

A semi-transparent image of the White House in Washington, D.C., centered in the upper half of the page. The building is white with a prominent portico and a flagpole on top. It is surrounded by green trees and a fountain in the foreground.

THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

Community Input Report • July 2021

THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT



Dear Neighbor,

Before the pandemic, Rochester was on a trajectory toward new levels of growth and opportunity that will give us something to build on as we head into the recovery. But make no mistake: this virus has had a devastating impact on our city, and that impact has not been evenly distributed. Unless we do something about it, the recovery won't be equitable either. Many of our residents – especially our Black and Brown residents – will struggle far longer to get back on their feet.

That's why a major goal of the City's use of the American Rescue Plan Act funding is to make sure every resident has an opportunity to reclaim their pre-pandemic momentum by confronting the historic racism and structural inequality that has been a part of our city since its founding.

We started that process in May by seeking the insight of our community members, and that perspective is now a fundamental building block for our emerging recovery plan. Thank you to all the residents who participated.

This report outlines the guidance we received. I invite you to read it and stay involved as we develop our agenda for these historic investments.

With this knowledge and information in hand, you can help us put Rochester back on its trajectory toward growth and opportunity – for everyone.

Sincerely,

Lovely A. Warren, Mayor

INTRODUCTION




The \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 ("ARPA") signed into law on March 11, 2021, provides \$350 billion in emergency funding for state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments to remedy the disparity between rising costs and falling revenues. The City of Rochester will receive \$202 million, creating an historic opportunity to shape Rochester's recovery and bring true equity to our city, along with more jobs, safer more vibrant neighborhoods, and greater educational opportunities.

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ELIGIBLE USES OF ARPA FUNDS

The American Rescue Plan Act provides significant resources for the City to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency and its economic impacts through programs and services that fall within several categories of eligible uses listed below.

	<p>Support Public Health Response Fund COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral healthcare, and certain public health and safety staff</p>		<p>Address Negative Economic Impacts Respond to economic harms to workers, families, small businesses, impacted industries, and the public sector</p>
	<p>Replace Public Sector Revenue Loss Use funds to provide government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue experienced due to the pandemic</p>		<p>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</p>
	<p>Water and Sewer Infrastructure Make necessary investments to improve access to clean drinking water and invest in wastewater and stormwater infrastructure</p>		<p>Broadband Infrastructure Make necessary investments to provide unserved or underserved locations with new or expanded broadband access</p>

Source: US Department of Treasury, *Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Quick Reference Guide*

Within these categories, governments have some flexibility to determine how best to use the stimulus funds to meet the specific needs of their communities and populations. ARPA also allows for broader flexibility in use of these funds for programs and services that target the hardest-hit communities and families or that are provided within Qualified Census Tracts and other disproportionately impacted areas. (See Qualified Census Tract map at www.cityofrochester.gov/ARPA.)

The City engaged the community for direct input on the use of ARPA funds to transform Rochester's recovery from the pandemic, and will use this input to develop a blueprint for allocation of funds over the next 3 to 5 years.

COMMUNITY INPUT OPPORTUNITIES

Online Forum – Mayor Lovely A. Warren hosted an online forum on June 3 to provide the community with more information about the ARPA funds. The forum streamed live on YouTube and included a presentation by the Budget Director, Chris Wagner, followed by a question and answer period.

Telephone Town Hall (TTH) – Mayor Warren, Budget Director Chris Wagner, Department of Environmental Services Commissioner Norman Jones, Department of Neighborhood and Business Development Commissioner Gary Kirkmire, Department of Recreation and Human Services Commissioner Dr. Daniele Lyman-Torres, and Library Director Patricia Uttaro hosted a Telephone Town Hall on June 17 to gather input from Rochester residents on ARPA spending. A total of 19,562 phones were dialed in the city of Rochester and 3,558 individuals took part in the call.

