



ZENCITY TEMPERATURE CHECK REPORT

# ARPA Funding

Prepared for Brooklyn Park, MN

# Introduction

The following report reviews resident input into how the City should best use federal funding provided by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) through an analysis of responses to a survey designed by Zencity and deployed by the City of Brooklyn Park. The survey was conducted between September 20 and October 17, 2021, and included 6 closed-ended and 1 open-ended question. The survey received a total of 733 responses.

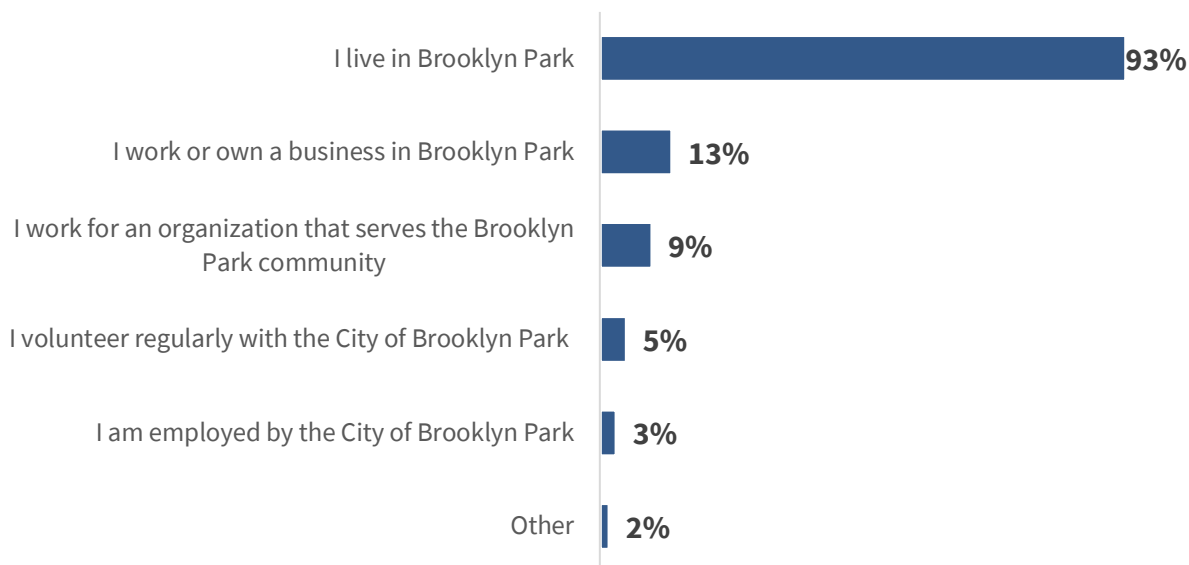
The following analysis includes: Results of each closed-ended question; Results of the open-ended question; Related social media discourse analysis; Main takeaways and recommendations.

## Executive Summary

- Many in the community are concerned about public safety issues, and a majority of respondents supported funding violence intervention and support services to alleviate rising crime.
- Funding more “upstream” issues that can contribute to violence and crime — such as mental health services, youth outreach and programming, and housing and homelessness — also earned the approval of many respondents.
- Respondents also supported funding community-based organizations and highlighted the unique position they are in to address community needs.

