

City of Reno Federal Platform 2023-2024

Introduction

The City of Reno's federal priorities for 2023 reflect the key issues our community is facing. Our day-to-day operations are guided by the strategic plan that was approved by the Reno City Council in February 2020 and refreshed in 2022. The plan includes the following overarching goals:

- Promoting financial stability;
- Fostering a safe city;
- Increasing economic opportunity for all residents;
- Achieving a well-planned and economically stable Reno;
- Improving the City's infrastructure and protecting the environment; and
- Enhancing arts, parks, and historical resources.

In addition, two overarching principles specifically inform the City's platform:

1. Preserve and enhance direct federal funding to Reno.
2. Oppose federal pre-emption of local authority. Cities are voluntarily created by the residents of a community to provide local self- governance. Efforts that would create unfunded mandates or preempt the ability of local governments to set appropriate policy at the local level should be opposed.

Finally, with regard to the American Rescue Plan Act, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and Inflation Reduction Act:

In 2021 and 2022, Congress enacted legislation that provided generational-level federal investments in pandemic relief and mitigation, as well as infrastructure. The City will continue to work to ensure that direct funding we receive through these measures is spent as Congress intended, while also looking to compete for discretionary funding that will assist with City priorities.

Housing

Housing and Neighborhood Services

Northern Nevada has been fortunate to experience economic growth in recent years, but this good fortune has also created an urgent need for housing opportunities for Reno residents and families of all income levels. The City does not have the resources to build the workforce housing and other forms of affordable housing that are currently needed, and so federal incentives for private developers to include them in their plans would go a long way in addressing this crisis. Further, the City believes that the federal government can play an active role in improving access to expensive and hard-to- find construction materials through improvements in supply chains.

Similarly, need for rental assistance in the community is at an all-time high. The City quickly put its federal pandemic relief dollars to work in the last few years to provide housing stability for renters. Between the two rounds of funding in the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), the City has less than 16 percent of its allocated funds remaining. While the federal requirements allow the funds to be spent through 2025, the City estimates its remaining funds will be fully spent no later than the fourth quarter of 2023 and demand for assistance continues to grow.

- Support funding increases for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME programs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). CDBG and HOME funding leverage

significant local resources for a variety of important programs in low-and moderate-income neighborhoods.

- Support the Community Services Block Grant and Social Services Block Grant programs that leverage local resources for low-and very low- income families in the region.
- Support a major expansion to the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit to provide increased incentives for the production of affordable housing.
- Support additional funding through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP).

Homeless Assistance

There also continues to be a vital need for federal assistance for programs that assist our very-low, low, and low-moderate income residents. These citizens were disproportionately affected by the Great Recession and continue to face severe challenges through the COVID-19 pandemic. The City Council has made addressing homelessness in Reno a top priority with its regional partners and has dedicated significant resources to the matter.

- Support continued increases to the core federal programs for homeless assistance at HUD, Continuum of Care, and Emergency Solutions grants.
- Support for new, well-funded federal programs that allow communities some flexibility to fund urgent initiatives that occur outside the normal regional Continuum efforts.
- Support any efforts that will assist with the cost of renewing and expanding investments for permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing—proven, cost-efficient solutions to homelessness and poverty.
- Support programs and initiatives to increase access to and funding for mental health services.

Fiscal Issues and Economic Development

Reno is an active participant in local and regional collaborations that increase our area's economic competitiveness in attracting and retaining primary employers. While the gaming and tourism industry continues to provide important benefits to the Reno economy, the City has been successful in diversifying and promoting opportunities to enhance business development in other sectors, especially advanced manufacturing and technology industries.

Fiscal Issues

From a fiscal perspective, three issues are priorities this year:

- Support continued efforts to monitor the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and to plan for responses to future pandemics that will provide for economic stability for the City of Reno and its residents.
- Oppose any efforts to eliminate or cap the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds. With declining federal and state resources, municipal bonds are now the only way that communities, such as Reno, can finance large-scale capital projects. Any degradation of their tax-exempt status would be devastating.
- Support legislative efforts to repeal the section of the 2017 tax bill that prohibits advance refunding of municipal bonds.

