



# **The People's Budget**

**Denver's Participatory Budgeting Program**

*Community Planning and Housing Committee | September 16, 2025*

*Kiki Turner | People's Budget Program Administrator*



A child with long brown hair is holding a circular white sign with blue and red markings. The sign says "I Voted" in blue marker, with a blue star next to "I" and a red star next to "Voted". There are also two red stars and one blue star scattered around the text. The background is blurred, showing colorful objects.

# Agenda

## **What is the People's Budget?**

Direct democracy, where community allocates taxpayer dollars

## **Projects Funded by the People**

6,000+ community members invested in  
13 infrastructure projects to date

## **Meet the People of the People's Budget**

Community experiences and upcoming  
opportunities for council engagement



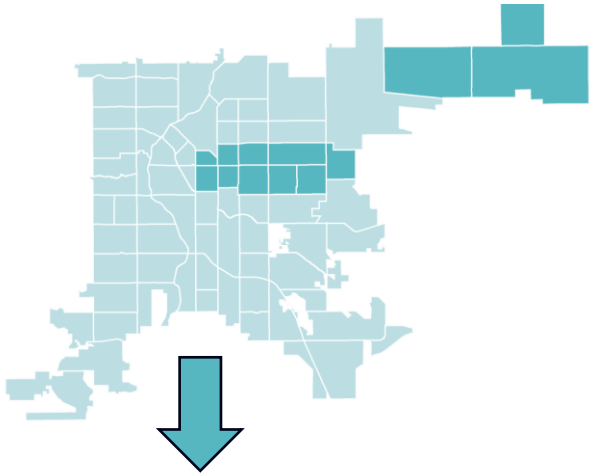
# What is the People's Budget?

A direct democracy process where the people invest a portion of their own taxpayer dollars toward neighborhood projects



