

Town of Blacksburg ARPA Report



June 2022

INTRODUCTION

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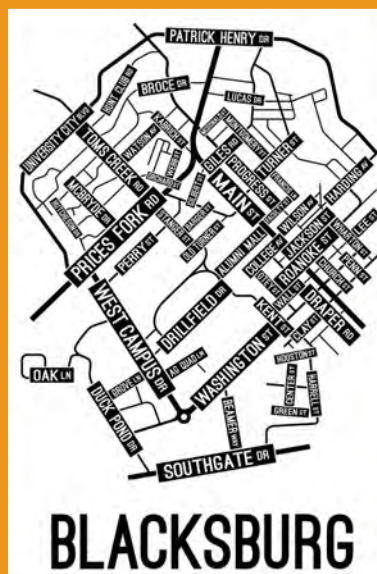
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INTRODUCTION

What is ARPA? What does it mean for Blacksburg?

What is ARPA?

The American Rescue Plan Act (or ARPA) was signed into law by President Biden on March 11, 2021. The \$1.9 trillion dollar plan offers assistance to millions of Americans and assistance to communities struggling to retain and regain normalcy coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Town of Blacksburg's share of that assistance is \$13 million, allocated over the next two years.



What does it mean for Blacksburg?

This presents a once in a generation opportunity to invest in our community. The Town wants to make sure the projects chosen align with community needs, help those hardest hit by the pandemic, and make strategic investments that move our community toward the future we envision.

INTRODUCTION

What projects are eligible? What is the timeline?

Eligible Expenditures for ARPA Funds include:

1. Supporting the public health response
2. Addressing the negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency
3. Serving the hardest-hit communities and families
4. Investing in water and sewer infrastructure
5. Investing in broadband infrastructure
6. Replacing lost municipal revenue



Timeline for Use of Funds

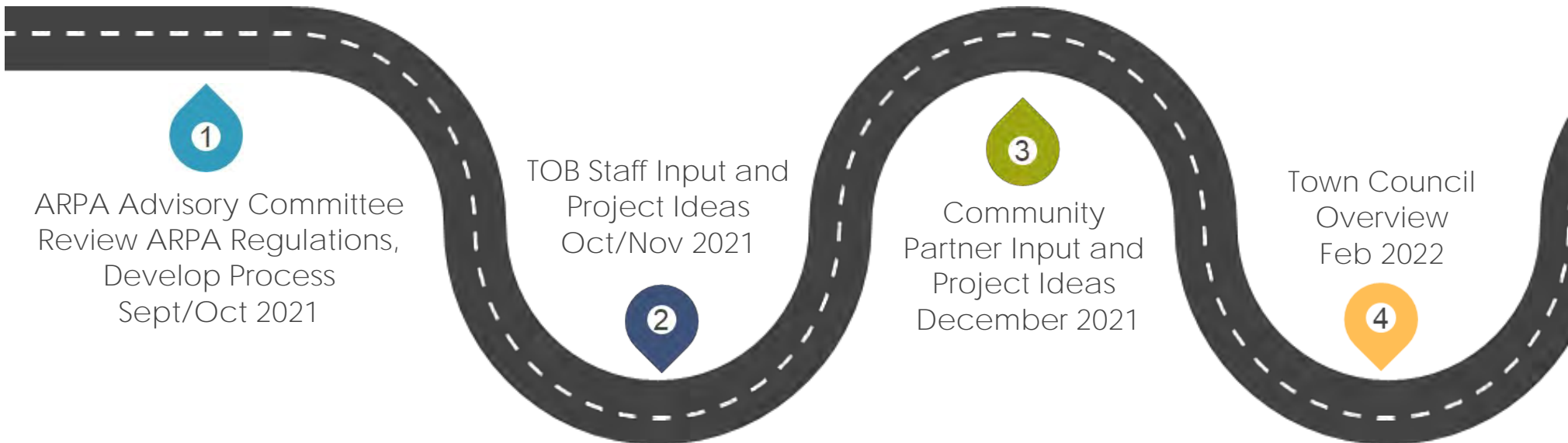
- Unless specifically excluded, project costs must have been incurred after March 3, 2021
- Project funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024
- All project funds must be expended by June 30, 2026

PROCESS

Project Proposal Development

Town of Blacksburg ARPA Advisory Team

Staff from the Town Manager's Office developed an internal process for developing, reviewing, and selecting ARPA projects. An ARPA Advisory Team was formed to guide the process and included a key staff member from each of the following departments: Engineering, Housing & Community Connections, Finance, Parks & Recreation, Planning, Police, Public Works, Sustainability, Technology, Transit, and the Town Manager's Office.



Engaging Community Partner Organizations

How Projects Were Proposed

The ARPA Advisory Team created and distributed an internal ARPA survey to gather project ideas. Departments worked closely with their staff to identify and submit potential projects. The Advisory Team also created and sent a similar survey to 52 community partner organizations that directly serve Town of Blacksburg residents. Through the survey, community partner organizations were able to submit project ideas of their own. The ARPA Advisory Team then reviewed all project ideas to confirm ARPA eligibility. 57 projects were determined to be ARPA eligible and were included in a community survey that sought broad public input. As part of this survey, respondents were asked to prioritize project ideas generated by both Town staff and community partners. They were also given the opportunity to suggest additional project ideas.



ARPA Project Evaluation Criteria and Scoring Process

The project evaluation criteria shown on the following page were used by the Town of Blacksburg ARPA Advisory Team to independently score each of the projects under consideration. After scoring, the Advisory Team had a series of deliberative meetings to discuss the relative merits of the proposed projects, fine-tune project scoring, and narrow the list down to the most strategic and impactful projects.

The ARPA Advisory Team worked to identify projects that scored highly according to these selection criteria and reflected strong community support. Balancing all of these considerations, the advisory team put forward a slate of projects for Town Council's consideration that:

- are strongly supported by the community
- will accelerate COVID recovery for residents and businesses
- will provide critically needed support and services for our community's most vulnerable residents
- are anticipated to have strategic and long-term impacts
- are logistically feasible within the ARPA timeframe

This funding scenario was further refined based on Town Council's feedback. This report details the final ARPA recommendations and project list for the Town of Blacksburg.

ARPA ADVISORY TEAM

Project Selection Criteria

Criterion		Will the proposed project...	Max Points
Equity	→	serve the hardest hit residents and businesses? advance equity and inclusion? address a need for traditionally underserved or vulnerable members of the community?	→ 20
Community Need & Benefit	→	address an identified community need? provide widespread benefit to the community? advance a community-identified priority (based on survey responses)?	→ 15
Strategic & Impactful	→	be likely to produce a meaningful and/or lasting impact? fill a gap where no other funding source exists? complement other federal, state or regional ARPA investments?	→ 15
Capacity & Logistics	→	Can the proposed project be completed within the ARPA timeline? Is there internal staff capacity to manage this project? Are there other logistical consideration that could impede or delay project completion?	→ 15
Town Council Goals	→	align with and advance one or more of Town Council's Strategic Goals?	→ 10
Town Plans & Priorities	→	support priorities articulated in the Comprehensive Plan? support priorities articulated in other Town plans (e.g. Bicycle Master Plan)? align with Town of Blacksburg departmental priorities?	→ 10
Project Cost vs. Impact	→	be a prudent allocation of ARPA resources relative to other needs in the community? have sufficient impact relative to the proposed project cost? be excessively impacted by ARPA's federal regulatory requirements, in terms of cost?	→ 5
Operational Impact	→	require ongoing Town of Blacksburg staff support post-implementation? have anticipated long-term maintenance or operational costs? If operational costs or staff support are anticipated, will they be minor or significant?	→ 5

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

How We Engaged Citizens

How We Engaged Citizens

The ARPA Advisory Team developed a community survey to gauge how residents wanted to prioritize ARPA investments, both in terms of broad categories and specific projects, while also helping Town staff to better understand the impacts COVID-19 has had on Blacksburg residents. A post card requesting input was sent to all mailing addresses within the Town of Blacksburg. It was also advertised through local media outlets, Citizen's Alerts, and on social media.



