

March 8, 2022



**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF ST. LOUIS
MISSOURI**

**CITY HALL - ROOM 200
1200 MARKET STREET
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI 63103-2877
(314) 622-3201**

**TISHAURA O. JONES
MAYOR**

To the Members of the Housing, Urban Development, and Zoning Committee,

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reverse decades of disinvestment in St. Louis communities, helping us build a city that is fairer and more prosperous across racial lines and zip codes. Already through the first round of funding, nearly 300 youth have been served through an ARPA-funded basketball program, the City has deployed incentives to lift our COVID-19 vaccination rate, more than 7,000 St. Louis families have received direct payments to help put food on the table, and that's just the start.

Whether it's the first installment of ARPA funding or redistricting, community engagement is essential to produce the best result. In early January, my office met with President Reed's to discuss how we best use the rest of the funding we currently have in the bank to support St. Louis families - nearly \$109 million, \$69.5 million of which has already been allocated by the Board in the capital bill in line with the Capital Committee's recommendations. Since my office was not consulted prior to last week's Housing, Urban Development, and Zoning (HUDZ) Committee, I wanted to ensure my administration's position on the next installment of ARPA funding is clear.

My office's discussions with President Reed's staff to this point have not addressed the \$249 million still on its way to St. Louis, expected to hit the City's bank account in the coming months. Last week, Chairman Boyd stressed the need to begin appropriating this yet-to-arrive funding immediately. This is concerning; public input for such a significant allocation has been almost nonexistent, and City departments are assessing their budgets to ensure that ARPA funds amplify the impact of their budget priorities to build a strong foundation for a successful St. Louis well beyond 2026.

The Board will be rushing to make a more than \$240 million critical appropriation right up to the end of the current legislative session without necessary input and a comprehensive

vetting of proposals. As such, I encourage the Board to focus on the nearly \$40 million funds currently in the bank as emphasized in my office's discussions with President Reed's staff. My priorities for this funding include:

- Direct Cash Assistance, or a similar Guaranteed Basic Income pilot for St. Louis families;
- An American with Disabilities Act transition plan to put St. Louis on the path to better accessibility and equity;
- Infrastructure improvements in North St. Louis to prime neighborhoods surrounding the future National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency for further growth;
- Early childhood education to help families return to the workforce;
- Support for our Department of Health so they can continue their critical work to protect St. Louisans from COVID-19;
- Building stabilization, maintenance, deconstruction and demolition to address vacancy and combat blight;
- Traffic calming and street paving to protect people driving, walking, or biking;
- Support for our arts institutions and neighborhood placemaking.

St. Louis has until 2024 to appropriate and 2026 to spend these federal funds, and we are spending current appropriated funds as quickly as we can in line with US Treasury regulations, city processes, and guidelines set out by the Board of Aldermen. As St. Louisans look to us to seize this incredible opportunity for our city, my administration will work with City departments to solicit input on appropriations. I am also ready to work together to stand up public town halls and hearings to listen to the public's priorities for the next tranche of ARPA funds, similar to the public input process currently underway in St. Louis County. Doing so will help St. Louis set priorities and develop a strategy to leverage public dollars for maximum impact, especially as we aim to reverse decades of disinvestment in North St. Louis.

We must govern with an open ear to St. Louis residents and with an eye to maximizing the impact of this funding. Throwing together a proposal for funding with no further public input and no input from our City's departments does not honor those principles. Until then, based on the concerns outlined above, I cannot support an appropriation of hundreds of millions of dollars at this time.

Sincerely,



Tishaura O. Jones
Mayor, City of St. Louis

Cc: Board of Aldermen President Lewis Reed