

LA CROSSE COUNTY ARPA REPORT



ARPA: INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was passed by Congress on March 10, 2021, and signed into law on March 11, 2021. The bill provided \$350 billion in funding to state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments to aid long-term recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. La Crosse County received \$22.9 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding over two installments. All funds had to be obligated by the end of 2024 and spent by 2026, which has been achieved. The La Crosse County Board worked with staff and public input to make high-impact investments across six priority areas:



**AFFORDABLE
HOUSING**



CHILDCARE



**SUSTAINABILITY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**



**INFRASTRUCTURE, WITH
A FOCUS ON AGING**



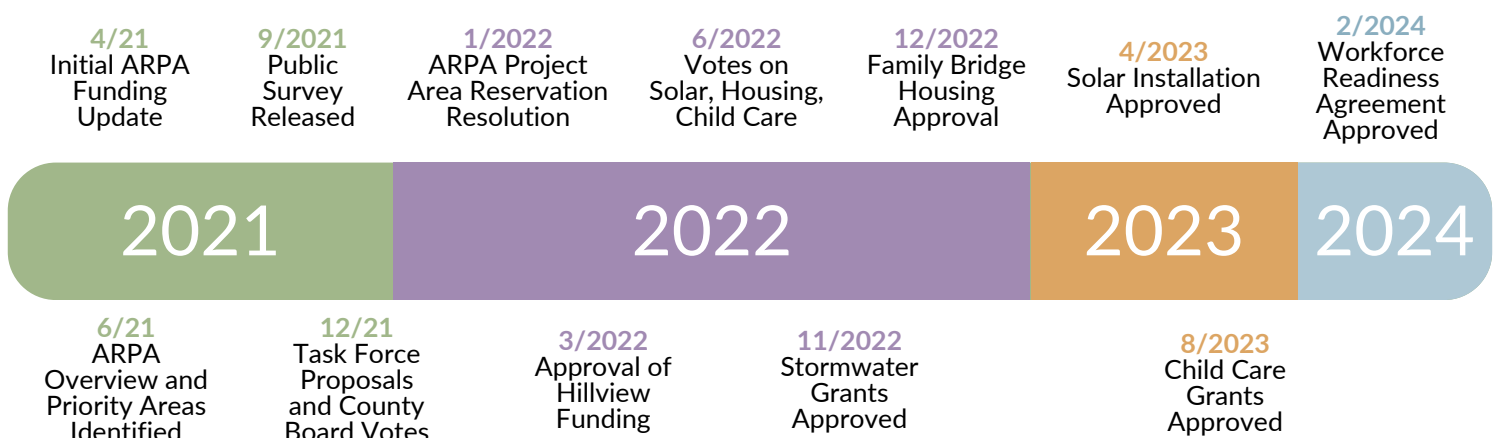
**LOCAL ECONOMY
AND TOURISM**



EQUITY

Task forces created for each area included roughly 80 individuals—county staff, community partners, and subject-matter experts. A community survey added 1,547 public responses. In January 2022 the County Board reserved funding for major project categories and directed staff to develop implementation plans to bring back to the Board for approval.

TIMELINE OF COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS



\$22.9 MILLION IN ARPA FUNDING SUPPORTED:



