



Budget Public Engagement

September 24, 2019

Agenda

- Background & Purpose
- Defining Public Engagement
- Current Budget Public Engagement Activities
- Peer Jurisdiction Activities & Best Practices
- Manager's Budget Public Engagement Plan



Background & Purpose

- The Board of County Commissioners seated in December 2018 have placed an emphasis on public engagement in the budget process.
- FY2020 Budget process included an additional public hearing, advisory board feedback, and a resident budget survey.
- The County Manager has tasked the Office of Management & Budget and the Public Information Department with developing a sustainable and formalized public engagement strategy for future budget processes.
- This project is a piece of a larger County-wide public engagement initiative
- Strategy is also included in the Mecklenburg County Equity Action Plan adopted June 11th, 2019, with OMB and Public Information owning accountability.



Deliverables & Desired Outcome

- Design a sustainable public budget engagement process which can be duplicated each year.
- Strategy will be inclusive and ensure that all residents and stakeholders are given access to provide input.
- Public Information will lead implementation of approved community engagement activities.



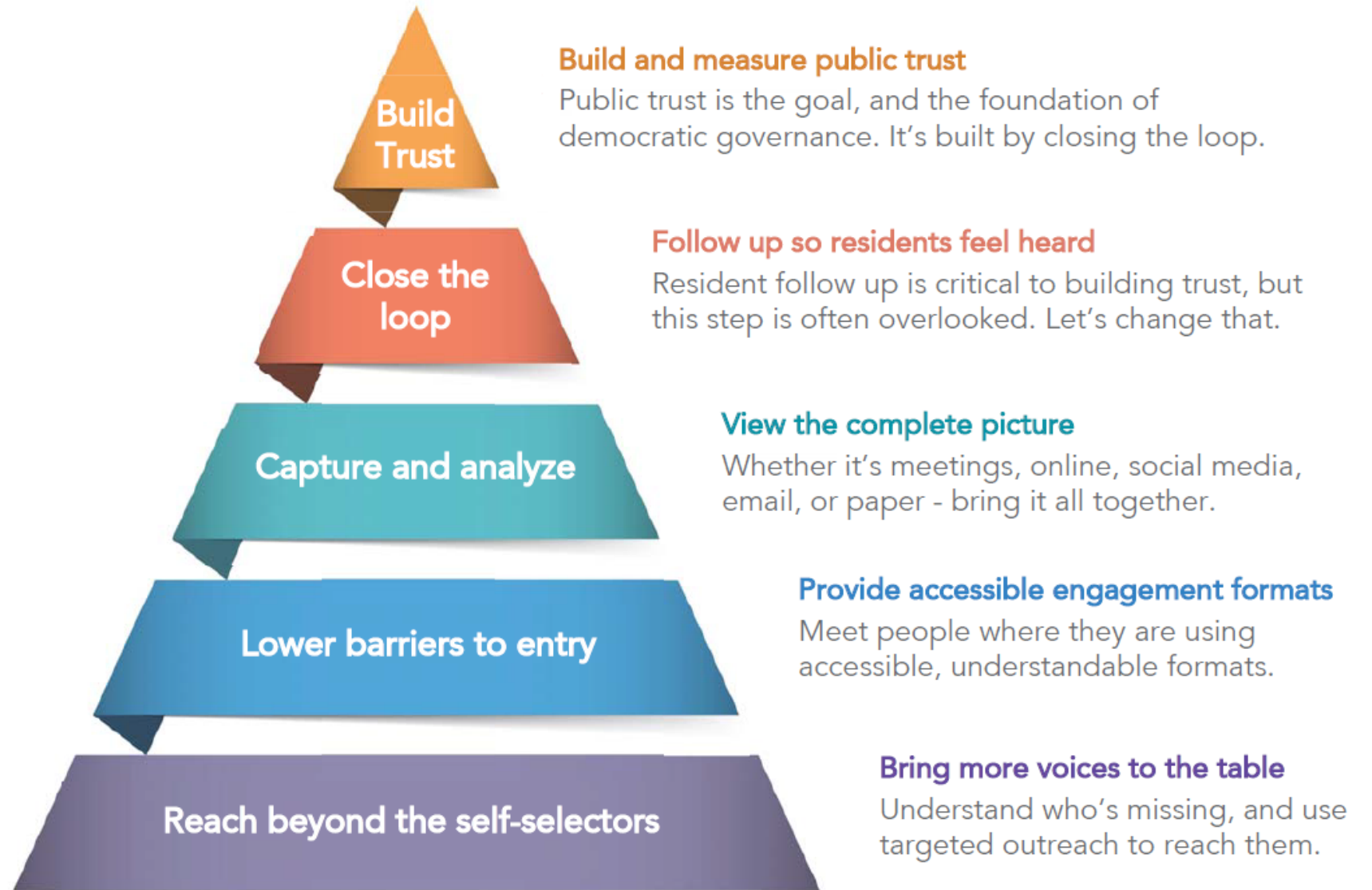


Participation Spectrum

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with objective info and assist them in understanding problems, alternatives, and solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and decisions.	To work directly with the public to ensure concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of decision-making, including the development of alternatives and solutions.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen, acknowledge your concerns, and provide feedback.	We will work to ensure that your concerns are reflected in alternatives.	We will look to you for advice and innovation and will incorporate your recommendations into the decisions.	We will implement what you decide.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheet • Web site • Social media tools • Open house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Deliberative polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen advisory committees • Consensus building • Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decision

provided by the *International City/County Management Association & International Association for Public Participation*

Public Engagement Pyramid



provided by *PublicInput.com*

Existing Budget Public Engagement Activities

What is the County currently doing to engage the public regarding the budget?



Existing Budget Public Engagement – 1/2



Budget Public Hearing

