



# Osceola County Board of County Commissioners Recovery Plan



## State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds 2021 Report

# Osceola County Board of County Commissioners

## 2021 Recovery Plan

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## **GENERAL OVERVIEW:**

### **Executive Summary**

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Public Law No. 117-2 was signed into law. Section 9901 of ARPA created Section 603 of the Social Security Act, which created the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (Recovery Fund). The Recovery Fund provides \$130 billion for local governments, including counties, cities, and smaller local governments. Osceola County has been awarded \$72,985,227 and received its first disbursement in the amount of \$36,492,613.50. A second payment is expected no earlier than 12 months after the first payment.

The Recovery Funds, in coordination with other federal and state programs and allocations, allow Osceola County to mitigate the COVID pandemic, address the negative economic impacts, and make the necessary investments to our community, county, and infrastructure so that we can recover in an equitable way from this pandemic and be well positioned for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Osceola County's economy was hit especially hard. Located south of Orange County, Osceola County is home to the workers of Disney World, Universal Studios, and Sea World. Our tourism and hospitality-based economy was shut down in March 2020, and unlike our neighboring counties that received direct aid from the federal government through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), Public Law No. 116-136, Osceola County was forced into triage with only two smaller direct CARES Act allocations from the federal government, specifically from the Community Development Block Grant – Coronavirus (CDBG-CV), and FEMA Disaster Recovery Assistance funds. Faced with some of the longest food bank lines in the country, the third highest unemployment rate in the United States, and the highest unemployment rate in the state of Florida, the Osceola County Board of County Commissioners (the Board) quickly allocated the CDBG-CV, County General Fund dollars, and FEMA Disaster Recovery Assistance funds into three main categories of assistance: (1) food assistance, (2) business assistance, and (3) housing assistance.

In July 2020, Osceola County was awarded a suballocation of Coronavirus Relief Funds from the State of Florida's CARES Act allocation. With those funds, the Board expanded assistance efforts to help support the costs of public safety, ensure the protection of residents, maintain local government operations, and the local response to the emergency health crisis. With the leveraged funds, the Board was able to adopt strategies for individuals, families, businesses, education, non-profits, mental health, workforce training, and continued support for the recovery of tourism through our local destination marketing organization. Additionally, from these funds the County provided a bonus for employees that were on the frontline supporting the County's operations from the onset of the pandemic, but not qualified for the State's pandemic first responders bonus criteria. Osceola County has provided the following necessary assistance to stabilize our economy and community:

- **\$65,565,652** from the State of Florida’s Coronavirus Relief Fund went to support the costs of public safety, ensure the protection of residents, maintain local government operations and allowed the allocation of funds that would have supported the County’s public safety payroll to be used for the County’s local response to the public health emergency. The County’s strategies are mentioned above, and more detail provided in the table below:

CARES REPLACEMENT FUNDS			
Recipient	Strategy	Recipient	Strategy
Individual Recipients	Rental/Mortgage Foreclosure/ Eviction Asst/Utilities	Osceola Tech College / Adult Learning Center of Osceola	Training for better paying jobs
Help Now - Not For Profit	Rental/Mortgage	Valencia Community College	Training program for sustained employment
Cameron Preserve Phase II	Development of Affordable Housing	Experience Kissimmee	Recovery Marketing/Local-Focused
Hope Center	Housing Homeless	Health Department	2 Mobile Medical Units
Homeless Services Network	Housing Homeless	Federally Qualified Health Centers	1 Mobile Medical Unit
Dillingham Apartment	Chronically Homeless	Park Place Behavioral Health Care	Mental Health Assistance
Individual Recipients	Elderly/Disabled assistance program	School District of Osceola County	Support for Distance Learning
Food Pantries/Bank (multiple)	Food Insecurity Assistance	United Cerebral Palsy School	Support for Distance Learning
School District of Osceola County	Food Insecurity Assistance - FIT support	LS&S / Career Online High School	Scholarships for online educational learning
Individual Recipients	Business Assistance/Utilities	County Support Costs & Supplies	Support for delivery of strategies
Early Learning Coalition	Child Care Assistance		

- **\$6,320,306** from the State of Florida’s State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) awarded to the County to support housing initiatives to aid in the pandemic response, Osceola County was able to support many critical initiatives.
- **\$2,862,023** from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Community Development Block Grant – Coronavirus, which was used to provide assistances to individuals, families, and businesses impacted by COVID-19.
- **\$11,346,059.80** from the Treasury’s Emergency Rental Assistance 1 program to assist eligible households with household income at or below 80% of the area median income, stay in their homes.
- **\$8,977,606.10** from the Treasury’s Emergency Rental Assistance 2 program to assist eligible households with household income at or below 80% of the area median income, stay in their homes.
- **\$69,996.12** from the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund ("Relief Fund"). The Relief Fund allowed for the purchase of equipment used to disinfect the fire rescues, the solution used in this equipment, the purchase of consumable items such as cleaners, hand sanitizer and personal protective equipment including coveralls, boot covers, gloves masks, thermometers and probe covers.
- **\$48,000** from the Florida E911 Board the funds were used to assist the county with expenses necessary to protect County 911 personnel from COVID-19 e.g. cleaning and disinfecting, installation of protective shields between positions, etc.
- **\$1,724,43** is being requested from FEMA’s Disaster Recovery Assistance fund, which allowed the County to provide emergency protective measures.