HOUSING

10

Units of Adult Bridge Housing

35

Housing units for older adults

64

Children (23 families) housed through Thriving Families

4

Dementia Crisis Stabilization Beds



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

14

Stormwater Infrastructure Projects

8

Solar Arrays

21

Housing Redevelopment Grants

1

Countywide Broadband Report



CHILDCARE AND LOCAL ECONOMY

1

Youth Workforce Readiness Center

60

Childcare Places

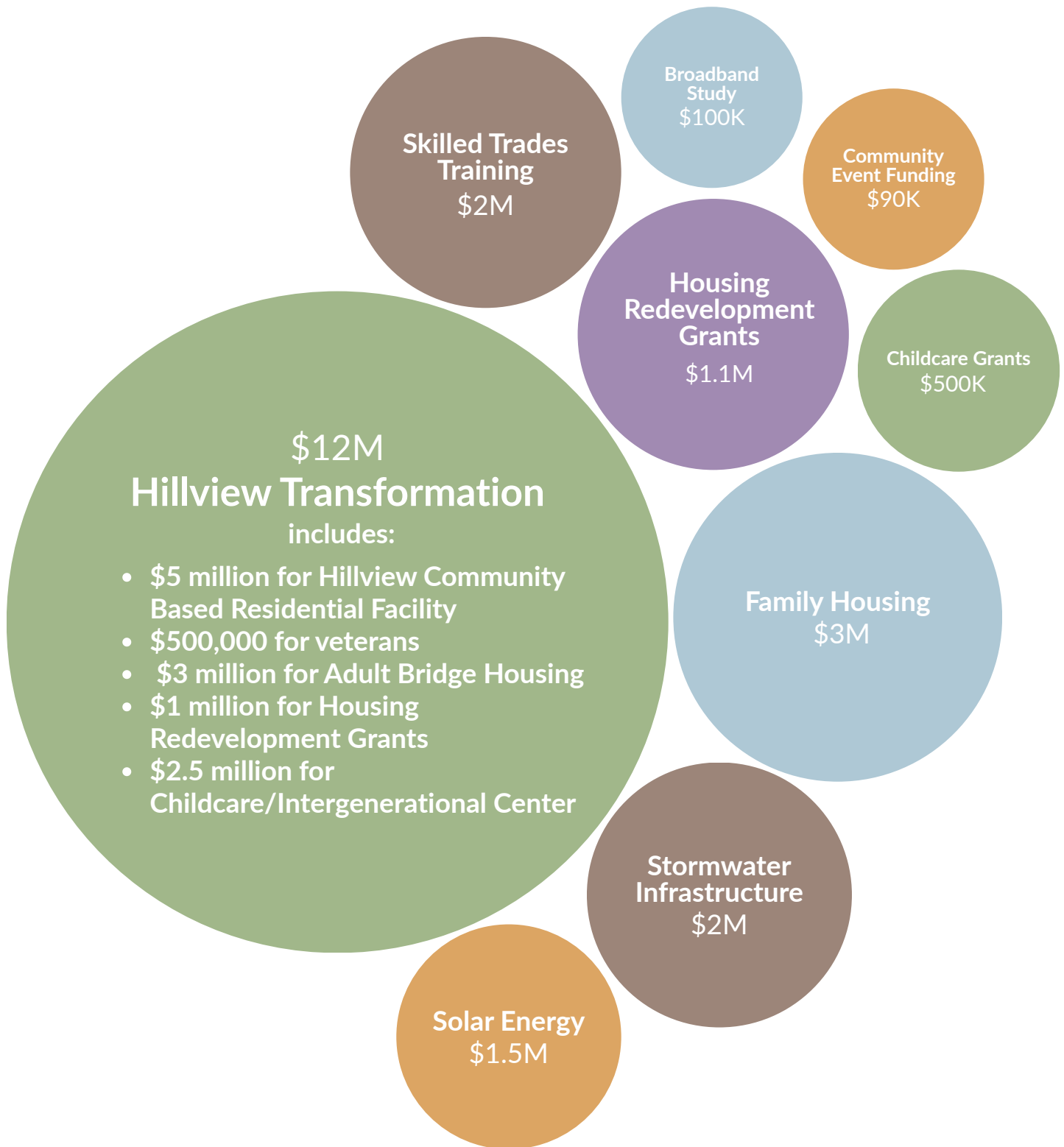
36

Childcare Provider Grants

13

Community Event Grants

ARPA SPENDING BREAKDOWN



\$2M: STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

The County established the Stormwater Infrastructure Grant Program to help towns upgrade systems that were undersized, failing, or repeatedly overwhelmed by heavy rains. Town governments often lacked the financial capacity to complete these projects without assistance. The program emphasized projects that reduced flood risk, improved water quality, and protected public infrastructure.