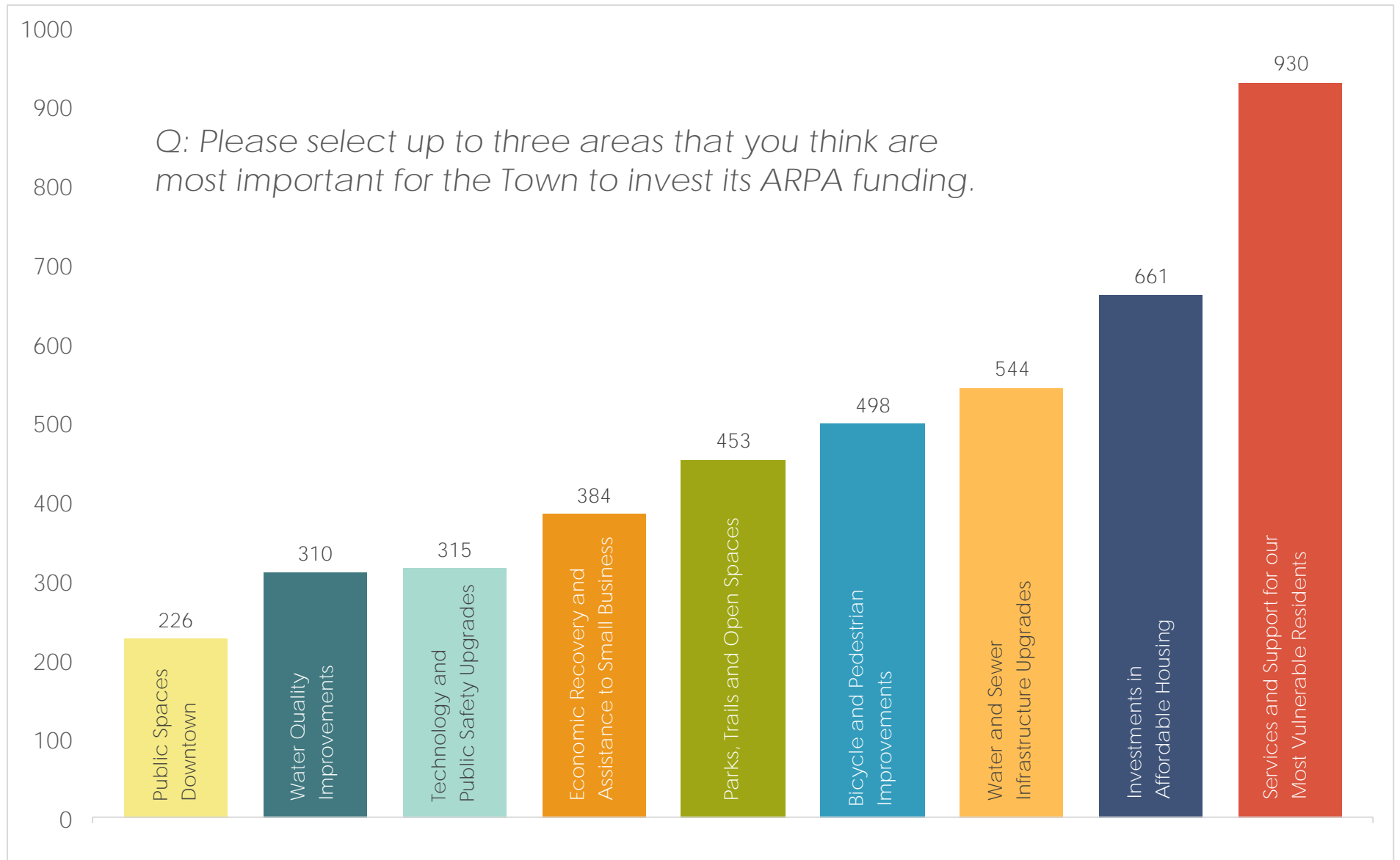
Survey Outcomes

- The Town received 1,549 survey responses.
- We received feedback from a wide cross-section of Blacksburg residents in terms of age, income, and location.
- 21% of respondents were renters, while 77% were homeowners, and the remainder noted other.
- The most widespread impacts from the pandemic included: mental or emotional health issues (44%), disruptions to education or training (29%), internet connectivity (19%), problems accessing childcare (16%), work hours reduced (12%), problems accessing medical care (12%), problems covering bills/expenses (9%), problems finding housing (8%), unemployment (8%), and problems returning work (7%).

Citizen feedback on specific theme areas and projects is provided in more detail on the following pages. If you wish to review the full survey results, Click [HERE](#), or visit the Let's Talk Blacksburg ARPA Project page: letstalkblacksburg.org/arpa

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Community Survey Responses












COMMUNITY PRIORITIES


Community Priorities within Categories

Level of Support for Specific Projects within Categories

As shown on the prior page, some clear priorities are starting to emerge by theme. We also asked the community to share how they would prioritize specific projects that had been proposed within each category:

 Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure	 Affordable Housing	 Water Quality
 Public Spaces in Downtown	 Parks, Trails & Open Spaces	 Technology & Public Safety
 Water & Sewer Infrastructure	 Assistance to Small Businesses	 Support for Vulnerable Residents

On the pages that follow, more detailed results from the community survey are shown. These show the relative support residents expressed for specific proposed projects within each category. Please note the overlay indicating which projects were proposed by community partner organizations. Adjacent to each chart is a legend indicating whether or not a project is being recommended for full or partial funding.

Project Description	 Fully Fund
 Community Partner Proposed Project	 Partially Fund/Modify Project
	 Fund in Town 5-year Capital Plan
	 Do Not Fund

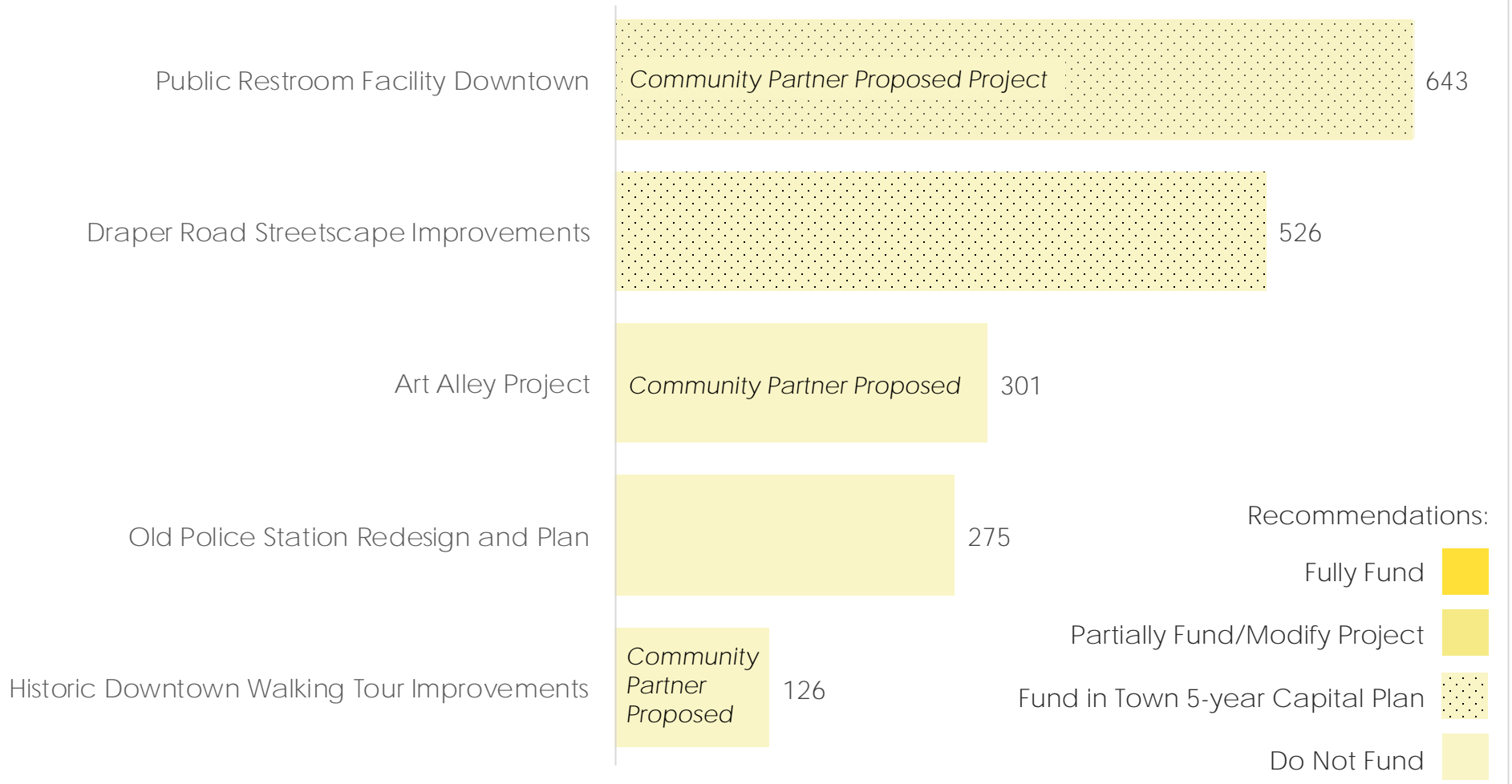
It is important to note that even if a project has been recommended to “Partially Fund” or “Do Not Fund”, those that emerged as high priorities will be seriously considered for future investments through the Town’s normal budgetary process. In fact, some of these projects have already been budgeted for in the Town’s 5-year Capital Improvement Plan, as outlined later in this report.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Public Spaces in Downtown Blacksburg

