Items

Attachments:

[Greenbelt ARPA Community Engagement Plan](#)

CITY OF

Greenbelt

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Community Engagement Plan

DRAFT / December 2021

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Project Background

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 was signed into law. This act appropriates a total of \$362.0 billion for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery (CSLFRF) funding to provide direct payments to state, local, territorial, and tribal governments. It also includes nearly \$122 billion to states and school districts to safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund.

Greenbelt City government has been allocated \$22.88M in ARPA funds. These funds are intended to be used to support the efforts of local governments in their response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given the magnitude and unprecedented nature of this funding opportunity, the City of Greenbelt (City) seeks to implement an inclusive and comprehensive decision-making process by the City Council for prioritizing the allocation of ARPA funds that includes significant public engagement.

This project will consist of extensive external stakeholder engagement, including development of external communications materials, creation of an online engagement tool/survey, stakeholder focus groups, community meetings, and key stakeholder interviews. The issues and project ideas identified during the community engagement process will be compiled and categorized for Council consideration.

ARPA Funding – Eligible Uses

The American Rescue Plan Act was enacted to deliver direct relief to the American people, develop a national COVID-19 vaccination program, safely reopen schools, repair the American economy, and support communities and institutions that are struggling in the wake of COVID-19. The language of the ARPA Act along with subsequent guidance from the U.S. Treasury govern the allowable uses for funds provided through this program.

City of Greenbelt Allocation

The City of Greenbelt has been allocated a final amount of \$22.88M in ARPA funds, of which \$11.44M has been received by the City. The remaining \$11.44M is anticipated to be received by next year. In general, the purpose of these funds is to ensure that local governments can keep front line public workers on the job and paid, while effectively distributing the vaccine, scaling testing, reopening schools, and maintaining essential services. Except for premium pay for essential workers, these funds are to be used for costs incurred between March 3, 2021, and December 31, 2024. Any funds not obligated by December 31, 2024, or expended by December 31, 2026, must be returned to the Department of the Treasury. The City is required to file quarterly reports with the Federal Government on the use and status of allocated funds. The following are the current ARPA expenditures to date to be included on the first quarterly report. We are in the process of reviewing an approving

Rent and Utility Assistance

136 Greenbelt Households were granted assistance totaling \$ 431,661.76

Mortgage and HOA fee Assistance

2 Greenbelt Households were granted assistance totaling \$5,519.56

The Act identifies statutory categories of allowable uses and provides broad flexibility within these categories to support the unique needs of each community. The Department of the Treasury's Interim Final Rule provides detailed guidance on the implementation of these funds.¹

¹ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-05-17/pdf/2021-10283.pdf>

 Support Public Health Response • Fund COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral healthcare, and certain public health and safety staff	 Address Negative Economic Impacts • Respond to economic harms to workers, families, small businesses, impacted industries, and the public sector
 Replace Public Sector Revenue Loss • Use funds to provide government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue experienced due to the pandemic	 Premium Pay for Essential Workers • Offer additional support to those who have and will bear the greatest health risks because of their service in critical infrastructure sectors
 Water and Sewer Infrastructure • Make necessary investments to improve access to clean drinking water and invest in wastewater and stormwater infrastructure	 Broadband Infrastructure • Make necessary investments to provide unserved or underserved locations with new or expanded broadband access

The Interim Final Rule also outlines several ineligible uses for these funds, including:

- To offset a reduction in taxes
- Deposits into a pension fund
- Funding debt service
- Funding legal settlements or judgements
- Deposits into a rainy-day fund or financial reserves
- As a non-Federal match for grants where prohibited

A detailed explanation of the allowable uses identified in the Treasury's Interim Final Rule is provided in Appendix A.

ARPA Investment Framework

To begin prioritizing funding options, it will be important for the Greenbelt City Council to first approve an investment framework for how ARPA funds should be spent. This framework should include three components which are described in the following sections:

- Guiding Principles
- Funding Priorities
- Evaluation Methodology

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are intended to represent the values and philosophy of the organization, and serve as guardrails for decision-making, to ensure that the organization is strategic in its investment of ARPA funds.