Funding was offered through two rounds. Grants were capped at \$50,000 for conceptual projects and \$500,000 for fully designed projects. Awards were made in French Island, Shelby, Onalaska, Farmington, and Holland.

Projects awarded in the first round (ended 2022):

- French Island – Lakeshore, Plainview, Jerald
- French Island – Pierce, Youngdale
- French Island – Spillway, Lakeview
- Holland – Gaynor Rolling Hills
- Onalaska – Apple Valley
- Onalaska – Thunderbird Hills
- Shelby – Boma Road
- Shelby – Ebner Coulee
- Shelby – Wedgewood Valley



Projects awarded in the second round (ended 2023):

- French island – Pierce Avenue
- Farmington – Herman Coulee Road
- Holland – Gaynor Rolling Hills
- Onalaska – Eric Avenue Phase 3
- Onalaska – Hidden Valley

The County's \$2 million investment leveraged an additional \$1.2 million from town governments, producing a combined \$3.2 million in stormwater improvements. Projects included improved ditching, culvert replacements, building infiltration basins and upgrading storm sewers.

The largest single grant—\$500,000—went to Shelby's Wedgewood Valley project, paired with \$210,000 in local matching funds. Recent flash floods had caused an estimated \$280,000 in property damage there.

County Board Chair Tina Tryggstad said, "This investment will have a long-lasting, positive impact. It's a great example of collaboration to protect homes and public infrastructure from flood risks."

These projects collectively reduced flooding risk for hundreds of homes, protected public infrastructure, and improved runoff managements to support water quality

"The ARPA program funds allowed the Town of Shelby to complete three important stormwater projects that were otherwise not possible due to our limited budget."

Tim Candahl - Shelby Town Chair

\$100K: BROADBAND STUDY

La Crosse County hired Broadband consultants Design Nine to conduct an analysis of broadband needs in the county and a plan for how to address those needs. The completed study, which is available at lacrossecounty.org/plans, supported the continued expansion of broadband access by Internet Service Providers across La Crosse County. As of Dec. 31, 2025, the governor's taskforce on broadband reported that 93% of locations in La Crosse County had broadband access. Of the remaining 7%, about 6% were unserved but in progress, with 1% unserved and not in progress. Between 2024 and 2026, unserved areas not in progress have declined by 80% to 397 locations. Unserved in progress areas are down 7%.





\$1.5M: SOLAR ENERGY

With sustainability identified as a priority, the County used ARPA funding for a broad solar energy expansion. Solar Connections Inc. installed ground-mounted arrays at the St. Joseph Highway Shop, the West Salem Highway Shop, and Lakeview Health Center, and rooftop arrays at the Administrative Center, Health & Human Services, Goose Island Facilities Shop and the Law Enforcement Center. The County received \$750,000 in federal rebates from these installations. The rebates, from part of the Inflation Reduction Act, helped fund a ground-mounted array at Hillview.

By 2025, the solar arrays generated about 11% of the County's electricity. That percentage is expected to increase in 2026 as all arrays were not fully operational throughout 2025. Over the next decade, savings are projected at around \$1 million, reducing long term energy costs and helping advance County sustainability goals.



\$500K: CHILDCARE

The County Board considered several options for how to create a positive impact on the local childcare system, which faced chronic shortages. The final plan had two elements. One was to provide \$500,000 in grants to childcare providers outside the City of La Crosse, which had its own ARPA funded childcare plan.



The second part was to allocate \$2.5 million reserved for childcare to support the renovation of Hillview. The project converted Hillview's former dining hall into an intergenerational center that includes childcare with up to 60 places, to be operated by YWCA La Crosse. More on the intergenerational center is included in the Hillview section of this report.

For the grant program, awards were capped at \$25,000. The program received \$860,000 in requests and funded 36 projects, supporting both in-home and center-based providers. Funding was used for safety upgrades, capacity expansion, and quality improvements.

