A PEOPLE’S BUDGET

A Research and Evaluation Report

on the Pilot Year of Participatory Budgeting in New York City

By the Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center with the PBNYC Research Team
Acknowledgements

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In March, thousands of New Yorkers went to the polls. But they weren’t voting for Democrats or Republicans; they were casting ballots for computer labs in schools, a meal program for senior citizens and a composting system, through a groundbreaking process called Participatory Budgeting (PB).

There are over 1,000 participatory budgets around the world, most at the municipal level. These diverse undertakings generally follow a basic process: residents brainstorm ideas, volunteer budget delegates develop proposals based on these ideas, residents vote on proposals, and the city implements projects.

This year, four New York City Council Members—Brad Lander, Melissa Mark-Viverito, Eric Ulrich, and Jumaane D. Williams—partnered with community groups, led by Community Voices Heard and the Participatory Budget Project, to pilot Participatory Budgeting, or what the New York Times called “revolutionary civics in action,” relinquishing decision-making power over about $6 million along the way. While PB has its roots in Brazil, New York was only the second city in the United States to implement participatory budgeting.

In New York City, budget allocations usually happen quietly, behind closed doors. City Council Members might make their best guesses at what their constituents want, work with the city agencies they know best, or allocate funds to the residents and organizations that have the means to participate.

Not this year. Over 2,000 community members were the ones to propose capital project ideas in neighborhood assemblies and town hall meetings in the fall of 2011. During the winter, budget delegates put in some 15,000 volunteer hours, vetting costs and the feasibility of projects with city agencies and preparing proposals for the ballots. Six thousand people selected 27 projects, which totaled $5.6 million dollars. Several Council Members also committed funds for projects that were not selected or eligible for PB. Voters included those that the government bars from traditional elections: undocumented immigrants and the formerly incarcerated.

Knowing that their opinions finally mattered, city residents turned off or typically excluded by politics got involved for the first time. Of the New Yorkers who attended assemblies, 62 percent reported that American democracy is in need of a lot of changes or should be completely revamped. Almost half had never before contacted a civil servant or elected official—yet there they were, participating.
Participatory budgeting holds the potential to not only reconnect us to government, but with each other—to help us build coalitions across political, racial and class lines, to address inequalities within the American public. PB mobilized a racially and ethnically diverse cross-section of New Yorkers, and through this process renewed their faith that government can do better and be more transparent, equitable, and inclusive.

Research and Evaluation

In order to track participation, examine shifts in civic participation and attitudes towards government, and conduct ongoing evaluation throughout the PB process, a research and evaluation team was formed, comprising scholars, professional researchers, and graduate students. Overall, researchers collected over 5,000 surveys, 35 in-depth interviews, and 91 observations at key points during the PB process. Unless otherwise noted, all data in the report derives from this research. Researchers also analyzed baseline data about the participating districts, such as overall income, race, gender and education demographics and voting patterns, in order to draw meaningful comparisons between PB participants and the broader population.

Overall, the data included in this report show that PB brought together thousands of New Yorkers from diverse backgrounds, many of whom do not typically participate in politics or have contact with government. These participants developed close connections with Council Members, neighbors and organizations in their districts. They gained valuable leadership skills and knowledge about government, and learned to work collaboratively to solve community problems. The following report details the pilot process from 2011-12 and provides key trends and lessons learned from the initial year in NYC.
How the NYC Budget Works

To understand why Participatory Budgeting is unique, it is helpful to consider how PB compares to the traditional budgeting process in NYC. As indicated by the timeline on the right, every February the Mayor releases a preliminary budget. The City Council then holds hearings on the Mayor’s budget, where community members can testify about their concerns and priorities but have no opportunity to play a meaningful or decisive role in what gets funded. The following month, the City Council submits a response to the Mayor’s budget, which may or may not incorporate testimony from the public hearings. Behind closed doors, the Mayor and City Council then do more negotiating, and the City Council holds more hearings. In late April, the Mayor releases his executive budget, which in the last several years has included cuts to critical services, like senior centers, childcare and HIV/AIDS services. A political performance ensues: the City Council fights with the Mayor, and community groups and activists protest to restore budget cuts. Finally, in late June, the City Council and Mayor approve a budget. This annual process, known as the “budget dance,” exemplifies the centralization of power, inequity and lack of transparency that tends to characterize typical government decision-making.