Online Survey – An online survey was available on the City of Rochester website from May 27 to June 28 that asked about a range of ideas for the use of ARPA funds, including public health measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, housing, mental health services, and youth programs. Responses were received from 1,183 individuals. Youth and young adults ages 34 or younger accounted for 29% of respondents, adults between the ages of 35 to 54 accounted for 40%, while the remaining 31% were 55 or older. Most respondents (70%) live in the city. Among city residents, 44% indicated they live in the Southeast quadrant, 16% live in the Southwest, 20% live in the Northwest, 12% live in the Northeast, and 8% are from Center City.

This summary report highlights themes in community opinions gathered through these public engagement opportunities.

COMMUNITY INPUT RESULTS

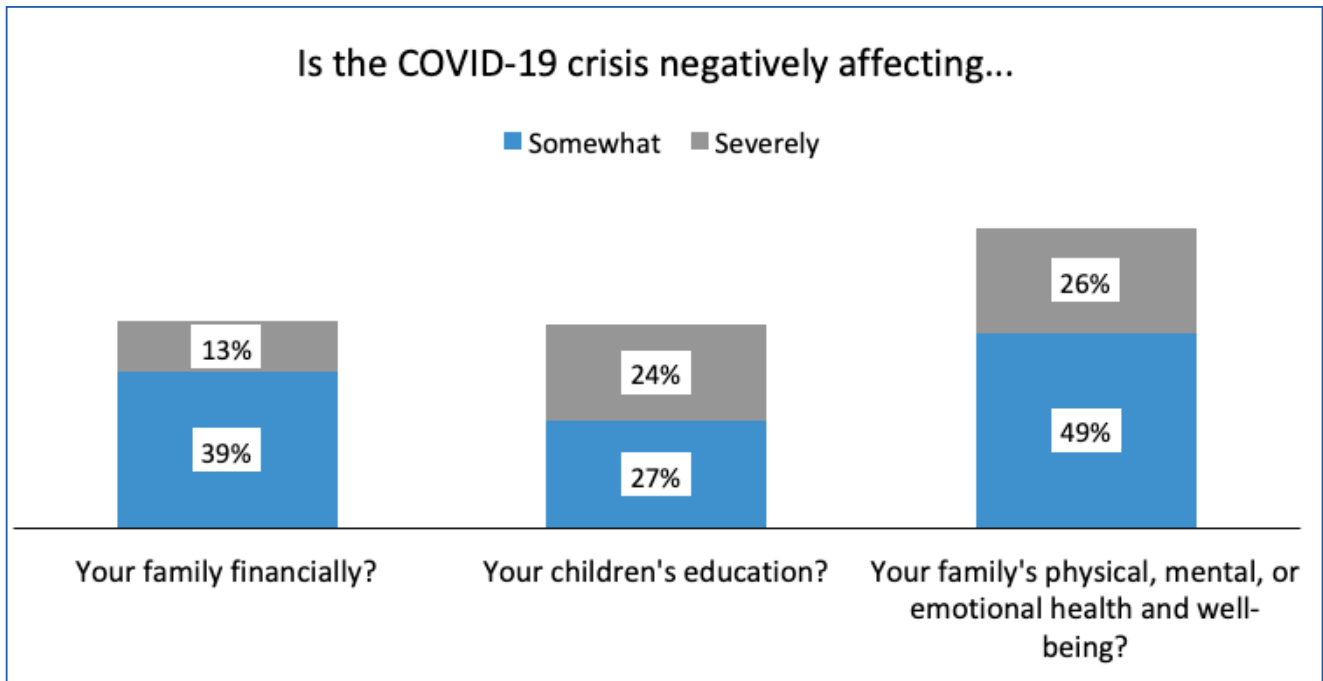
Online Survey Results: Respondents ranked “Services for households and individuals hardest hit by COVID-19” and “Public health services to stop the spread of COVID” as most important for City investment to shape Rochester’s recovery.

Rank	Program or Service <i>(marked as 1st or 2nd)</i>	City Residents	All Respondents
1	Services for households and individuals hardest hit by COVID-19	57%	56%
2	Public health services to stop the spread of COVID	49%	47%
3	Services for businesses hardest hit by COVID	26%	29%
4	Premium pay for essential workers	25%	25%
5	Investments in broadband infrastructure	16%	17%
6	Replacement of lost public sector revenue to fund general government services	15%	13%
7	Investments in water and sewer infrastructure	13%	13%

The following community input results are grouped by major themes.

