

City of Fort Worth, Texas

Neighborhood Services - Gwendolyn C.
Gragg Child Development Center

Recovery Plan

State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds 2025 Report

City of Fort Worth Texas
Gwendolyn C. Gragg Child Development Center
2025 Recovery Plan

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

Executive Summary

The City of Fort Worth's Neighborhood Services Department is leveraging American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to mitigate the disproportionate economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our most-affected communities. Through a competitive process, local agencies submitted proposals totaling \$31.4 million for affordable housing and human services initiatives. After thorough review, City staff recommended funding for seven projects.

One of the selected initiatives is the Gwendolyn C. Gragg Child Development Center—a renovation of the existing facility operated by Child Care Associates. This project received a \$2 million ARPA allocation to expand and modernize the early learning center's infrastructure and programming.

Key milestones to date include:

- Tranche 1 Approval: Fund allocation and Mayor & Council authorization completed.
- Contract Execution: Agreement signed in Q4 2022, followed by a pre-construction meeting on December 21, 2022.
- Notice to Proceed: Issued January 3, 2023, enabling site mobilization.
- Architectural Procurement: A design firm has been engaged and is preparing plans for City review following Q1 2023.
- Anticipated Fund Disbursement: Construction-related expenditures are scheduled to begin in Q4 2023, pending final design approval and permitting.

This investment will enhance classroom capacity, improve accessibility and safety features, and enable the center to serve more low- to moderate-income families in the Riverside neighborhood.

Uses of Funds

Expenditure Category: 2.11-Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care

All ARPA funds allocated to the Gwendolyn C. Gragg Child Development Center have been fully expended, and the renovation project reached completion in August 2024. Under this program:

- Classroom Expansion & Capacity Increase
 - Three new classrooms were constructed, bringing the total to eight.
 - Annual operational capacity rose from 82 to 106 unduplicated children, an increase of 24 infants and toddlers.
- Comprehensive Building Rehabilitation
 - Childcare Spaces & Restrooms: Added dedicated infant/toddler activity areas and two new restrooms.
 - Energy Efficiency Upgrades: Replaced all single-pane windows with ENERGY STAR® models.
 - Roof & Drainage Improvements: Completed roof repairs and installed new gutter drains to prevent water damage.
 - Interior Renovations: Upgraded flooring and rubber base throughout, modernized lighting and plumbing fixtures, and overhauled mechanical and electrical systems.
 - Fire & Safety Systems: Replaced fire alarm and suppression equipment to meet current code.

- ADA Accessibility: Installed ramps, widened doorways, and updated restroom fixtures to ensure full ADA compliance.
- HVAC & Water Systems: Installed new high-efficiency water heaters and optimized HVAC controls for indoor air quality and comfort.

These targeted investments not only addressed critical safety and longevity needs but also substantially increased the Center's ability to serve low-income families in the Riverside neighborhood. All expenditures adhered strictly to EC 3 guidelines, ensuring transparent use of SLFRF funds to create a healthier, more accessible early learning environment.

Promoting Equitable Outcomes

The renovation of the Gwendolyn C. Gragg Child Development Center directly advances equity by expanding high-quality, affordable childcare for families most impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. Located at 2400 E. 1st Street, Fort Worth, TX 76111, the Center serves a predominantly low- to moderate-income community in south Fort Worth.

Key Equity Impacts

- **Increased Capacity for Infants & Toddlers:**
 - Added three classrooms specifically designed for 0–3-year-olds, boosting annual capacity from 82 to 106 unduplicated children (a +29% increase).
 - Expanded Early Head Start enrollment by 24 additional slots, ensuring more at-risk children receive comprehensive early-learning services.
- **Safe & Accessible Environment:**
 - Upgraded all interior spaces, restrooms, and activity areas to meet ADA standards, ensuring children with disabilities and families with mobility challenges can fully participate.
 - Installed energy-efficient windows, new HVAC, and enhanced lighting to create healthier indoor environments, reducing absenteeism due to illness.
- **Targeted Support for Underserved Families:**
 - Priority enrollment for households at or below 80% of the Area Median Income, with outreach facilitated through local community partners and social service agencies.
 - Continued collaboration with Child Care Associates' family-support staff to connect families with sliding-scale fees, nutrition programs, and wrap-around case management.
- **Long-Term Sustainability:**
 - Repaired critical building infrastructure (roof, gutters, fire-safety systems) to extend the facility's useful life by at least 15 years.
 - Ensured all capital improvements adhere to State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds guidelines, securing the Center's ability to serve vulnerable children well into the future.

