



Conor M. Baldwin
Chief Financial Officer

Allison Chambers
Deputy CFO

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*
FROM: Conor Baldwin, Chief Financial Officer
CC: Christine McCall, Asst. City Manager/ DPD Director
Brendan Flynn, ARPA Finance Manager
DATE: February 21, 2022

SUBJECT: MOTION RESPONSE: 1/11/2022 (9.5) – C. Nuon - Req. City Mgr./CFO
Develop A Plan To Use A Portion Of The Federal ARPA Funding To Make Improvements To
The City Parks To Address The Negative Health Impacts Caused By The Covid-19 Pandemic

MOTION RESPONSE: 2/1/2022 (9.20) – C. Yem & C. Scott - Req. City Mgr. Consider
Developing A Small Business Recovery Grant Program From ARPA Funding; Also, To Develop
Informational Materials Available In Multiple Languages That Includes All Known Business
Recovery Options

Enclosed as an informational item on the March 1st agenda for the regular City Council meeting, under separate cover, is the transmission of the full budget plan for the City of Lowell's American Rescue Plan allocation. The plan, in and of itself, provides funding to address the programs and expenditure categories outlined in both of the motions references in the subject line.

There are multiple ways that investments in improving outdoor spaces could qualify as eligible uses; several are highlighted within the ARPA budget document, though there may be other ways that a specific investment in outdoor spaces would meet eligible use criteria. First, in recognition of the disproportionate negative economic impacts on certain communities and populations, the Interim Final Rule identifies certain types of services that are eligible uses when provided in a Qualified Census Tract (QCT), to families and individuals living in QCTs.

Recipients, like Lowell, may also provide these services to other populations, households, or geographic areas disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. These programs and services include services designed to build stronger neighborhoods and communities and to address health disparities and the social determinants of health. The Interim Final Rule provides a non-exhaustive list of eligible services to respond to the needs of communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and recipients may identify other uses of funds that do so, consistent with the Rule's framework. For example, investments in parks, public plazas, and other public outdoor recreation spaces may be responsive to the needs of disproportionately impacted communities by promoting healthier living environments and outdoor recreation and



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socialization to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Second, recipients may provide assistance to small businesses in all communities. Assistance to small businesses could include support to enhance outdoor spaces for COVID-19 mitigation (e.g., restaurant patios) or to improve the built environment of the neighborhood (e.g., façade improvements).

As had been communicated and discussed in prior City Council meetings, the Administration has been conducting an ongoing process of simultaneously planning for ARPA alongside the preparations for the annual capital budget submission, so as to most fully maximize the impact of federal dollars on the highest priority items. Included in the budget plan are specific recommendations for funding investments in the Cawley Stadium facilities and the Shedd Park pavilion and restroom facilities, two park features within the city which, while not specifically in a QCT, provide central recreational amenities to the entire City of Lowell. In addition to those specific project allocation, the budget plan includes \$6.25 million for investments in parks & playgrounds to promote healthy childhood environments. These funds will be targeted towards QCT areas and further defined into specific projects as they are designed and bid.

Business assistance, especially to those businesses in the downtown, is also included in the ARPA budget plan. Certain costs associated with informational materials about available grant programs would also be an eligible use of APRA funds and the city will make every effort to offer those materials in multiple languages. Also included within the budget plan is a category of “community input” projects which is budgeted as \$2.1 million. The intent with that allocation would be to seek specific public input and additional input from the City Council about neighborhood priorities and make expenditures based on meeting program eligibility and priority criteria. Each of these requested program areas of park improvements and small business recovery grants could fall within that category.

In addition to the aforementioned neighborhood and downtown business improvement fund of \$10 million included in the ARPA budget plan, the DPD’s economic development office has developed an additional round of small business assistance targeted specifically to restaurants and food service businesses that will provide up to \$10,000 for each business. Details about this program will be announced and disseminated to eligible business in the coming weeks. This program is being funded through surplus CDBG-CV funding previously allocated to the City of Lowell.

Please let me know if there are any questions.