

# INVESTING IN THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and other public funds to better New Orleans





# ADDRESSING THE ROOT OF VIOLENCE

These proposals are aimed at addressing the root causes of violence: disinvestment, houselessness, marginalization, and isolation

To truly stop violence and build thriving communities, we must invest in affordable housing, violence prevention and intervention, youth development, and community equity

These proposals are effective, community-driven, and evidence-based

# TIMELINE OF COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT SINCE 2021

## 2021

### October:

- Vera presentation to Crisis Intervention Strategy Task Force

### December:

- CBNO letter to the Mayor and Council

## 2022

### March:

- Vera conducted meetings with Council offices

### April:

Vera conducted meetings with Council offices

- Vera presented to the Council Criminal Justice Committee
- Vera communication with CAO's office

### May:

- Vera communication with CAO's office

### August:

- NOWCRJ attended Council Budget Meetings

### September:

- Vera & LaFHAC provided public comment at the Council Budget Committee Meeting
- NOWCRJ provided public comment at Regular Council Meeting
- Vera sign-on letter to the Mayor and Council
- Vera communication with CAO's office
- Vera & NOWCRJ conducted meetings with Council office

## 2022 Continued

### October:

- Vera, LaFHAC, and NOWCRJ provided comments at both Mayoral Town Halls
- Vera and NOWCRJ conducted meetings with Council offices
- NOWCRJ invited Mayor to meet with the membership
- NOWCRJ provided public comment at Mayor's budget presentation to the Council

### November:

- LaFHAC conducted meetings with Council offices
- LaFHAC and NOWCRJ provided public comment at the Council Budget Hearings
- LaFHAC letter to Mayor and Council
- Vera communication with CAO's office
- NOWCRJ press conference in front of City Hall
- NOWCRJ submitted a petition to the Mayor and Council

### December:

- LaFHAC conducted meetings with Council offices
- Vera & LaFHAC conversations with Council offices during the final budget passage
- Vera communication with CAO's office
- NOWCRJ sign-on letter to City Council

## 2023

### January:

- LaFHAC conducted meetings with Council offices
- NOWCRJ provided public comment at City Council Budget Meeting
- Vera sent letters to Councilmembers

### February:

- NOWCRJ provided public comment at City Council Budget Meeting

# Community Feedback Process

Organizations contacted: 37  
Districts contacted: All

ACLU Louisiana  
ALAS  
Café Reconcile  
Center for Restorative Approaches  
Daughters Beyond Incarceration  
Dillard University's Center for Racial Justice  
Eye on Surveillance  
First 72+  
Friends and Family of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children  
Home is Here  
Imagine Water Works  
Innocence Project New Orleans  
Isaiah Institute of New Orleans  
Justice and Accountability Center  
Liberation Collective/Community Safety Coalition  
Louisiana Center for Children's Rights  
Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center  
Louisiana Public Health Institute  
New Orleans Youth Alliance  
New Orleans Voices for Accountability and Safety  
New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice  
Orleans Public Defenders  
Operation Restoration  
Our Voice Nuestra Voz  
People's DA Coalition  
Power Coalition  
Promise of Justice Initiative  
Rethink NOLA  
Roots of Music  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund  
St. Charles Center for Faith + Action  
Ubuntu Village  
Together Gert Town  
Vera Institute of Justice  
Violence Prevention Institute at Tulane University  
Voice of the Experienced  
Voters Organized to Educate  
Women With a Vision

# AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT GUIDELINES

- New Orleans has received a total of \$388 million in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRL).
- These are flexible funds intended to “foster a strong, inclusive, and equitable recovery, especially uses with long-term benefits for health and economic outcomes.”

# TREASURY GUIDELINES

US Treasury  
Reporting  
Guidelines:

Expenditure  
Categories  
and  
Uses of  
Funds

## EC 1

Promoting  
public health

Making investments that increase access to public health services, including mental health services (1.10), substance use services (1.11), and prevention in congregate settings like jails (1.4).

## EC 2

Supporting  
economic  
recovery

Making investments in agencies and people that were disparately harmed by the pandemic to propel and promote economic recovery, including aid to nonprofit organizations (2.10) and job assistance programs (2.7).

## EC 3

Increasing  
equitable  
outcomes

Making investments that necessarily respond to the disparate impact the pandemic had on Black communities, other communities of color; including community violence interventions (3.16), community health workers (3.14), housing services (3.11).