Economic Development

The City itself can serve as a catalyst for economic development through investments that protect and enhance taxpayers' investments in local infrastructure and business development.

Federal actions that can further these goals for the City and our economic development partners include:

- Support increased funding for the Economic Development Administration to leverage local investments.
- Robust implementation of federal tax credits enacted in the Inflation Reduction Act for investment in industries that lower greenhouse gas emissions.

- Use federal infrastructure law funding to invest in expanded wireless broadband and other downtown revitalization efforts, such as those in the City's Downtown Action Plan and the Midtown district.
- Support ways to increase the ability of small businesses to have access to capital and provide relief from administrative burdens associated with Small Business Administration loans.
- Continue and expand on recent investments in renewable energy, such as geothermal, solar, and wind, whose abundance in the region have the potential to be significant contributors and drivers of the local economy while creating stable, living wage jobs.
- Support federal workforce development programs that prepare secondary and post-secondary graduates for well-paying jobs in the growing industrial sectors of Northern Nevada.
- Support of the New Market Tax Credit program as a path toward incentivizing community development and economic opportunity in distressed communities.
- Support efforts to align federal regulations with laws in Nevada related to the legal cannabis industry in an effort to limit confusion and create a clear system in which the industry operates and local governments license and enforce.

Infrastructure

The City of Reno continues to make significant local investments in its infrastructure, but maintaining our existing infrastructure as well as addressing the needs of 40,000- 50,000 new residents to the region over the next several years poses a significant challenge. It is imperative that Congress and the Executive Branch maintain robust, long-term federal funding vehicles for vital areas such as transportation, water quality, and water resources. The City of Reno is eager to address more projects in its almost \$1 billion Capital Improvement Program (CIP); almost \$900 million of that CIP is deferred because of limited resources.

While the City seeks to support domestic manufacturers for our capital projects, there are instances where domestic materials are either not available at all or not available in a timely manner, resulting in significant cost increases if we are forced to find those domestic products. We hope that waivers to Buy America requirements will be readily available in these situations in order to continue the strong impacts of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Many local and regional initiatives would benefit from access to federal resources, including:

Transportation

- The Spaghetti Bowl Project, which aims to enhance mobility and traffic safety as the region continues to experience population and economic growth.
- Transportation projects sponsored by the Washoe County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) that offer area residents multi-modal alternatives to traffic congestion, create jobs in the community, and increase our region's economic competitiveness.
- Micro mobility options in the downtown core. Federal funding assistance for these roadway safety improvements would support critical revitalization efforts of this key area of the City, including providing stronger connectivity between the University of Nevada, Reno and downtown.
- Infrastructure bill funds designated to the state and through competitive programs for the replacement of aging vehicular and pedestrian bridges, including the Sierra Street and Keystone Avenue bridges, to improve safety and reduce impacts of flooding.
- Transportation and other infrastructure needs of the Reno-Stead Airport to support the economic diversification and vitality of the North Valley's region.
- Implementation of the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act that will allow the City to accelerate mobility improvements for disabled residents.

Water, Sewer, and Stormwater

- Replacement of the City's aging collection system, including sewer lines, is a serious public health, safety, and quality-of-life matter. The City estimates that it could spend \$45 million over the next five

years on these projects.

- Programs to assist with the upgrades necessary to connect all neighborhoods to the City's sanitary sewer system.
- Improvements to the Truckee Meadows Water Reclamation Facility (TMWRF) to extend the plant's useful life and allow this vital water-quality infrastructure to operate in a more energy- efficient manner.
- Expansion of the Reno Stead Water Reclamation Facility (RSWRF) to meet future growth needs, including treatment and effluent management options and advanced water treatment efforts.
- Support the OneWater Nevada Initiative and the advanced purified water treatment project that aims to address water reclamation facility effluent management and long-term water supply issues in the high-desert area and future uncertainties of climate variability.
- Support of water resiliency efforts and the development of technologies to improve water resources through the Nevada Water Innovation Institute.
- Increased drought preparedness through programs that encourage expanded water storage initiatives or water reclamation facilities.
- Support for funding opportunities that would assist in accelerating future capital improvement projects that are critical to stormwater, drainage flood control, and watershed water quality.
- While the City is committed to meeting any requirements that improve the health and safety of its water systems, both state and federal mandates often come with enormous costs that should be shared among all levels of government.
- Consideration by the Environmental Protection Agency to allow greater flexibility in meeting the goals of revised Truckee River Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements with limited resources.
- Continued support for the Truckee Meadows Flood Control Project as well as efforts to make the National Flood Insurance Program more affordable and reward homeowners who take steps to protect their residences.
- Support for the expansion of the federal tax exemption for non-structural flood protection to include state and local mitigation efforts.