# Funding to Date: \$5 Million over Five Years

## Cycle One: 2021-2022

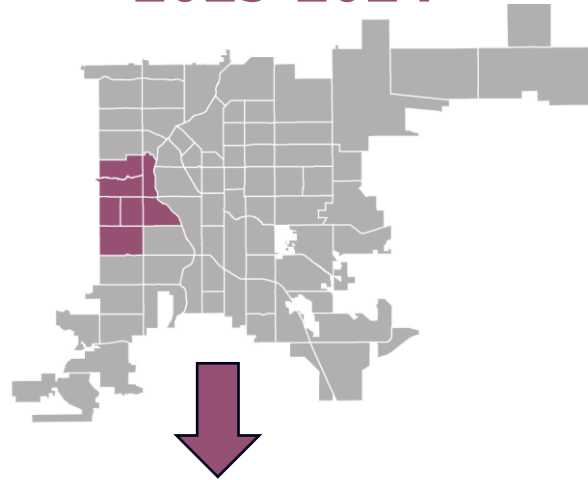


Budget toward constructed projects: **\$2 Million**

Budget to operate the Program: **\$250,000**

Budget toward constructed project contingency: **\$0.00**

## Cycle Two: 2023-2024

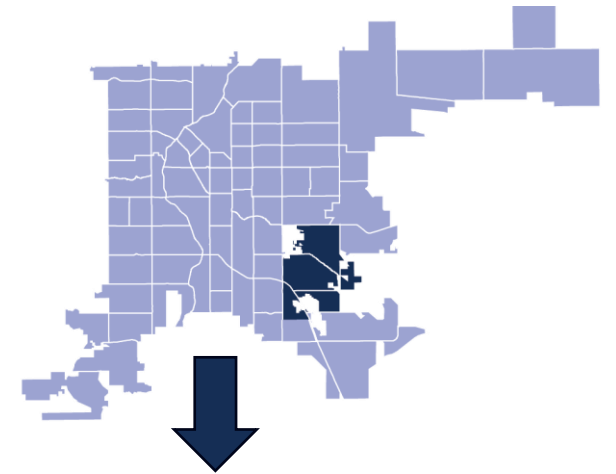


Budget toward constructed projects: **\$1 Million**

Budget to operate the Program: **\$150,000\***

Budget toward constructed project contingency: **\$0.00**

## Cycle Three: 2025-2026



Budget toward constructed projects: **\$2 Million**

Budget to operate the Program: **\$200,000\***

Budget toward constructed project contingency: **\$200,000\***



# Cycle 3 of the People's Budget: 2025 through 2026

**\$2 MILLION**

**\$1 MILLION** dedicated to the **Near Southeast** to build on the Neighborhood Planning Initiative

**\$1 MILLION** dedicated **citywide** to build on prior engagement and involve all neighborhoods



April-Sept. 2025

Launch Cycle 3!  
Recruit and train  
Resident Leaders



Oct.-Dec. 2025

PHASE 1:  
Steering  
Committee



Dec. '25.-April 2026

PHASE 2:  
Idea  
Collection



May-Sept. 2026

PHASE 3:  
Project  
Development



Oct.-Dec. 2026

PHASE 4:  
Community  
Voting



# People's Budget Lifecycle *Phase I* *Community Design*



Oct.-Dec. 2025	Dec. '25-April '26	May-Sept. 2026	Oct.-Dec. 2026	Q1 2027-2028
PHASE 1: Steering Committee	PHASE 2: Idea Collection	PHASE 3: Project Development	PHASE 4: Community Voting	PHASE 5: Project Implementation



# Steering Committee sets the foundation for Cycle 3

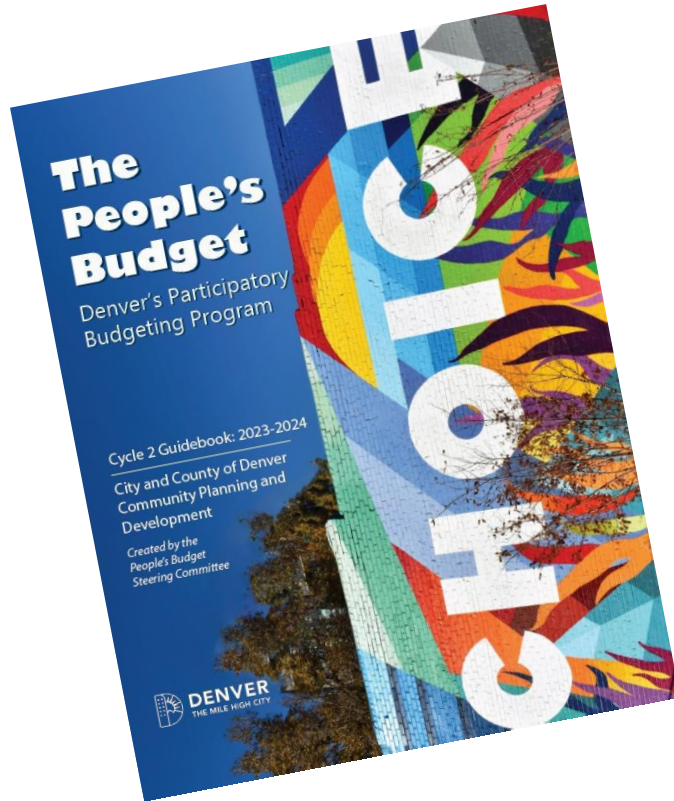
The committee creates a guidebook with key decisions for the program, including:

*Who can submit ideas?*

*What will be included in the project scoring rubric?*

*Who can vote?*

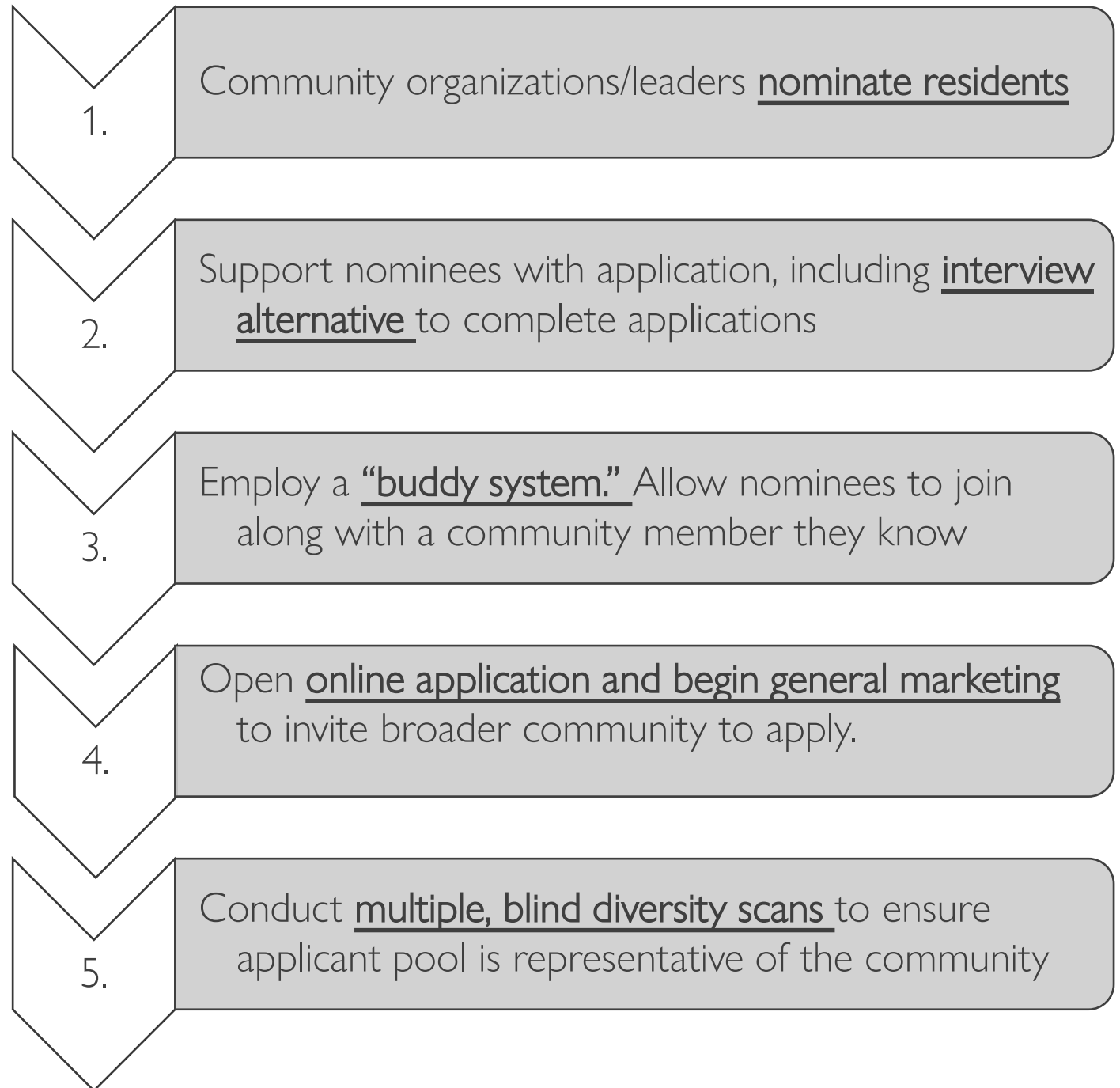
*What type of voting mechanism will be used*



# Identify new community leaders through strategic recruitment

Outreach from April through September:

- City Council recommendations
- Community database outreach
- In-person recruitment
  - 30 events or meetings
  - Engaged over 500 people







# Steering Committee: Logistics

- One committee, with significant representation from the Near Southeast Plan Area as well as representation from north, east, central, and west Denver
- Meetings in southeast Denver, likely the Cook Park Recreation Center or George Washington High School

★ **Several members from prior cycles, building long-term relationship with the city**





# People's Budget Lifecycle: *Phase 2* *Idea Collection*



Oct.-Dec. 2025	Dec. '25-April '26	May-Sept. 2026	Oct.-Dec. 2026	Q1 2027-2028
PHASE 1: Steering Committee	PHASE 2: Idea Collection	PHASE 3: Project Development	PHASE 4: Community Voting	PHASE 5: Project Implementation



A woman with long brown hair, wearing blue sunglasses, a blue plaid shirt over a light green dress, and black sandals, is sitting in a black motorized wheelchair. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The wheelchair has a large rear wheel and two smaller front wheels. In the background, there is a multi-story building with many windows and some trees. The scene is outdoors on a paved surface.

# ***Phyllis Mack Community Outreach Mini-Grants***

Funds and resources to community members  
to help generate participation during idea  
collection and community voting



# Cycle 3 Idea Collection:

- Phyllis Mack Community Outreach Mini-grantees trained in December and January.
- Community-led events January through April.

★ New partnership with Denver Public Schools for increased youth participation.