# ARPA & Fund Balance

- The December 2022 Bureau of Government REsearch (BGR) report makes it clear that Fund Balance funds cannot be segregated from ARPA funds and the priorities they were intended to serve.
- The report shows that at least \$139M of the first tranche of ARPA funds was appropriated to make up for lost revenue, but was **never actually spent** because the City didn't lose as much revenue as expected.
- That \$139M, which could be an even larger number once we have a full accounting of 2022 spending, rolled over into the Fund Balance but is **actually just unspent ARPA funds**.
- There is now **\$300M of Fund Balance** available and we strongly believe at least \$139M of it should be allocated like ARPA funds, to meet the needs of the people most impacted by the pandemic and the resulting economic downturn.
- We appreciate that some of your offices have similarly encouraged us to think of Fund Balance funds this way, especially after the Mayor and Council agreed to spend down **two-thirds of the remaining ARPA funds last December with little public engagement or notice**.
- Therefore, we understand the remaining **ARPA and Fund Balance funds to total roughly \$209M** and we are presenting proposals for \$147 of those funds

# Vetting our ARPA Asks

All of the following investments were vetted using the following questions:

- Which City department is going to manage this funding and who will ultimately run the program?
- What evidence is there that the City can manage the program or succeed? Is this similar to something that already exists or are we building it from scratch?
- Why does this make sense for one-time funding? If it's a new program, what opportunities exist to continue funding in future years?
- How many people/households is it expected to serve? Will those people be from marginalized or disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 communities?





# Affordable Housing Investments

Total: 107M across 5 investments

## Justification:

- New Orleans has been in the midst of a housing crisis since Hurricane Katrina, which has been recently exacerbated by the impacts of COVID-19, Hurricane Ida, and record-high inflation.
- Connecting the unhoused or those on the verge of being unhoused to safe, stable, affordable housing is one of the most efficient, cost-effective, and just solutions to slow our homelessness crisis and address the underlying causes of violence in our city.
- New Orleans would be in good company in spending ARPA funds on affordable housing programs. Over 100 states and local jurisdictions have funded affordable housing, including Houston, Miami, Louisville, St. Louis, and dozens of others.

# HOUSING PROPOSAL 1:

## *Permanently- and Deeply-affordable Rental Housing Construction*



**Amount Requested:** \$70M

**Details:** The funds should be dedicated to the construction or rehab of up to 2,000 permanently-affordable rental housing units in high-opportunity and gentrifying neighborhoods to serve families at 50% AMI or below.

### **Justification:**

- Investing in the construction of brick-and-mortar affordable housing that will serve the community for decades to come is one of the most cost-effective and impactful uses of one-time funding available.
- The Office of Community Development already has the staff and expertise to award funds in this manner through its existing Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) process and could produce up to 2,000 units.

# HOUSING PROPOSAL 2:

## *Community Taskforce Plan to Reduce Street Homelessness*

**Amount Requested:** \$15M

**Details:** The Plan would fund the evidence-based practices of:

- Permanent Supportive Housing for people living on the street with severe behavioral health and other disabilities,
- Rapid Re-Housing rent assistance and case management to quickly get people off the street into permanent housing,
- Non-congregate shelter for individuals with the most serious behavioral health disabilities,
- Improving access to access to congregate shelter and
- Program evaluation.

### **Justification:**

- The plan is designed to end homelessness for the 420 people currently living on the street in New Orleans and has been matched by \$15M in commitments from major healthcare institutions, businesses, and philanthropies.
- This one-time boost to the member agencies of the New Orleans Continuum of Care, who already perform these functions and serve this population, is essential to stem the tide of homelessness while we fund the construction of thousands of units of affordable housing.



# HOUSING PROPOSAL 3:

## *Renter-Occupied Rehab Program*



**Amount Requested:** \$10M

**Details:** The program would offer forgivable loans of \$35k-\$50k to small landlords that will help them repair health and safety violations in 200-500 apartments in exchange for holding their rents affordable.

### **Justification:**

- The program will simultaneously meet three goals: offer support to undercapitalized small business owners, address health and safety concerns in rental homes, and preserve our dwindling stock of naturally occurring affordable housing.
- The Office of Community Development (OCD) already has experience running a similar Owner-Occupied Rehab program and has been planning the program with local stakeholders and national experts for over six months.

# HOUSING PROPOSAL 4:

## *Owner-Occupied Rehab Program*

**Amount Requested:** \$10M

**Details:** This investment in our existing owner-occupied rehab program would allow that program to start to clear backlogs of low-income and disabled homeowners on a fixed income in need of repairs to keep their homes.