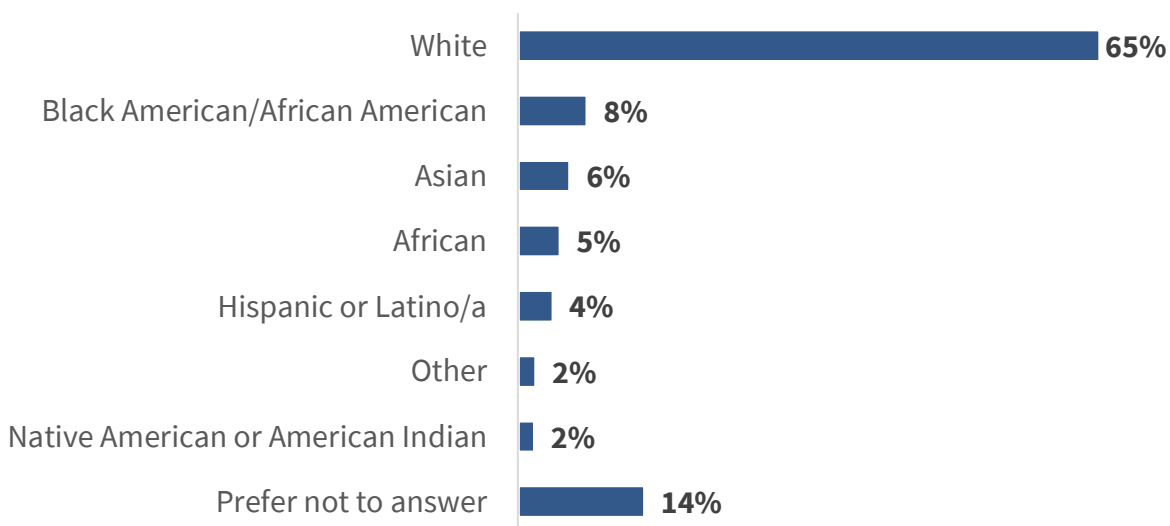
# Demographics

## Connection to Brooklyn Park

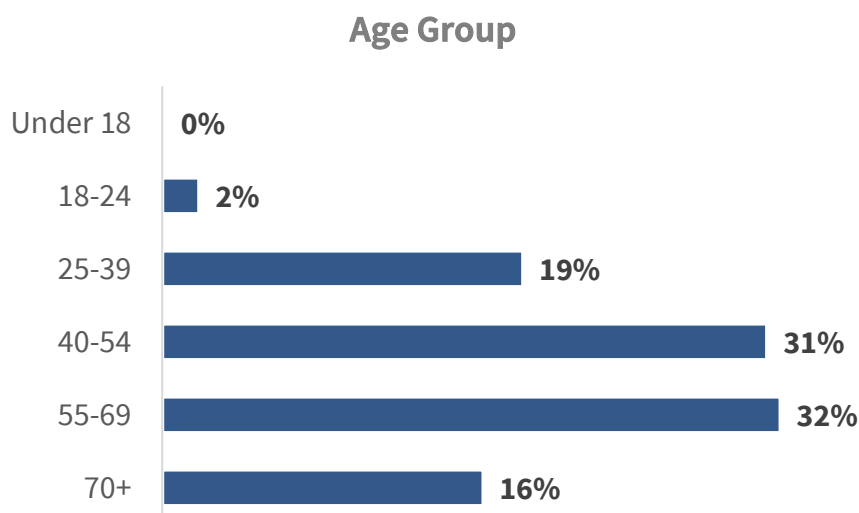


**At 93%, the overwhelming majority of respondents were residents of Brooklyn Park.** Another 13% worked or owned a business in the city. Most of the “Other” responses came from former residents, local volunteers, and residents of Brooklyn Center.

## Ethnicity and Race



**Almost two-thirds (65%) of respondents identified as white**, more than 8x greater than the second-largest group (Black American/African American). Additionally, 14% of respondents preferred not to self-identify.



**Nearly two-thirds of respondents were between the ages of 40 and 69**, with the 55-69 (32%) and 40-54 (31%) age groups representing the largest cohorts. Comparatively, slightly more than a fifth (21%) of respondents were below the age of 40.