“This funding is going to make a huge difference for my small business and for my community,”

Josie Wermager - Learning Wagon Preschool and Childcare

Providers receiving grant support included:

- Lehmann's Littles Childcare – Onalaska
- Tammy's Tiny Treasures – Onalaska
- Cindy's Little Treasures – Holmen
- Little Lion's Den – French Island
- Creative Family Childcare – Holmen
- Hand and Hand Childcare – Holmen
- Vickie's Kids in Care – Holmen
- Viv's ABC Kind Care – Onalaska
- Bright Minds Childcare and Preschool – Holmen
- Tot's About Family – Onalaska
- Josie's Little Joys Daycare – Mindoro
- Stepping Stones Childcare and Preschool – Holmen
- Grandma's Arms – Onalaska
- Paradise Landing Child Care – Holmen
- Sproutlet's Daycare – Holmen
- Christian Chapel Daycare Center – Onalaska
- Bright Minds Childcare and Preschool - Holmen
- Children's Place – West Salem, Holmen, Onalaska
- It Takes a Village – Holmen
- Great Outdoors Learning Center – Holmen
- Bundle of Joy Daycare – West Salem
- Children's Tree House – Onalaska
- First Lutheran Preschool – Onalaska
- Northstar Early Learning Center – Onalaska
- God's Kingdom – Onalaska
- Red Balloon Early Learning – Onalaska
- La Crosse Toddle Inn Day Care – St. Joseph's Ridge
- Busy Bee Academy – Medary
- Happy Trails Day Care – Holmen
- Little Feet & Happy Hands Childcare and Preschool – Holmen
- Joy's Day Care – Onalaska
- Kim's Kiddie Campus – Holmen
- Learning Wagon Preschool and Childcare – Rockland
- Old School House Childcare – Onalaska
- Gentle Lambs Childcare Center – Onalaska
- Little Lion's Den - French Island

\$1.1M: NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION



The \$1.1 million in Neighborhood Revitalization grant funding spurred development of 386 housing units, adding an estimated \$56 million in tax base that supports local services. The funding leveraged about \$50 million in private investment.

The ARPA funding was put into the existing Neighborhood Revitalization Acquisition and Demolition grant program. Prior to this, the program had only been available in a small group of neighborhoods within the City of La Crosse. With the infusion of ARPA funding, the program was expanded countywide. Grants of up to \$50,000 are available for single family projects and up to \$100,000 for multifamily. Twenty-one housing projects were funded with the ARPA dollars between 2022 and 2024, which covered projects in French Island, Onalaska, Rockland and La Crosse.

Projects funded included:

- A&L McCormick – 455 Park Plaza Drive, La Crosse
- Fuhrmann Project – W2813 County Road. ZB, Onalaska
- RLR Properties – 1108 King Street, La Crosse
- Riverland Investments LLC – 1715 La Fond Street, French Island
- Trishool Enterprises LLC – 318 4th Street S., La Crosse
- Spies Construction - 1402 S. 6th Street, La Crosse
- VSC Corp – 2418 State Road, La Crosse
- Small Town Investments, LLC – 305 Commercial Street S., Rockland
- MSP Real Estate – Zone D, River Point District
- Habitat for Humanity – multiple sites in La Crosse
- City of La Crosse Replacement Housing Program – multiple addresses
- Couleecap – multiple redevelopment sites



\$3M: FAMILY BRIDGE HOUSING

In December 2022, the County Board approved allocating \$3 million in ARPA to be awarded to two nonprofits, Couleecap and Catholic Charities, for a new program called Thriving Families. The funding has been used to purchase 14 scattered site properties, or 16 total housing units.

As of August 2026, 23 families have been housed through the program, which includes 64 children and 31 adults. Six families have successfully exited the program so far, moving into their own housing. Families housed are referred by La Crosse County Human Services, which provides case management. They may either be homeless or at risk of homelessness. The housing is managed by the two nonprofits and the families are expected to contribute 30% of their income toward rent.

The program's goal is to keep families safely housed and support their transition to long-term, sustainable housing. Stable housing helps families stay together and reduces costly out-of-home care for the County. By lowering out-of-home care costs, Thriving Families is estimated to save the County about \$180,000 annually.