Investments in Public Spaces in Downtown Blacksburg

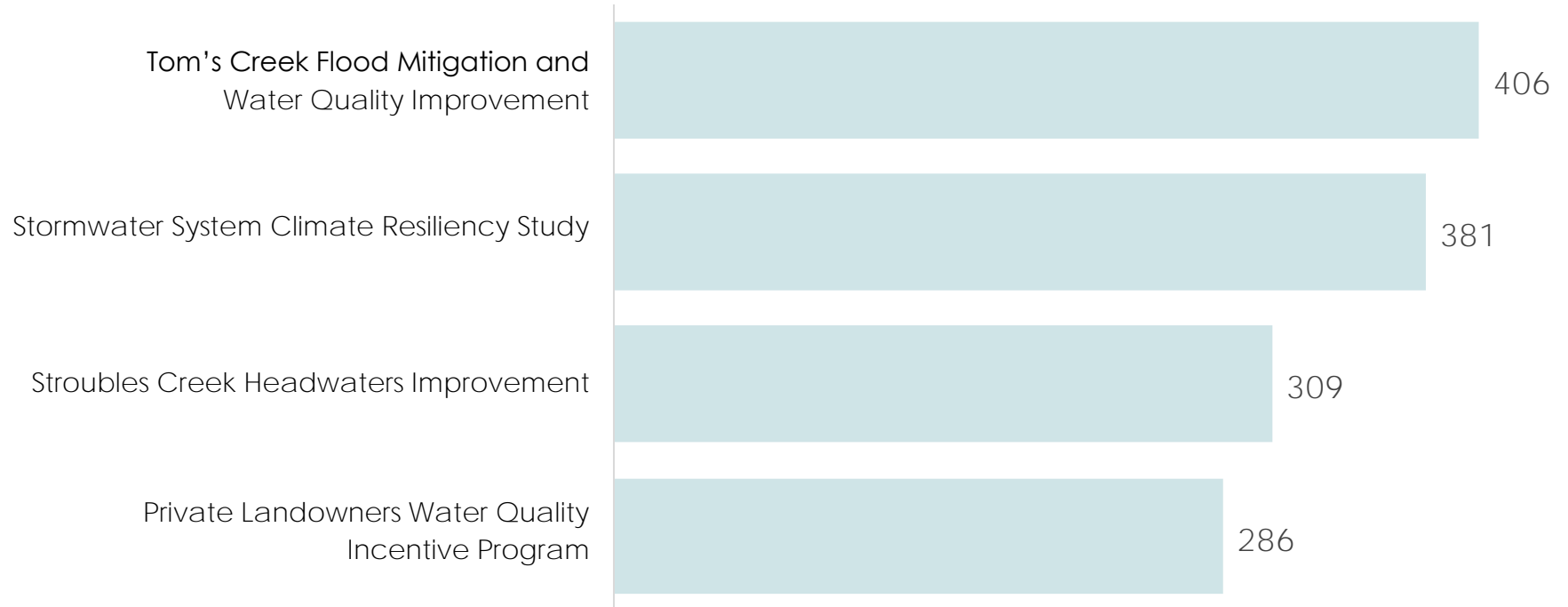
Select up to two projects listed below



COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

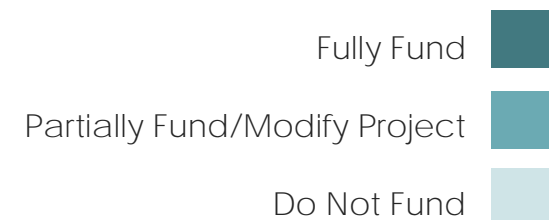
Water Quality Improvements

Water Quality Improvements
Select up to two projects listed below



Note: Survey respondents identified water quality improvement projects as a moderately high priority. Although there is considerable value in pursuing this work, the Town has decided not to expend ARPA funds for water quality improvement projects. Using ARPA funds would require the Town to “federalize” these projects. This means that the projects would be subject to additional compliance with all federal laws and regulations, which will increase project costs and expand the timeline for implementation.

Recommendations:



COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Water and Sewer Infrastructure Upgrades

Water and Sewer Infrastructure Upgrades

Select up to two projects listed below

Water and sewer infrastructure upgrades to improve water quality, address aging infrastructure and increase the system's capacity as our community grows.

816

Investments in solar technology to offset the electricity needed to power our water and sewer infrastructure.





575

Water and sewer infrastructure upgrades to protect the security and increase the efficiency of our water delivery systems.

358

Note: The Town recognizes the importance placed by survey respondents on undertaking water and sewer infrastructure upgrades that address age, quality or capacity issues. For reasons similar to the ones stated on the facing page, the Town is not dedicating ARPA funds to these projects. Additional detail on how the Town plans to address water and sewer infrastructure upgrades in the future is more fully explained starting on page 34.

Recommendations:

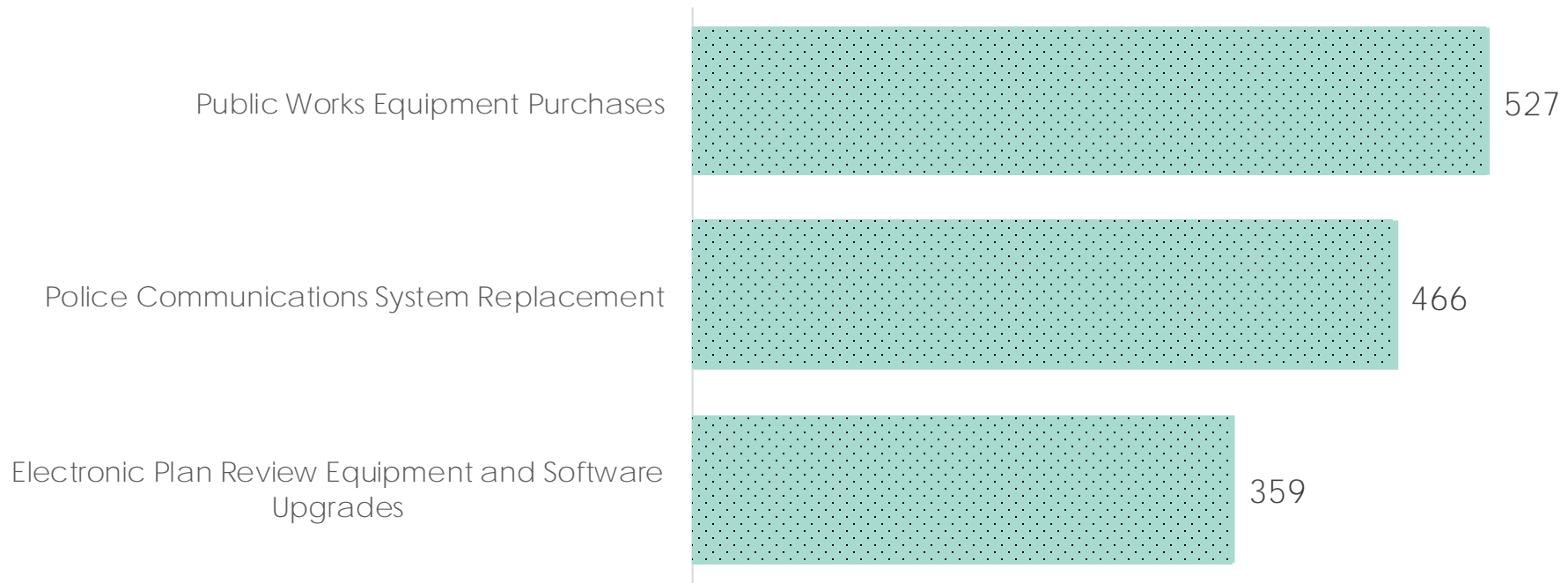
Fully Fund	
Partially Fund/Modify Project	
Fund in Town 5-year Capital Plan	
Do Not Fund	

