WARD 11
PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

RULEBOOK

A Pilot Project of the
City of Providence, Providence City Council
& South Providence Community

Purpose

Welcome to the Ward 11 Participatory Budgeting Rulebook!

This document was created by the Ward 11 Participatory Budgeting Steering Committee – a group of community members nominated by Councilwoman Mary Kay Harris to co-design this process with City staff based on their years of community-based work.

The Rulebook is intended to serve as a reference for residents, city staff, elected officials, and the broader community to learn more about what participatory budgeting is, how it will work in Ward 11, and how decisions that shaped this process came to be.

The Steering Committee crafted these rules with careful consideration for the needs, wants, and desires of the Upper South Providence community. The rules reflect best practices research and aim to support a transparent process that can become a model for community empowerment in local government decision making.

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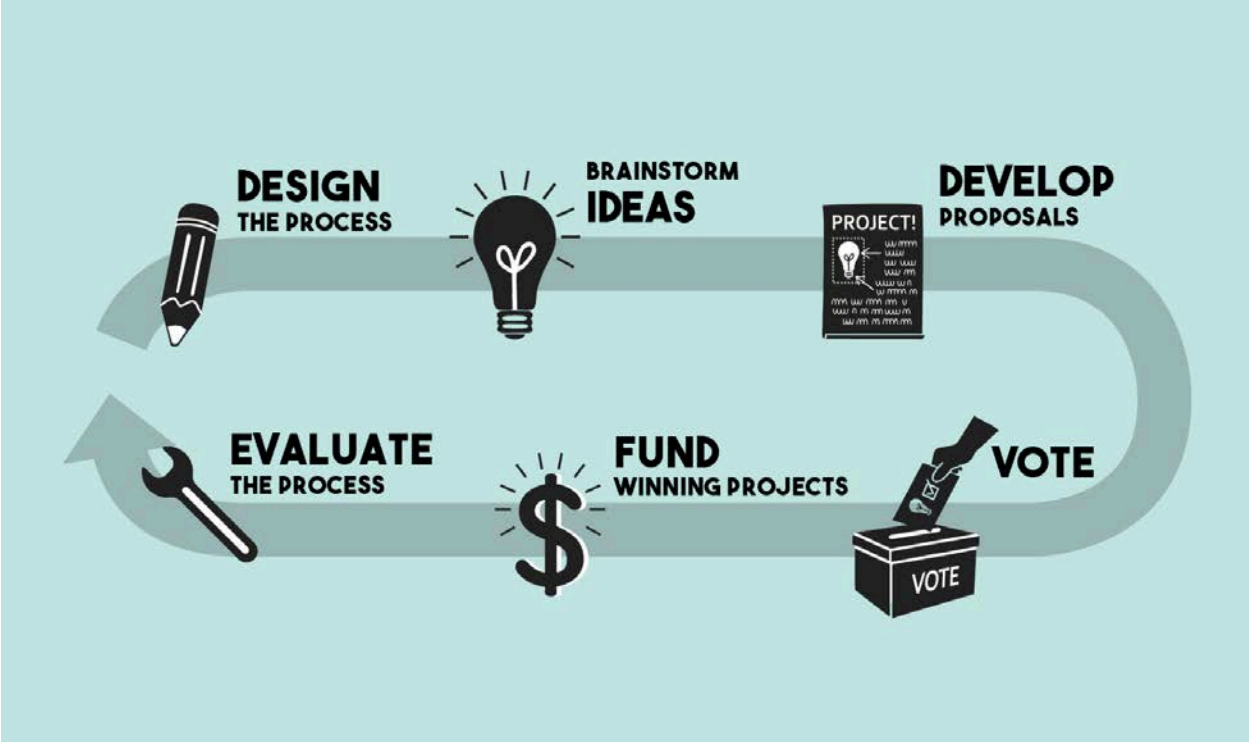
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What is Participatory Budgeting?

Participatory Budgeting (or “PB”) is a democratic process by which community members decide how funds should be spent in their own communities!

First developed in Brazil in the 1980s, PB is now a widespread practice of community empowerment across the globe, including recent examples in Rhode Island, Cambridge (Massachusetts), and New York City.

