

Thursday, Sept. 15, 2022

Mayor's Update



I am excited to share the next set of transformative investments we are making with the City of Newton's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. These investments reflect input from across our community, and they will make Newton more resilient, more livable, more vibrant, more inclusive, and more sustainable for years to come.

We are already underway with investments of a little over one half (\$34 million) of the City's \$63.5 million in ARPA funds. Today we are committing another \$23 million towards pressing needs facing Newton:

Schools & Students

√ \$2 million towards new reading curriculum materials for students and teachers, Kindergarten – 5th Grade in all 15 elementary schools

√ \$100,000 towards professional services to inform facility decisions for the Ward and Underwood elementary schools.

Housing & Human Services

√ \$3.5 million towards the creation of affordable housing and/or energy retrofits for affordable housing

√ \$500,000 in accessibility investments in curb ramps and playgrounds

Roads & Traffic Calming

√ \$4 million to repave roads in the worst condition in our neighborhoods

√ \$2 million for traffic calming measures to improve safety

Parks, Recreation & Culture

√ \$2.5 million for investments in our athletic fields, Gath Pool, Crystal Lake beach, parks, playgrounds and recreation facilities

√ \$1.8 million towards renovating the performing arts auditorium at 150 Jackson Road to serve students at the new home for the Lincoln-Eliot Elementary School and the larger Newton community

√ \$200,000 towards revitalizing the exhibits at Newton's History Museum to better reflect our diverse heritage

Economic Recovery & Village Centers

√ \$3 million to make Washington Street along the Mass Pike safer and more inviting

√ \$750,000 for the final design of improvements to Newton Highlands to support a business-friendly, multimodal (pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, public transit users), resilient and inviting village center