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Technology, Public Works & Public Safety

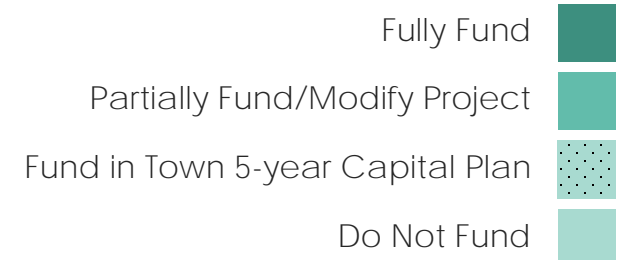
Technology, Public Works and Public Safety Equipment & Upgrades

Select up to two projects listed below



Note: Survey respondents identified upgrades to public works equipment and police communications systems as a moderately high priority. Although both of these proposed projects have considerable value, the Town has decided not to dedicate ARPA funds to them. As noted in the legend, all of these projects have been budgeted for in the Town's 5-year Capital Improvement Plan.

Recommendations:

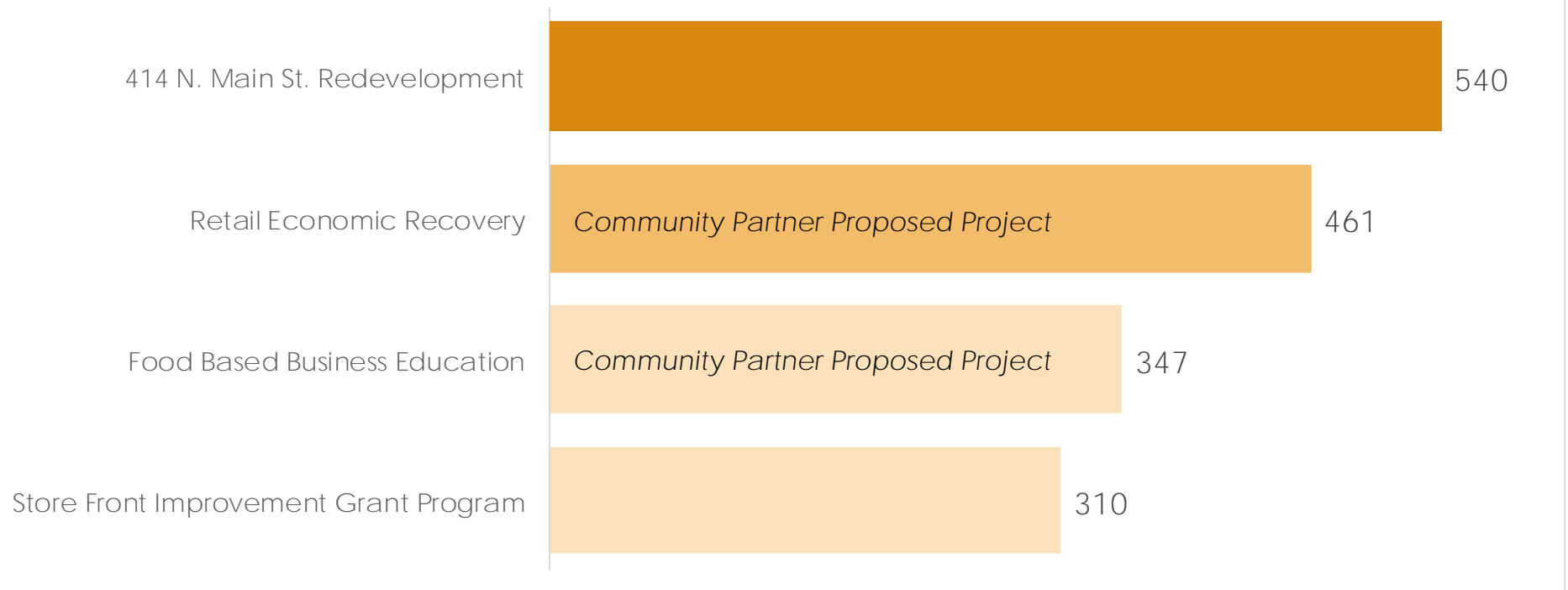


COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Economic Recovery & Small Business Assistance





Economic Recovery & Assistance to Small Businesses

Select up to four projects listed below



Note: In order to accelerate the community's economic recovery, the Town has decided to fully fund the redevelopment of 414 N. Main Street as a downtown business and non-profit coop. The Town is also electing to fund the first year of a three-year Retail Economic Recovery planning process. The Town is working with other community partners to ensure this project is fully supported in the coming years.

Recommendations:

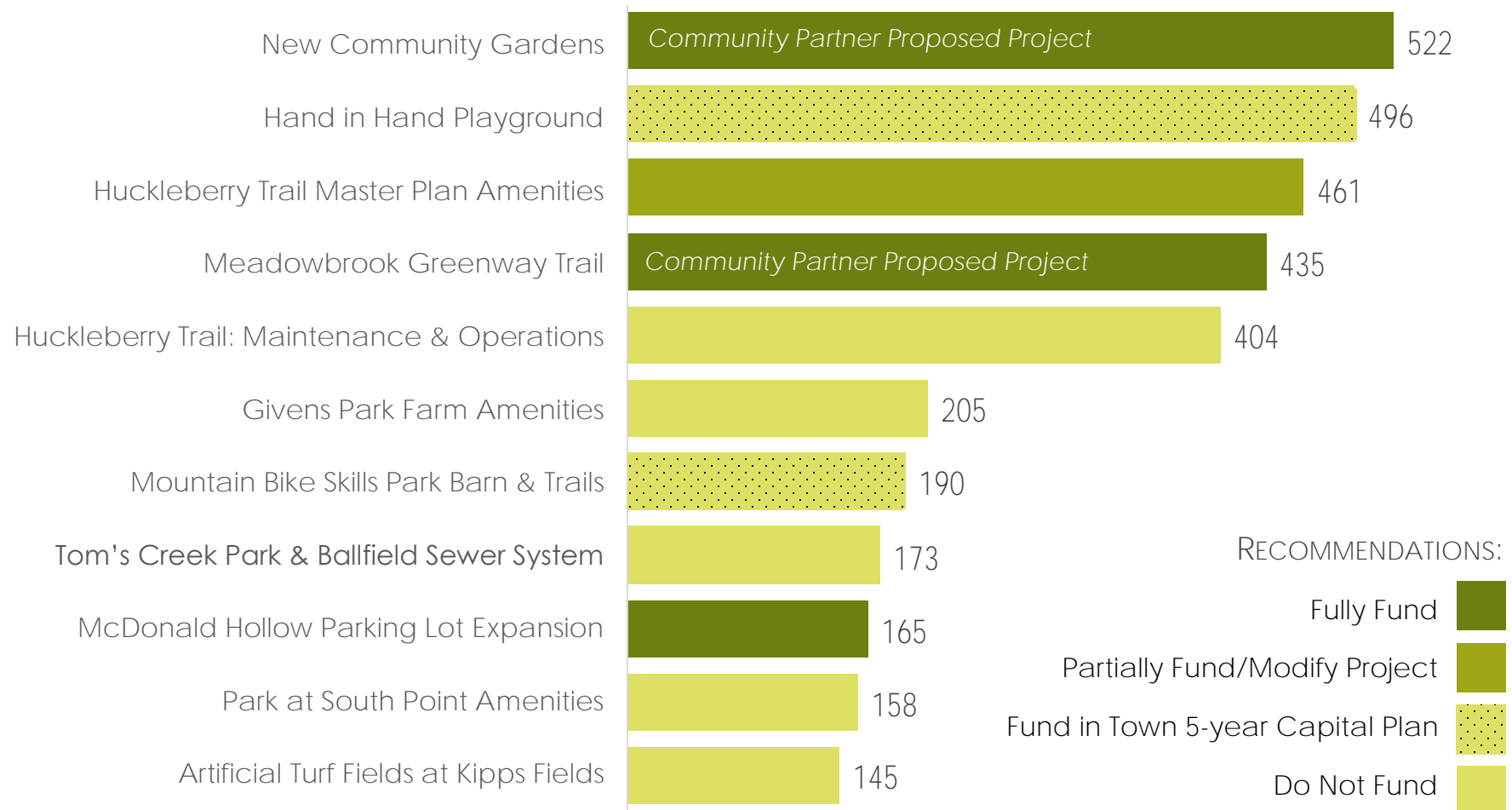
- Fully Fund 
- Partially Fund/Modify Project 
- Fund in Town 5-year Capital Plan 
- Do Not Fund 

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Investments in Parks, Trails & Open Spaces

Investments in Parks, Trails & Open Spaces

Q: Select up to four projects listed below.