PB processes often include multiple phases where community members brainstorm ideas, develop them into feasible proposals, and vote on projects to be funded.



PB Process Diagram by the [Participatory Budgeting Project]

How PB came to Ward 11

The $6.6M dedicated to the Ward 11 PB process is from the City of Providence's Capital Improvement Plan (or "CIP"). These funds were part of a larger allocation of CIP dollars first made in 2020 to support infrastructure work in the Upper South Providence area of Ward 11.

The initial project was paused to avoid conflicting with planned utility improvements in the area by Providence Water and Rhode Island Energy. Other funding has since been identified by the City of Providence to potentially complete the previously planned work once the utility work is complete.

Faced with the question of how to spend the remaining $6.6M in funding, Councilwoman Mary Kay Harris, Mayor Brett P. Smiley, and South Providence community leaders proposed that a community engagement process guide how the money is spent.

In part inspired by the recent Nine Neighborhoods Fund Participatory Budgeting process led by Central Providence Unidos (the Health Equity Zone for Providence's 02908 and 02909 zipcodes), the group proposed facilitating a Ward 11 Participatory Budgeting process – a first of its kind effort for the City.

Guiding Principles

When designing the Ward 11 PB process, a Steering Committee of community members and the Project Team identified the following set of guiding principles to ground their decisions and the initiative's implementation.

We envision a Ward 11 PB initiative that is:

Transparent – *To build community trust, we must embrace openness, responsiveness, and share how decisions are made.*

Inclusive – *To gather deep and representative input from our community, everyone should feel welcome and included in the process.*

Trustworthy – *To truly feel empowered, community members should have faith in the process, its leaders, and its outcomes.*

Community Driven – *To ensure the process reflects our interests and priorities, community members should lead from start to finish.*

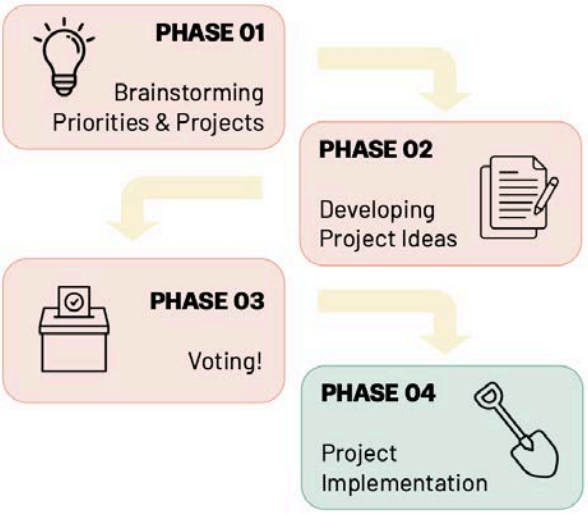
Well Communicated – *To participate in the process, the community first has to hear about it, learn about it, and understand its importance.*