COVID-19 RESPONSE AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

Online Survey Results: When asked about the impact of COVID-19, respondents disproportionately associated the negative effects of the crisis with their family’s physical, mental, or emotional health and well-being.



Asked to rate how important it is to invest ARPA funds in selected public health services, many respondents found it *“somewhat important”* or *“very important,”* with particular interest in Mental and Behavioral Health Services, Food Security, and Violence Prevention and Intervention.

	City Residents	All Respondents
Mental and behavioral health services (ex. Crisis Intervention services)	89%	87%
Food security for families and seniors	88%	87%
Violence prevention and intervention programs	88%	87%
Lead hazard remediation	64%	63%
Safety measures at City facilities (ex: personal protective equipment, improvements to ventilation, etc.)	60%	59%
Website and technology updates for improved online access to City services	59%	57%
COVID-19 testing and/or vaccine clinics at City facilities	58%	58%

Comments on public health services:

“Bring the vaccines to neighborhoods or homes for those who can’t get out or to senior apartments.”

“Need to invest in essential worker populations, such as home health aides, who are supporting seniors and people with disabilities in their homes.”

“Healthcare worker training.”

“Improved healthcare services and support for the elderly, including financial support to assist with doctor bills, co-pays, etc.”

“Anything that involves mental health treatment; we need more psychiatrists and therapists for the black and brown community!”

“Mental Health!! Expand access to and availability of behavioral health providers so that people who need help can get APPROPRIATE support through these systems.”

“Safety, health (including mental and emotional) are most important to me, currently.”

“Substance abuse treatment and prevention and mental health issues.”

“I would like to see a focus on bolstering/expanding existing programs and services rather than stretching thin over too many priorities. I would like to see closer collaboration with the County regarding mental health services and crisis intervention. This is really the role of a public health department - not City government.”