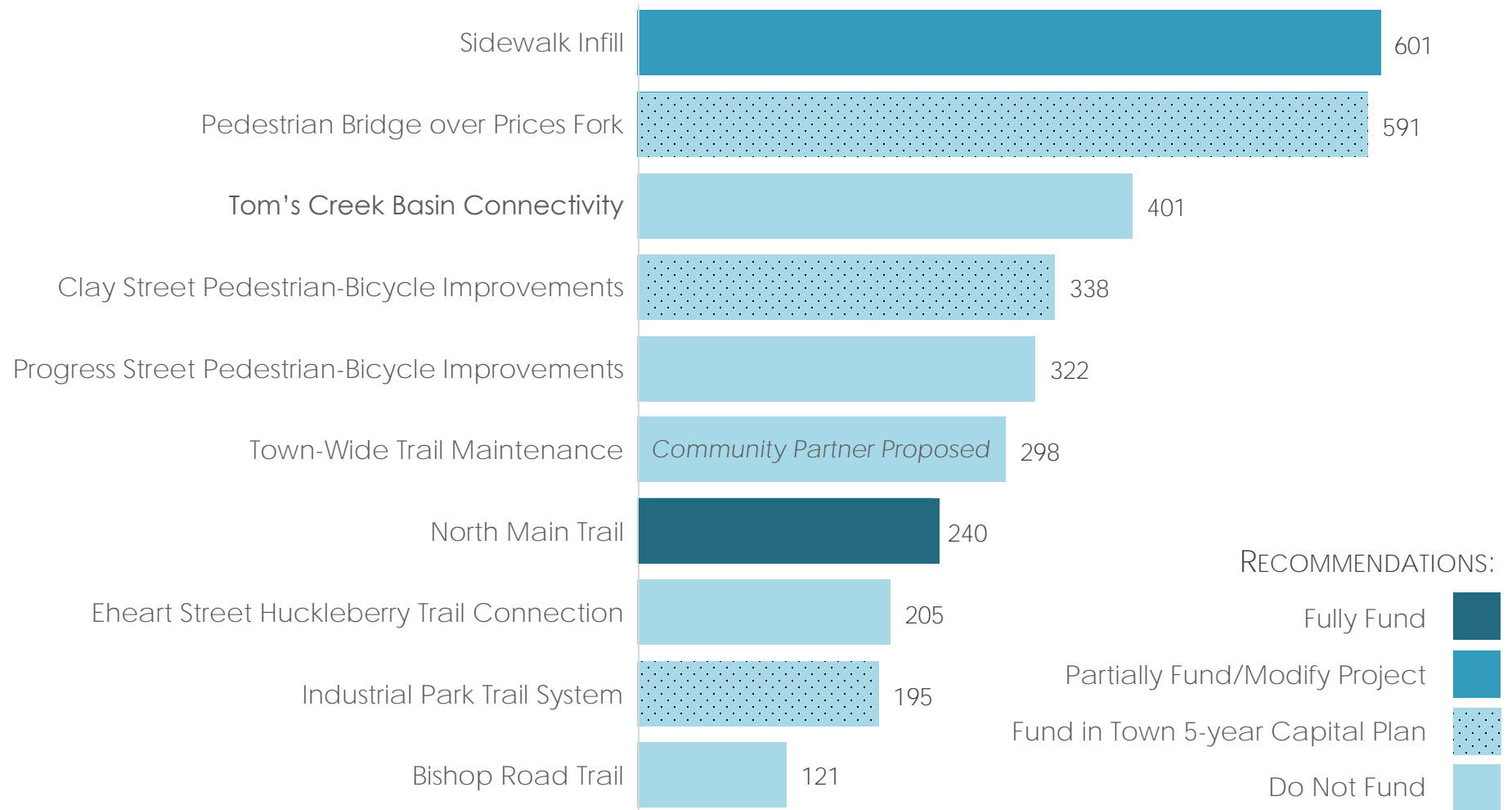


COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

Investments in Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

Q: Select up to four projects listed below.



COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Investments in Affordable Housing

Investments in Affordable Housing
Select this project if you think it should be funded




Affordable Housing Fund



768

Note: The Affordable Housing Fund was the only project proposed in the category of affordable housing. This would provide seed money to fund and be used to support multiple affordable housing projects over the next three years. The Town plans to partially fund this project and allocate \$4,000,000 of ARPA funds in the form of grants (through an application process) to housing developers willing to produce permanently affordable housing as part of their residential development project.

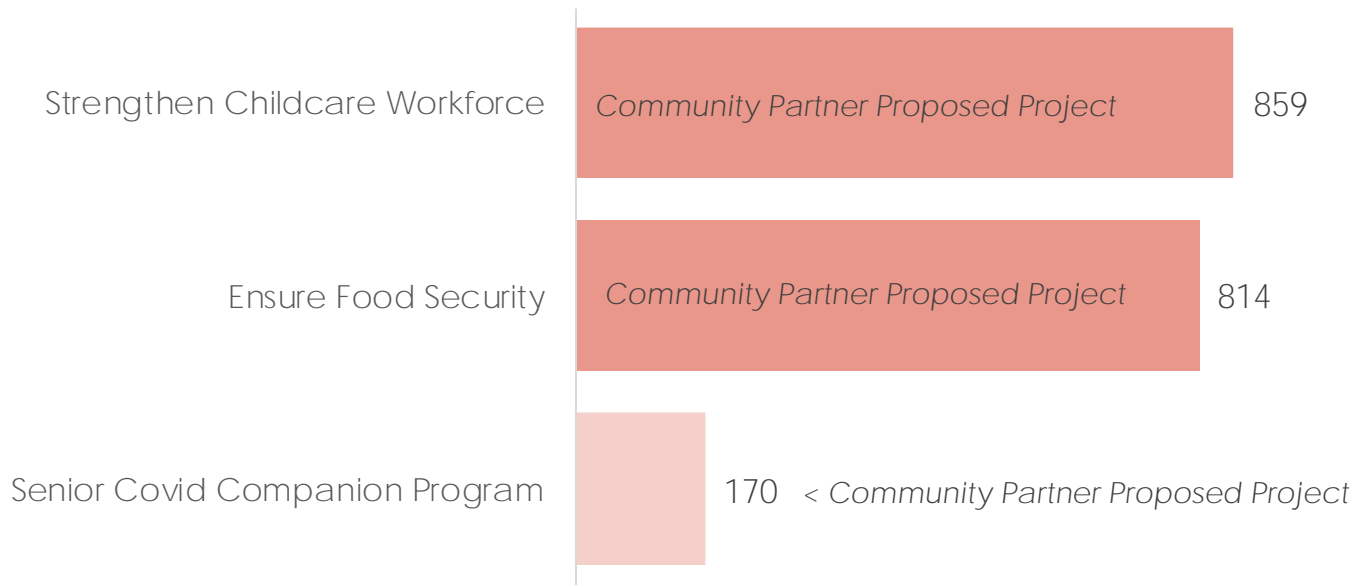
RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Fully Fund 
- Partially Fund/Modify Project 
- Do Not Fund 

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Support for our Most Vulnerable Residents

Support and Services for our Most Vulnerable Residents *Select up to two projects listed below*



Sojourn Hospice Center

We received over 60 write-in requests for the Town to use ARPA funds to support the development of a hospice house in Blacksburg. In response, the ARPA Advisory Team reached out to learn more about this project, have them submit a detailed project proposal, and score it. Based on that review, this project is also being recommended for ARPA funding.