City Facilities

In addition, Reno City Hall is in the midst of seismic upgrades to protect both City staff and visitors doing business with the City, and the City is in the process of moving the Police Department from its current aging and inadequate facility. The City is looking to develop a new Fire Department Central Station and is also constructing a major multi-purpose aquatic center at a site on Moana Lane, which has been a high-demand need of Reno residents for years.

Cybersecurity

Like many communities, Reno is concerned that its systems may be vulnerable to cyber attacks and is working to secure and update those systems, which will come at a significant cost. The City will seek funding provided through the infrastructure bill's state cybersecurity grant program but a sustained federal investment and technical assistance in local cybersecurity efforts is needed to ensure long-term protection.

Community Resiliency and Equity

Sustainability and Resiliency

The City of Reno is in Nevada's high desert and our region has been intensifying its efforts to conserve water, increase sustainable practices, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The City supports all efforts that aim to bring awareness to and mitigate climate change and increase local resiliency, especially for populations who are at higher risk or are more vulnerable due to the unequal distribution of resources like clean air, water, and housing.

The City encourages funding the federal Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program on an annual basis. The program provides vital funding to support local infrastructure and programs that meet sustainability and resiliency goals.

Immigration

The City of Reno strongly believes that immigrants strengthen the community economically and culturally and welcomes their contributions to society. With regard to federal measures aimed at reforming federal immigration laws, the City would urge Congress and the President to reaffirm that addressing unlawful immigration in a compassionate manner is the primary responsibility of the federal government and that sufficient resources must be committed on the federal level for this purpose. It is imperative that Congress and the Executive Branch:

- Codify or continue policies such as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) that allow for qualified undocumented immigrants who entered the country as minors to receive deferred action on deportation and apply for work permits.
- Oppose mandates on local law enforcement to enforce federal immigration law or deny federal funding to communities that have limited resources to do so.

Refugee Resettlement

The United States has played a historic role as a leader in the resettlement of refugees, and the City of Reno urges Congress to continue to support refugees through inclusive, comprehensive, and supportive processes. Reno has a strong tradition in partnering with the Northern Nevada International Center on the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program in Reno, which serves as the region's refugee resettlement agency to help displaced persons and victims of human trafficking. As a welcoming city, Reno is committed to sustaining a place where all people feel at home, safe, and able to fully participate in and contribute to the city's economic and social life.

Public Safety

Three departments of the City deliver services related to public safety: the Reno Police Department, the Reno Fire Department, and Public Safety Dispatch. While our first responders coordinate daily, their departmental needs are distinct.

Reno Police Department

The City believes that it is in the best interest of the federal government to recognize and assist all aspects of the criminal justice system, especially mental- health, substance-abuse, and social-service programs such as homeless assistance. Other programs the City supports include alternative sentencing programs, prevention programs, victim services, and technology upgrades. Additionally, the City will continue to productively and proactively participate in conversations around law enforcement reform as the community dialogue around equity and social justice continue.

The City has identified several specific areas of interest:

- Full funding for applicable federal grants and federal assistance for additional hiring and adequate staffing of police officers for our community.
- An increased focus on police officer wellness and safety programs.
- Funding opportunities for programs to reduce distracted driving and protect pedestrians.
- Assistance with the replacement or renovation of the aging and inadequate Reno Police Department headquarters.
- Addressing the problems associated with asset forfeiture programs without eliminating local access to important resources such as the Equitable Sharing Program at Justice.
- Funding opportunities to expand the City's forensic science division.

