

A woman with dark curly hair, wearing a tan jacket, is hugging a man in a dark suit. They are in a room with several large display boards in the background, each showing a grid of numbers and text, likely budget-related. The image has a soft, slightly blurred background.

Denver Participatory Budgeting

Cycle One Overview and Cycle Two Planning
Finance and Governance Committee | May 2, 2023

Purpose

- Overview of Cycle One
- A community leader's perspective
- Key recommendations and Cycle Two planning
- Questions and discussion





Cycle One Overview



What is Participatory Budgeting?

A form of **participatory democracy** to strengthen partnerships between residents and governments. An equity-focused civic engagement process, PB aims to **improve communication** between municipal government and historically underserved residents, **increase trust and transparency**, and foster reciprocal **learning between government and the community**.



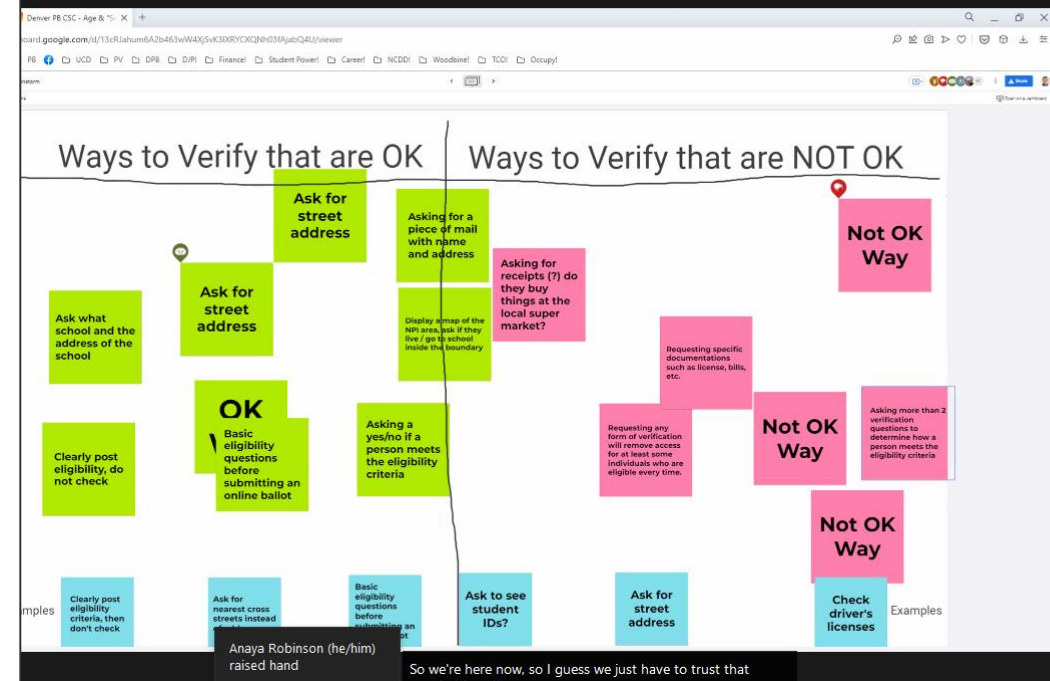
Phase I: Community Design

The Community Steering Committee deliberated to create the first-ever Denver Participatory Budgeting Guidebook, where they decided:

- Participants must **live, go to school, or work at a micro business** in their ballot area.
- Any resident of any **age, immigration status, incarceration status, and housing status**, could vote in this process.
- A **rank vote system** complete with contingency plans for ties and other scenarios.

80%

of the 60+ resident leaders in the program identified as **Black, Indigenous people of color**



Phase 2: Idea Collection

- Idea collection events focused on reaching **historically underserved communities**, with deliberative meetings at the jails, Safe Outdoor Spaces, schools, Denver Housing Authority sites, food banks, etc.
- **\$30K** of “mini-grants” went to residents and grass root organization to solicit project ideas from the community
- **Over 1,100 ideas** were submitted

97%

of idea collection respondents identified as BIPOC.