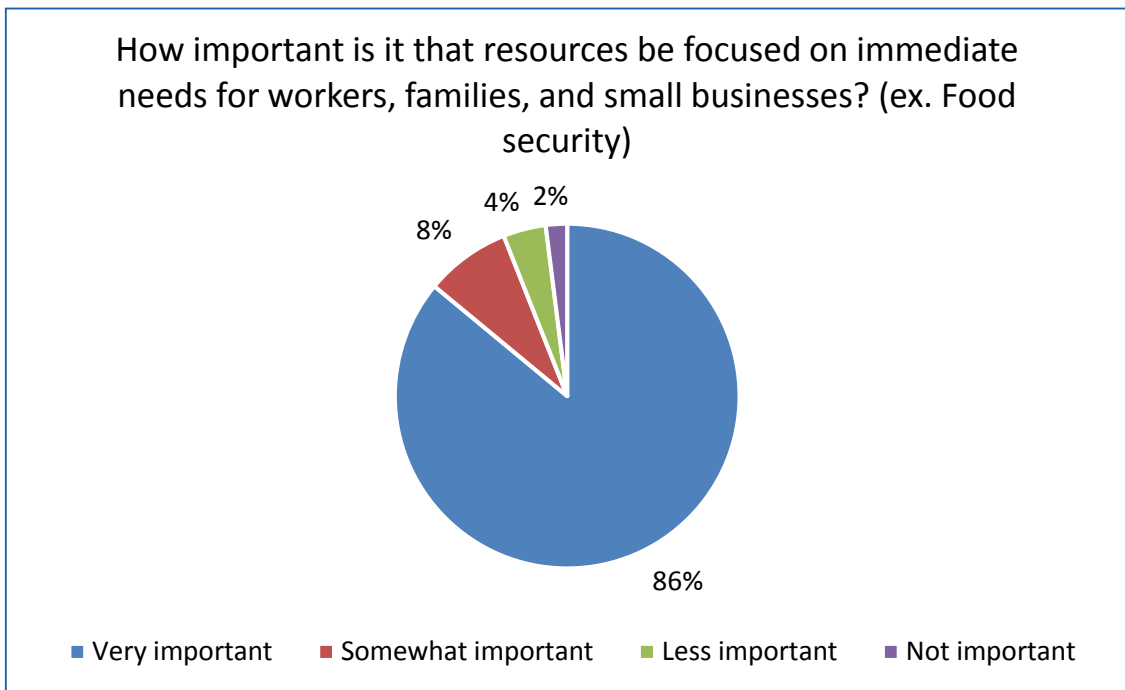
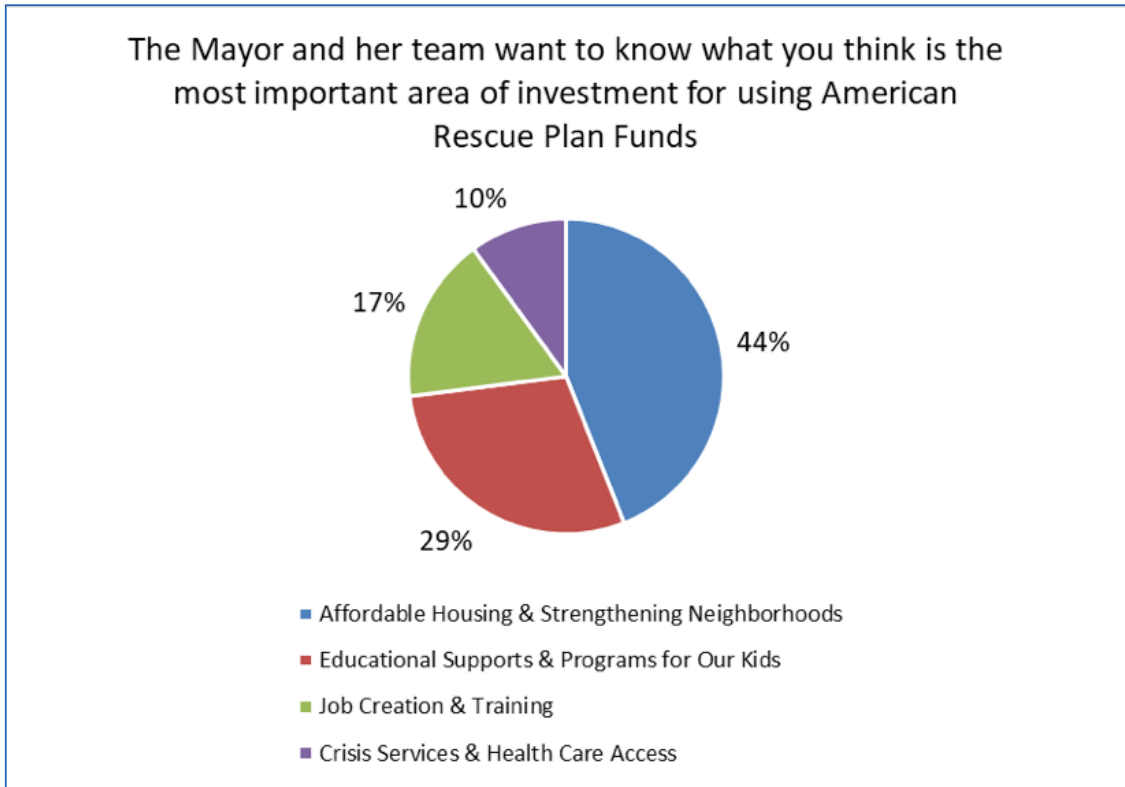
“Funding to get homeless and addicts the treatment and support they need.”

“Make more community food gardens so homeless and less fortunate people can have access to free organic produce.”