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) has identified three general guiding principles in its resources for government finance officers. The following table provides a summary of the guiding principles GFOA recommends for the prudent use of ARPA funds²:

Table 1: GFOA Recommended Guiding Principles

General Principle	Detailed Guidance
Temporary Nature of ARPA Funds <i>ARPA funds are non-recurring so their use should be applied primarily to non-recurring expenditures.</i>	• Care should be taken to avoid creating new programs or add-ons to existing programs that require an ongoing financial commitment. • Use of ARPA funds to cover operating deficits caused by COVID-19 should be considered temporary and additional budget restraint may be necessary to achieve/maintain structural balance in future budgets. • Investment in critical infrastructure is particularly well-suited use of ARPA funds because it is a non-recurring expenditure that can be targeted to strategically important long-term assets that provide benefits over many years. However, care should be taken to assess any on-going operating costs that may be associated with the project.

² GFOA. [American Rescue Plan Spending: Recommended Guiding Principles](#)

General Principle	Detailed Guidance
ARPA Scanning and Partnering Efforts <i>State and local jurisdictions should be aware of plans for ARPA funding throughout their communities.</i>	- Local jurisdictions should be cognizant of state-level ARPA efforts, especially regarding infrastructure, potential enhancements of state funding resources, and existing or new state law requirements. - Consider regional initiatives, including partnering with other ARPA recipients. It is possible there are many beneficiaries of ARPA funding within your community, such as schools, transportation agencies and local economic development authorities. Be sure to understand what they are planning and augment their efforts; alternatively, creating cooperative spending plans to enhance the structural financial condition of your community.
Take Time and Careful Consideration <i>ARPA funds will be issued in two tranches to local governments. Throughout the years of outlays, and until the end of calendar year 2024, consider how the funds may be used to address rescue efforts and lead to recovery.</i>	- Use other dedicated grants and programs first whenever possible and save ARPA funds for priorities not eligible for other federal and state assistance programs. - Whenever possible, expenditures related to the ARPA funding should be spread over the qualifying period (through December 31, 2024) to enhance budgetary and financial stability. - Adequate time should be taken to carefully consider all alternatives for the prudent use of ARPA funding prior to committing the resources to ensure the best use of the temporary funding.

Funding Priorities

Given the magnitude and visibility of the ARPA funding received by Greenbelt, it is critical that the funds are invested in a manner that aligns with community needs and priorities. Setting City funding priority categories will assist the City in categorizing and prioritizing proposals for ARPA funding.

As the City Council considers these priorities, they may consider the City's most recent (2021) Workplan as a starting point. These Outcomes and Top Priorities included:

- Enhance Sense of Community
- Economic Development and Sustainability
- Improve Transportation Opportunities
- Maintain Greenbelt as an Environmentally Proactive Community
- Improve and Enhance Public Safety
- Preserve and Enhance Greenbelt's Legacy as a Planned Community
- Promote Quality of Life for All Residents
- Provide Excellent Constituent Services
- Maintain and Invest in Infrastructure

As the Council determines its funding priorities, a few questions to consider include:

- Which of these priorities still resonates today in the context of ARPA?
- Which of these priorities are no longer relevant today or not relevant to ARPA?
- What is missing?

Evaluation Methodology

Throughout the community engagement process, funding proposals will be submitted by a variety of sources, including internal City staff, residents, businesses, and other governmental and non-profit partner organizations. To ensure that the City's funding decisions are aligned with its funding priorities and legally allowable uses of ARPA funds, a well-defined methodology for evaluating and prioritizing the use of ARPA funds is critical. This will include utilizing the State's ARPA consultant to provide guidance on eligibility on a case by case basis.

The evaluation methodology should include consideration and scoring of factors such as:

- **Priority Area:** Which funding priority does the proposal align with?
- **Eligibility:** Does the proposal meet the Treasury's eligibility guidelines?
- **Alternative Funding:** Are other sources of funding available to replace or supplement ARPA funding?
- **Timeline:** How quickly could the proposal be implemented after the receipt of funds?
- **Cost:** What is the cost magnitude of the proposal?
- **Equity:** What is the impact of this proposal on equity and inclusion in the community?
- **Community Impact:** What portion of the community would benefit from this proposal?
- **Impact on Operating Expenses:** Will this proposal require ongoing City funding? Will it reduce ongoing operating expenses?