By delivering these enhancements, the Gragg Center now offers equitable access to early-learning opportunities that foster school readiness, reduce childcare cost burdens, and support the developmental well-being of Fort Worth's youngest residents.

Community Engagement

Engaging the Riverside community has been central to the successful planning and delivery of the Gwendolyn C. Gragg Child Development Center renovation. The City of Fort Worth employed a comprehensive, equity-driven outreach strategy that invited input from all stakeholders—especially those historically underserved.

1. Public Notice & Formal Comment

- M&C Communication 21-0814: The project’s approval was formally announced in the Mayor & Council bulletin, triggering a 30-day public comment period.
- Public Notices: Published in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram and on the City Secretary’s website, these notices detailed funding allocations and invited feedback.
- City Council & Committee Agendas: Community members provided oral testimony at the Neighborhood Services Committee meeting on December 15, 2022, and during the January 3, 2023, pre-construction briefing.

2. Surveys & Written Feedback

- ARPA Portal Feedback Form: Hosted on the City’s ARPA webpage, the form solicited comments on childcare needs and facility improvements; it was promoted via the Neighborhood Services e-newsletter.
- Paper Comment Cards: Distributed at the Gragg Center and Riverside Branch Library through March 2023, enabling non-digital participants to share written input.

3. Stakeholder Meetings & Interviews

- Pre-Construction Community Workshop (Dec 21, 2022): At the Gragg Center, attendees reviewed draft plans, discussed classroom layouts, and prioritized safety upgrades.
- Interviews with Child Care Associates Leadership: Gathered frontline insights on infant/toddler program needs, which directly informed the addition of three new classrooms.

4. Equity & Accessibility Measures

- Bilingual Outreach: All materials, notices, and surveys were provided in English and Spanish.
- Accessible Meeting Times: Sessions were held in the evenings and on weekends to accommodate working families.
- On-Site Support: Interpretation services and childcare stipends were available at in-person events.

By weaving these engagement activities into every phase—from funding allocation through construction oversight—the City ensured that the Gragg Center renovation reflects community priorities, enhances transparency, and promotes equitable access to early-learning opportunities

Labor Practices

Expenditure Category: 2.11-Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care

To ensure high-quality delivery and support local employment, the Gragg Center renovation incorporated the following labor standards in alignment with ARPA SLFRF Section C(5):

- **Prevailing Wage Compliance**
 - The prime contractor and all subcontractors were required to pay Davis-Bacon Act wages for applicable trades, as well as Texas prevailing wage rates for non-federal work.

- Certified payroll records were submitted monthly to the City's Payroll Audit Unit for verification of wage and fringe benefit payments.
- **Local Hiring Preferences**
 - All construction and subcontracting opportunities were posted on Workforce Solutions Tarrant County's job board and the City of Fort Worth Careers portal, ensuring broad visibility among local job seekers.
 - Contractors were encouraged to hire residents of Fort Worth, with a target that at least 75% of labor hours be performed by workers living within Tarrant County.
- **SMWBE Participation**
 - The City set a subcontracting goal of 25% for certified Small, Minority-, and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (SMWBEs).
 - The Supplier Diversity Office tracked and reported that 28% of subcontracting dollars were awarded to SMWBE firms during the renovation.
- **Workforce Development & Apprenticeships**
 - In partnership with Tarrant County College's Construction Training Program, the project created five apprenticeship slots, providing on-the-job training in carpentry, electrical, and HVAC trades.
- **Ongoing Monitoring & Compliance**
 - The Contract Compliance Unit conducted biweekly site inspections and payroll audits to ensure adherence to labor standards.
 - Any identified discrepancies triggered a corrective action plan, safeguarding both worker protections and project timelines.

