

## **Framework for an Equitable Recovery**

St. Louis is at a crossroads. Deep racial inequities, compounded by an unprecedented pandemic, economic recession, and a wave of violence have pushed families across our city to the brink. The over half a billion dollars coming to the city through the American Rescue Plan represents a lifeline, and my first priority as mayor will be to expedite delivery of direct relief in the form of mass vaccination clinics, rental and mortgage assistance, small business relief, and wrap around support for the unhoused.

I will work to ensure that we seize this once in a generation opportunity to transform an intolerable and unsustainable status quo. We need to make bold investments designed to chart a new course towards justice, equity and democracy. Just as we intentionally invested in the Central Corridor for the last fifty years, we must use Recovery Act dollars to breathe new life into North St. Louis and parts of South St. Louis. We can use these funds to build affordable housing, expand public transit, renovate schools slated for closure, upgrade community and recreation centers, provide free public wi-fi, redesign our 911 dispatch system, transform the city's vacant land from a liability into an asset, invest in workforce development, and more. The possibilities are endless, and I'll need your help in order to ensure that my administration's priorities reflect your needs. I'm committed to incorporating your ideas in order to make this a people's stimulus.

Process is policy, and I believe that bringing in diverse perspectives will help us make wise investments and build a diversified portfolio. At the end of the day, the truth is that half a billion dollars is too much money for the city to allocate alone, and we'll need help. That's why I plan to allocate a portion of the funds through a participatory budgeting process. Additionally, I plan to transfer funds to public entities like SLPS, BiState, the Continuum of Care and the Housing Authority, and to capitalize public-private partnerships focused on equitable development and college promise programs.

At the end of the day, however, the money will flow through the city, and as Mayor, I will immediately plug in to the federal stimulus command center, connect with statewide partners to bring mass vaccination clinics to St. Louis, work with the Board of Estimate & Apportionment and Board of Aldermen to appropriate stimulus funds, negotiate MoUs to transfer funds to other public entities with the capacity to deliver

direct relief, and issue RFPs to partner with community organizations across the city to reach out to vulnerable communities - senior citizens without internet access, single mothers too busy to navigate byzantine bureaucratic processes, and countless others - to ensure that they have access to the vaccine, rental assistance, and other resources.

I am committed to full transparency throughout this process, including an open data portal tracking appropriations and expenditures. I will also establish an intergovernmental task force with working groups focused on implementation: negotiating intergovernmental transfers and MoUs, working with city departments to issue RFPs, designing and staffing an office of participatory budgeting, and more. All working group meetings will be open to the public, and the taskforce will hold regular hearings, providing all residents with the opportunity to ask questions and offer comments. Finally, I will dedicate stimulus funds to hiring a robust and independent auditing team to work with Comptroller Green.

## **American Rescue Plan Act of 2021**

Limitations: The city's \$517M allocation must be spent by 12/31/2024 for one of the following purposes:

- To respond to the public health threat posed by COVID-19 and its "negative economic impacts".
- To support and provide premium pay to essential workers in the public and private sectors.
- To fund any government services, up to the amount of revenue loss due to COVID, calculated relative to real revenues collected in FY2019.
- To invest in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.
- Transfers: The city may transfer funds to "special-purpose unit[s] of state or local government" as well as to the Continuum of Care.
- Funds may not be used to offset tax cuts or to pay pension funds.

### Process

- Certification: The mayor must certify to treasury that the city's intended uses are consistent with the permitted uses.
- Timeline: The first tranche of funds (50% - \$259M) shall be paid not later than 60 days after enactment. The second tranche of funds (50% - \$258M) may not be paid earlier than 12 months after the first tranche.

- Appropriation: Upon receipt of the funds, the city must pass an appropriating ordinance recommended by the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, approved by the Board of Aldermen, and signed by the Mayor
- Reporting: The city shall make reports as provided by forthcoming treasury guidance and rulemaking.

## **Direct Relief**

As always, I have listened to those closest to the problem: to the thousands of tenants with evictions hanging over their heads, protected only by eviction moratoria under constant attack; and to the small businesses hanging on by a thread, buoyed by communities which treasure them, and trying everything to make it to the other side of the pandemic. I have heard their dissatisfaction with the city's ongoing failure to effectively disburse funds, and I feel a profound responsibility to deliver.