## Methodology

In order to provide a holistic overview of the community's response, **Zencity analyzed the data in a way that provides a representative snapshot of the community's attitudes and priorities.**

For the responses to each closed-ended question in the following section, we use an industry-standard statistical technique called rake weighting **to correct for any differences between the makeup of our survey respondents and the community as a whole** by using data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

## RESULTS ANALYSIS

# Closed-Ended Questions Analysis

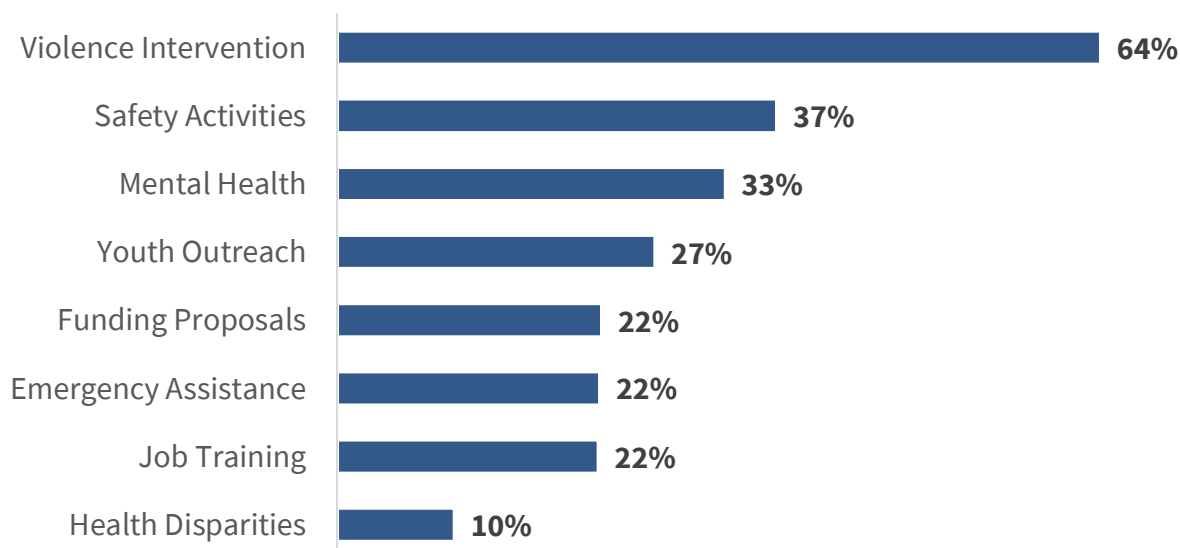
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Based on community input, below are proposed spending categories for the first half of the funds. Which of these activities do you think are most important for our city? (Choose up to 3)

Residents were asked to evaluate **8 proposed spending categories for ARPA funding**:

- 1.1 **Violence intervention** and support services
- 1.2 Neighborhood **safety activities**.
- 1.3 **Mental health** services
- 1.4 **Youth outreach** workers
- 1.5 **Job training** and placement programs
- 1.6 **Emergency assistance** (i.e., housing, food).
- 1.7 **Funding proposals** from community-based organizations (i.e., housing, business support, nonprofit services)
- 1.8 Reduce **health disparities**, increasing access to vaccines and testing