Scoring each proposed project idea against the evaluation criteria will allow for proposals to be categorized according to how closely they are aligned with the City's funding priorities. The final evaluation methodology should include clearly defined scoring guidelines for each factor. Proposals will then be grouped into quartiles based on similarity of scoring ranges (not ranked against one another). These include:

- **Quartile 1:** Proposals that are most closely aligned with City priorities and evaluation criteria
- **Quartile 2:** Proposals that are aligned with City priorities and evaluation criteria
- **Quartile 3:** Proposals that are only moderately aligned with City priorities and evaluation criteria
- **Quartile 4:** Proposals that are least aligned with City's priorities and/or ineligible for ARPA funding

ARPA Engagement Plan

The City of Greenbelt has identified the importance of providing a wide range of community engagement opportunities for stakeholders. The purpose of these engagement opportunities is to provide multiple, varied opportunities for the Greenbelt community to share perspectives on COVID-19 pandemic impacts, learn about ARPA and the City's funding priorities, identify potential areas of investment for ARPA funds, and submit funding proposals for specific projects.



To ensure that these efforts reach the desired audiences, a detailed ARPA Engagement Plan is required. This plan includes five components, which are described in the following sections:

- Stakeholder Audiences
- Communication Channels
- Communication Materials
- Online Engagement Platform
- Engagement Opportunities

Stakeholder Audiences

Stakeholders are individuals, groups, and organizations that have an interest in how the City invests ARPA funds. Stakeholders may be directly or indirectly affected by the outcome of these funding decisions. They may also recommend potential general or specific uses for ARPA resources. The following stakeholder audiences have been identified as having a connection to the City's ARPA investments and will be included in upcoming engagement and outreach efforts.

Table 2: Stakeholder Groups and Involvement

Internal / External	Group	Involvement
Internal	City Council	- Develop funding priorities - Approve ARPA Investment Framework - Review Engagement Plan - Allocate ARPA funds
	City Department Directors and Senior Staff	- Assist in the development of funding priorities - Identify initial list of specific project ideas - Coordinate with consultant to evaluate/rank funding opportunities
	Advisory Boards and Commissions	- Participate in focus groups and community meetings - Share insights on individual and community-wide COVID impacts, specific to their Boards/Commissions
External	Residents - All residents - LGBTQIA community - People of color - Residents who rent - Traditionally underrepresented groups	- Participate in focus groups and community meetings - Participate in online “Bang the Table” platform - Share insights on individual and community-wide COVID impacts - Identify ARPA funding priorities - Submit funding proposals for specific projects
	Businesses Non-profits - Faith-based organizations - Support organizations	

Communication Channels

Strategic communications will be critical in providing internal and external stakeholders with information and context for this ARPA Community Engagement Plan, why it is important to the people of Greenbelt, and publicizing opportunities for how to get involved. The City will post regular updates and information on engagement process. The following communication channels should be leveraged to share information and promote engagement.



City Website

Information about the City’s funding priorities, prioritization process, and engagement opportunities should be published on this site and updated regularly.



Bang the Table™ OPTIONAL

Bang the Table is an online community engagement platform designed to solicit input digitally. This platform could be used to discuss the City’s funding priorities and solicit ideas for potential project areas and specific projects.



Community Newsletter

The City has a quarterly newsletter (City Connector). Information about the American Rescue Plan, the City's funding priorities, and engagement opportunities should be included in upcoming quarterly newsletters.



Social Media

Information about the ARPA Community Engagement Plan should be communicated on the City's existing social media channels to reach a wider range of potential participants.



E-mail Distribution

The City may already have e-mail distribution lists reflective of various stakeholder groups (e.g., business leaders, non-profits, neighborhood associations, etc.). To ensure that these audiences are as engaged as possible, information about the Engagement Plan should be communicated using these channels.



Online Survey

Administer an online survey open to all community stakeholders. This can be done via a survey platform like SurveyMonkey™ or via Bang the Table, if the City chooses that option.



Individual Outreach

Members of the City staff and City Council may provide individual outreach to individuals and groups with which they have existing relationships and rapport.

Communication Materials

To maximize community involvement and engagement in the City's planning process, there should be regular communications with internal and external stakeholders and the community at large. The following table provides an outline of the communication materials that should be developed for this project.

Table 3: Communications Materials

Material/Item	Description	Possible Channels
ARPA Investment Framework	Describe the City's guiding principles for investing ARPA funds, funding priorities, and evaluation methodology.	City Website, Bang the Table, Community Newsletter(s), Engagement Session Materials
Project Messages	Explain the ARPA program; describe why the City is seeking public engagement and how the information provided will be used; explain how to provide input; provide updates on the priorities and progress as the process moves forward.	City Website, Bang the Table, Community Newsletter(s), Social Media, E-mail Distribution, Engagement Session Materials, Individual Outreach
Invitation to Bang the Table (Optional)	Explain the ARPA Community Engagement Plan; Publicize the launch of the online engagement platform; encourage participation; link to site.	City Website, Social Media, E-Mail Distribution, Engagement Session Materials, Individual Outreach
Invitation to Participate in Stakeholder Focus Groups	Explain the ARPA Community Engagement Plan; invite specific stakeholder groups to attend online focus groups.	E-Mail Distribution, Individual Outreach
Invitation to Participate in Community Input Meetings	Explain the ARPA Community Engagement Plan; invite the entire community to attend a Community Input Meeting.	City Website, Bang the Table, Social Media, E-Mail Distribution, Individual Outreach

