

Community Points of View: American Rescue Plan Act

Report to the Mayor and City Council, City of Powder Springs

February 11, 2022

Summary/Overview

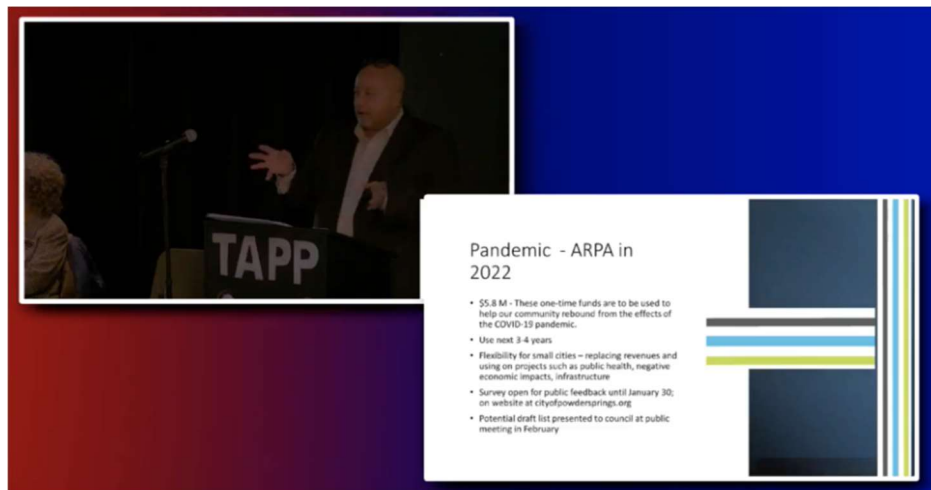
The rules developed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to implement the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund and the Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) established under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) direct recipients to expend ARPA funds in a transparent and publicly accountable manner. To that end, the City of Powder Springs has taken steps to develop a program that is responsive to the needs of the Powder Springs community.

- The City presented information about the program at widely attended City meetings, including the **Town Hall meeting** on January 25, 2022.
- We talked to a number of **community stakeholders**, including pastors, school principals, and business leaders.
- We hosted a **community survey** on the City's website.
- In addition, the City Manager and department heads provided input on **staff priorities** and potential projects.

Pandemic-related priorities identified by the different sources of input centered on several themes. These were: investments in various **infrastructure improvements**, concern for **struggling households**, and the need to take actions to **promote businesses, particularly in the downtown**. By focusing the City's ARPA funds on these areas, City Council will be responsive to the concerns of the community and boost the City's recovery from the pandemic.

Sources

Public meetings – At the **City Council work session** on January 3, 2022, staff and consultants presented an overview of the ARPA program and eligible uses of SLFRF funds. The presentation was broadcast to the public via Zoom. Additionally, at the **Town Hall meeting** on January 25 the City Council made a presentation on the program for the 50 citizens in attendance and the 350 who attended virtually.