\$2M: WORKFORCE READINESS

La Crosse County invested \$2 million in the Judy Corbett Hutchens Workforce Center, operated by the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse. The center includes labs focused on innovation, construction, automotive technology, finance and entrepreneurship, media production, and life skills.

It serves youth ages 6 to 18, expanding access to hands-on career exploration and supporting long-term workforce development across the County. A ribbon cutting for the project was held in June 2026.



\$12M: HILLVIEW TRANSFORMATION

Hillview's aging nursing home had been struggling with declining occupancy and outdated facilities that no longer met modern care standards. By 2023, licensed beds had dropped from more than 200 to about 60, leaving half the building unused. ARPA funding created an opportunity to rethink the campus. Rather than constructing a new facility, the County could renovate the existing property and repurpose unused space for childcare, adult bridge housing, and a new Community-Based Residential Facility. The nursing home itself would also receive a major upgrade. Together, these improvements would create a sustainable future for the campus while advancing several County Board ARPA priorities.

“Hillview had been part of La Crosse County for more than a century, and we wanted to keep it as a community asset that everyone could be proud of.”

Jane Klekamp - County Administrator

To guide the redevelopment, the County hired Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction, supported by \$12 million in ARPA funding. The project combined allocations for adult bridge housing, childcare, veterans services, infrastructure, and aging under the Hillview umbrella. Another \$1 million came through a Congressionally Directed Spending request secured by Senator Tammy Baldwin. The remaining costs of the \$19.6 million project were



financed through a bond issue. Unused wings were transformed to expand services for older adults and families. Renovations created private nursing home rooms, updated common areas, and added resident-accessible kitchens for a more home-like environment.

A former dining hall became an intergenerational center operated by YWCA La Crosse, serving up to 60 children and connecting childcare with older-adult programming—an innovative, first-in-Wisconsin model now nearing final approval. County employees will receive priority access to childcare slots. In alignment with the County Board's housing priorities, one former wing was converted into 10 units of supportive housing for people who had experienced homelessness. Park Lane Studios opened in 2025, welcoming six residents directly from unsheltered homelessness and four from temporary shelter. Within three months, most tenants were contributing to rent and either employed or enrolled in education. The development advances Pathways Home, the city-county plan to reduce homelessness, by pairing stable housing with effective services.



“In the end, it’s all about providing the best care for our residents. With the new Hillview, we have a facility that matches that commitment.”

Wanda Plachecki - former La Crosse County Long-Term Care Director

\$90K: COMMUNITY EVENT FUNDING

The County Board set aside \$90,000 ARPA funding to award grants of up to \$10,000 to help community events in La Crosse County that were negatively impacted by COVID-19 remain strong and sustainable. Eligible applicants were nonprofits that managed community events existing prior to 2020.

Grants Awarded March 2023:

- West Salem Dairy Days – June Dairy Days (\$8,000)
- Cia Siab, Inc. – Hmoob American Day Celebration & 5K Fundraiser (\$5,000)
- St. Joseph’s Fireworks – 4th of July Fireworks (\$8,000)
- The Center, 7 Rivers LGBTQ Connection – La Crosse PRIDE (\$8,000)
- Bangor Lions Club – Bangor Fun Daze (\$8,000)
- Hmoob Cultural and Community Agency – La Crosse Area Hmong New Year Festival (\$8,000)
- American Legion Auxiliary Unit 336 – Onalaska Community Days (\$8,000)
- AVCAP Inc. – Airport 5K & Open House (\$3,000)
- Bluff Country Tale Spinners – La Crosse Storytelling Festival (\$8,000)
- Great River Festival of Arts – Great River Folk Festival (\$8,000)
- Pump House Regional Arts Center – Artspire La Crosse (\$8,000)
- ORA – La Crosse Omnium (\$5,000)
- Coulee Council on Addictions – Voices of Recovery Brunch & Home Run for Recovery (\$5,000)





LA CROSSE COUNTY

Exceptional services. Extraordinary place.