The Budget Public Hearing is a staple of local government budget processes and is required by NCGS § 159-12. Mecklenburg County has held only one such hearing each year, typically after the recommended budget is presented by the County Manager. In FY2020, the BOCC requested an additional public hearing before the recommended budget was formulated. The additional public hearing is not required by statute. The results were used to inform the priorities for the Recommended Budget.



Resident Budget Priority Survey

This survey was requested by the BOCC to assist with FY2020 budget deliberations and was the first of its kind completed by Mecklenburg County. Survey was live for ~3 weeks in January 2019, provided in paper and online versions, and published in English and Spanish. A review of the response revealed an underrepresentation of minorities in comparison to demographic makeup of the County (33% vs. 53%). Findings from the survey were used in developing the Recommended Budget.



BOCC Town Hall Meetings

BOCC members hold periodic Town Hall meetings to discuss a variety of matters. Recent meetings have been held to discuss property revaluation, affordable housing, senior services, Latino/a relations, etc. These meetings provide an opportunity for elected officials to have formalized conversations with members of the community. These meetings are often attended by staff with expertise in the field being discussed.

Existing Budget Public Engagement – 2/2



Social Media

The County uses Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to share a great deal of information with the public, including budget information. The medium has not typically been used to gather budget priorities, but rather to answer questions regarding the recommended budget. The County Manager and BOCC members have held formal 'Facebook Live' events to answer questions from the community regarding the budget. Some BOCC members used social media to solicit budget priorities from their followers in FY2020, but County staff have not.



Advisory Boards

There are more than 30 area Advisory Boards, Committees, and Commissions with at least one member appointed by the BOCC. The scope of each group varies, but all provide some manner of expertise in a specific area or field. The County has not traditionally requested guidance or input from these groups during the budget process. However, each advisory board was asked to articulate its budget priorities for FY2020 with 13 responding.

Best Practices & Peer Jurisdictions

What are other large local governments doing to engage the public in the budget process, and what are industry best practices?



Best Practices – *Currently Provided by County*



Public Hearings

Required by NC law to be held at least once each year and useful to gather a large amount of feedback from residents, but can lack the conversational or educational elements of other public engagement strategies. Generally considered the minimum level of public budget engagement.