NEGATIVE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID - HOUSEHOLDS, INDIVIDUALS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

TTH Poll questions:



Online Survey Results: Respondents found it “*somewhat important*” or “*very important*” for the City to invest ARPA funds in services supporting households, individuals, and stronger neighborhoods as follows:

	City Residents	All Respondents
Vital City services such as fire services, library programming, recreation services	87%	85%
Literacy and early education programs	86%	85%
High quality childcare/daycare programs	85%	83%
Property repair and energy efficiency grants (income-eligible)	76%	73%
New library branch(es) or services in underserved neighborhoods	70%	67%
First-time homebuyer grants (income-eligible)	70%	69%
Improvements to parks, playgrounds, and athletic fields	63%	60%
Financial counseling services for individuals and families	60%	61%
Construction of single-family homes (income-eligible)	60%	58%
Expansion of Rochester Animal Services capacity, including community-based services	52%	54%
Improvements to Durand Eastman beach (ex. restrooms, pavilions and an accessible walkway to the beach)	45%	45%
New urban Nature Center in the historic Maplewood Park	40%	38%

Comments on supporting households, individuals, and stronger neighborhoods:

“Provide a program / services to invest in the quality of life for under privileged families in the high poverty communities/ neighborhoods.”

“Direct grants for underserved and poverty stricken communities.”

“Individual income tax reductions and property tax reductions for ALL homeowners. Everything is directed to low-income and all of the people who work hard that don’t qualify always get overlooked and we need tax breaks and financial help too! The middle working class is always ignored and never gets any help.”

“Universal Basic Income for all households at or below the national poverty line.”

“Adult education, literacy, life management/health related programs, parenting, job training, nutrition and preparing meals.”

“Ensuring seniors, home bound, disabled, mentally ill and children are provided for.”

“Comprehensive and integrated housing, health and employment support for poor.”

“The City should invest in high-quality parks / outdoor spaces, improving the quality and safety of its amazing historic housing stock, and improving walkability / bikeability. These improvements will benefit everyone for many years to come, pandemic or not; the pandemic exposed how important high-quality and safe living space and areas are.”

“Let’s use some of the ARP dollars coming into our community to support already existing programs that advance economic stabilization by making homes more energy efficient and improve public health via healthier & safer homes--and reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the same time.”

“Investment for rehabilitation of homes when construction prices are high. Making it eligible for individuals that are not just low income, but sit on the middle class to low income border.”

“Affordable housing. Any housing project purposed just to be for affordable / subsidized / lottery housing until homelessness is zero. What good are any of these other things for homeless Rochesterians?”

Community comments on supporting households, individuals, and stronger neighborhoods cont.

"Investing in organizations such as the Community Land Trust to preserve affordable housing and help residents become first-time homeowners."

"Neighborhood programs that offer residents in crime impacted neighborhoods assistance to get out of that neighborhood or ways to deal and cope with it."

"Public safety."

"Proper funding for emergency services to properly do their jobs safely."

"Upgrade all the playgrounds and install water/spray features in neighborhoods that don't have them yet."

"The libraries are a fantastic neighborhood-based resource that touch on many of the proposed priorities. More funding for them rather than creating new programs makes sense."

"Improving library services by increasing staffing hours, making improvements or needed maintenance for library buildings, more flexibility and funds to offer hot spots, electronic and digital materials, emerging technologies and training for staff and community with new and emerging technologies."

"Libraries should be fully funded and even allow for an expansion of services. Libraries provide many essential functions to the community and are critical for a flourishing democracy."

"New library branches or updated libraries for neighborhoods."

"Get rid of food deserts and add more affordable apartments."

"There needs to be more money and resources allocated to youth development organizations that are serving the youth in our community, especially the youth hit the hardest 14-18 years of age. We need to ensure that there are a wealth of programs and services available for them to help them overcome the social disparities that were created due to the pandemic. The money needs to go to the smaller organizations, clubs, sports organizations, etc. that are serving our youth and don't have access to money or resources like the large organizations do, even if it is a one-time grant-funded opportunity!"

"Any programming that would allow our children to develop social and emotional skills. Healing and coping with/ from the trauma they face on a daily basis."

"Please support essential services for City youth, especially libraries and recreational programs."