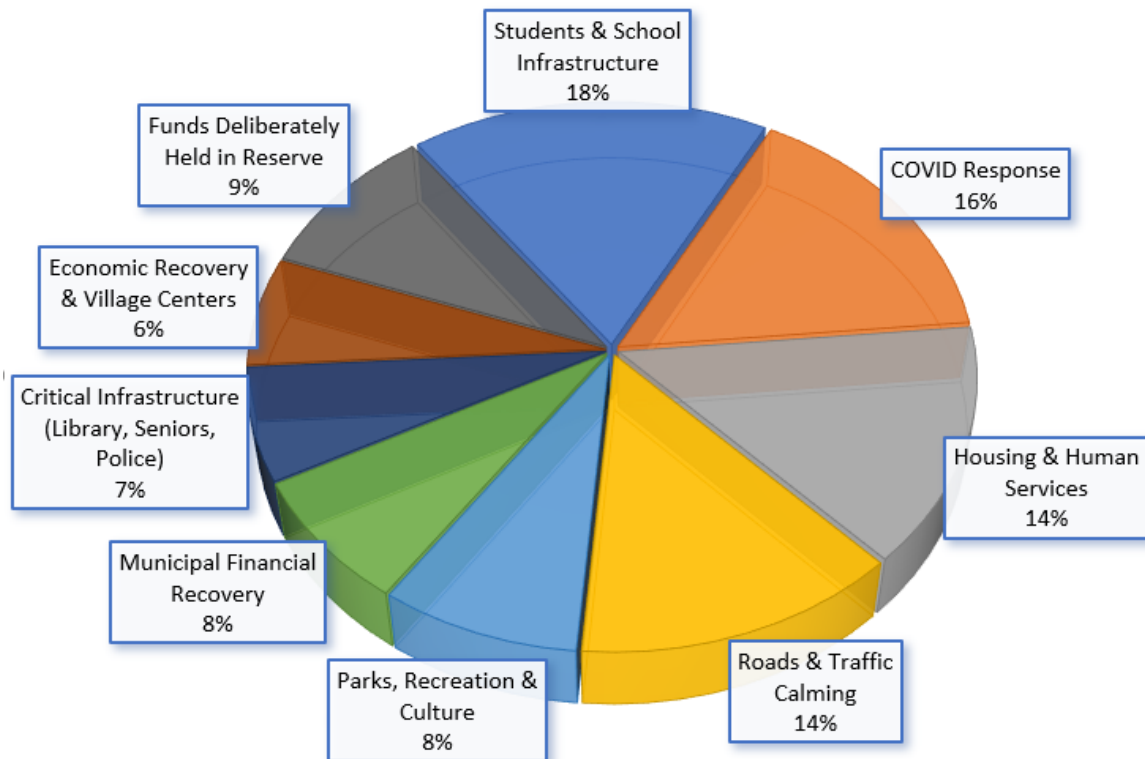
City of Newton Financial Recovery

√ \$2 million to recover from lost revenues in the City's General Fund in FY24 and \$1 million for FY25 to support our services and programs for students, residents and businesses

With the unprecedented one-time federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act, the City of Newton is supporting those most impacted by the pandemic, investing in the operations of the Newton Public Schools and the City, and seeding initiatives that will help Newtonians and our City not just stabilize and recover but permanently become more resilient, livable, vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable. We are investing these funds with the lens of equity, ensuring all geographic areas of Newton, all ages, and all people are supported while we help those disproportionately hurt by COVID-19.

All of Newton has come together to craft this plan. Through community meetings and listening sessions, an ARPAinput@newtonma.gov email address, and with open office hours, calls, emails and letters, our City Councilors, School Committee members, community groups, residents, businesspeople and non-profit leaders have weighed in to help guide our investments. I am grateful for this guidance and it shaped our decisions.

We have invested heavily in our students and schools, our COVID response, and in affordable housing and human services. We moved forward with one-time infrastructure investments – from roads and traffic calming to village centers and commercial corridors, and police facilities to multiple elementary school building. We supported the recovery of small businesses, restaurateurs and artists. We helped the youngest users of our Library and the oldest residents of our City. We improved our parks, athletic fields, playgrounds and recreation facilities as well as added more trees. The pie chart below shows our strategic intent; click on it for more details.



Altogether, the investment of the ARPA funds will be transformative for all Newtonians:

- We are helping residents facing hardships and people disproportionately impacted by the pandemic – too often people of color – with both short-term emergency housing support and longer-term economic stability and mobility initiatives.
- Four homes were bought to add to our stock of affordable housing.
- Rapid antigen tests were purchased.
- Ventilation systems were improved.

- Chromebooks were provided to students.
- We supported our little ones as they emerged from the isolation of the pandemic with a much larger, fully renovated Children's Room at the Newton Free Library.
- A new community garden is fast taking shape on the north side of the City.
- Trails were improved and trails and playgrounds became more accessible.
- Athletic fields were improved with lighting.
- More trees were cared for, something that proved particularly timely with the extreme drought we've been through this summer.
- Our employees received stipends for their extraordinary service during the pandemic.
- Roads were repaired.
- Artists were supported.
- A new Senior Center was designed and additional green space for the users and the Newtonville community was acquired.
- We moved forward with architects to rebuild, renovate or improve four elementary schools – Countryside, Lincoln-Eliot, Horace-Mann and Franklin.

Please see the full list of investments on the City website [here](#).

We are consciously retaining \$6 million, almost 10%, of the ARPA funds. These funds may still be needed for continued COVID-19 response and recovery efforts and for unforeseen repercussions of the pandemic, additional financial hardships or unpredictable circumstances.

While we received many great suggestions for worthy investments, the dollar value of the suggestions far outstripped the amount of funding. That said, the spirit of almost all the recommendations have been honored. The values and goals embodied in the requests will continue to inform our deployment of our capital and operating investments.

As we take these significant steps to move Newton forward, I'm conscious of how much challenging work we still have in front of us; how much of our aging infrastructure still needs updating; how much more we need to do for the most vulnerable among us and for our children, our students and our older residents; how much more we must do to confront the climate crisis. We are a tremendous community of engaged, caring, passionate people – I'm honored to answer the future's challenges alongside you.

Warmly,

Ruthanne