

For Immediate Release

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City of Vallejo First in Nation to Adopt 'Participatory Budgeting' city-wide; Groundbreaking Program Will Now Allow Vallejo Residents to Vote on How to Spend \$3.2 Million in Tax Dollars

VALLEJO, CA (Oct. 29, 2012) – Vallejo joins Chicago and New York City on the forefront of Participatory Budgeting in the United States; Vallejo is the first city in the nation to implement Participatory Budgeting at the city-wide level.

At a news conference here, the City of Vallejo announced “Participatory Budgeting Vallejo” (PB Vallejo), which will allow Vallejo residents to help decide how to spend approximately \$3.2 million of Measure B sales tax funds.

The City Council has set aside a minimum of 30 percent of the Measure B sales tax revenue for Participatory Budgeting. Both capital infrastructure projects and program or service projects are eligible, provided that they meet further criteria.

A Steering Committee of 20 civic organizations, nominated by City Council, designed and oversees the process. The City has contracted the non-profit organization The Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) to implement PB Vallejo.

The process involves a series of meetings that feed into the city’s annual budget cycle. Starting October 30th, community members will brainstorm spending ideas at budget assemblies. Volunteers will turn these ideas into full proposals, and the public will also be able to submit, review, and discuss project ideas online. In May 2013 residents and City Council will vote on the proposals.

"When we give the general public the tools and knowledge to make informed decisions, they make as good or better decisions as politicians about how to spend public funds," said City Council Member Marti Brown. "And that's exactly what PB is about: giving people the knowledge, power and money to shape communities that reflect their values."

“Vallejo is the first city in the U.S. to adopt participatory budgeting on a city-wide level,” added Joey Lake of the group Better Vallejo, chair of PB Vallejo’s Steering Committee. “We aim to improve our city,

engage our community, and transform our democracy. We hope that this process will build a new spirit of civic pride and raise the profile of Vallejo on the regional, state, and national levels.”

City Council Member Stephanie Gomes noted, "PB lets residents decide directly how they want to spend their tax dollars, and what kind of community they want to create. It's true democracy in all CAPS."

Lynda Daniels of the NAACP and Vice-Chair of the PB Vallejo Steering Committee explains, "Participatory Budgeting is a unique opportunity to engage people in our community who don't normally come out for activities that involve city government. Vallejo is rich in diversity, and it is especially important that our communities of color are represented here."

"This is a golden opportunity to reinvent Vallejo, and make the city a model for democracy, inclusion, and innovation," explained Josh Lerner, Executive Director of The Participatory Budgeting Project. "In over 1,500 cities, participatory budgeting has educated citizens, built community, and led to real improvements in people's quality of life."

"In an era when tremendously hard decisions must be made about budget priorities, participatory budgeting is an exciting new way to involve the public and to get their guidance and support for what has to be done," said Dean Henry Brady of the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley, Co-Coordinator of PB Vallejo Research Board.

"We're proud that the forward-thinking City of Vallejo is bringing participatory budgeting to California," said Alissa Black, Director of California Innovation Project for the New America Foundation. "I look forward to seeing how this model of inclusion helps to galvanize the Vallejo community, and how it can be applied to other areas of governing."

Learn more at www.pbvallejo.org, and follow Participatory Budgeting Vallejo on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ParticipatoryBudgetingVallejo.

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PB Vallejo Assemblies

Tues. 10/30, 6:30-8:30 pm*
Vallejo Adult School
2833 Tennessee Street
Spanish Interpretation available

Thurs. 11/1, 1:30-3:30 pm
Douglas Senior Center- FOR SENIORS
333 Amador Street

Wed. 11/7, 6:30-8:30 pm*
Norman King Community Center
545 Magazine Street

Wed. 11/14, 6:00-8:00 pm*
Omega Boys & Girls Club
1 Positive Place
Spanish Interpretation available

Thurs. 11/15, 6:30-8:30 pm*
Federal Terrace Elementary
415 Daniels Avenue

Sat. 11/17, 2:00-4:00 pm*
Kyles Temple AME Zion Church
912 Florida Street

Sun. 11/18, 2:00-4:00 pm*
St. Vincent's Church - EN ESPANOL
925 Sacramento Street

Thurs. 11/29, 6:30-8:30 pm*
Glen Cove Elementary
501 Glen Cove Parkway

Wed. 12/5, 2:30-4:30 pm

Jesse Bethel High School - FOR YOUTH
1800 Ascott Parkway

Refreshments will be served at Assemblies.

**Child care will be available on site.*

Participatory budgeting in Vallejo has five steps starting with project proposals from the community. These steps are:

- 1. Budget Assemblies (October through December).** At these meetings Vallejo residents and stakeholders will learn about the budget, then meet in small groups to brainstorm project ideas. Some participants will volunteer to serve as budget delegates, to further develop the project ideas.
- 2. Budget Delegate Meetings (December 2012 through April 2013).** These volunteers will transform the community's initial project ideas into full project proposals to help meet community needs. During this stage projects may be combined, modified or dropped, based on feedback from experts and further research.

3. **Project Expos (April 2013)** – At three Project Expo meetings, the Budget Delegates will share with the community their draft project proposals and seek feedback from Vallejo residents and stakeholders.

4. **Voting on Final Project Proposals (May 2013)** – The Budget Delegates will present the ballot with the final project proposals and residents will vote on which projects they want to see funded. Projects that get the most votes and are within the funds available will be submitted to the City Council for approval.

5. **Evaluation and Monitoring** - Delegates and other participants evaluate the process, then monitor the implementation of projects.

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