**ARPA Committee Ideas for Selectboard**

**June 2022**

**Ideas generated in four focus groups:**

***Problems***

* All groups agreed that the biggest challenges facing Bristol are housing and childcare – these were problems before, but have been made worse/more revealed by covid
* Covid stressed these already problematic areas such that nothing else can happen (no growth) without addressing these first. For example, we could hire a social worker/mental health professional to work with BPD but where will they live? Where will their children receive care?
* In addition to childcare generally, children’s mental/physical health worsened with covid – they need more outdoor education and services

***Solutions***

* Groups converged on the need to use our existing resources as much as possible given the high cost of land and construction - working with other entities, like existing child care providers or converting existing spaces – BristolWorks for services and perhaps a building like Mountain Trading Post for conversion into apartments. These investments would use less funding for more impact.
* Everyone also agreed on the need to invest in something that would solve these fundamental problems rather than spend small amounts on lots of different things
* Sustainable investments to solve the foundational problems we face – childcare and housing

***Housing Ideas***

* Existing home conversion - One idea was to set up some sort of fund where homeowners could partner with the town to divide up their houses into more units that could be sold/rented; once that happened, the homeowners would pay the town back (with any interest?) and that money could then be used for another home. When discussed, this idea seemed mostly to apply to elderly residents needing only one bedroom but living in a 4-bedroom house. This would allow aging in place, plus expand housing stock in Bristol.
* Build public-private partnerships - with people/businesses that owned buildings that could be converted into apartments for higher-density living, like the Old High School or Mountain Trading Post. The town would subsidize some of the costs of conversion with the owner then paying that money back over time.

***Childcare Ideas***

* Pursue public-private partnerships with existing child-care providers to expand services to make the money go farther and be more sustainable (so that the town doesn’t have to maintain/run everything), like working
  + Create more space at BES for pre-K?
  + Fund sprinklers or other investments at BFC that allow them to expand?
* Build out space at the Hub that would be used for multiple purposes – in a public-private partnership, town investment would facilitate Hub expansion, but Willowell would be able to base themselves in this new space during the day to offer expanded outdoor preschool, including for the 0-3 age group.
  + This additional space would be used:
    - By the Hub/Rec Department to expand the “gear lockers” to ensure that all children have access to sports; and to create a 2nd-hand teen clothing shop to ensure that teens have access to winter coats, etc.
    - By Willowell to offer school-day outdoor education programs to the local public schools; to expand its preschool to accept more children, including the underserved 0-3 group; and to offer expanded and accessible summer programming.

***Other Ideas***

* Build a Community Center to connect people and bring in services (maybe also an app or platform for people to request and give help)
* Build bus shelter with passenger amenities for the Tri-Town bus: it is hard to get in and out of Shaw’s parking lot and the park in front of the Baptist church; there isn’t a warm dry place for people to wait for the bus – if it were safer and more comfortable more people would take the bus
* EV charging stations – both for Tri-town buses and for resident vehicles
* Turning Point is asking all towns to support their restoration of St Mary’s in Middlebury to be a full service one-stop community center
* New town garage & BPD – buy BristolWorks instead of building new? Use it also for community center space?
* Electronic information sign by the fire station to communicate better with residents
* Improve financial infrastructure for the town
* Community social worker embedded with BPD
* Full-time grant writer for town
* Roofing the rink (so could be multipurpose space: concerts, basketball, hockey)
* Buy vehicle for Rec Dept (teen hub and programs)

**Next Steps - plans for broader community outreach:**

1. Town halls or setting up booth (Kris)?
2. Targeted outreach with people or groups we wanted to talk to but weren’t able to connect with through the focus groups? Given the housing/building conversations, Tom and Carol Wells, John Moyers, Kevin Harper etc?
3. Survey – administered over Front Porch Forum and/or paper copies available at the town office (other locations – library?)
   1. Questions could first ask residents to rank their favorite ideas from the focus groups and then could ask one or two open response questions about what they see as the biggest problem and how they would spend the money [you will need some introductory information about ARPA at the beginning of the survey]