Surveys

Provide a snapshot of what is important to a community at a point in time. Organizations can receive a large amount of data from their residents by using surveys, although findings & priorities can swing widely year-to-year. Some jurisdictions complete budget priority surveys in 2-3 year cycles to control from wide swings in priorities.



Advisory Boards

Can be valuable when developing policy and budget recommendations for complex service items, such as homeless services, IT, affordable housing, etc. Most jurisdictions do not rely on these types of bodies for budget priority building due to the narrow nature of their roles and expertise.



Town Hall Meetings

These meetings provide constituents of a particular representative an opportunity to have a conversation with them in a less formal setting than a meeting of the full elected body. These meetings can be used to inform an elected official and staff of the needs and desires of district residents.

Best Practices – *Not Provided by County*



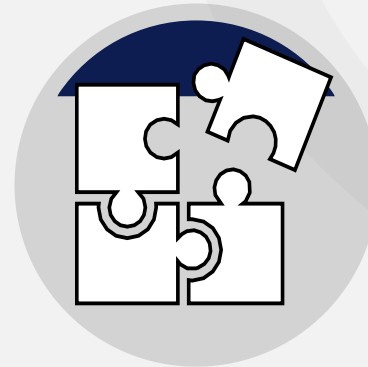
Budget Education & Outreach Events

These events accomplish many of the goals of public budget engagement. Organizations can be targeted in the location of events to reach traditionally marginalized communities, and ensure participants learn about the budget process and are given the opportunity to contribute to its development.



Digital Engagement Campaigns

Many organizations have used digital engagement platforms to engage their residents. Firms such as CityZen, NationBuilder, and PublicInput.com have worked extensively to assist public sector organizations in reaching residents through their customizable online platforms and marketing expertise.



Interactive Budget Exercises

There are several interactive tools that local governments can use to allow residents to create their own budgets based on their individual priorities. These tools require participants to create balanced budgets with limited resources.



Participatory Budgeting

In Participatory Budgeting, a jurisdiction allocates funding toward **one-time** projects which are selected and voted on by residents. This process is primarily utilized by municipal governments. All projects must be approved as to legality, and sustainability before proceeding to a vote.

What are Other Jurisdictions Doing?

The following section has real-life examples of what other communities have done to engage their residents.



Thousand Oaks, CA – ‘Your City, Your Priorities’

- The goal of this Budget Public Engagement strategy was to understand how residents prioritize city projects and services, and to educate the public on the budget process.
- The strategy included use of a dedicated website with key dates, budget simulation tool, budget survey, and educational videos.
- The City also hosted several events to educate residents on the budget process, and to engage them in facilitated prioritization exercises.
- Leveraged community partners and local media to assist with outreach and marketing.
- Findings are used to inform budget decision each year.



Go Triangle - Digital Engagement Campaign

- 'Go Triangle' is the Regional Transit Authority for Wake, Durham, and Orange Counties.
- Organization used the digital engagement consultant PublicInput.com to engage and educate the public on existing investments in transit, future investment plans, and bus route planning.
- PublicInput.com worked with Go Triangle staff to develop an online survey and market it using targeted social media advertising, local news websites, and smart phone links to the survey at bus stop shelters.
- The digital engagement was combined with more than 30 events across GoTriangle's jurisdiction to ensure a broad reach.
- Go Triangle used the feedback received to inform future plans
- How feedback was used was promoted/marketed at same levels as the initial survey.



Fort Collins, CO – ‘Show Residents the Money’

