

Ideas to utilize upcoming American Rescue Plan dollars
Washoe County will be collecting feedback until November 30, 2021

Through the passage of the American Rescue Act of 2021 (H.R. 1319), state and local aid will be distributed to States, local governments, and tribal governments in the same manner as Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) from the CARES Act.

Funds are required to be spent within the following categories:

- Response to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts
- Response to workers performing essential work during the public health emergency
- The provision of government services due to revenue reduction
- Make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure

Members of community stakeholder groups and the public are encouraged to share their ideas using the form provided below.

Required

1.Name

Age Friendly Livable Reno Action Group, Donna Clontz AARP NV Lead Volunteer

2.Email donnanorm1@yahoo.com

3.Zip Code

89509, 89519, 89523, 89431, and 89436

4.Idea to utilize ARPA funds within the categories listed above

Response to public health emergency and its negative impacts for Washoe County older adults; provision of government services due to revenue reduction, especially focused on preventing homelessness by increasing access to affordable housing.

Idea: Create and fund a new pilot project to supplement HUD vouchers

The Age Friendly Livable Reno Action Group (made up of community members/service provider representatives, as well as members of Washoe County Senior Advisory Board, Sparks Senior Citizen Advisory Committee and Reno Senior Citizen Advisory Committee) recommend creation and funding of a 2-year pilot project to supplement HUD vouchers. The 2020-2023 Age Friendly Livable Reno Action Plan has three priorities to support: increased affordable housing, improved access to community and healthcare services and improved transportation options.

The following idea, contained in our 2020 Action Plan was proposed by one of our Action Planning Group members, Brent Boynton of Reno Housing Authority, who we tragically lost during the pandemic. We urge the County Commission to fund some projects that could increase affordable housing options for Washoe County elders:

The Reno Housing Authority (RHA), issues Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8 vouchers). They pay a percentage (based on need) of a person's monthly rent. But a voucher is worthless unless

a landlord accepts it, and his/her rent is considered reasonable according to federal guidelines. RHA clients typically take four to six months to find that combination in our current housing market.

We suggest a two-year pilot project to create a fund, not for renters, but for landlords—incentive money to keep rent low for qualifying seniors. We wouldn't need to reinvent the wheel. Qualification would follow HUD guidelines for eligibility, starting at 30% of area median income (AMI). This program could help seniors in one of two ways by:

- (1) Providing a "Rent Gap" supplement in cash (or as a property tax credit) to landlords who agree to rent to low- or moderate-income seniors (criteria to be established, for example, up to 50% of AMI), or by
- (2) Providing a supplement to landlords in an amount equal or greater than a Housing Choice Voucher if they rent to seniors who are not currently receiving HUD assistance, but who fit the HUD guidelines for Section 8 eligibility. This option could attract more seniors because of not carrying the stigma of public assistance.

Success could be easily measured by the number of new units furnished at reasonable rates to seniors through our program.

This project would expand existing Section 8 federal assistance with ARPA funding sources, specifically for seniors, at a time when HUD funding is dwindling. We suggest that ARPA funds could be granted to a 501(c)(3) organization, such as Center for Healthy Aging, and it could be administered by the Reno Housing Authority if the RHA were to receive an administration fee (which is the same way Section 8 is administered). We recommend RHA because it already has the tools and the framework to determine eligibility and the expertise in dealing with both renters and landlords. In order to sustain the project beyond the ARPA funding, the nonprofit organization would also do fundraising to seek contributions from individuals, businesses, foundations or governments to continue to fund the supplements.

We believe creating a local subsidy to be used in Section 8 fashion would create more affordable living spaces for seniors far more quickly than investment in new properties. While not providing needed housing for the region, it would make a greater percentage of existing housing affordable to seniors.