By embedding these measures into contract requirements and oversight, the Gragg Child Development Center renovation not only meets ARPA's compliance standards but also delivers equitable employment opportunities and strengthens the local construction workforce.

Use of Evidence

The Gwendolyn C. Gragg Child Development Center renovation employs a rigorous, evidence-based framework and clear evaluation measures to demonstrate impact and guide future investments:

- **Evidence-Based Standards**
 - Facility upgrades align with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation criteria and Head Start Performance Standards—both of which are backed by extensive research linking high-quality early learning environments to improved cognitive and social-emotional outcomes.
- **Quantitative Outcome Tracking**
 - Capacity Increase: Enrollment rose from 82 to 106 children per year (a 29% gain), measured via monthly attendance and enrollment reports.
 - Utilization Rate: Child-care slots filled and turnover rates are monitored each quarter to assess improved access for low-income families.
- **Quality & Satisfaction Evaluation**
 - The Center participates in the Texas Rising Star Quality Rating and Improvement System, using standardized observation tools (CLASS, ERS) to benchmark instructional quality before and after renovation.
 - Parent Surveys: Administered biannually to capture feedback on safety, facility improvements, and program effectiveness. Results inform continuous refinement of services.
- **Learning Agenda & Public Transparency**
 - A formal Learning Agenda will launch in FY 2026, focusing on long-term indicators such as kindergarten readiness, family economic stability, and health outcomes.
 - An ARPA-funded Child Care Dashboard—hosted on the City's website—will publish real-time

data on capacity, quality ratings, and demographic reach, ensuring transparency and fostering community trust.

By embedding these evidence-based interventions and an ongoing evaluation strategy, the Gragg Center not only provides immediate improvements in accessibility and quality but also generates actionable insights to strengthen Fort Worth's early learning investments.

Project Inventory

Gwendolyn C. Gragg Child Development Center

Project ID: 9919AC

Project Name: Gwendolyn C. Gragg Child Development Center Renovation

ARPA Funding Amount: \$2,500,000

Expenditure Category: 2.11-Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care

Project Overview:

Renovation of the existing Gragg Child Development Facility to:

- Replace aging infrastructure (windows, roof, HVAC, fire-safety systems)
- Expand program space by adding three new classrooms (total of 8) and restrooms
- Improve ADA accessibility, energy efficiency, and child-safety features
- Increase annual capacity from 82 to 106 unduplicated children (Early Head Start slots)

All ARPA-eligible costs for design, rehabilitation, and equipment upgrades have been fully expended, and the project reached final completion in August 2024.

Construction & Reimbursement Schedule

Phase	Scope of Work	ARPA Funds	Completion Date	Status
Phase I	Contract execution; A/E procurement & fees	\$250,000.00	January 31, 2023	Completed
Phase II	25% construction (site prep, framing start)	\$500,000.00	June 30, 2023	Completed
Phase III	50% construction (building shell, rough-ins)	\$500,000.00	January 31, 2024	Completed
Phase IV	75% construction (interior finishes, systems installations)	\$500,000.00	June 30, 2024	Completed
Phase V (Close-Out)	100% completion: punch-list, inspections, final reimbursements	\$250,000.00	August 1, 2024	Completed
****	Total ARPA Expenditures for Rehabilitation	\$2,000,000.00		

Note: The remaining \$500,000 of the \$2.5M award funded ancillary program support (furniture, educational materials, and initial operational costs), bringing the full project budget to \$2.5M.

All phases complied with ARPA SLFRF requirements, and final documentation was submitted in Q4 2024.

GRAGG CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER



Gragg Child Development Center– Project Highlights

The Gwendolyn C. Gragg Child Development Center renovation expanded from five to eight classrooms, boosting capacity to 106 subsidized childcare slots annually for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, offering safe, accessible, high-quality early learning at no cost to low-income families.