Community Partner Project

Note: Projects that support our most vulnerable residents generated the greatest level of support in the community survey, both as a general category (question #1), and when respondents were asked to weigh in on specific projects. Investments to strengthen our local childcare workforce and support programs that ensure food security garnered the #1 and #3 slots, respectively among the 57 projects presented. Additionally, because supporting vulnerable residents was such a high priority and because the Sojourn Hospice Center received such high level of support in the survey, the Town has decided to fully fund the architecture, engineering and site design for this project.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Fully Fund ■
- Partially Fund/Modify Project ■
- Do Not Fund ■

ARPA FUNDING SCENARIO

Balancing Priorities

Alignment of Community Priorities, Staff Recommendations, and Project Feasibility

The proposed slate of projects on the following page represents a set of investments to accelerate Blacksburg's continued recovery from the pandemic while strategically addressing longstanding needs and priorities in the community. At the outset of the ARPA process, 57 projects were put forward for consideration. Arriving at this list of eleven recommended projects required Town Council to balance citizen priorities, project feasibility considerations, and staff recommendations based on the selection criteria and scoring process detailed in the previous section. Difficult decisions had to be made, and it was not possible to select all high priority projects. Some selected projects are recommended for full funding, while others needed to be amended to fit within the available budget, or to address logistical considerations. Below are some of the additional factors that came into play when developing this proposed funding scenario.

High Priority Projects **Amended** either in Budget and/or Scope:

Some projects were scaled down to stay within budget, while still resulting in a meaningful step forward.

- *Examples: Huckleberry repaving/widening; Priority Sidewalk Infill Projects*

High Priority Projects **Not Recommended** for ARPA Funding:

Some projects were already far enough along that it didn't make sense to support them with ARPA funding.

- *Example: Hand in Hand Playground Redesign and Replacement*

Some projects would have had additional federal requirements that would significantly increase cost and complexity.

- *Examples: Water Quality and Water/Wastewater Infrastructure Projects*

Some projects would have been challenging to fully complete within the ARPA timeframe.

- *Example: Draper Road Streetscape (permanent redevelopment)*

ARPA FUNDING SCENARIO

Selected Projects & Budget Allocation

Project Category	Selected Projects	Budget Allocation
Investments in Economic Recovery and Small Business Assistance		
	414 N. Main Small Retail Coop and Incubator	\$ 1,750,000
	Retail Economic Recovery Plan	\$ 150,000
Investments in Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements		
	Priority Sidewalk Infill Projects (Prospect, Penn, Mt. Tabor, Washington)	\$ 1,002,000
	North Main Trail	\$ 776,000
Investments in Parks, Trails and Outdoor Spaces		
	Community Gardens	\$ 87,000
	Repave/Widen the Huckleberry Trail	\$ 750,000
	Meadowbrook Greenway Trail & McDonald Hollow Parking Expansion	\$ 2,000,000
Investments in Affordable Housing		
	Affordable Housing Fund	\$ 4,000,000
Investments in (Support and Services for) our Most Vulnerable Residents		
	Food Security	\$ 700,000
	Strengthen Childcare Workforce	\$ 1,150,000
	Hospice Center	\$ 695,000
Budget Total: Town of Blacksburg Recommended ARPA Projects		\$ 13,060,000
Contingency (funds held in reserve to address project cost adjustments)		\$ 304,987
Total Town of Blacksburg ARPA Allocation		\$ 13,364,987

ARPA FUNDING SCENARIO

Selected Projects

Investments in Economic Recovery & Small Business Assistance

414 N. Main Small Business Coop & Incubator

The Town plans to invest \$1,750,000 of ARPA funds to **renovate the former Cooks Cleaner's property** for a Small Business Retail Co-op, DBI and Community Arts Organization offices, shared and/or community meeting space, and open studio space for art and small receptions. This project will complement parallel economic recovery efforts and will create another civic anchor and gathering space for downtown Blacksburg.



Retail Economic Recovery Plan

With its ARPA funds, the Town will provide \$150,000 to the Blacksburg Partnership to begin development of a comprehensive retail recovery plan. The Blacksburg Partnership will engage with Retail Strategies Inc. and members of the business community to develop a recovery plan that includes technical assistance for existing retailers and discovery and recruitment of new retailers who are a good fit for our community.

ARPA FUNDING SCENARIO

Selected Projects

Investments in Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

Priority Sidewalk Infill Projects

The Town plans to allocate \$1,002,000 of its ARPA funds to complete four priority sidewalk infill projects to improve walkability and safety for pedestrians in various locations across town. Town staff works with the Corridor Committee to help identify and prioritize sidewalk infill projects and these four sections were identified by staff after considering many needed sections in the community. The infill projects include sections along Mount Tabor Road, Prospect Street, Penn Street, and Washington Street.



North Main Trail

The Town plans to allocate \$776,000 of ARPA funds to complete the North Main Trail. This project will extend the multipurpose trail along N. Main Street from near Vinyard Avenue to U.S. 460/Bishop Road. This will provide an outdoor recreational and alternative transportation route to connect residents to amenities off Main Street such as the Hale Community Garden, the Community Center and Municipal Park, and Downtown Blacksburg.

ARPA FUNDING SCENARIO

Selected Projects

Investments in Parks, Trails and Outdoor Spaces

New Community Gardens

Demand for community garden space grew during the pandemic and survey results indicate this remains a high priority for residents. The Town is devoting \$87,000 of its ARPA funds to Live Work Eat Grow (LWEG) to create two more community gardens within Town limits. Part of the funding will also go toward a small tractor that will ultimately serve all of Blacksburg's community gardens.



Huckleberry Repaving & Widening

The Town plans to invest \$750,000 of ARPA funds to widen and repave approximately three miles of the Huckleberry trail based on locations identified in the Huckleberry Trail Master Plan. Survey results also show strong support for dedicating ongoing funding for the Huckleberry. The Town is exploring options to establish a capital depreciation fund for the Town's section of the Huckleberry Trail, in order to address future trail and amenities, maintenance and other improvements.



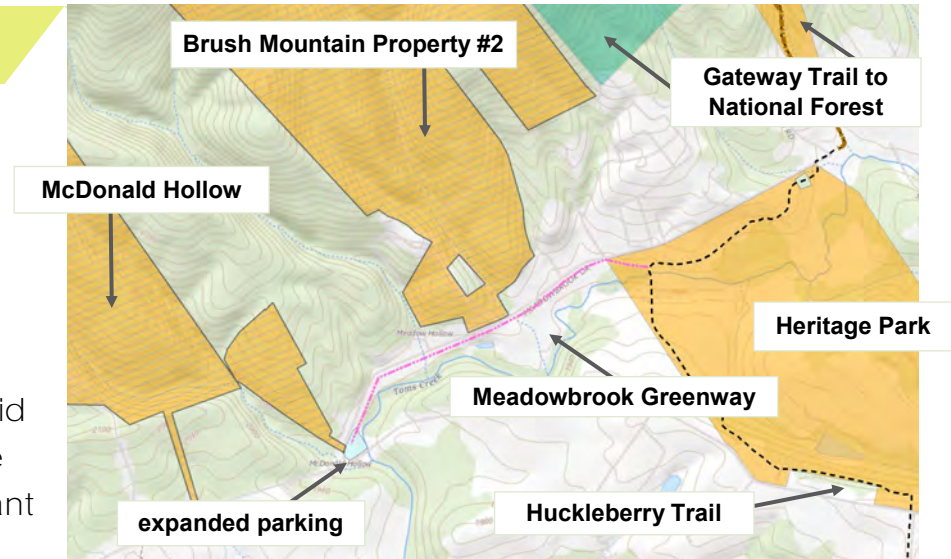
ARPA FUNDING SCENARIO

Selected Projects

Investments in Parks, Trails and Outdoor Spaces

Meadowbrook Greenway Trail & Expanded Parking

The Town is planning to invest \$1,800,000 of its ARPA funds to construct the Meadowbrook Greenway Trail. This trail will provide a critical connection between the Huckleberry Trail, Heritage Park, and the Gateway Trail to the Brush Mountain Park and the Poverty Creek trail networks. This project also includes an additional \$200,000 to expand the McDonald Hollow parking area. Although the parking area did not rank as highly on the community survey, completing these two connected projects at the same time will result in significant cost savings for project design and staff time.