The fiscal year begins July 1st and ends June 30th. The budget for a fiscal year includes expenditures (all the money that the city government thinks it will spend) and revenues (everything it expects to bring in through taxes and fees).
PB is a tiny fraction of the overall budget:

- 0.008% of the Total NYC Expense Budget
- 0.06% of the NYC Capital Budget
- 1% of Capital Discretionary Funds Allocated By City Council

**Expense Budget**: Pays for the annual operating costs of the city, such as the salaries of teachers and police officers, supplies, contracted services with non-profits and debt service. This is like a household's annual budget that includes food, clothing, and childcare.

**Capital Budget**: Pays for infrastructure projects that benefit the city well beyond the time of purchase, such as constructing a firehouse, repaving a road or sidewalk or building a new sewer.

**Discretionary funds**: City budget resources allocated by elected officials. The City Council, individual Council Members, the Speaker and the Borough Presidents can all allocate pots of discretionary money. Like the overall budget, there are two types of discretionary resources: expense funds, to finance programs; and capital funds, for infrastructure projects.

**Council Member discretionary funds**: Each Council Member can allocate between approximately $2 and $9 million dollars as individual discretionary funds. The amount of discretionary funds that a Council Member receives each year is determined by the City Council Speaker, depending on factors such as length of time in office, committee appointments and relationship to the Speaker. In recent years, critics have accused the City Council Speaker of inequitably distributing discretionary funds to benefit her political allies and short-change her critics.

**Eligible Participatory Budgeting Projects**: For the first year of PB, Council Member discretionary funds were used to pay for only capital items. There is a very strict test for funding projects in the city’s Capital Budget. In order to be eligible for PB, a project must meet all of the following three conditions:

1. Cost at least $35,000
2. Have a "useful life" of at least five years
3. Involve the construction, reconstruction, acquisition, or installation or a physical public improvement

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Total Budget</th>
<th>Capital Budget</th>
<th>Total Allocated to PB</th>
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<td>$68.5 Billion</td>
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<td>$5.6 Million</td>
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<td>$50 Million</td>
<td>$489 Million</td>
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New York City FY 2013 Budget vs. Budget for PBNYC
Participatory Budgeting

In contrast to the annual budget dance and arbitrary allocation of discretionary funds, participatory budgeting stresses three core principles: transparency, equity and inclusion. This means that the items funded through a participatory budget are selected with the maximum amount of public input, aim to benefit those most in need and engage the most diverse set of stakeholders possible in decision-making.

There are over 1,000 participatory budgets around the world, most at the municipal level. These diverse undertakings generally follow a basic process: residents brainstorm ideas, volunteer budget delegates develop proposals based on these ideas, residents vote on proposals, and the city implements projects. For example, if community members identify recreation spaces as a priority, their delegates might develop a proposal for basketball court renovations. Residents would then vote on this and other proposals. If the voters approve the basketball court, the city pays to renovate it.

The most famous example of PB comes from the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, where since 1989 as many as 50,000 people have decided how to allocate as much as 20% of the city budget. Such high levels of public involvement in deliberation and decision-making resulted in more equitable distribution of funds and markedly improved the quality of life. Because of this success, PB has spread to cities in Latin America, Asia, Africa, Europe and North America over the past 20 years. Countries such as the United Kingdom and Dominican Republic have mandated that all local governments implement PB. States, counties, public housing authorities, schools and community organizations have also used PB for their budgets. The United Nations and The World Bank have promoted PB as a best practice of democratic governance.