Osceola County's planned use of the ARPA Recovery Funds will complement the County's prior response to the pandemic, through the use of revenue replacement. Since March 2020, Osceola County has seen substantial losses in various revenue sources. The County saw revenue loss in gas taxes, sales taxes, toll revenue, and tourist development taxes. Revenue replacement will allow the County to stabilize its finances, allowing for the continuation of county services, and enhance pandemic and economic recovery response efforts.

The Board established the following categorical priorities to help guide how the future recovery efforts should be focused, ensuring equitable investments and establishing long-term resiliency for the county:

- Education/Training/Infrastructure
- County Infrastructure
- Targeted Recovery Efforts
- Enhanced Recovery of Tourism/Quality of Life
- Enhanced Transit

Key outcome goals of the County's recovery efforts mirror the county's strategic planned goals, which include establishing and promoting Osceola County as a great place to live with high quality infrastructure and transportation supported by a diversified economy delivered via an efficient and high performing county government. By replacing lost revenue, we will be providing an efficient and high performing county government. The strategies will then provide educational and workforce development opportunities and investments in infrastructure and transit which support a diversified economy, a more equitable community, and a higher quality of life.

## **USE OF FUNDS:**

### **Uses of Funds: REVENUE REPLACEMENT**

**Priority Category:** Revenue Replacement (EC-6)

**Funding Amount:** \$72,985,227

**Purpose/Goal:** Stabilize the County's budget with revenue replacement to offset decreases in revenue experienced during the pandemic. Some of the sources of revenue that declined include the gas tax, sales tax, tourist development tax, and toll revenue.

**Description:** Local governments may use payments from the Recovery Fund for the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue experienced due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Section 603(c)(1)(C) of the ARPA provides local governments with broad latitude to use the Fiscal Recovery Funds for the provision of government services. Government services can include, but are not limited to, maintenance, or pay-go funded building of infrastructure, including roads; modernization of cybersecurity, including hardware, software, and protection of critical infrastructure; health services, environmental remediation; school or educational services; and the provision of police, fire, and other public safety services.

Osceola County has generally decided to use Revenue Replacement to support the impacted revenue streams from the economic decline caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It would be the County's goal to stabilize the County's finances and ensure the level of services for County operations are restored. The ability to implement this strategy will allow the County to both provide vital public services and help retain jobs, while allowing additional resources to focus on the continued recovery efforts. While this plan is still evolving, the overall strategy will be for the revenue replacement funds to support human services, transportation, and impacted areas from the decline in revenues, for example the decline in Tourist Development Taxes impacted the County's sporting facilities and venues. These funds will not be used directly to make a deposit in pension funds, funding debt services, legal settlements, or judgments. Neither will these funds be deposited into rainy day funds or other financial reserves. Nor will not be used as a non-federal match.

Osceola County's long term recovery efforts fall under these broad categories: (1) education, workforce training, and supporting infrastructure, (2) investing in county infrastructure, (3) targeted recovery efforts within the Commission districts, ensuring equitable investments are made, (4) enhance and promote the recovery of tourism and the quality of life for our residents, and (5) enhance transit.

Further details about each categorical use can be seen below:

**EDUCATION/TRAINING/INFRASTRUCTURE:**

**\$12.5 million**

Workforce development, scholarships for students attending higher education or job training, wrap around services and potential infrastructure to support educational/training opportunities are key to diversifying our economy beyond tourism so that the County may better withstand future economic fluctuations as well as the foundation for our citizens to improve their lives. (Strategic Plan Goal - Diversified Economy)



**COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE:**

**\$35.4 million**

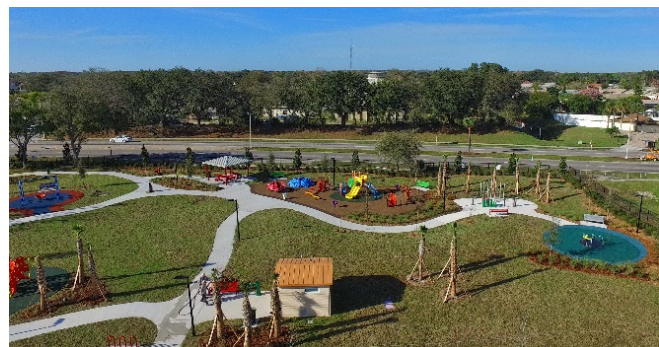
Extension of utilities and roads that could spur economic development is another key to improving our County. Where possible extension of utilities could be structured based on reimbursement to the County, such as for industrial development, so that the assistance could be further leveraged. Land acquisition that supports the County's need for economic development and additional affordable housing are possibilities. (Strategic Plan Goal - High Quality Transportation & Infrastructure)