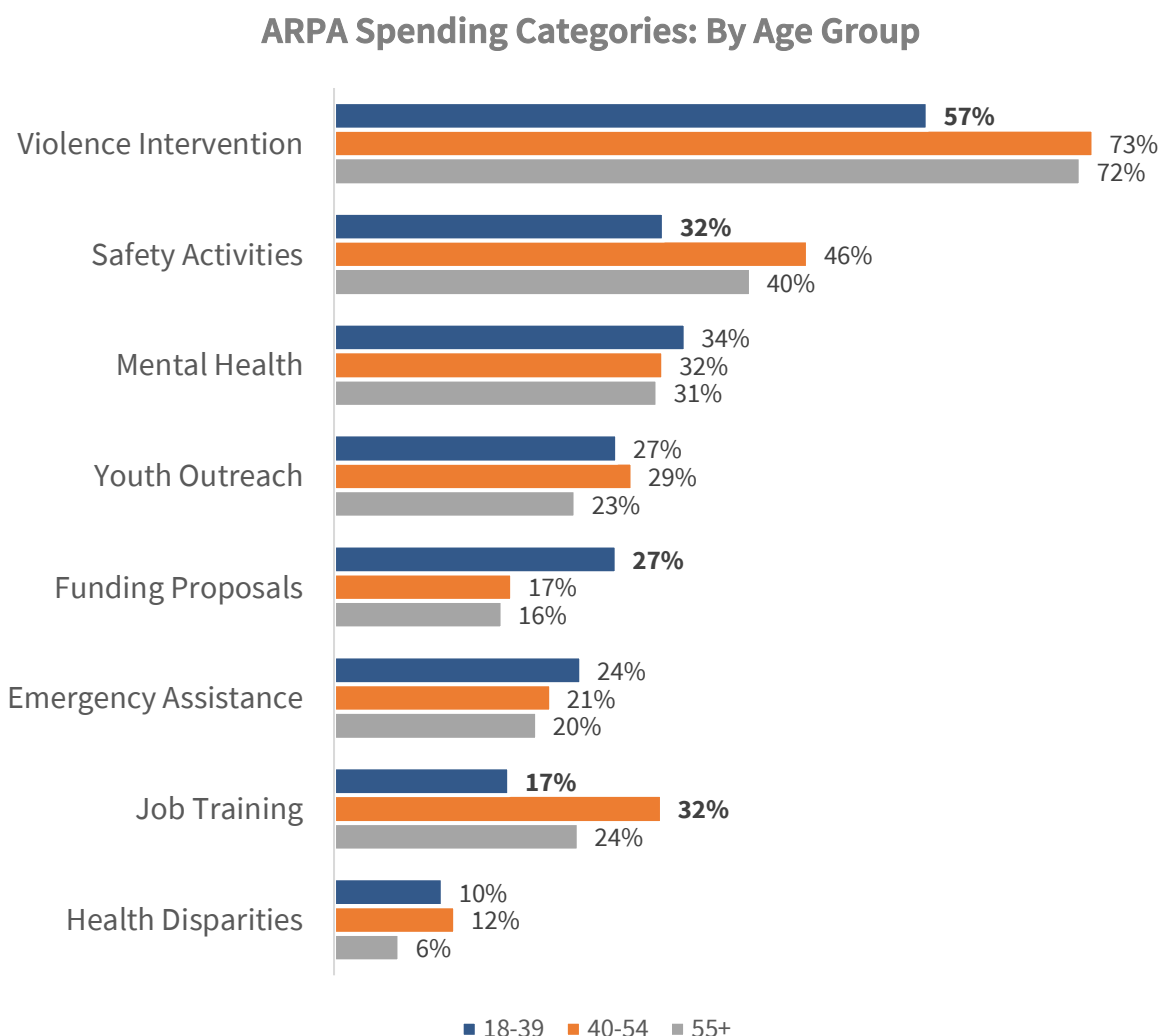
As shown in the graph below, **funding violence intervention and support services emerged as a consensus priority** for nearly two-thirds (64%) of the community.



**At least a third of respondents** also chose neighborhood safety activities (37%) and mental health services (33%). On the other hand, using ARPA funds to reduce health disparities in the community received the least number of votes (8%).

Additionally, 41 “Other” responses (6% of respondents) specified issues relating to public safety and law enforcement, taxation, and water treatment.