Each Council Member let residents directly decide how to spend at least $1 million of discretionary capital funds.
Timeline and Description of Phases of PB in NYC

In May 2011, a city-wide Steering Committee, composed of 42 organizations and led by Community Voices Heard and Participatory Budgeting Project, was established to plan and oversee the PB process in New York City. District Committees were also formed to coordinate local implementation. These committees spent months working with the Council Members to design and plan the process.

In September 2011, the four Council Members and the Steering Committee officially launched the process at a press conference at City Hall. Speaking on the steps of City Hall, Council Member Lander said, “We are excited to put budgeting power directly in the hands of the people. Not only will next year’s budget be more democratic as a result, it will also be more effective, because our constituents know best where money needs to go in our community.” Council Member Williams added, “The message behind participatory budgeting is ‘your money, your vote, your choice’,” while Council Member Mark-Viverito said, “Participatory budgeting asks citizens how they want their taxpayer dollars reinvested in our communities, and encourages civic participation across the neighborhoods we represent. It is a real step towards true democracy in our city, and I am excited to bring this process to my district.” Council Member Ulrich said, “This is an effort to bring the public into the budget decision-making process.”

In October 2011, the PB team rolled out the process with approximately 2,000 residents attending 27 neighborhood assemblies across the four districts. Through the assemblies and project website, residents submitted nearly 2,000 ideas for capital projects, and over 250 people volunteered to serve as budget delegates. In November, because of the visible success of PB in its pilot year, participation will double for the next cycle in 2012-13, with four additional Council Members joining the process. NYC has inspired other cities and institutions around the country to adopt PB, including Brooklyn College and the City of Vallejo, California. Because of the visible success of PB in its pilot year, participation will double for the next cycle in 2012-13, with four additional Council Members joining the process. NYC has inspired other cities and institutions around the country to adopt PB, including Brooklyn College and the City of Vallejo, California.
the delegates began researching, revising and prioritizing the initial project ideas and transformed them into detailed and concrete proposals. In February 2012, the delegates presented and received feedback on the proposals at another round of neighborhood assemblies.

At the end of March, residents 18 years and older in each district voted for five out of about 20 projects that made it onto the ballot. In total, about 6,000 people voted for projects. Twenty-seven projects won, totaling $5.6 million. In addition, other projects that were not selected by voters or were ineligible for PB ended up being funded through other mechanisms.

In 2011-2012 the PBNYC process had six main steps that fed into the city’s annual budget cycle:

### How PBNYC Works

#### First Round of Neighborhood Assemblies

**October–November 2011**

At public meetings in each district, the Council Members present information on the budget funds, and residents brainstorm project ideas and select budget delegates.

2,000 people participated in 27 neighborhood assemblies.

#### Delegate Orientations

**November 2011**

Delegates selected at the assemblies learn about the budget process, project development, and key spending areas, then form committees.

250 people attended 6 orientations.

#### Second Round of Neighborhood Assemblies

**February 2012**

Delegates return to the community in another round of meetings, to present draft project proposals and get feedback.

Delegates presented at 10 second round neighborhood assemblies.

#### Delegate Meetings

**November 2011–February 2012**

Delegates meet in committees to transform the community’s initial project ideas into full proposals, with support from Council Member staff and other experts.

23 committees were formed. Volunteers spend almost 20,000 hours working on projects.

#### Evaluation, Implementation & Monitoring

**April 2012 onwards**

Delegates and other participants evaluate the process, and then continue to meet and oversee the implementation of projects.

#### Voting

**March 2012**

Delegates present the final project proposals and residents vote on which projects to fund.

6,000 people voted city-wide. Projects selected by voters are included in the FY13 city budget.
Methods

Background and Secondary Research

Researchers collected data on the NYC budget, population demographics and voting patterns in the participating districts to explore how PB impacts government spending and operations, and to conduct a comparative analysis of participation in PB. Data sources include Census data, the General Social Survey and 2009 voter data from the Voter Activation Network and Catalist.