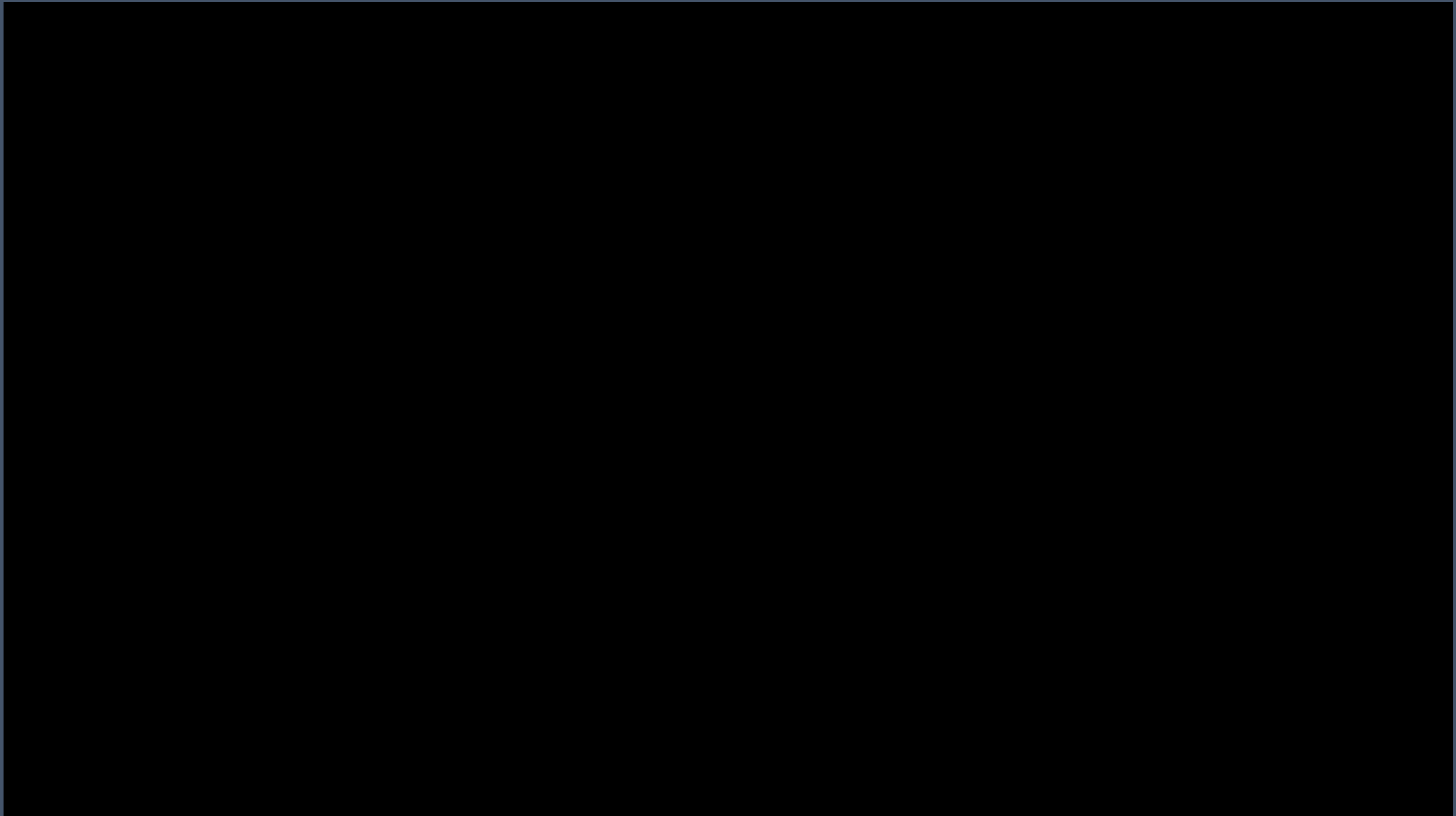
- The City of Fort Collins, CO utilized ‘Balancing Act’ software to assist with engaging residents in the budget process.
- The program was customized by City staff to be relevant to their residents.
- The program allows residents to allocate resources based on their individual priorities, with final ‘balanced’ budgets submitted to staff for review and reporting.
- Participants can be asked to provide information about themselves to assist with understanding varying priorities based on race, gender, location, age, etc.
- The City’s link received more than 4,000 hits, or 2.4% of the population.
- This level of response in Mecklenburg County would be more than 24,000 responses.