Half earned less than \$25K a year and **half** had not earned a high school diploma



Phase 3: Proposal Development

- Residents, called **budget delegates**, worked in four groups to score ideas and prioritize projects.
- Collaborating with city staff and community partners budget delegates designed **23 project proposals** across the four ballots.

+ REPRESENTATION

Budget delegates represented historically underserved communities, including people with disabilities, youth, undocumented residents, refugees, and unhoused residents

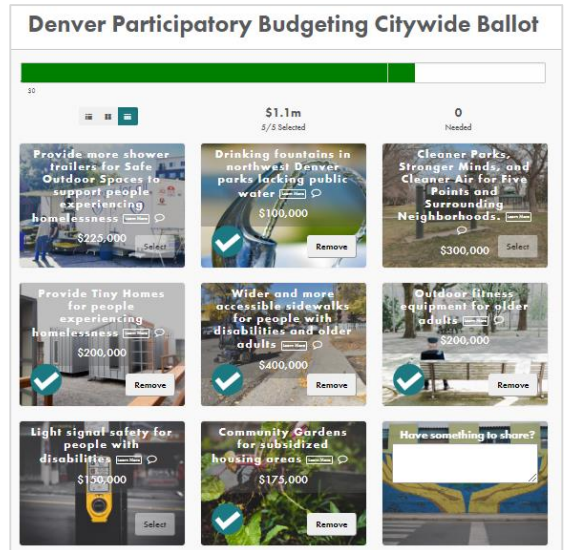
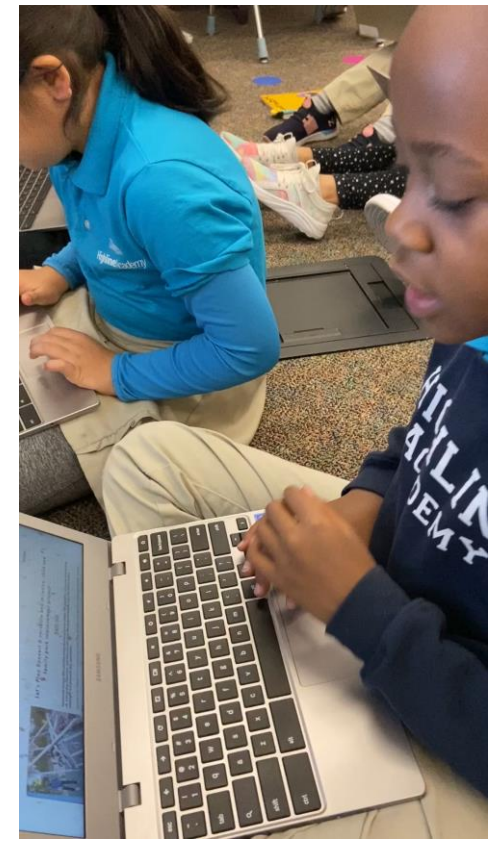
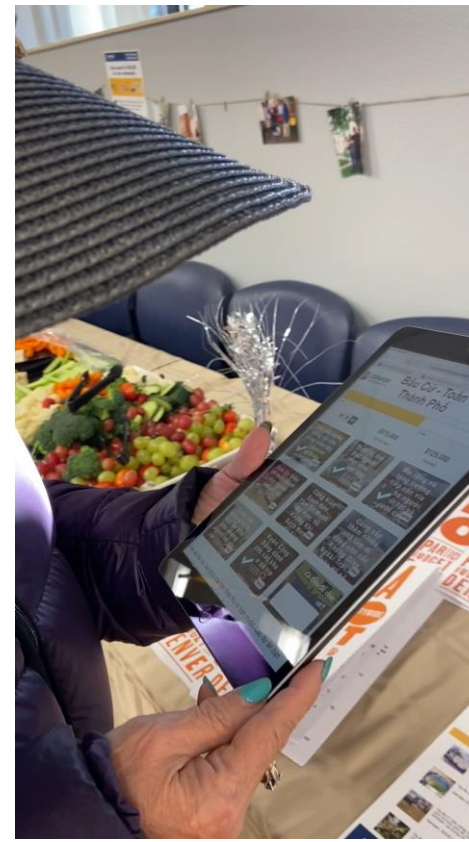