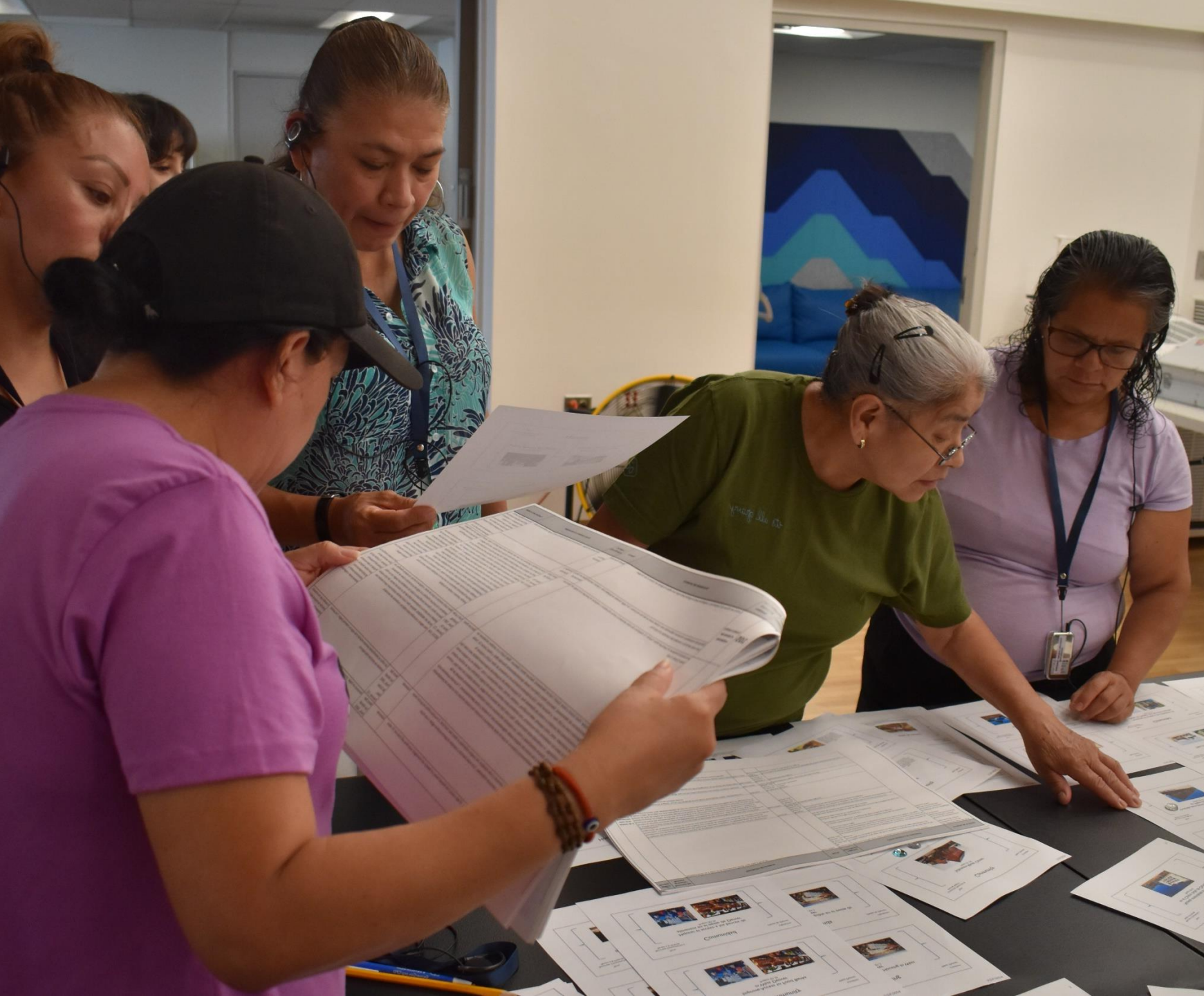


# People's Budget Lifecycle:

## *Phase 3 Proposal Development*



Oct.-Dec. 2025	Dec. '25-April '26	May-Sept. 2026	Oct.-Dec. 2026	Q1 2027-2028
PHASE 1: Steering Committee	PHASE 2: Idea Collection	PHASE 3: Project Development	PHASE 4: Community Voting	PHASE 5: Project Implementation