### **Justification:**

- The Office of Community Development (OCD) already runs the Owner-Occupied Rehab program, so there is no additional staff needed.
- A \$10M investment could serve roughly 300 households.

# HOUSING PROPOSAL 5:

*Anti-Displacement Fund for Renters displaced by health or safety violations*



**Amount Requested:** \$2M

**Details:** \$2M in one-time funding could support up to 1,000 households stuck in the most dangerous units and provide the City a cushion of three years to find a more permanent source of funding for the fund.

## **Justification:**

- As the evacuation of the Oakmont Apartment Complex showed, the City needs to have resources available to move people in dangerous conditions.
- The fund already exists and the Office of Community Development has experience administering this sort of support, as they did with Oakmont tenants and throughout the pandemic through the Emergency Rental Assistance program.

A young girl with dark skin and braided hair is smiling and sticking her tongue out. She is wearing a yellow t-shirt under red overalls. The background is a bright, slightly blurred indoor setting. The image is framed by a large, semi-circular grey shape on the left side of the slide.

# Youth Development

Total: **\$20M**

## Justification:

- New Orleans youth deserve high-quality investment. Frontline investments can establish a sustainable infrastructure centering positive youth development as the evidenced-based method to generate and sustain a results-focused continuum that extends support, coordination and connections across youth serving organizations
- Providing a much-needed infusion of investments in organizations supporting youth in school and in their neighborhoods will create community environments with protective factors and interventions to lessen the harm of exposure to violence and prevent further violence.

# YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

## *Youth Program Capacity and Network Building*

**Amount Requested:** \$20M

### **Details:**

- 1.5 Support the Children Youth and Planning Board to grow, build, and increase the capacity of youth programs
2. Creation of a fund focused on engaging opportunity youth both in school and in their neighborhoods, in collaboration with the Children and Youth Planning Board and the following organizations: Operation Restoration, Youth Empowerment Project, ALAS, Daughters Beyond Incarceration, Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children, Center for Restorative Justice, Roots of Music, New Orleans Youth Alliance, and Louisiana Center for Children's Rights

### **Justification:**

- Well-funded, coordinated youth development programs are highly effective strategies to prevent youth violence and crime
- Providing youth with comprehensive, accessible and engaging positive youth development programming has been proven to allow youth the opportunity to develop positive behaviors and conflict resolution skills







# Community Violence

Total: 2M

Justification:

- When funded properly, Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs can reduce shootings and gun violence by up to 30 percent while also saving money.
- The City of New Orleans should broaden its CVI programs in the Office of Gun Violence Prevention by funding full time social workers and technology for the Community Crisis Intervention Team, which visits shooting victims and their families to prevent further conflict and retaliation.
- The City must invest in stable, robust strategies to address violence through a comprehensive, coordinated network of services and supports

# COMMUNITY VIOLENCE PROPOSAL

## *Expand Community Violence Intervention Services*

**Amount Requested:** \$2M

**Details:** increase the budget of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention so that it can quickly expand violence prevention and intervention services and programs and analyze data to implement a sustainable plan to address the ongoing increase in violence.

### **Justification:**

- Gun violence has risen across the country since the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, especially in New Orleans, which has the highest rate of homicide among comparable sized cities
- Cities like Oakland saw a 7-year stretch of ~50% reduction in fatal and nonfatal injury shootings when they invested comparable money into community violence interventions
- Adult life coaching, youth life coaching, street outreach, and shooting response and homicide support have all been shown to be sustainable and effective interventions to reduce shootings and homicides.



A hand is shown holding a stack of four light-colored wooden blocks. The blocks are stacked vertically, with the top block being the widest and each subsequent block below it being narrower, creating a stepped effect. The words on the blocks, from top to bottom, are: BELONGING, INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, and EQUITY. The background is a dark, solid color.

**BELONGING**

**INCLUSION**

**DIVERSITY**

**EQUITY**

# Community Equity

Total: 18M

## Justification:

- Community equity and cohesion are essential to functioning democracies and thriving communities. For people to have faith in the government, they must have fair and equitable access to services and support.
- Marginalized communities were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and will continue to be vulnerable to worse outcomes from natural disasters if we do not create a more equitable community infrastructure.