**TARGETED RECOVERY EFFORTS:**

**\$5 million**

Specific projects targeted to address the discrete needs of each District as identified by the respective Commissioner to equitably address the diverse needs of our community. This represents approximately \$1 million in each District. County administration will work with each Commissioner to identify the projects. (Projects will meet one of the Commission's Strategic Plan Goals)



**ENHANCE/ RECOVERY OF TOURISM/ QUALITY OF LIFE:**

**\$15 million**

In addition to \$3 million already committed to our destination marketing organization toward its continued tourism recovery efforts through additional sales and marketing, the remaining \$12 million would assist in funding infrastructure (performing arts center / amphitheatre) to enhance not only our residents quality of life, but also further support the County’s primary economic industry, tourism. (Strategic Plan Goal - Great Place to Live).



**ENHANCED TRANSIT:**

**\$5 million**

Expansion of the County’s regional transit services (LYNX) and interconnectivity of the Kissimmee SunRail Station to NEOCITY will aid our underserved populations by providing more transportation options to get to work and school. (Strategic Plan Goal - High Quality Transportation & Infrastructure).



As mentioned above, Osceola County has provided the following necessary assistance to stabilize our economy and community:

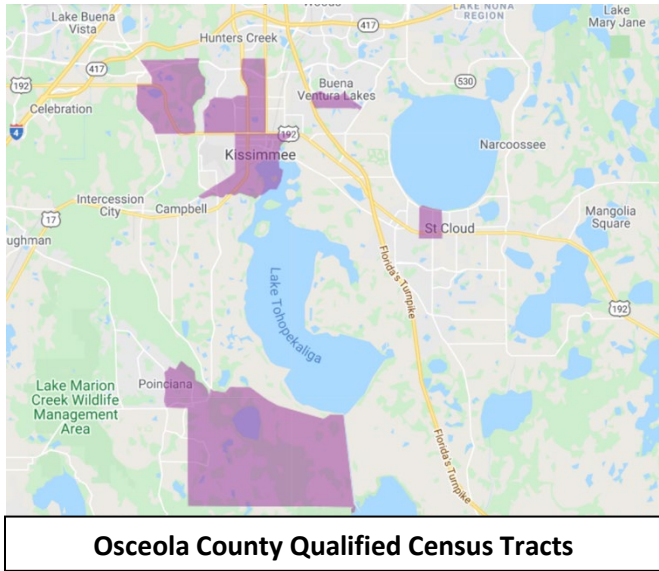
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## **PROMOTING EQUITABLE OUTCOMES:**

Osceola County is home to a majority-minority population, with 55% of our population Hispanic, 9% African American, and 30% White. Additionally, our median household income is \$52,279 per year with approximately 13% of our population living in poverty. Osceola County is aware of our historically underserved and marginalized populations and has made it a priority to assist them. The County provides all information about county services in both English and Spanish and continuously works towards greater awareness of our human service programs within the community.



In recognition of the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on health and economic outcomes in low-income communities, Osceola County has established priorities that will focus on the hardest hit from the public health crisis. The Board has committed funding to connect unemployed and low-wage workers with good jobs and careers by investing in education and training initiatives. This is critical for the residents of Osceola County, many of which were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic with the complete shutdown of the tourism industry and slow

recovery that has followed.

The revenue replacement funding will also be used to improve the County's infrastructure, including utilities and roads. These projects will have a direct impact on the underserved communities in Osceola County, providing the needed infrastructure and improved connectivity to enhance opportunities.

Establishing the opportunity for the residents to upskill, train, and find new employment and essential services is also key to ensuring the improvements provide the highest level of equity. In addition to road improvements, the county will also invest in expanding bus services, creating connections between SunRail, our local commuter rail system, and NEOCITY, the County's new technology district home to high-tech/high-wage job opportunities, and easy access to Valencia Community College.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:**

The Recovery Plan brought forward by the Board of County Commissioners is a result of strong community engagement. The Board is committed to ensuring their constituents and community-based organizations feedback and suggestions are heard. Through public meetings, public workshops, and one-on-one discussions with residents and community leaders, the Board of County Commissioners have established a balanced plan that brings forward the needs of the community, while ensuring efforts will create equity and long-term resiliency for future generations.

**LABOR PRACTICES:**

Osceola County is committed to promote effective and efficient delivery of high-quality infrastructure projects which is supported by the County’s existing Procurement Code. This document outlines the County’s procurement process and ensures all County projects follow the required Federal, State and local laws.

**USE OF EVIDENCE:**

The County does not have specific projects that require the use of evidence. However, the County will evaluate all projects to ensure that they have the greatest impacts for the community with a focus on improving the quality of life and opportunities for the underserved communities, creating a more stable economy and enhancing training and education systems.

**TABLE OF EXPENSES BY EXPENDITURE CATEGORY:**

Category		Recovery Plan Allocation	Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)	Amount spent since last Recovery Plan
6	Expenditure Category: Revenue Replacement			
6.1	Provision of Government Services	\$72,985,227	\$0	\$0