



HARRISONBURG | VA FRIENDLY BY NATURE



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City seeks input on addressing needs, inequities caused by COVID-19

Community invited to take survey, attend ARPA conversations on pandemic's impacts

HARRISONBURG, Va. – Residents, businesses and nonprofits impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic are being asked to share their experiences, and the needs recognized through those experiences, so City leaders can consider opportunities to improve upon services offered to our community and support ongoing needs.

A survey is now available, and public meetings upcoming, for the City of Harrisonburg's public engagement process concerning the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The City of Harrisonburg has been awarded \$23.8 million in ARPA funds to be used to support our community and address needs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The goals of the City's ARPA program are to:

- Support families and businesses struggling with the public health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Maintain vital public services, even amid declines in revenue resulting from the crisis
- Build a strong, resilient, and equitable recovery by making investments that support long-term growth and opportunity

"These funds represent a once-in-a-generation investment in our community, so it is critical that we hear from as many community members as possible to understand the impacts, needs, and ideas for restoring and transforming our community," Harrisonburg Mayor Deanna Reed said.

James Madison University's Institute for Constructive Advocacy and Dialogue is leading the public engagement process, which is now underway with the release of a public survey: https://jmu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_aXzDcOyaS40Nnl. It is available in English, Spanish, Arabic, French, Kurdish and Russian.

The survey asks participants to share how the pandemic has disrupted their lives and lifestyles and to identify what is needed to get the Harrisonburg community back on track. Some focus areas include Community Health and Wellness, Neighborhood Investments, Community Services for Individuals and Families, Public Facilities and Services, and Maintaining and Growing Jobs and Businesses.

"Our public input approach emphasizes inclusion of as many different voices as possible," Rob Alexander, PhD, with JMU's Institute for Constructive Advocacy and Dialogue, said. "As such, we will 'bring the public input meeting to the people' by



asking the community to invite our facilitators to come to their own spaces and places to hear and capture stories and ideas. Individuals interested in this option may make their request on the City's ARPA webpage."

Additionally, at least two public forums will be held across the city to give those interested an opportunity to engage directly with City staff about their experiences and community needs. The first of these will be held **Saturday, March 5, at the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center, 620 Simms Ave. The event will run from 1 to 3 p.m.** Anyone requiring an interpreter to take part in this event must request one four days prior to the event by calling City Hall at 540-432-7701.

The second community conversation will take place Monday, March 28, at Keister Elementary School, 100 Maryland Ave. This event will run from 6 to 8 p.m.

More information on the process is available at the City's website, www.harrisonburgva.gov/ARPA. Future public conversation dates and locations will be posted to the Harrisonburg ARPA webpage and the City's social media pages once available.

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to 51,000 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.



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