Surveys and Evaluation Forms

Over 5,000 surveys were collected to examine who participated in PB, how they learned from the process and what outreach methods were most effective.

Survey respondents included:
- Neighborhood Assembly participants: 796
- Budget Delegates: 251 surveys at beginning and 95 at the end of the process
- Facilitators of Neighborhood Assemblies and Budget Delegate meetings: 150
- Voters: 3,746

In-depth Interviews

Researchers conducted 35 in-depth interviews with neighborhood assembly participants, budget delegates, steering and district committee members and Council Member staff to examine how and why people participated in PB, what participants learned from PB, and how it affected relationships between city officials, city staff and community members.

Observations

Researchers collected 91 observations of PB meetings and events to examine the dynamics of participation in PB.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council Member</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Neighborhoods</th>
<th>Key Demographics</th>
<th>Unique Characteristics</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melissa Mark-Viverito, Democrat</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Manhattan Valley, El Barrio/East Harlem, Mott Haven, Central Park, Randall's Island</td>
<td>50% of the district's population identifies as Hispanic/Latino/a, 23% as Black/African American, and 19% as White&lt;sup&gt;25&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>District encompasses Central Park and Randalls Island. Neighborhoods span from the Upper West Side to East Harlem/El Barrio to the South Bronx. Has the greatest concentration of public housing in the city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Ulrich, Republican</td>
<td>32nd</td>
<td>Belle Harbor, Breezy Point, Broad Channel, Rockaway Park, and Rockaway Beach</td>
<td>68% of the district's population identifies as White&lt;sup&gt;26&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Most of the district is located on a peninsula known for its beaches and parks. Only a portion of the district participated in PB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad Lander, Democrat</td>
<td>39th</td>
<td>Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, Columbia Waterfront, Gowanus, Park Slope, Windsor Terrace, Boro Park, and Kensington</td>
<td>Large Bangladeshi population in Kensington, 66% of the district's population identifies as White&lt;sup&gt;27&lt;/sup&gt; 57% of residents have a college education&lt;sup&gt;28&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>The district is intersected by the Gowanus Canal and contains several parks and cemeteries. These geographical characteristics create distinct neighborhoods: including wealthy Park Slope; Kensington with a large Bangladeshi population; and finally Borough Park, a Jewish enclave.&lt;sup&gt;29&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumaane D. Williams, Democrat</td>
<td>45th</td>
<td>Flatbush, East Flatbush, Flatlands, and parts of Midwood and Canarsie</td>
<td>76% of the district's population identifies as Black/African American&lt;sup&gt;30&lt;/sup&gt; 45% of residents have a college education&lt;sup&gt;31&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Has the largest foreign-born population in Brooklyn, made up of immigrants from Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago. &lt;sup&gt;32&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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**Participating NYC Council Districts:** 8, 32, 39 and 45
City-wide Findings

From November until March of 2012, four Council Members: Melissa Mark-Viverito (D-8), Eric Ulrich (R-32), Brad Lander (D-39) and Jumaane D. Williams (D-45), serving four distinct constituencies, took part in the pilot year of participatory budgeting in NYC. Based on an aggregate analysis of over 5,000 surveys, 35 interviews, 91 observations and multiple secondary data sources collected across the four districts, researchers developed a set of city-wide findings.

Overall, the data shows that PB brought together thousands of New Yorkers from diverse backgrounds, many of whom would not otherwise participate in politics or have contact with government. Research shows that these participants learned how the budget works; developed close connections with Council Members, other residents and organizations in their districts and learned to work collaboratively to solve community problems.

PB engaged 7,736 people: 2,138 neighborhood assembly and 245 online participants, 251 budget delegates and almost 6,000 voters.

Budget delegates attend an orientation to learn more about the city budget and how to turn project ideas into concrete proposals that can be voted on by residents in their district.
Who Participated in PBNYC?