# EQUITY PROPOSAL 1:

## *Subsidizing Public Transportation*

**Amount Requested:** \$5M

**Details:** Creating a zero-fare program provides economic relief and addresses transportation inequity for a rider population that is majority low-income workers, youth, and seniors, who were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19

### **Justification:**

- Ensure that public transportation provides a reliable and accessible means to travel from every area of the city of New Orleans and does not create a barrier for low-income residents without personal transportation
- The New Orleans Regional Transit Authority has seen ridership decrease, from 15.47 million rides in 2019 to 6.95 million rides in 2021
- Public transportation is an effective tool in mitigating the damages to our environment from climate change



# EQUITY PROPOSAL 2:

## *Resilience and Sustainability*

**Amount Requested:** \$2M

**Details:** Increase the financial, service, and operations capacity of the Office of Resilience and Sustainability to address public health and resilience concerns in Orleans Parish through planning and research related to water, sewerage, electricity and broadband access in low-income and vulnerable communities.

### **Justification:**

- The city of New Orleans is on the frontlines of climate change, is disproportionately threatened by an increasingly volatile climate, and needs to build strong lasting infrastructure so that it can adapt
- There is an unprecedented amount of federal competitive funding as a result of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, but the process to find, apply for and manage such competitive funding opportunities is complicated and time-consuming and requires access to analytic data and tools
- Local funding can support the much-needed planning, project design, data, and community engagement work federal funds does not support



# EQUITY PROPOSAL 3:

## *Language Access Pilot*

**Amount Requested:** \$500,000

**Details:** Appropriate funds to the Council of the City of New Orleans to provide interpreters for public meetings held by the City of New Orleans, to translate all existing, public-facing, City government-issued materials, and to develop a long-term language access plan for all City government agencies.

### **Justification:**

- The City of New Orleans has 30,000 residents who speak a language other than English in the home, including 14,000 Spanish-speaking residents and 4,000 Vietnamese speaking residents;
- Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires equal access to governmental services and information as well as the ability to participate in governmental meetings and the democratic process regardless of national origin
- The COVID-19 pandemic revealed that clear communication from government agencies is critical in combating misinformation about public health emergencies



# EQUITY PROPOSAL 4:

## *Food Security*

**Amount Requested:** \$5M

**Details:** 1) Provide aid to food banks and related organizations to increase their capacity and inventory to better serve communities in New Orleans. 2) Expand access to traditional government food pantries to families who barely make too much to qualify and to undocumented immigrants and others who may not have identification or the proper paperwork. 3) Support local food producers when possible to doubly invest in residents, as consumers and as businesses.

### **Justification:**

- COVID 19 pandemic devastated low- and middle-income household resources, including food budgets
- the COVID 19 pandemic overwhelmed the resources of food banks as requests for food assistance greatly increased



# EQUITY PROPOSAL 5:

## *Labor Audit*

**Amount Requested:** \$500,000

**Details:** Undergo an audit of contractor and subcontractor payrolls and past labor complaints to ensure legal and equitable treatment of all workers on city contracts or subcontracts to complies with the City's Living Wage, Local Hire, Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, and Ban the Box ordinances with oversight from an Essential Worker Task Force

### **Justification:**

- As the City engages in more contracts with Federal grants following the COVID-19 Pandemic, we must ensure contractors employment practices are legal
- a team of paid auditors is necessary to ensure relevant city contractors and subcontractors are complying with the City's Living Wage, Local Hire, Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, and Ban the Box ordinances
- To advise, guide, and provide transparency and accountability for the team of auditors, we must create an Essential Worker Task Force of relevant city government representatives, including, but not limited to, the Office of Workforce Development, the Chief Administrative Office, the Inspector General's Office, and community worker representatives.





# EQUITY PROPOSAL 6:

## *Direct Cash Assistance*

**Amount Requested:** \$5.2M

**Details:** Supplement the income of essential workers who were ineligible for direct financial government assistance during the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic and who suffered negative consequences due to the pandemic

### **Justification:**

- Decades of research show that targeted monetary payments can help bring people out of poverty, improve their health and well-being, and increase the likelihood of finding and keeping a stable home and employment
- Individuals and families who were not eligible to receive any direct financial assistance faced the same impacts on employment, including job loss and difficulty finding new, stable employment
- Individuals who may have lost employment during COVID-19 shutdowns were often ineligible for any unemployment assistance



# Investment Summary

**Total: \$147M**

**Housing: \$107M**

**Youth Development: \$20M**

**Community Violence Prevention: \$2M**

**Community Equity: \$18M**

**BE A**

**LEADER**



# Thank you!

Will Snowden and Sarah Omojola, Vera Institute of Justice  
Maxwell Ciardullo, Louisiana Fair Housing Action Coalition  
Matt Olson, New Orleans Worker Center for Racial Justice