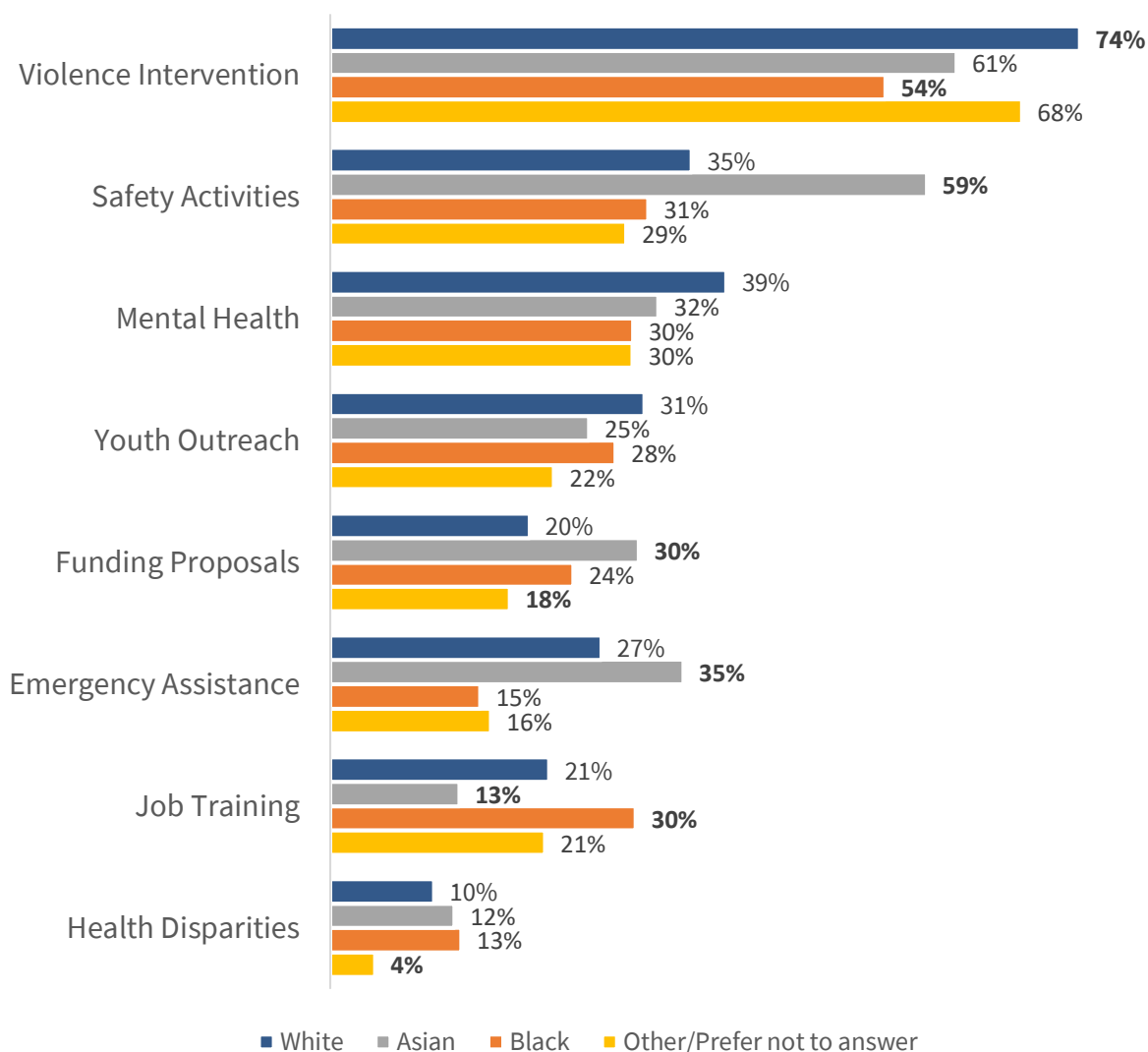
To pinpoint specific trends among demographic groups, we also **analyzed the responses to Q1 according to demographic groups**. In the following two graphs, **bolded figures represent statistically significant responses** among a certain demographic group when compared to the general population.



As seen, safety-related issues — Violence Intervention and Safety Activities — are top priorities for all age groups, **but younger respondents prioritize them significantly less than people over the age of 40**.

Further, **respondents under the age of 40 also prioritized funding proposals from community-based organizations significantly more than older respondents**. Finally, **the 40-54 age group was more likely to prioritize job training and placement programs**, while people under the age of 40 prioritized this issue significantly less.