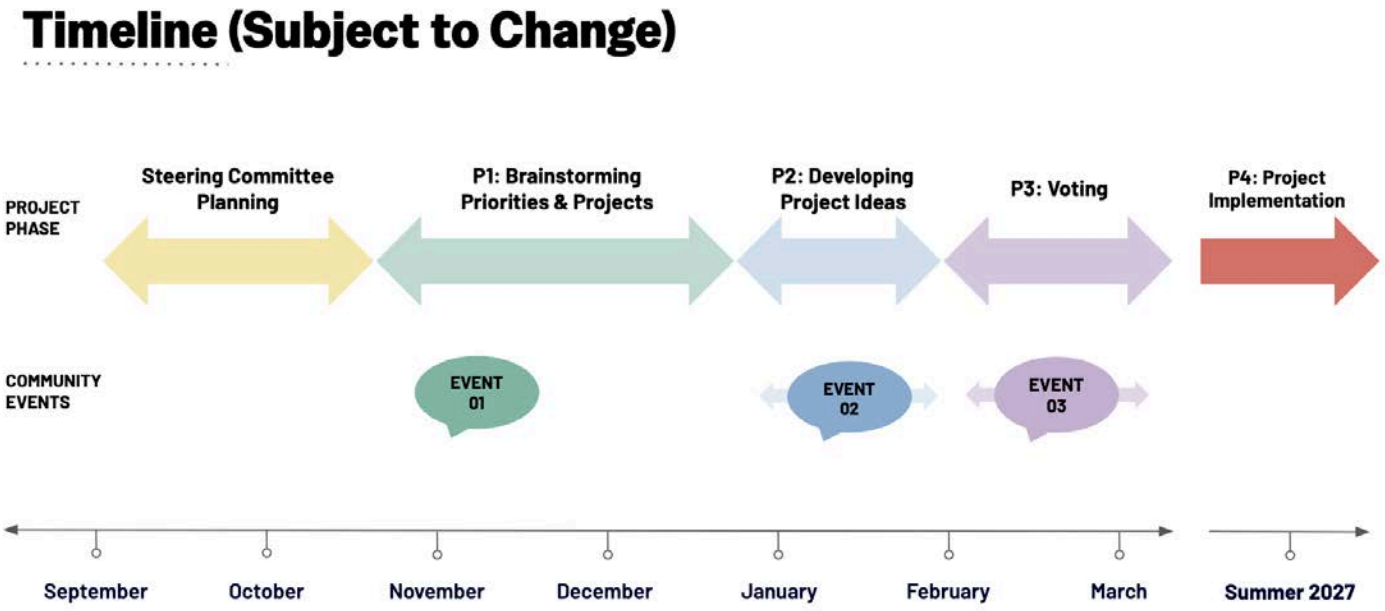
Open to Ideas & Perspectives – *To brainstorm together and share decision-making, we must be open to and respect a diverse set of ideas and perspectives.*

Phases & Timeline

Community members will shape the participatory budgeting process over a series of engagement phases, each including multiple opportunities for participation.

In Phase 01, community members will brainstorm their priorities and begin identifying project types. In Phase 02, community members will develop project ideas into proposals and score them based on community priorities. In Phase 03, Community members will review eligible projects and cast their ballots!





Ward 11 Participatory Budgeting Initiative Timeline

Rules

What types of projects can be funded through this process?

Since the funding for this initiative comes from the City's Capital Improvement Plan (or "CIP"), there are parameters informing what can be funded. By CIP rules, the $6.6M can only be spent on "capital projects" on either City-owned property (like parks, schools, recreation centers) or in the "public right-of-way."

- *Capital projects* can be new infrastructure or significant one-time maintenance – but <u>not</u> ongoing maintenance, programming, or staffing.
- The *public right of way* refers to the land area of streets and sidewalks that are City-owned and dedicated for public use.

To ensure projects can be implemented before a 2027 funding deadline, the Steering Committee has decided that projects must be located within the boundary map to the right. A series of preliminary engineering studies reviewed the baseline state of public infrastructure in this area as part of the original infrastructure project.



The boundaries are roughly the I-95 service road and Westminster Street high schools to the north, Prairie Avenue to the east, Chester Avenue to the south, and Broad Street, Bridgham, and Dodge Street to the west.

How are project ideas gathered?

In Phase 01 of the PB process, titled *Brainstorming Priorities & Projects,* community members will brainstorm and nominate project ideas for consideration either at an in-person community workshop or through online engagement that will be promoted through neighborhood outreach. Anyone can nominate an idea.

In both formats, to nominate a project idea, participants will be asked to make the case for why this project benefits the community and should be funded. These responses will be revisited later in the process.

At the end of Phase 01, the Steering Committee will work with the Project Team to review all project nominations. Any ideas that are not eligible for funding will be set aside. Duplicate ideas will be consolidated.

A Phase 01 Summary Report will share the results of this brainstorming phase back to the community.

How do project ideas become full proposals?

In Phase 02 of the PB process, titled *Developing Project Ideas*, community members will develop ideas into proposals, building upon the community priorities and project ideas gathered in Phase 01. Anyone can participate in Phase 02 of the process.

The Steering Committee and Project Team will work with City of Providence staff to assess the feasibility of and develop approximate cost estimates for each type of project.

Through activities at an in-person community meeting and an alternative engagement format (for example: an interactive exhibit) designed to be completed at any time during Phase 02, community members will learn about the feasibility and cost of each project idea while scoring the project ideas based on how well they meet the community priorities gathered in Phase 01.

