



Kriss Worthington

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ACTION CALENDAR

April 28, 2015

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington
 Subject: Implementing Participatory Budgeting in the City of Berkeley

RECOMMENDATION

Berkeley City Council should implement a participatory budgeting process that allows Berkeley residents to decide how to spend money not in the City Manager's budget and new money that becomes available after the City Manager's proposed budget.

BACKGROUND

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a process that allows the public to determine how to spend the city money on projects proposed by the residents for city improvement. The Public Budgeting Project started out informally as a collaborative effort between PB activists and researchers and has since promoted PB in over 1,500 cities worldwide, mostly in Europe and Latin America.

In the US, seven cities—Chicago, New York, Boston, San Francisco, Vallejo, Cambridge, and St. Louis— have utilized PB as part of the budgetary process. In New York, 18,576 residents from 24 Council Districts are now deciding how to spend \$25 million through the PB process. In San Francisco, the pilot PB program from District 3, which allows the public to decide how to spend \$100,000, has since expanded to three districts. These programs now involve over 2261 residents and totals an amount of \$461K. Recently, Cambridge residents have just voted on how to spend \$50,000 to fund one-time capital projects, including bike repair stations, free wifi in six outdoor spaces and other programs that improve public infrastructures.

Participatory budgeting helps officials do their job better by putting them in closer touch with their constituents, and by injecting local knowledge and volunteer energy into the budgetary process. It also makes local government more inclusive to those with barriers to involvement in politics. The participatory budgeting program will have a positive impact on the budgetary process in Berkeley by encouraging residents to become more involved in local politics, deepening democracy, empowering communities, making budgeting more effective, and ultimately improving the overall quality of community services and public infrastructures.

For more information, please see the hyperlinks below:

History of the Participatory Budgeting Project:

<http://www.participatorybudgeting.org/who-we-are/history/>;

Examples of participatory budgeting in the US:

<http://www.participatorybudgeting.org/about-participatory-budgeting/examples-of-participatory-budgeting/>;

Participatory budgeting in San Francisco:

<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2015/3/25/cambridge-participatory-budget-voting/>;

The Harvard Crimson article on PB in Cambridge:

<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2015/3/25/cambridge-participatory-budget-voting/>

FINACIAL IMPLICATIONS

To be determined.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no identifiable environmental effects or opportunities associated with the subject of this report.

CONTACT PERSON

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