Online Engagement Platform (*OPTIONAL*)

As part of the external stakeholder outreach efforts, Raftelis will develop and maintain a community engagement website using EngagementHQ by Bang the Table. EngagementHQ is an online community engagement platform designed to solicit input for local government and public sector organizations. This platform will provide a forum for discussing the City's funding priorities and soliciting ideas for and prioritizing potential projects.

For the duration of the ARPA project, Raftelis will be the administrator for the Bang the Table site. This will include designing and building the site in a manner that complements the City's existing online presence, with the City logo, graphics, and colors as well as a custom domain name. Once the ARPA project is concluded, the City may opt to take over the license for the system and continue using it for other community engagement opportunities.

The Bang the Table platform includes several different online engagement tools which may be used as part of the community engagement process. The following table details each of the available tools and how they could be used as part of the engagement process.

Table 4: Bang the Table Engagement Tools

Engagement Tool	Description	Recommended Use
Stories	Stories are a safe way to gather personal narratives and promote empathy and connections in a safe environment. This information can be analyzed using sentiment analysis.	The Stories tool would be an effective tool for encouraging members of the community to share how the COVID-19 pandemic has personally impacted them.
Ideas	The Ideas tool lets residents post their own ideas and thoughts on an online idea board. This tool operates like virtual post-it notes. Participants can like and comment directly on all ideas that are posted.	The Ideas tool would be best used at the early stages of the community engagement process to gather as many funding and project ideas from as many people as possible.
Surveys	The Surveys tool gathers structured feedback and quantitative data and provides instant analytics and reporting.	The Surveys tool could be used for two important purposes in this project. The first is to gather structured feedback from participants on COVID impacts and ARPA funding priorities. The Surveys tool can also be used to collect project idea proposals.

Engagement Opportunities

The ARPA Community Engagement Plan includes several opportunities for internal and external stakeholders to participate in developing funding priorities, share information about individual and community COVID impacts, propose project areas and specific projects, score and prioritize potential projects, and ultimately recommend priority projects to be funded with ARPA funds. The following table identifies the various engagement opportunities that are a part of this project.

Table 5: Engagement Opportunities

Event(s)	Participants & Description	Date(s) & Delivery Method
Planning Phase		
Project Team Meeting	City Project Team - Review the draft ARPA Community Engagement Plan, including the draft ARPA Investment Framework - Identify key community stakeholders - Identify communication channels and strategies	Multiple
City Council Meeting	City Council City Project Team Review and approve ARPA Community Engagement Plan	December 20, 2021 (virtual)
Engagement Phase		
Ongoing Online Engagement (OPTIONAL)	External Stakeholders - Discuss eligible uses for ARPA funds - Solicit information on individual and community COVID impacts - Discuss the City's ARPA funding priorities - Solicit and submit funding proposals for potential projects	TBD Online via Bang the Table website
Stakeholder Focus Groups	External Stakeholder Groups - Discuss eligible uses for ARPA funds - Solicit information on individual and community COVID impacts - Discuss the City's ARPA funding priorities - Solicit funding proposals for potential projects	Multiple Dates (TBD – 5? virtual sessions)
Community Input Meetings	External Stakeholders - Discuss eligible uses for ARPA funds - Solicit information on individual and community COVID impacts - Discuss the City's ARPA funding priorities - Solicit funding proposals for potential projects	3 In-Person and 2 Virtual (Dates TBD)

Event(s)	Participants & Description	Date(s) & Delivery Method
Key Stakeholder Interviews	Key External Stakeholders - Individual interviews with key stakeholders who are representative of various local groups and specific interests - Discuss eligible uses for ARPA funds - Solicit information on individual and community COVID impacts - Discuss the City's ARPA funding priorities - Solicit funding proposals for potential projects	TBD (Approx. 5 virtual interviews)
Evaluation Phase		
Project Team Meeting	City ARPA Project Team - Review Engagement Summary and funding proposals - Review evaluation methodology and preliminary proposal scoring - Work with State consultant for eligibility as needed - Prioritize funding proposals based on the results of internal and external stakeholder input	TBD - Online via Zoom
City Council Meeting	City Council City ARPA Project Team - Review Engagement Summary and funding proposals - Finalize ARPA allocation plans	TBD
Community Results Meeting	Internal and External Stakeholders Present and explain the City's final ARPA allocation priorities and plans to the public	TBD In-Person or Virtual

