

Building Democracy through Participatory Budgeting



What's PB?

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is an open, democratic process that builds the capacity of community members to deliberate and directly decide how to spend part of the city's budget. PB fosters collaboration among community members and municipal government by blending direct democracy with representative democracy. Over a period of 6-9 months, residents come together in neighborhood assemblies to discuss ways to improve their quality of life, then elect delegates who in turn specify and cost out specific proposals. The proposals are then voted on by all the residents. The proposals that get the most votes are the ones that get funded.



Our Money - Our City - Our Decision

Participatory Budgeting gives ordinary people real decision-making power over real money in order to make their city a better place to live

A group of Greensboro residents are calling for the City to allocate just one percent of the City's budget to be democratically decided by the community.

The City of Greensboro's proposed budget for the 2012-2013 fiscal year is just over \$450 million. If the City were to allocate just one percent of its budget to a participatory budgeting process, that would give residents the ability to directly decide how to spend \$4.5 million on projects that could benefit their neighborhoods and communities.

Fortunately, PB has been used for years in cities across the world and in the US. We can build on their experiences as we design a process that can engage people from across Greensboro in a participatory process that's fair, productive, and democratic.

Working for a Democratic, Just, and Sustainable Greensboro

Participatory Budgeting



Photo courtesy of Debra Delois

For more information or to get involved in the Greensboro Participatory Budget Project:

- <http://greensboropb.org>
- pb@f4dc.org
- 336-497-1854

This mural was a community project in Rogers Park decided on through participatory budgeting in Chicago's 49th Ward.

PB Projects in Real Terms*

\$200,000 can buy:
A year-long youth athletic program

\$180,000 can buy:
Five blocks of street resurfacing

\$100,000 can buy:
A dog park

\$90,000 can buy:
Two miles of bike lane

\$55,000 can buy:
Four blocks of new street lighting

\$12,000 can buy:
20 bike racks

* Figures are approximate

Participatory Budgeting in Greensboro: What's in it for me and my community?

1 A fair shot at getting what you need: Worried about the lack of a street light at the end of your street? Are your kids longing for an upgrade to the swings at the playground? Wishing your library was open a bit later on the weekends? Whatever your needs, PB provides an open, transparent avenue to get your needs met! Attend a PB neighborhood assembly, and you may discover that your neighbors want the same things you do. Working together, you can craft a proposal to address your specific concern. The proposals with the highest number of votes get funded, so if you do a good job describing your idea, you have an excellent chance of getting what you need.

2 More efficient use of tax dollars: PB provides residents with direct say-so about how they want their tax dollars spent. This means city expenditures will be right on target. In cities with PB, elected officials often remark that before PB they thought they knew what their constituents wanted; when PB came in, they learned they hadn't really understood. The PB vote not only directs funding to the winning proposals—it also provides feedback to elected officials and city planners, who use it to improve their planning for the rest of the budget as well.