# Proposal Development Logistics:

- **Develop two lists of projects: a Near Southeast list and a Citywide list**
- **Community collaborates with staff from a dozen agencies to develop top ideas for the ballot**



**Continued collaboration with non-profits to develop externally-led projects**



# People's Budget Lifecycle:

## *Phase 4 Community Voting*



Oct.-Dec. 2025	Dec. '25-April '26	May-Sept. 2026	Oct.-Dec. 2026	Q1 2027-2028
PHASE 1: Steering Committee	PHASE 2: Idea Collection	PHASE 3: Project Development	PHASE 4: Community Voting	PHASE 5: Project Implementation





## Cycle 3 Community Voting:

- Fund \$1M of projects the Near Southeast and \$1M of projects citywide.
- Support Phyllis Mack Mini-Grantees with community led voting events.



★ New telephone townhall for strategic dial-out voting event



# People's Budget Lifecycle:

## *Project Implementation*



Oct.-Dec. 2025

PHASE 1:  
Steering  
Committee

Dec. '25-April '26

PHASE 2:  
Idea  
Collection

May-Sept. 2026

PHASE 3:  
Project  
Development

Oct.-Dec. 2026

PHASE 4:  
Community  
Voting

Q1 2027-2028

PHASE 5:  
Project  
Implementation





***Cycles 1-2 Project Implementation***



# Cycle 1 Results

**\$300,000:** New Freedom Park Improvements

**\$225,000:** Shower trailers for unhoused residents

**\$200,000:** Tiny homes for unhoused residents

**\$37,500:** New trashcans in FNE Parks/Trails

**\$175,000:** Community Gardens at subsidized housing

**\$362,500:** New lights in FNE Parks/Trails

**\$187,500:** Safer intersections in Capitol Hill

**\$400,000:** Accessible sidewalks in Ruby Hill

**\$112,500:** Accessible transit in City Park

COMPLETE

**\$2 MILLION**

# Cycle 2 Results

**\$356,250:** Intersection Safety

**\$306,250:** Mobile Food to Enhance Community Access to Healthy, Culturally Relevant Nutrition and Education (Community Partner-led)

**\$181,250:** Oxygen and Shade for All! Adding trees in West Denver

**\$156,250:** Heat Relief for Lower Income Households (Community Partner-led)

**\$1 MILLION**





**Completed  
Work:**  
Projects for the people, by  
the people





# *Meet the People of the Denver People's Budget*



“A good government takes work, and it takes government meeting community members where we are. The People’s Budget puts the people first. I want everyone to have this kind of access to their government.”  
- *Craig Allen, Cycle 2 Steering Committee member*



*Mariafer Fernandez* served as a project delegate in Cycle 2, where she helped build the ballot. In Fall 2024, she voted for the first time in the People’s Budget. A few months later, she gained citizenship and now looks forward to voting in traditional elections this fall.

## Democracy is hard. Without you, it’s impossible.

You matter in the Denver People’s Budget. Make a difference for your community today and vote online.  
Get involved at [denvergov.org/denverpb](https://denvergov.org/denverpb)



## La democracia es difícil. Sin ti, es imposible.

Usted importa en el Denver People’s Budget.  
Haga una diferencia para su comunidad hoy y vote en línea en [denvergov.org/denverpb](https://denvergov.org/denverpb)





# Over 6,000 people have participated

The majority of which are historically under-represented residents including communities of color, immigrants and refugees, youth, people with disabilities, unhoused people, people in jail, etc.

81%

of resident leaders identify as **Black, Indigenous people of color**.

53%

of resident leaders earn **less than \$25K a year**.

34%

of resident leaders identify as a **person with a disability**

The People's Budget reaches those who **cannot access traditional government** or who face barriers to civics and traditional participation.

55%

*Reported they could not or did not vote in the previous federal election.*

- ★ Won the 2025 **Metro Vision Award** through DRCOG.
- ★ Featured in a global report on democracy as an **inclusive process and a model** for other cities.
- ★ Won the **Voice of the People Award** by the International City/County Management Association.

# Next Steps and Council Engagement:

## Phase I Milestone Event:

Nov. 24 from 2:30 to 5pm

- Tour of City Hall
- Cycle 3 guidebook reveal
- Steering committee submits first ideas of Cycle 3

## Phase II Launch: Idea Collection

Idea cards and digital platform share kits distributed on Dec. 1





# Questions?