## ARPA Spending Categories: By Ethnicity and Race

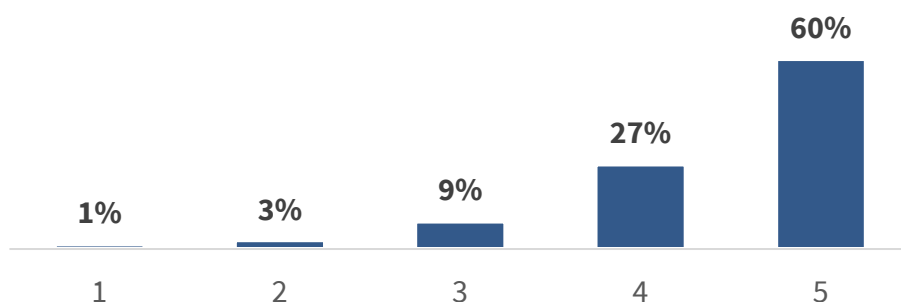


Safety issues are a top priority for all groups, **though white respondents were significantly more likely to prioritize Violence Intervention and Black respondents were significantly less likely to prioritize it compared to other groups.** On the other hand, Black respondents also prioritized Job Training significantly higher than other groups.

Finally, Asian respondents prioritized Neighborhood Safety significantly higher than other groups, as well as Funding Proposals, and Emergency Assistance.

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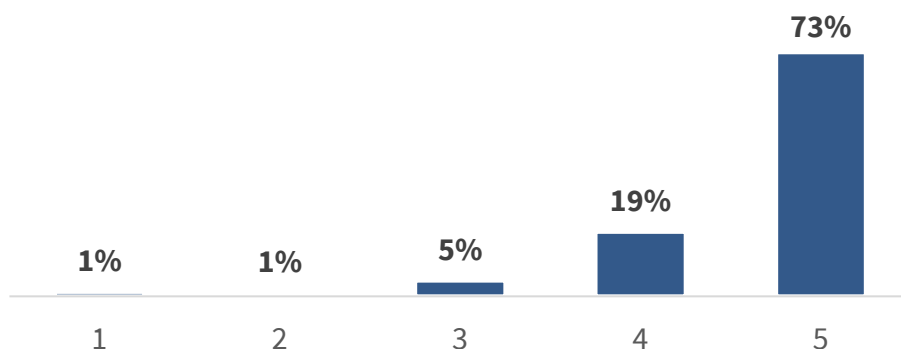
In your opinion, to what extent do the suggested actions that you just rated address the most crucial issues in the community? (1 - Not at all; 5 - Very much)



At 87%, **the overwhelming majority of respondents expressed some level of agreement that the proposed funding options listed in Q1 would address the community's most crucial issues.** Nearly two-thirds (60%) expressed the highest level of agreement, while only 4% expressed some level of disagreement.

3

In your opinion, to what extent do the suggested actions that you just rated have a positive impact on the community? (1 - Not at all; 5 - Very much)



Similar to Q3, **almost all (92%) respondents expressed some degree of agreement that investing in the spending categories positively impact the community.** Only 2% also voiced some level of disagreement with this statement.

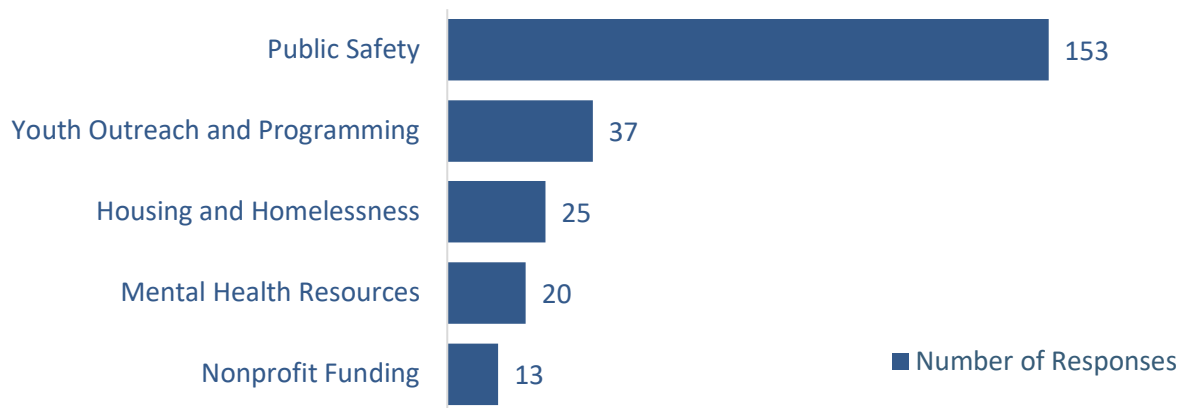


## RESULTS ANALYSIS

# Open-Ended Question Analysis

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Please share any thoughts you have on the city's use of American Rescue Plan dollars including anything you think should be changed.