Reno Fire Department

The Reno Fire Department (RFD) continues to provide a high level of fire service to the Reno community. With increased incidences of wildland fires exacerbated by drought conditions continuing to threaten the region, the City remains committed to maintaining levels of fire protection that best meet the needs of our residents. RFD has identified five areas of needed support from the federal government, including:

- An increased focus on firefighter wellness and safety programs.
- Assistance with the construction of four local fire stations.
- Full funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program and assistance to maintain obligations for awards previously awarded to the City through the SAFER Firefighter Hiring Program at the Department of Homeland Security.
- Increased federal assistance for local efforts to prevent and respond to wildland fires.
- Increased opportunities to obtain reimbursement for emergency medical services, with or without transport, for Medicare and Medicaid patients.

Public Safety Dispatch

Public Safety Dispatch is the nerve center for regional first responders. The City has identified two priorities related to dispatch:

- Acceleration of federal guidance and initiatives to build communication networks that support public safety. The City encourages the adoption of standards that allow for the leveraging of existing investments in broadband infrastructure and assets, while also encouraging public/ private partnerships.
- Timely and expanded information to Northern Nevada first responders regarding high-hazard flammable freight trains traveling through the heart of the City.
- As Nevada brings the federally mandated 988 behavioral health crisis hotline online, expanding available supportive services will be essential to provide individuals with assistance and care they need. The City encourages increased support for federal programs and funding for local, specialized entities that provide behavioral health and crisis stabilization services.

Arts, Parks, and Recreation

Maintaining and enhancing the City's parks and recreation system is a high priority for Reno residents, and the City Council has committed significant resources to offering safe and accessible recreational opportunities. In particular, the City sees the restoration of recreational opportunities along the Truckee River as a natural utilization of a unique environmental resource. Our citizens are also interested in increasing the availability of multiuse athletic fields, and the City is looking for opportunities to meet this community demand.

The City believes there is a federal role for assisting in local recreation, conservation, and preservation programs. In particular, the City is supportive of increased funding for the following programs:

- The Corporation for National and Community Services, including volunteer initiatives such as Vista Volunteers and AmeriCorps, which provides valuable community services and resources. It would be detrimental to our local partners if these important community programs were eliminated.
- Federal nutrition programs, especially for youth and seniors.
- Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program at the National Park Service.
- Recreational program grants for activities for individuals with disabilities.
- Initiatives to provide rehabilitation services to veterans.
- Programs for seniors through the Older Americans Act.
- Job training and employment programs for at-risk youth.

Public Lands Legislation

The City is prepared to engage in comprehensive public lands legislation that addresses economic development, conservation, and recreation needs in Washoe County. The City's efforts on this initiative will focus on providing for economic opportunities consistent with regional planning principles that promote sustainable growth and efficient growth patterns in our region as well as furthering conservation by designating appropriate wilderness areas and providing funding for habitat restoration and other conservation activities.

The City will remain neutral on the legislation until specific details are provided, and support for any effort will be determined when sufficient details are available for review. The City is committed to partnering with the Nevada Congressional delegation and other diverse stakeholders to develop a well-balanced approach to enacting a Washoe County lands bill that assists in facilitating job creation and achieving important conservation goals for the City of Reno, City of Sparks, and Washoe County.

Arts & Culture

The City supports continued funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Part of the City's vision is to provide and be known for a vibrant arts and cultures scene. Continued funding for the NEA will help achieve this goal and provide diverse opportunities for arts participation in our community. Elimination of this program would have little impact on the federal deficit, and it represents a relatively small investment that results in significant returns to the Reno community.

Local Control

The City is wary of federal or state attempts to preempt our authority in matters that are traditionally handled on the local level. While guidance in some areas is welcomed, federal intrusion into local decision-making can be in direct opposition to the direction provided to us by Reno residents. Some areas of concern include:

- Proposals to bypass local zoning and authority over rights-of-way when regulating the activity of telecommunications companies.
- Regulation of drones and other unmanned aircraft systems and associated implications regarding zoning, private property rights, and privacy issues.
- Regulation of autonomous vehicles.