ARPA FUNDING SCENARIO

Selected Projects

Investments in Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing Fund

Investing in affordable housing emerged as one of the highest priorities in the community survey. The Town plans to allocate \$4,000,000 to establish an Affordable Housing Fund that will be dispersed in the form of grants (through an application process) to housing developers willing to produce permanently affordable housing as part of new residential development projects.



Support and Services for Our Most Vulnerable Residents

Food Security

The Town plans to invest \$750,000 of its ARPA funds to support food assistance to Blacksburg residents through these community organizations: Blacksburg Interfaith Food pantry, Live Work Eat Grow, Montgomery County Christmas Store, and YMCA Meals on Main. Funds will be used to purchase food, prepare fresh meals, and provide cold storage to support the distribution of food to clients in need. This group of organizations will also focus on increasing program coordination to address any redundancy, increase efficiency, and fill gaps in service.



ARPA FUNDING SCENARIO

Selected Projects

Support and Services for Our Most Vulnerable Residents

Hospice Center (Architecture & Site Engineering)

The Town plans to invest \$695,000 of ARPA funds in Sojourn Inc., which is working to develop an 8- bed hospice house in Blacksburg. Funds would support the architectural and engineering costs for the eventual facility, which will be located near Warm Hearth. This project was not originally included in the public engagement survey. However, the great interest in serving vulnerable residents and seniors as expressed in the survey comments led staff to recommend funding for this project.



Strengthen Childcare Workforce

The Town plans to invest \$1,150,000 of ARPA funds in a childcare workforce project led by the Community Foundation of the New River Valley. This project will work with 13 licensed childcare providers in Blacksburg on teacher retention and recruitment. Funds will support salary increases and professional training to rebuild and retain the workforce.



HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS

Not Recommended for ARPA Funding

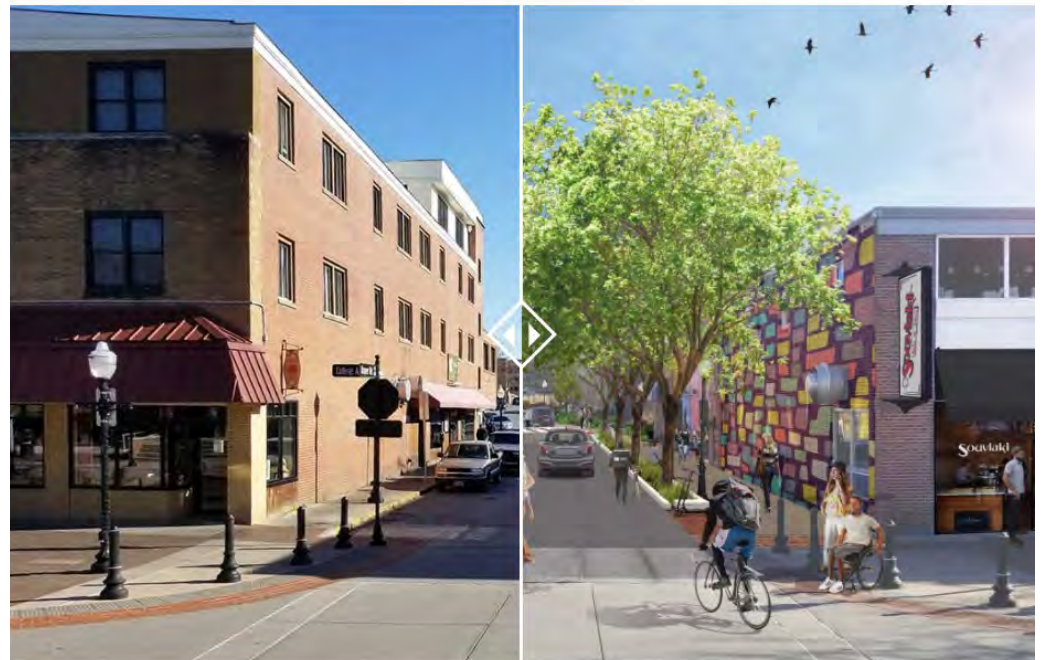
Difficult Decisions, Tradeoffs, and Future Funding Options

As noted in prior sections, 57 ARPA-eligible projects were put forward for consideration at the outset of this process, and it was not possible to select all the projects that emerged as high priorities. The section that follows offers additional context on some of the higher priority projects that we are not recommending for ARPA Funding, with detail on how the Town of Blacksburg is planning to move these projects forward in the coming years.

Other High Priority Projects

Draper Road Streetscape Improvements

Although the Draper Road Streetscape emerged as a relatively high priority, the Town elected to not invest ARPA funds to complete the architecture and engineering work associated with this project. Because of its importance to residents and the vibrancy of downtown, it is being funded in the Capital Improvement Plan this year. The scope of this project will include permanent streetscape improvements (widened sidewalks, street lighting, outdoor dining improvements, expanded bicycle infrastructure, and a public restroom facility) along Draper Road between College Avenue and Washington Street.



HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS

Not Recommended for ARPA Funding

Other High Priority Projects

Public Restroom Facility Downtown

A public restroom facility in the downtown area emerged as a very high priority in the community survey. Finding an appropriate site is the primary challenge for this project. It is important for the public restroom to be thoughtfully integrated into the final design for the Draper Road Streetscape. Once that design is complete, we are recommending that the public bathroom element be completed on an accelerated timeline as a stand alone project funded through the Capital Improvement Plan.



Pedestrian Bridge over Prices Fork (Engineering Study)

A Pedestrian Bridge over Prices Fork Rd. was strongly supported by survey respondents. However, the very high anticipated cost of this project (estimated at over \$4 million dollars), is prompting the Town to take an interim step. In the next budget cycle, the Town plans to invest in an engineering study of the Prices Fork corridor to better assess the site, develop different ADA accessible crossing options with cost estimates for each, gather public input, and develop site plans for the preferred option. Full implementation of this project will be considered for a future Capital Improvement Plan.



HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS

Not Recommended for ARPA Funding

Other High Priority Projects

Police Communications Equipment

The Blacksburg Police Department's current communications equipment is nearing the end of its anticipated useful life of ten years. While the new police station will have upgraded communications equipment in the building, there is still a need to upgrade the older field equipment. This project will ensure the police department has a reliable communications system moving forward. The Town will use its Capital Improvement Plan funds, instead of ARPA funds, to purchase the requested police communications equipment before 2025.



HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS

Other High Priority Projects

Other High Priority Projects

Public Works Debris Management Equipment

The Town's Public Works Department routinely works to address debris along the road side and in bike lanes, cleaning of sidewalks downtown, and collection of brush and leaves from residents in the spring and fall. **Upgrading the Town's debris management equipment will provide better service to residents, improved safety for cyclists, community beautification, landfill diversion of woody waste and leaves, and downstream water quality improvements.** The Town will use its Capital Improvement Plan funds, instead of ARPA funds, to purchase the additional debris management equipment before 2025.



Hand in Hand Playground

Replacing and updating Hand in Hand Playground emerged as the top preference in Parks, Trails and Outdoor spaces category. The Town decided to dedicate Capital Improvement Plan funds for this project in this year's budget, in order to accelerate the timeline for the playground's redesign and upgrade. The Town has contracted with the firm that created the much-loved original design for Hand in Hand (Playgrounds by Leathers) to guide the redesign process.



HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS

Not Recommended for ARPA Funding

Other High Priority Projects

Water and Sewer Infrastructure Projects

Although the Town recognizes the importance placed by survey respondents on undertaking water infrastructure upgrades that address age, quality or capacity issues, Town staff decided not to dedicate ARPA funds to these projects. Using ARPA funds would require the Town to “federalize” these projects, meaning they would be subject to additional compliance with federal laws and regulations. This would increase project costs and would likely expand the timeline for implementation. Instead, over the next 5 years, the Town plans to use the Town’s Capital Improvement program on the following water and sewer infrastructure projects:

Upgrading Undersized Water Lines

Priority will be placed on water lines that are undersized for current demand, which can restrict flow, reduce pressure, and do not provide adequate fire protection at various locations in the Town’s water system. These smaller lines account for the majority of leaks experienced throughout the year.



Bishop Road Water Main Extension

This project will extend the Bishop Road water main approximately 600 feet to help mitigate water quality issues for this section of Town. This water main extension will allow new and existing customers to connect to the extended water main. Over time, increased demand at the end of the water main will decrease water age and improve water quality for residents along Bishop Road, Coal Bank Ridge, and at the Fountain Court Trailer Park.

HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS

Not Recommended for ARPA Funding

Other High Priority Projects

Wastewater Pumping Station Upgrades

Several of the Town's wastewater pumping stations are more than 25 years old and it can be difficult to find replacement mechanical and electrical parts for them. This project will replace older mechanical and control equipment to increase the reliability of these stations. Priority locations include the following neighborhoods: Karr Heights, Shawnee, Sturbridge Square, Wyatt Farms, Highland Park and Brookfield.



Repair & Replacement of Sanitary Sewer Lines

Degraded and/or broken sanitary sewer lines do not provide adequate service and are at high-risk for inflow and infiltration, which allows groundwater to seep into sewer pipes. Inflow from heavy storm events can overwhelm these older sewer lines, causing backups and pooling of wastewater.

A cross-departmental sanitary sewer working group has identified and prioritized specific locations for sanitary sewer line repair, replacement and/or lining to protect public health and ensure uninterrupted service to residents.

CITIZEN SUGGESTIONS & QUESTIONS

Responses

As part of the community survey, a number of other suggestions and questions were raised by respondents. Below are answers to some of the most commonly asked questions.

Can we increase pay for Town employees to address staff shortages in Transit, Police and Public Works?

The Town has recently completed a town-wide compensation study to address this issue. Personnel costs account for the majority of the budget, so increasing pay needs to be carefully analyzed to reduce the strain on future operating budgets. ARPA is one-time funding that will not be available in the future, while increased salaries would represent an ongoing expense. The Town believes salary adjustments emerging from the recent compensation study will help address staffing shortages in these key departments.

Can we use ARPA funds to provide tax relief or direct payments to residents?

The Town's objective is to use the funds for impactful and long-term benefit to the community. A tax rebate would not provide a long-term impact, as the tax rate would need to return to the previous amount to support government services. Direct payments to residents are eligible, but under stringent requirements that must be met for those residents who qualify under the Negative Economic Impact expenditure category.

Why is the Town not using ARPA funds to cover revenue loss only?

The Town must follow specific federal guidelines in determining projects that will qualify under this category. Payments for debt service, pension funds, rainy-day funds, or replenishing financial reserves are prohibited, as the funds must be allocated to specific projects or services.

CITIZEN SUGGESTIONS & QUESTIONS

Responses

Can we invest in Blacksburg Transit (bus shelters, bus routes, bus stop accessibility, and electric buses)?

Blacksburg Transit has been allocated \$4.7 million dollars in ARPA funds that it will use over the next three to four years for operating and capital expenses, which are separate from the Town general ARPA allocation of \$13 million.

Can we invest in broadband infrastructure to improve access, affordability, choice, and speed?

ARPA Broadband infrastructure projects are required upon completion to deliver service that reliably provides 100 Mbps download and upload speed through a wireline connection (100/20 Mbps if geographical or topographical issues are present). This standard of speed is currently being met inside the majority of Town. In terms of choice and affordability, market competition (Shentel coming to Blacksburg for example) will provide more competitive options for residents in the future. Affordability would not be addressed by more infrastructure. It would require direct assistance to impacted individuals. In relation, Montgomery County plans to use its ARPA funding to invest in broadband infrastructure in areas of the County that cannot meet these speeds. The Town has asked them to consider several small underserved pockets in Town as part of their broadband investment.

Can we invest in new recreation facilities or upgrades to our existing facilities?

We received many suggestions related to recreational amenities including an outdoor pool, skating rink, climbing gym, lazy river, basketball courts, pickle ball, track and sports fields, playgrounds, and updated public bathrooms. ARPA funds can be used to improve outdoor spaces and recreation facilities under the Public Health or Revenue Loss expenditure categories. Currently, there are several projects scheduled in our Capital Improvement Program related to Parks and Recreation improvements. A new recreation center cannot be accomplished within the ARPA timeline. Funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024 and the time needed from concept to construction would continue beyond the deadline. This capital project will be discussed in future Capital Improvement planning.

CITIZEN SUGGESTIONS & QUESTIONS

Responses

Can we invest in public infrastructure maintenance and upgrades (roads, electric lines, street lighting, etc)?

Public infrastructure maintenance and upgrades are generally ineligible ARPA expenses however there are some exceptions if the maintenance/upgrades supports the public health response to COVID-19. There is also a separate federal infrastructure bill that focuses on roads that will more specifically address these areas but the details of that legislation are not available yet. The Town is planning on using some of those funds to address public infrastructure and we are anticipating knowing more information on the details of that legislation in the coming months.

Can we use ARPA funds to support public health and mental health efforts, positions, or supplies?

ARPA funds are eligible for EMS/rescue squad needs however the Town typically funds those needs (ambulances, response vehicles, cardiac monitors, defibrillators) through the Capital Improvement Program. ARPA funds are federal dollars which also add costs to buying EMS equipment that otherwise would not be incurred so it was decided that there were better ways to spend the ARPA funds that do not add additional costs. The New River Health District is already receiving ARPA funding to address public health needs as it relates to COVID recovery. Their request of Blacksburg was to ensure Town staff are involved in regional community health coordination efforts and to support local initiatives focused on the health and wellbeing of the community, including ensuring a healthy workforce, safe housing, access to medical care, childcare and early childhood education, recreation and public transportation.

Can we use ARPA funds to upgrade ventilation systems in our public buildings?

The Town already utilized CARES Act funding to upgrade the ventilation systems in our public buildings a year ago.

CITIZEN SUGGESTIONS & QUESTIONS

Responses

Can we use ARPA funds to reduce the density of the Legacy on Main affordable housing development?

ARPA funds cannot be used to reduce the density of the Legacy on Main affordable housing development. The Legacy on Main plan is binding as approved and the town cannot require any changes to the approved plan. However, the Town will look at investing in future affordable housing developments with ARPA funds at various densities through a competitive process that is yet to be determined.

Can we support the development of the Sojourn Center Hospice Facility?

ARPA funds can support the development of the Sojourn Center Hospice Facility and this project has a lot of value for the community. Based on the community survey, investing in services for our most vulnerable residents was by far the most important area the community thought ARPA funds should be used to support. There is a critical need for a hospice facility in Blacksburg and the greater NRV as the closest facility. As a result, the Town has decided to invest in the Sojourn Hospice Center by providing the funding needed to complete the architectural drawings and site plans.

Can we invest in the homeless/emergency shelter program?

The New River Valley HOME Consortium received an additional \$2.1 million dollars in HOME ARP funds to assist individuals or households who are unhoused, at risk of losing their housing, and other vulnerable populations, by providing housing, rental assistance, supportive services, and non-congregate shelter. HOME Consortium staff will be coordinating and convening local community partners to prioritize and implement investments in support of this community need over the next 5-7 years.

CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

What We Learned

Conclusions & Next Steps

Through this process, the Town has learned a great deal about the community's priorities and that knowledge has significantly influenced the final list of projects the Town has decided to fund with its \$13.3 million ARPA allocation. Over 1,500 surveys were completed by the community in addition to extensive staff, community partner, and Town Council involvement to narrow down 57 proposed projects to the final eleven that will receive ARPA funding. Many of the projects chosen for funding are not traditionally funded by local governments including strengthening our childcare workforce, supporting food security programs, creating new community gardens, and making a significant investment in affordable housing opportunities for Blacksburg's workforce.

Moving forward, the Town will begin to implement these eleven projects, which will be completed over the next four years. This will include working with our community partners to increase capacity for services, procuring contractors to design and build several of the construction projects, providing regular project updates to the community on how things are progressing, and offering opportunities for further input and engagement.



CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

Looking Ahead

Moving Other Priorities Forward

The community input the Town received through this process highlighted a number of other priorities for residents. This feedback will be used to inform project prioritization and future funding decisions for the Town's Capital Improvement Program budgeting process.

These projects include finding a suitable location for a public bathroom in the downtown area that is integrated into the permanent redevelopment design for the Draper Road Streetscape; an engineering study to find a safe crossing for the Huckleberry Trail over Prices Fork Road; upgrades to the communications equipment used by our police officers; new debris management equipment to keep our streets, bike lanes, and sidewalks clear; redesigning and upgrading Hand-In-Hand Playground; and an array of upgrades to our water and sewer infrastructure.

These seven projects, and the other eleven that will be funded through ARPA, will have a profound impact on our community for many decades to come.