Phase 4: Voting

Over **3K** residents of all ages and any immigration status ranked and voted for projects on physical and digital ballots



Ballots translated into 8 languages



Results

Residents budgeted \$2M, funding nine projects across a broad range of infrastructure

\$400,000: Accessible sidewalks in Ruby Hill

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

\$300,000: New Freedom Park Improvements

\$225,000: Shower trailers for unhoused residents

\$200,000: Tiny homes for unhoused residents

\$187,500: Safer intersections in Capitol Hill

\$175,000: Community Gardens

\$112,500: Accessible transit in City Park

\$2 MILLION of community-led infrastructure projects

Total Ideas and Respondent Information



Far Northeast

511
Respondents live in

145
Respondents go to school in

158
Respondents work/own mic...



East

98
Respondents live in

26
Respondents go to school in

28
Respondents work/own mic...



East Central

122
Respondents live in

31
Respondents go to school in

59
Respondents work/own mic...



another part of Denver

249
Respondents live in

50
Respondents go to school in

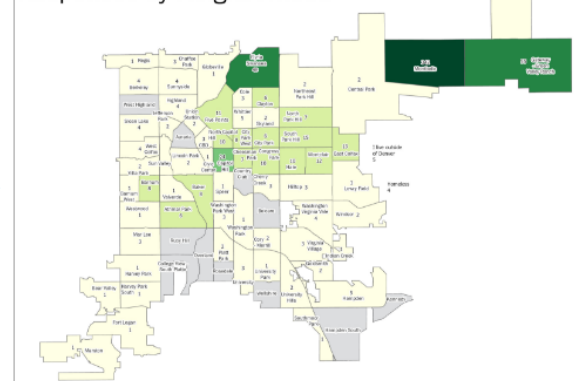
204
Respondents work/own mic...

Note: Each of these responses is not mutually exclusive, so some people may be double counted (e.g. someone may have indicated that they live in East, go to school in Far Northeast, and work in Far Northeast)

Notes on the data

- Use of the demographic information in this dashboard is limited given that about 1/3 of respondents did not provide their demographic information.
- Data from the 2020 US Census American Community Survey 5-year Estimates is offered as context only and not as a statistical comparison due to limited response rates to demographic questions.

Denver Participatory Budgeting Responses by Neighborhood



Select neighborhood to see total number of responses. Neighborhoods not listed in the drop-down had no responses.

Neighborhood

All

1176

total ideas

1094

total respondents



Phyllis Mack

Cycle 1 Mini-Grant Recipient

Cycle Two Planning



Key Recommendations

From the 3rd Party Evaluation and City Staff

Expanded community involvement

- ☒ Grassroots data collection
- ☒ Referral or recommendation process to select resident leaders

Collaborate with community organizations for project delivery (staff rec)

Program resources and resource allocation

- ☒ Create a full-time program position
- ☒ Language justice needs to be addressed
- ☐ Set spending caps on proposals

+ *Staff suggest posing this to the Community Steering Committee*

Program structure and management

- ☒ Integrate the implementation and data-collection teams
- ☐ Expand PB citywide and based on council districts
- ☐ Allocate more money to projects and expand funding to one-time

+ *Staff suggest posing this to the Community Steering Committee to implement if additional funding is available*

Cycle Two Approach



External Approach

\$1M toward infrastructure

- Capital projects delivered by the city and in partnership with community organizations.

Focus on West Region

- Key neighborhoods would include Westwood, Sun Valley, West Colfax, Villa Park, Barnum, Barnum West, and Valverde
- Build upon existing outreach and engagement in these areas through plans and other efforts



Internal Approach

Internal project management team

- Integrate city agencies and city council, and build in time for collaborative problem solving

Professional Services (\$250K)

- Direct majority of funds toward residents and grassroots organization.
- Contract for key needs: fiscal administration, facilitation and outreach, data collection, language access, etc.

Cycle Two Timeline

Key milestones for 2023:

- **Successful solicitation** for professional services
- Onboard program-wide **resident specialists** (for facilitation/data collection/outreach)
- Onboard **Community Steering Committee** and begin design meetings



Questions and Discussion