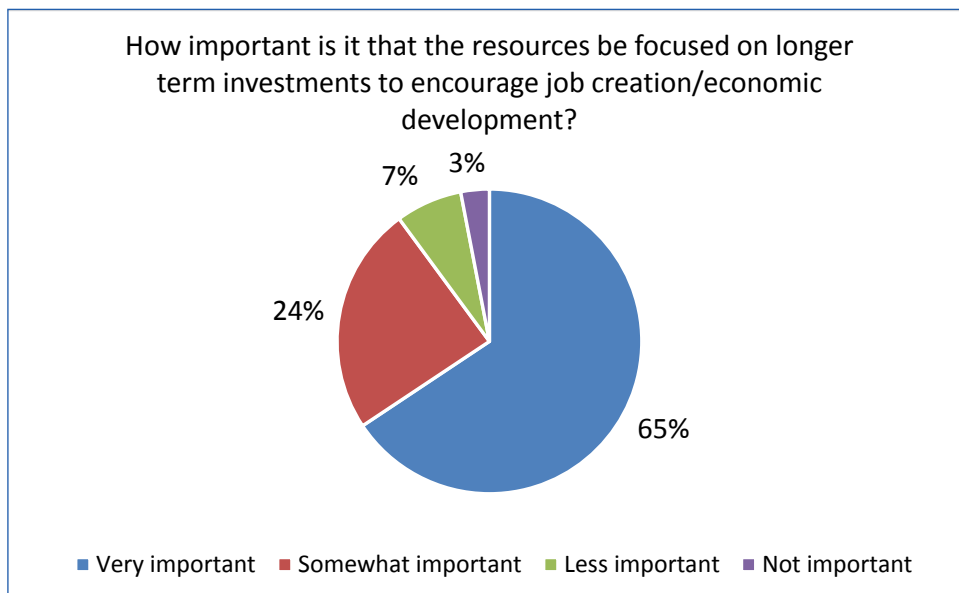
"Pets play a vital role in the mental health of people and play a vital role in the family. Invest in bettering the programs that provide pet-related services."

"Academic-rich afterschool programs for kids."

"Build a Civil Rights Heritage Education Site at Baden Park, adjacent to School #22, on Upper Falls Blvd. This is an upgrade in the 14605 neighborhood where the majority of residents are Black, Hispanic, and other minorities. The Civil Rights site will bring visitors, business, and pride to the residents. They NEED support always, and especially in these challenging times."

NEGATIVE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID - JOB CREATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TTH Poll question:





Online Survey Results: Respondents found it *“somewhat important”* or *“very important”* for the City to invest ARPA funds in services supporting businesses and impacted industries (ex. tourism, travel, and hospitality) as follows:

	City Residents	All Respondents
Job training programs for youth	87%	86%
Job training programs for adults	81%	81%
Financial incentives for grocery stores to locate in underserved neighborhoods or food deserts	75%	73%
Small business services for vendors at the Rochester Public Market and the International Plaza	61%	59%
Small business support services at local libraries	58%	57%
Expansion of the City’s Office of Community Wealth Building to encourage entrepreneurship and creation of new businesses	46%	45%
Parcel 5 downtown event and public gathering space	40%	37%
Improvements to local tourist attractions (ex. Convention Center, Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial, Neighborhood of Play, etc.)	36%	36%

Comments on Job Creation and Economic Development:

“Vocational training (include a stipend if necessary) to open career paths.”

“Downtown revitalization and safety.”

“Attracting major employers - why is new Amazon distribution facility in a suburb? I think it would have been a wonderful addition to the city’s North East or West.”

“Develop entrepreneurial training that is specific to opening a food business. Connect urban agriculture and farms, food businesses, and underserved populations to make Rochester a food destination. Leverage The Commissary, Foodlink’s Culinary Fellowship and existing entrepreneurial programs to make this a reality. We need food specific entrepreneurial training.”

