



What is Participatory Budgeting in District 21?

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. The process began in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989. Today, there are more than 3,000 participatory budgeting processes around the world, most at the municipal level. PB is a different way to manage public money, and to engage people in government. It is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. It enables residents to work with the government to make the budget decisions that affect their lives. Participatory budgeting was designed to create opportunities for local communities to have real decision-making power over how local money is spent. Over 30 cities worldwide have used this process to increase residents' say in how money is spent.

In 2018, the Center for Health Equity and two Metro Louisville Council Members - David James and Brandon Coan – launched a PB process to allow residents to allocate part of their council discretionary funds. In 2020, Council Member Nicole George started a process in District 21. These projects aim to give community member's real decision-making over taxpayer spending. In District 21, Council Member George is asking residents how to spend at least \$20,000 in council funding. PB enables District 21 residents to propose and vote on projects in their City Council districts.

Metro Council District 21 launched a district-wide survey in October 2020 to ask residents how they would like their Council office funds to be used in their neighborhoods by asking, "if you had \$2,000 for a project in your neighborhood that would have a lasting impact, what would it be?" Survey respondents were also asked if they would want to be part of the Action Team to assist in implementing participatory budgeting in District 21. From these results, a Steering Committee (or Action Team) was formed to represent the District's neighborhoods to determine and implement neighborhood projects. 2021 Steering Committee Meetings are facilitated by the McNary Group.

Participatory budgeting has a variety of benefits. Government officials are able to hear directly from residents about their priorities. Residents are able to learn more about how government processes work. Together, this means that more transparency and trust are built. Residents also gain leadership skills, and those who cannot participate in traditional voting are able to have a voice. We believe this process can be an important tool to achieving equity in Louisville.