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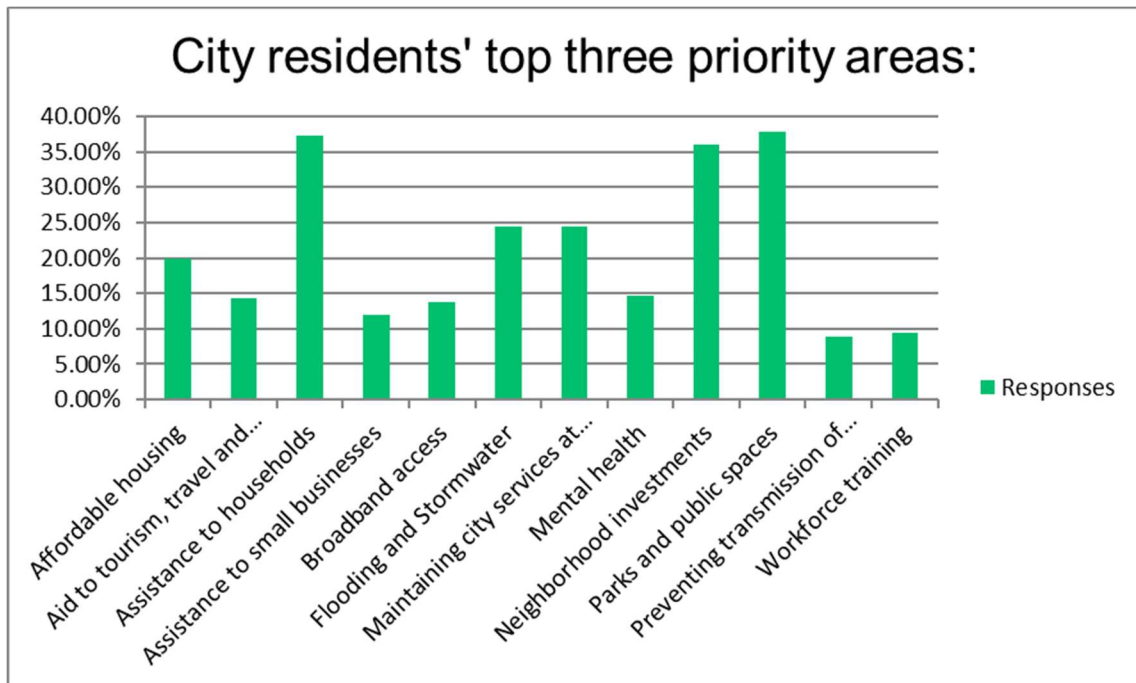
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Community stakeholders – We met with community stakeholders representing businesses, churches, and schools. These included the Powder Springs Business Group’s board of directors and also the “Four P’s” group representing local pastors, school principals, and police and parks leaders. Stakeholders identified many needs among families, small businesses, and students. Some common problem areas from these conversations included:

- Concerns about **affordable housing** and increasing rents
- Concerns that **students** are suffering and achievement gaps increasing
- Need for worker training and other supports for **struggling businesses**

Suggestions for solutions included building another community center to serve as hub for neighborhood and youth services; creating a business incubator; and promoting the local economy through more community events in the downtown and improved infrastructure to support downtown events.

Survey – Staff conducted a non-scientific poll asking community residents what they thought were the top three priority areas on which the City should focus ARPA funding. The actual text of the survey is appended to this report. The survey was posted on the City’s website homepage and open from January 12, 2022 through January 31, 2022. Over 350 responses were received.



Respondents prioritized spending on parks and **public spaces**, assistance to **households**, and **neighborhood investments** above the other program spending options. Over one-third of residents listed one of these priorities as among their three most important areas of concern.

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City staff – Powder Springs’ department heads provided input on potential projects at a recent staff meeting. Staff recommendations generally focused on completing or enhancing **planned projects** and programs or accelerating **unfunded projects**. These included stormwater infrastructure improvements; upgrades to the new municipal building to make citizen and staff interactions safer; and improved gateway signs and interactive signage in pedestrian areas.

Conclusions

Input from the public and stakeholders to this point indicate common priorities are:

- 1) **infrastructure investments**, including parks and public facilities;
- 2) **assistance to households**; and
- 3) promotion of **small businesses and the downtown**.

These priorities correlate with the approach contemplated by the City’s staff leaders early in the process.

The Mayor and City Council should use this information to guide its decision making when selecting projects to be funded through the SLFRF. If City Council is so inclined, there appears to be significant support from the community to use this funding to move forward on projects that will enhance residential quality of life and promote business activity, as well as efforts to help struggling families.

Report prepared by Wayne Wright, SLFRF Program Manager

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Attachment: Text of community survey

The City of Powder Springs will receive \$5.8 million from the federal government through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These one-time funds are to be used to help our community rebound from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We appreciate your thoughts on how the City's ARPA funds should be invested in our community.

Please select the top three priority areas that are most important to you.

Affordable housing

Aid to tourism, travel and hospitality

Assistance to households

Assistance to small businesses

Broadband access

Flooding and stormwater

Maintaining city services at pre-pandemic levels

Mental health

Neighborhood investments

Parks and public spaces

Preventing transmission of disease

Workforce training

Tell us your priorities for the city's ARPA funds:

Do you live within the Powder Springs city limits (i.e., pay taxes to the city)?

Yes

No