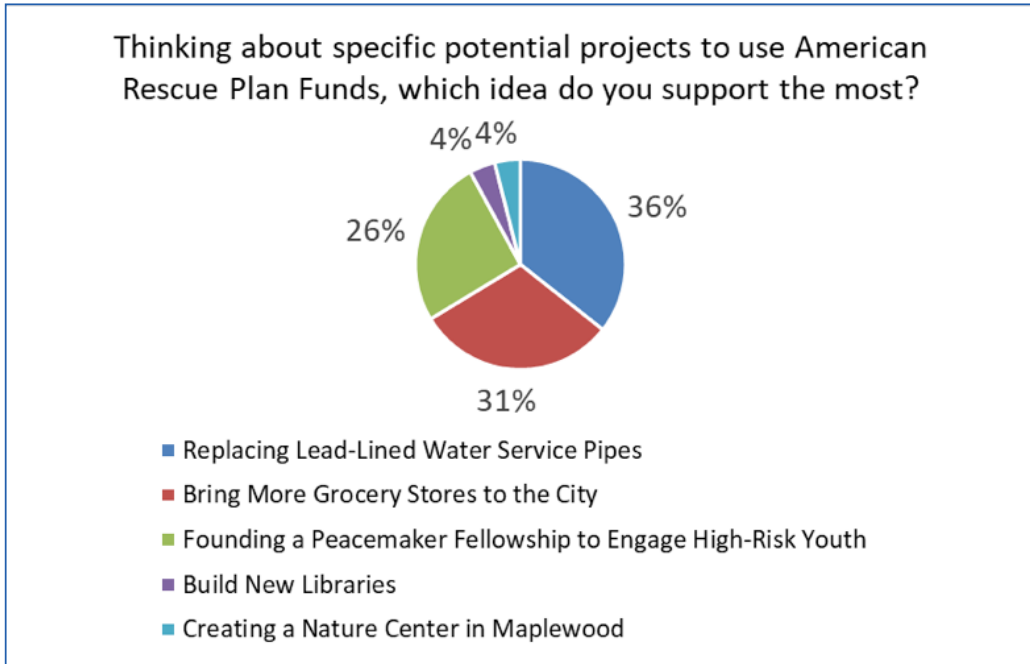
“Green initiatives & related job training.”

“Rochester needs to think BIG and compete with other mid-sized cities. A new city arena (replace Blue Cross) and a NEW Performing Arts Center replacing the 1928 vintage Auditorium Theater should be at the top of the list. We need to attract top tier entertainment not 2nd and 3rd rate level.”

“Consider offering grants to artists to do temporary art installations and to musicians to hold public performances. Rochester has a great art and music scene and people are eager to see and attend these activities.”

INVESTMENTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE

TTH Poll question:



Online Survey Results: Respondents found it *“somewhat important”* or *“very important”* for the City to invest ARPA funds in infrastructure as follows:

	City Residents	All Respondents
Water infrastructure (ex. replacement of water service lines that contain lead)	86%	86%
Sewer infrastructure	77%	76%
Broadband infrastructure	76%	74%

Comments on investments in infrastructure:

“Water infrastructure - again! It is extremely important!”

“Modern infrastructure and sustainable practices.”

“Improved public transportation services.”

“Think ahead! Think how the big picture infrastructure will help Rochester (and create jobs).”

“Ensure that the infrastructure being constructed is energy efficient, create green jobs.”

“Invest in Fire House infrastructure and staffing.”

“Safe active transportation networks including converting the Rochester Running Track Bridge into a bike/pedestrian bridge and installing protected bike lanes in areas with the most collisions.”

“Fix the roads.”

“Improve roadway infrastructure.”

“If it’s eligible for ARP fund use, I’d support using some portion of the City’s allocation to promote Inner Loop North infill and development/greenspace expansion.”



NEXT STEPS

Using this valuable community input as a guide as well as recent experience on spending stimulus funds from CARES Act allocations, the City is in the process of developing a blueprint for allocation of funds over the next 3 to 5 years. Strategic investment will ensure that these funds meet our immediate needs as well as provide long-term, transformative investment for tomorrow. ***Working together, we can create more jobs, safer and more vibrant neighborhoods, and better educational opportunities for all of our residents.***

Please be sure to check the www.cityofrochester.gov/ARPA website periodically for updates on ARPA projects and programming.



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