### Rental, Mortgage & Utility Assistance

- The city's decentralized approach is widely recognized as dysfunctional and inefficient. Not only has the city failed to disburse funds in a timely manner, applicants are frequently tossed from one entity to another, creating multiple opportunities for vulnerable people to get lost or disengage.
- I will streamline the application process for rental and mortgage assistance, centralizing disbursement in a trusted partner, establishing both an online intake portal and multiple in person intake sites across the city, and funding direct service organizations to conduct outreach to marginalized communities.
- Housing is a human right, and I will work to establish and fund a permanent rental assistance fund.

### Small Business Grants

- I will work with the St. Louis Development Corporation to expand the city's small business grant program. This program will fund business interruption costs, new operational costs created by COVID, and reopening costs. Eligible costs will include rents, utilities, salaries, benefits, and more.
- Funds will be allocated according to demonstrated need, as determined by applicant's income statement and balance sheet, and according to neutral principles which prioritize getting support to the sectors that need it most. All participants will be required to provide an update to determine the effectiveness of the program, and a random subset of participants will be audited to protect against fraud.

### Emergency Shelter & Rapid Re-Housing

- As soon as the eviction moratorium runs out, hundreds, and possibly thousands of city residents will be left without a home. I will instruct the Department of Human Services to work hand in hand with the Continuum of Care to set up hundreds of new shelter beds, possibly in the form of an intentional encampment, as soon as possible.
- I believe that, as a city, we must wrap our arms around our most vulnerable communities, and provide unhoused individuals with basic necessities including food, transportation vouchers, mobile phones, healthcare, including mental health services, and more. These shelters must be hubs for supportive services, including social workers and case managers who can plug families into rapid-rehousing programs.

### Targeted Basic Income

- Between stimulus checks, expansions to the child tax credit and unemployment insurance, thousands of St. Louisans are already receiving a form of basic income. I will dedicate funds to supplement these programs, supporting those who fall through the cracks, including refugees and undocumented residents, expanding monthly allocations to those with demonstrated need, and extending the support through 2024 to the extent funds allow.

## **Transfers**

While the City of St. Louis will receive the lion's share of local stimulus funds, a wide range of other public bodies face serious fiscal challenges. Perhaps more importantly, I believe that the magnitude of this stimulus calls for a whole of government approach, and entities like SLPS, BiState, MSD, SLHA, SLPL, STLCC, GRG, MHB, and CoC represent vital components of the local public sector. Thankfully, the American Rescue Plan foresaw the necessity of transfers, and provides that "The city may transfer funds to "special-purpose unit[s] of state or local government" as well as to the Continuum of Care. While it does not detail the process according to which such transfers may be made, I plan to transfer the funds pursuant to Memorandums of Understanding negotiated by the Mayor and approved by the Board of Estimate & Apportionment and Board of Aldermen. Among countless other provisions, these MoU's will provide for an oversight mechanism and require each recipient to deliver quarterly reports on expenditures.

### BiState

- BiState is reliant on sales taxes, and thus took an especially severe fiscal hit over the course of the pandemic. I will transfer sufficient funds to - at least - match the reduction in the city's contribution relative to FY19. This transfer will be predicated on an MoU providing that these funds must be dedicated to establishing multiple bus rapid transit routes in the city of St. Louis.
- BRT has a demonstrated capacity to connect people to jobs, but its catalytic potential will only be realized to the extent it physically transforms the corridor. That's why a key component will be building robust stations - including heating and AC, a real time arrival display, a public bathroom, and bike racks - near schools, hospitals, community centers, dense housing, grocery stores, parks, commercial corridors and more.

### SLPS

- While SLPS is also slated to receive over \$100M in stimulus funds, I nonetheless hope to partner with SLPS to transform schools slated for closure into hubs for early childhood, adult remedial, and technical education.
- Because these funds may only be spent through 2024, allocating them to fund annual operational costs is unsustainable, and a recipe for disaster. Instead, I anticipate the annual funding for the operation of these schools to come from a new property tax associated with either the expansion or creation of a Special School District in the city by 2024.

### Other local public entities:

- I hope to partner with the St. Louis Housing Authority, Continuum of Care and Mental Health Board to provide direct relief, and expect a portion of the rental assistance, emergency shelter, and rapid rehousing funds to be allocated pursuant to MoUs with these entities.
- The St. Louis Community College is an enormous asset for the city, and I will work with their leadership team to identify any gaps we can help fill. Additionally, I expect that STLCC will receive a significant portion of the funds allocated through the St. Louis College Promise program.
- Great Rivers Greenway is another enormous regional asset, and I share their vision for a city in which it's possible to walk or bike from North Riverfront Park, down to the Arch, and over to Forest Park without seeing a car. I am especially passionate about aligning greenways with bus rapid transit in order to build a holistic, multi-modal transit strategy.