'Balancing Act' Simulation



Participatory Budgeting Overview



provided by *Participatory Budgeting Project*



Durham, NC - Participatory Budgeting – 1/2

- The City of Durham allocated \$2.4 million in FY2020 for the program, \$800k for each of the three City Council Wards. \$2.4 million is ~1% of the General Fund budget.
- Program is housed in Budget & Management Services, and staffed by three dedicated full-time employees.
- Program runs in two-year cycles. FY2019 was year one and determined which projects to fund, implementation will occur in FY2020.
- The process for Durham is as follows:
 1. A steering committee, appointed by council, creates rules in partnership with government officials to ensure the process is inclusive and meets local needs
 2. Through meetings and online tools, residents share and discuss ideas for projects
 3. Volunteers turn the ideas into formal proposals, which are vetted by the Budget Office, City Manager, and Attorney
 4. Residents vote on which projects to fund
 5. Winning projects are implemented, such as technology, bus shelters, public Wi-Fi in parks, sidewalk improvements, etc.



Durham, NC - Participatory Budgeting – 2/2

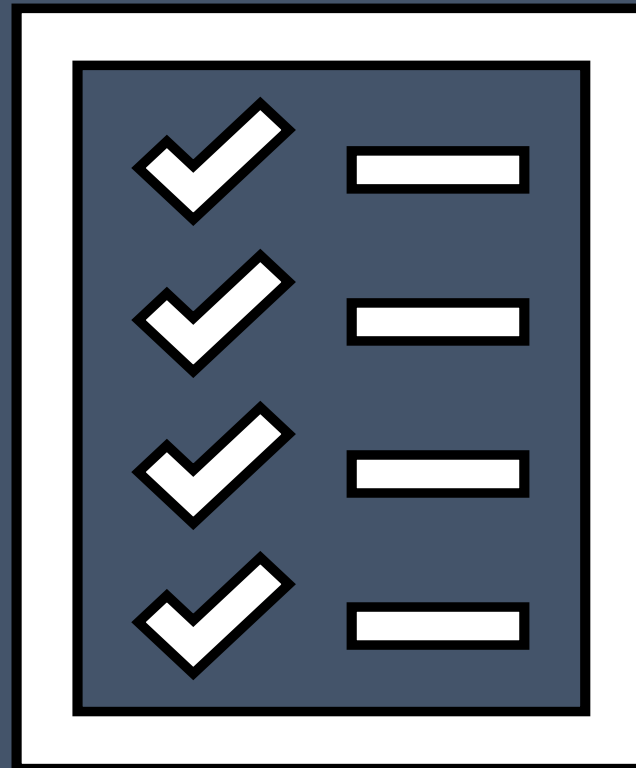
- Voting occurs the entire month of May, both online and at Durham City Hall.
- Eighteen projects were funded, details of which are below, ranked by the number of votes in each Ward. The City will implement at least 50% of projects in FY2020.
- Each Ward retains balance of any of the \$800k not utilized during Cycle 1 for future cycles. For example, the budget for the next cycle in Ward 1 will be \$902k.

Ward 1		Ward 2		Ward 3	
<i>Project</i>	<i>\$</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>\$</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>\$</i>
Technology for Middle/High Schools	\$135k	Technology for Middle/High Schools	\$135k	Technology for Middle/High Schools	\$135k
Accessible Ramps for Disabled Residents	57k	Accessible Ramps for Disabled Residents	57k	El Futuro Mental Health Clinic Expansion	96k
LGBTQ+ Youth Center (citywide)	38k	Housing Authority Lighting & Security Cameras	113k	Life Center of Durham	146k
STEM & Entrepreneurship Program	99k	LGBTQ+ Youth Center (citywide)	38k	Accessible Ramps for Disabled Residents	57k
Bus Shelters w/ Reclaimed Art	132k	Bus Shelters w/ Reclaimed Art	132k	Bus Shelters w/ Reclaimed Art	132k
Street Trees	68k	Bus Shelters on Fayetteville Street	159k	LGBTQ+ Youth Center (citywide)	38k
Historic Neighborhood Monuments/Signage	90k			Housing Authority Lighting & Security Cameras	58k
ADA Equipment for Parks	79k			Belmont Park Improvements	125k
Ward 1 Total	\$698k	Ward 2 Total	\$634k	Ward 3 Total	\$787k