When asked what the City should consider as part of its planning for the use of ARPA funds, **352 respondents offered input through free-text responses**. Analysis of these responses reveals that some of the common themes included:

- **Public Safety (153 responses):** By far, the most common issue raised in the free-text responses was concern about the state of the City's public safety. In particular, respondents advocated for increased funding for the police department, combatting gun and gang violence, and restoring an overall sense of safety in the community.

*"We need to make Brooklyn Park a safe place to live again. The violence in our city is out of control. Residents no longer feel safe in their community. The amount of gun violence is increasing and the police do not have enough resources to deal with it."*

- **Youth Outreach and Programming (37 responses):** More than a tenth of responses called for more resources to be directed toward more youth outreach and programming, with many directly linking this perceived deficiency to public safety concerns.

*"I think youth programs to provide early interventions to prevent our youth [from joining] a gang due to lack of hope for a future."*

- **Housing and Homelessness (25 responses)**: Many also pinpointed insufficient housing options and homelessness as priority areas and root causes of other issues facing the city.

*“Stable housing impacts every aspect of people’s lives. We need to increase affordable housing for large families.”*

- **Mental Health Resources (20 responses)**: Another group called for more mental health resources in the community, some of whom believed that addressing this area would alleviate some of the public safety issues.

*“We really need to improve access to mental health intervention, education, violence associated with mental health.”*

- **Nonprofit Funding (13 responses)**: Finally, some believed that ARPA dollars would have the most positive impact if distributed to local nonprofits given the success of their existing work in the community.

*“Community based organizations have an insight into what their communities need and how they have been affected by the pandemic. Having the funds to work with them will help address their immediate needs.”*

# Conclusions

The survey results outlined above reveal several key takeaways about how Brooklyn Park residents believe the City could best appropriate ARPA funds to maximize impact in the community:

**Concerns about rising crime and residents' sense of safety emerged as consistent priorities** in responses to both the closed-ended and open-ended questions. Although Violence Intervention was chosen as a preferred spending category by older and white residents, **a majority of respondents in all demographic groups approved of funding this priority area.**

As such, this survey strongly indicates that **public safety is at the forefront of residents' minds** and that there is consensus support for funding violence intervention and support services and, to a lesser extent, neighborhood safety activities. The City may also want to consider using ARPA funds for promoting public safety in a way that aligns with answers to the free-response question, which included **increased funding for the police department and specific initiatives combatting gun and gang violence.**

Furthermore, the fact that **Safety Activities and Violence Intervention received more positive sentiment than negative in the online social media discourse** indicates that residents largely support such initiatives.

**Respondents also consistently pointed to Mental Health and Youth Outreach** as priority areas for the City to address. Responses to the free-response question also indicate that many **view these two issues as directly linked to the rising crime and violence** that many raised fears about in other parts of the survey.

Accordingly, the City should be aware that funding **Mental Health and Youth Outreach are also important to many Brooklyn Park stakeholders** and are viewed as “upstream” issues contributing to residents’ perceived lack of sense of safety.

Finally, **funding nonprofits and community organizations** also received consistent approval in responses to the open-ended and closed-ended questions, as well as the social media discourse.

Given that **many believe these organizations are well-positioned to serve the community's needs**, the City may also want to consider how best to bring community-based organizations into the fold to address the priority listed above.

Overall, **the survey responses indicate that most are supportive of funding areas that would promote public safety and alleviate residents' concerns about rising crime and violence.** Addressing more “upstream issues” that directly and indirectly impact public safety — such as mental health, youth outreach and programming, and housing and homelessness — would also likely receive significant support in the community.