Project Governance

To ensure clarity of expectations for all groups and individuals that are involved in the ARPA Community Engagement Plan, it is necessary to clearly define the governance structure for the project. The following sections define the roles and responsibilities of internal and external stakeholders and a summary of deliverables that will be completed as part of this project.

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of each group involved in the project can be summarized in the following general terms:

- **City Council:** Develop City funding priorities and make final allocation decisions related to the use of ARPA funds.
- **City ARPA Project Team:** Manage the internal and administrative processes related to the ARPA Community Engagement Plan.
- **City Staff:** Provide expertise and recommendations related to the use of ARPA funding for City initiatives and submit funding proposals for specific projects.
- **Community Members and Stakeholder Groups:** Provide insights on community and individual COVID impacts, discuss City funding priorities, and submit funding proposals for specific projects.

Appendix A: Eligible uses of Local Government ARPA Funds

Support Public Health Expenditures

Legislative Description	<u>Section 602(c)(1)(A)</u> : To respond to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19.
Interim Final Rule Guidance	• COVID-19 mitigation and prevention • Medical expenses • Behavioral health care • Public health and safety staff • Expenses to improve the design and execution of health and public health programs • Address disparities in public health outcomes

Address Negative Economic Impacts Caused by the Public Health Emergency

Legislative Description	<u>Section 602(c)(1)(A)</u> : To respond to the public health emergency with respect to its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality.
Interim Final Rule Guidance	• Assistance to unemployed workers • State unemployment trust fund contributions • Assistance to households • Expenses to improve the efficacy of economic relief programs • Support for small businesses and non-profits • Rehiring state, local, and tribal government staff • Aid to impacted industries • Additional allowable uses for Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs) ○ Investments in housing and neighborhoods ○ Addressing educational disparities ○ Promoting healthy childhood environments

Premium Pay for Essential Workers

Legislative Description	<u>Section 602(c)(1)(B)</u> : To respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers of the State, territory, or Tribal government that are performing such essential work, or by providing grants to eligible employers that have eligible workers who perform essential work.
Interim Final Rule Guidance	• Offering additional support to those who bear the greatest health risks because of their service in critical sectors, including: ○ Healthcare ○ Public health and safety ○ Childcare ○ Education ○ Sanitation ○ Transportation ○ Food production and services staff • Amounts may not exceed \$25,000 per worker, must be entirely additive to a workers' regular rate of wages, and may not be used to reduce a worker's normal earnings • Additional documentation necessary if premium pay exceeds 150% of average wages • Premium pay may be retroactive for work performed at any time since the start of the COVID-19 public health emergency

Replace Lost Public Sector Revenue	
Legislative Description	<u>Section 602(c)(1)(C)</u> : For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue of such State, territory, or Tribal government due to the COVID–19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year of the State, territory, or Tribal government prior to the emergency.
Interim Final Rule Guidance	• Recipients may use these funds to replace lost revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency • Applies to “general revenue” as reported under “General Revenue from Own Sources” in the annual Census Bureau survey of state and local government finances • Specific and detailed methodology to calculate lost revenue annually through 2023 compared to an adjusted pre-COVID base year • Once shortfall is identified, Cities will have broad latitude to use this funding to support government services
Investments in Water, Sewer, and Broadband Infrastructure	
Legislative Description	<u>Section 602(c)(1)(D)</u> : To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.
Interim Final Rule Guidance	• Allowable water and sewer infrastructure investments are aligned with the eligible uses of the EPA’s Clean Water State Revolving Fund and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. These include ○ Projects to construct, improve, and repair wastewater treatment plants ○ Control non-point sources of pollution ○ Improve resilience of infrastructure to severe weather events ○ Create green infrastructure ○ Protect waterbodies from pollution • Broadband infrastructure investments should be made with modern technologies in mind, specifically: ○ Projects delivering reliable 100Mbps download and upload speeds ○ Fiber optic investments ○ Priority should be given to projects that achieve last-mile connections to households and businesses