Based on the input gathered in Phase 02, the Steering Committee will create a list of project proposals to be included on the Phase 03 ballot that reflect their feasibility and alignment with the community's priorities.

Depending on which projects are nominated, the Steering Committee may decide to set part of the budget aside for smaller projects and/or set a cap for the amount of the budget that can be spent on one project.

A Phase 02 Summary Report will share the community input gathered and share the decision making process that led to the final list of project proposals.

How do community members vote on proposals?

In Phase 03 of the PB process, titled *Voting*, eligible community members will vote on their preferred project proposals. The outcomes of this vote will determine which projects receive funding.

Anyone aged 14 and older who lives in Ward 11 will be eligible to vote. In order to vote, voters will sign an affidavit attesting that they meet the eligibility requirements and will only vote once.

Based on their preferences, voters will vote for up to ½ of the total number of proposals on the ballot minus 1. For example, if 10 proposals are on the final ballot, voters will vote for up to 4 proposals. If 8 proposals are on the final ballot, voters will vote for up to 3 proposals. The Steering Committee reserves the right to adjust this approach if necessary based on community input.

Eligible voters can cast their ballot either at an in-person voting kick off event or via an online voting portal over a set time period that will be widely publicized.

How are funding decisions made based on the voting results?

The Steering Committee and Project Team staff will review the voting results together.

Starting with the highest vote-receiving project and moving down the list, each project will be assessed for whether it can be funded based on its cost estimate and the remaining available PB funding.

If a project cannot be fully funded with the remaining funds available, the next most popular project that can be funded will be.

The final list of funded projects will be shared out and celebrated. Projects that do not receive funding will be considered for future funding opportunities.

How are projects implemented?

In implementation, each PB-funded project will be subject to the City of Providence's competitive bidding process facilitated by the Board of Contract and Supply.

Qualified contractors will be selected to implement projects based on how well their proposals score on factors like experience and cost. Proposals will also be subject to the City's First Source and Minority and Women-Owned Business (M/WBE) procurement programs and requirements.

The Project Team commits to sharing implementation updates to the community through neighborhood meetings and maintaining an online Ward 11 PB implementation dashboard.

The Ward 11 PB Team

The “Project Team” behind the Ward 11 PB process includes elected officials, the Steering Committee, City Staff from several Departments, and a contracted outside facilitator. Each team member has their own roles and responsibilities in the process, as outlined below.

	Project Team			
	Elected Officials	**Steering Committee**	**City Staff**	**Outside Facilitator**
Who	*Mayor & Councilor*	*Appointed Ward 11 Community Members*	*Representing City Council, Planning Department, and other Departments*	*CIVIC*
Role	• Initiate Process • Provide Oversight • Affirm & Approve Projects	• Bring Community Into Decision-Making • Co-Design Process • Support Outreach • Analyze Input	• Co-Design Process • Support Outreach • Advise Eligibility & Feasibility • Implement Projects	• Co-Design Process • Support Outreach • Facilitate Meetings & Events • Analyze Input • Communica te Findings

Steering Committee

Purpose

The Steering Committee was created to partner with the City and CIVIC to co-design and lead the Ward 11 PB process, ensuring the community has clear choices and a process for deciding how to spend $6.6 million in available funding.

The participants in the Steering Committee were nominated by Councilwoman Mary Kay Harris for their deep knowledge of the neighborhood and/or significant relationships with various groups within the neighborhood.

The Steering Committee will work with the City to determine project parameters, co-design the participatory budgeting process in collaboration with the City and CIVIC, and lead the community outreach process.

Responsibilities

- Steering Committee members will bring their experience living and working in the Ward 11 neighborhood to the process of designing the participatory budgeting process, advising the City and CIVIC as to the best way to create an accessible, inclusive and democratic participatory budgeting process in the neighborhood.

- Steering Committee members commit to regular and sustained attendance at steering committee meetings and are encouraged to attend public meetings.

- Members provide assistance with outreach in advance of public meetings.

- Members commit to showing up throughout the process with presence, generosity, patience and curiosity.

Steering Committee Members

Will Casey
Debra Harris
Debbie Schimberg
John Prince
Asata Tigrai
Kai Cameron

Councilwoman Mary Kay Harris
Councilman-elect Brian Guzman