- The St. Louis Public Library is another local treasure, and I am looking forward to working together to get books to children across the city, and help bridge the digital divide by renting out mobile phones and wi-fi hotspots.
- The city's county offices have also taken a fiscal hit over the course of the pandemic, and I will work with them to ensure they have the resources to effectively fulfill their functions and meet their legal obligations.

## **City of St. Louis**

I am dedicated to transforming the city from an instrument of privilege into a champion for progress, and I will seize this opportunity to fund overdue investments into the hollowed-out communities which are the bedrock of a safe, equitable and sustainable city. While the expenditures in every other category must be dedicated, to the extent they don't fit other narrow permissible uses, to addressing the "negative economic impacts" of COVID, the American Rescue Plan also permits cities to allocate funds to fund any government services, up to the amount of revenue loss due to COVID, calculated relative to real revenues collected in FY2019. For St. Louis, that gives us well over \$100M of extremely flexible funds. This informs the wide range of programs described below:

### Public Wi-Fi

- These funds afford us a unique opportunity to begin to bridge the digital divide by installing free public Wi-Fi in city parks, bus stations, traffic lights, and other public property.
- As soon as I take office, I will work with the Board of Public Service to issue a RFP soliciting designs, proposals, and pricing for the procurement and installation of hundreds of outdoor access points with both 2.4 and 5 Gigahertz capacity, and a coverage radius of at least 90 meters.
- While RSMO 392.410(7) prohibits political subdivisions from establishing municipal broadband enterprises, it does not prohibit local governments from providing telecommunications services on their own property, or from paying telecommunications providers to deliver free internet access to city residents.

### Affordable Housing

- The Affordable Housing Trust Fund typically splits its modest allocation of funds between a variety of deserving projects. This is a sensible approach given its limited funds, but with additional scale, I will ask the Director of the Affordable Housing Commission to reserve a large portion of the funds for strategic, high

impact investments. These should be allocated according to a competitive and transparent grant making process which rewards robust community engagement and planning processes, and prioritizes neighborhoods with the highest need.

- I am committed to replacing extractive models of ownership designed for slumlords to extract wealth from vulnerable communities, with democratic models, such as Community Land Trusts, which empower community members to set development priorities, reinvest profits in the neighborhood, and help tenants save and build wealth.

### Infrastructure Backlog

- I will fund a portion of the city's infrastructure backlog, including: bridge repairs, fleet replacement, light upgrades, sidewalk repair, community & recreation center upgrades, and more.
- Demolition, deconstruction & land remediation: we must turn the city's vacant land from a liability into an asset, and to that end, I will ensure the Building Division and Land Remediation Authority have the resources they need in order to clear dangerous sites, conduct proactive site assembly, and sow the seeds for expanded urban agriculture in St. Louis.
- Improvements to city community & rec centers, including: basketball courts,
- The city's 911 system is intolerably slow, siloed and inefficient. I will invest funds in building a centralized Public Safety Access Point, and seize the opportunity to redesign dispatching protocols such that the default response is no longer a police response, and callers are empowered to identify what kind of response - EMS, Fire, Civilian First Responders, Clinicians, or Police - best fits their needs.
- For decades, the Water Department has kept rates low in the face of inflation and growing costs. Today, it faces a capital gap of hundreds of millions of dollars. These funds will not solve the overall problem, but a portion will be allocated to fund critical needs.
- I will prioritize upgrading election machines in order to both improve election security and empower voters to express their full and complete will.

### City Wide Pay Raise & Paid Family Leave

- City employees have worked their hearts out over the course of the pandemic, and I believe a city-wide pay raise is overdue. I will prioritize the over 90% of city employees (5300/5800) who make less than \$75,000, and raise the minimum salary in the city to \$32,000. Additionally, I will fund a generous paid family leave program.

### Reserves

- I believe a critical component of addressing the “negative economic impacts” of COVID will be to replenish the city’s reserves to their pre-crisis level.