Manager's Recommendation: Mecklenburg County Budget Public Engagement Process

*What can Mecklenburg County do to engage
the public in the annual budget process?*



Mecklenburg County

Budget Public Engagement – 1/3

1. Budget Education & Outreach Events – FY2021

- A. Meetings will be non-district specific (i.e. North, South, East, West, Central).
- B. 1.5 – 2 hours long, 20% Education – 80% Prioritization Exercises.
- C. Meeting locations will be targeted in traditionally marginalized communities to address equity & inclusion.
- D. The County will contract with Meagan Palmer, facilitator from the Board Retreat that led the prioritization exercise.

2. Dynamic Budget Survey Campaign – FY2021

- A. Survey would be made available on the County's website, and at libraries, park facilities, senior centers, etc.
- B. Survey would be marketed heavily on digital platforms, including social media, local media websites, etc.
- C. Digital version will be available in multiple languages.
- D. Paper versions will be available in English & Spanish

3. Customized Budget Simulation Tool – FY2021

- A. Simulation would include options to add staff to departments and impact on caseload/performance, reductions to budgets and impacts on service, increasing revenues' impact on tax bills, etc.



Mecklenburg County

Budget Public Engagement – 2/3

4. Advisory Board Feedback – FY2021

- A. County should continue to request information regarding budget gaps each year.
- B. Departments should consult with relevant Advisory Boards before submitting budget requests to the County Manager
- C. BOCC could receive presentations from the groups as information at single Budget & Public Policy, with time requirements being considered for all boards to present.

5. Additional Budget Public Hearing – FY2021

- A. The County should continue to host an additional budget public hearing as part of the annual budget process.
- B. This hearing was valuable for the BOCC and provided enhanced levels of public engagement.



Mecklenburg County

Budget Public Engagement – 3/3

6. Participatory Budgeting – FY2022

- A. An extremely popular and valuable tool to engage residents in the budget process.
- B. The County will contract with Participatory Budgeting Project to provide 'PB 101' Training.
- C. "PB 101 Training is a day-long workshop for up to 30 people that will walk the group through the full PB process, case studies, strategies for implementation, and gaining insights into challenges and how to overcome them."
- D. Existing Clients of the Participatory Budgeting Project included New York City, City of Seattle, City of Boston, City of Minneapolis, City of Toronto, and many others.



Next Steps



BOCC Feedback

Brief the BOCC and consider feedback on the Manager's recommended plan.



OMB & PI Activities

OMB will coordinate with Procurement to begin process of securing contracts to develop dynamic digital survey, budget simulation tool and Participatory Budgeting training. Public Information will begin the planning and marketing of all activities to be undertaken by approved strategy, including dedicated website.



Public Engagement

Planning for all activities will be begin immediately. Budget Education & Outreach events will be begin at the beginning of the calendar year.



BOCC Reporting

The BOCC will receive a report on the results of engagement activities at the Annual Retreat. The report will include the number of participants and findings from survey results, budget priorities from simulation tool, and advisory board presentation schedule. Also, the report will include an update on outreach activities scheduled to kickoff in January.

Public Engagement Activity Flow Chart

Activity	September	October	November	December	January	February
<i>BOCC Briefed on Strategy</i>						
<i>Community Budget Workshops</i>					N S E W C	
<i>Digital Survey – Development</i>						
<i>Digital Survey – Survey Goes Live</i>						
<i>Digital Survey – Analysis</i>						
<i>Budget Simulation Tool – Development</i>						
<i>Budget Simulation Tool – Go Live</i>						
<i>Additional Budget Public Hearing</i>						
<i>BOCC Retreat – Engagement Results</i>						
<i>Advisory Board Presentations</i>						
<i>“PB 101” Consultation</i>						
<i>Participatory Budgeting</i>						

Based upon availability

Planning Period – FY2022





Budget Public Engagement

September 24, 2019