## **Public-Private Partnerships**

There are certain projects which by their nature benefit from the strengths of both the public and private sectors. I will work to ensure that the following public-private partnerships have a board of directors and corporate structure designed to ensure that priorities are set according to a democratic process. Additionally, because the American Rescue Plan does not permit transfers directly to private entities, the following project funds will likely live in SLATE, SLPS and SLDC respectively.

### Workforce Development

- I will convene a regional consortium of major employers, educational institutions, civic organizations and community leaders, to expand and improve workforce development programs.
- I will ask the group to work to establish an year-round youth jobs program, expand programs for adult remedial education, and identify opportunities for new job training programs focused on the technical & certification needs of industry clusters poised for job growth, including: green jobs, healthcare, software, construction, manufacturing, logistics and hospitality.
- Each of these programs should have a physical footprint in neighborhoods across the city, and must be paired with wrap around services including transit and childcare vouchers, counseling and scholarships.

### St. Louis College Promise

- The St. Louis College Promise will guarantee every graduate of SLPS with a C average a \$10,000 scholarship to a school of their choice. Over 50 communities across the country have implemented college promise programs, and there is significant evidence that they improve attendance rates, graduation rates, GPAs, test scores, college enrollment rates and even the rate of enrollment in public school systems.
- While stimulus funds can help lay the foundation for this program, in order to be sustainable, it must live outside city government in an entity with extensive fundraising capacity. I will work with SLPS, local universities, and regional civic and business leaders to build this public-private partnership.

## Equitable Development Fund

- I will work with non-profit and private partners to capitalize an equitable development fund, including accounts dedicated to greenlining, oasisifying food deserts, stabilizing LRA properties, community gardens, providing solar, weatherization and home repair grants, and supporting M/WBE small businesses with the technical assistance they need to grow, and the low-interest loans they need to scale.
- I will work with SLDC and private partners to expand the InvestSTL program to support small businesses moving into the city, provide existing small businesses with the technical assistance they need to thrive, and offer low-interest loans to small businesses ready to scale.

## **Participatory Budgeting**

Participatory budgeting is a democratic process in which members of the public decide how to spend part of a public budget through a series of local assemblies, meetings, project proposals, and research that result in a final vote by the public to allocate discretionary funds to specific projects. I believe that empowering and engaging citizens in the democratic process improves the quality of public investments, is an antidote to the public's lack of trust in government, and contributes to a sense of community in the City.

- Office of Participatory Budgeting
  - Staff: Director; Project manager; Budget/data analyst; Public Information Officer; Web manager; Graphic designer; Facilitators
  - Materials: Food, transit, childcare vouchers; Stipends; Advertising/Comms budget; Rental budget; Office supplies; Technology
  - Contracts: Citizen Outreach; Community Engagement; Training & Education
- Youth Council Process
  - High school students apply, 15 are randomly selected (April-June)
  - Office of PB facilitates education and planning sessions (July-August)
  - Students spend fall semester holding (w/ OPB's support) community engagement/visioning meetings across SLPS high/middle schools.
  - Students spend spring semester developing projects/proposals w/ support from city staff.
  - Hold an expo at the convention center in April to present projects, and open online voting for projects.

- Voting is open through May.
- Project implementation begins & new round begins
- Ward Council Process
  - Equitable formula, allocating funds
  - Steering committees may, pursuant to the approval of the OPB, choose to spend up to 10% of their allocation on community engagement, event planning & stipends.
  - Random (jury rolls) selection of steering committee. Alderman vets to ensure current residence w/in ward and may w/ public notice, strike individuals from steering committee (equivalent of voir dire) (June)
  - Steering committee meets w/ alder and OPB for education and planning - alder serves as non-voting secretary/treasurer, OPB provides planning support and facilitation (July-August)
  - Community Engagement (September-November)
  - Project Development (December-March) - steering committee approves project descriptions
  - Project Presentations (April)
  - Online & In Person Voting (May)

## **Conclusion**

These proposals are not meant to be comprehensive, they are a starting point, and I welcome your feedback and insight. But though I am committed to a robust community engagement process, I am also committed to moving quickly to get these funds to the people who need it most.

We stand at a historic moment which demands renewed investment in communities who have been left out and left behind, who have been knocked down but who have refused to be knocked out, and those for whom the pandemic has hit the hardest.

I stand ready to lead on day one. I have strong relationships with our Comptroller, our Board President, the majority of the Board of Aldermen, our citywide elected officials, our Circuit Attorney, and our Congresswoman.

I'm ready to lead. I'm ready to unify. I'm ready to govern.