In its pilot year, PB engaged 7,736 people, including: 2,138 neighborhood assembly and 245 online participants; 251 Budget Delegates; and almost 6,000 voters. In addition, hundreds more joined the process as volunteer members of the Steering and District Committees. Demographic information collected at key points during the process indicates the following:

**PB mobilized long-term residents, many of whom had NOT previously worked for community change.**

“Before [PB], you heard from civic associations or a block association or a tenant association or a non-profit, but those are naturally organized constituencies already. The point is that people, who don't feel a part of those groups for whatever reason, still have a way in.”

— Bart Haggarty, Chief of Staff, Office of Eric Ulrich, District 32

- 75% of neighborhood assembly participants and 78% of PB voters lived in their neighborhood for more than 8 years; 55% of assembly participants and 60% of PB voters lived in their neighborhood for more than 15 years.

- 1 out of 3 neighborhood assembly participants and budget delegates and 44% of PB voters had never worked with others in their community to solve a problem before PB.

**PB Mobilized a racially and ethnically diverse cross-section of New Yorkers.**

- 20% of PB voters identified as African American; 14% as Hispanic or Latino/a; 2% as Asian and 2% as “Other.”

- A higher percentage of African Americans participated in neighborhood assemblies (38%), compared to the full population in the four districts (31%).

- 21% of budget delegates and 19% of PB voters were born outside of the United States.

- 1 out of 10 PB voters reported that English is not their primary language.
People of color actively participated in PB meetings and discussions.

- 87% of participants who identified as Black/African American, 81% of Asians and 79% of Latino/as made specific budget proposals at neighborhood assemblies.

- Participants that identified as Black/African American were the most likely to volunteer to be budget delegates.

Although women reported starting the PB process with less comfort in their leadership skills and more skepticism about government, they were the most likely to actively participate in all phases of PB.

- Only 24% of female budget delegates reported that they felt "very comfortable" with public speaking prior to starting PB, compared to 40% of male delegates.

- Only 18% of female budget delegates reported that they felt "very comfortable" with negotiating and building agreement prior to starting PB, compared to 30% of male delegates.

- 64% of women neighborhood assembly participants think that government needs a lot of changes or that it needs to be completely changed, compared to 58% of male participants.

- However, women were 64% of neighborhood assembly participants, 65% of budget delegates and 62% of voters in the PB process.

Non-English speakers and those born outside of the U.S. were actively engaged in PB.

- 21% of budget delegates and 19% of PB voters were born outside of the United States.

- 1 out of 10 PB voters reported that English is not their primary language.

- 89% of Spanish-speaking participants spoke during the small group discussion at the neighborhood assembly and 42% of Spanish-speaking participants volunteered to be budget delegates.
How did Participatory Budgeting compare to previous patterns of civic engagement?

One of the most striking findings about who participated in PB is how the data compares to other types of civic engagement, particularly voting patterns in NYC elections. Across the districts, PB engaged communities that have traditionally been uninspired by politics. People of color, low-income people and some immigrant groups turned out at higher rates than in previous elections. More than just getting people to vote, PB deepened the connections between residents and the government.

People of color and low-income people participated in PB at higher rates than traditional electoral politics.

Melissa Mark-Viverito, District 8:
- Latino/as were 39% of voters in the 2009 City Council elections. However, 46% of the district’s neighborhood assembly participants and 50% of PB voters identified as Latino/a.
- 22% of PB voters had household income less than $10,000 compared to 4% of the district’s voters in the 2009 City Council election.

Jumaane D. Williams, District 45:
- Black or African Americans were 79% of voters in 2009 City Council elections. However, 83% of the district’s neighborhood assembly participants and 87% of the district’s PB voters identified as Black or African American.
- 21% PB voters had household income less than $25,000 compared to 6% of the district’s voters in the 2009 election.

Eric Ulrich, District 32:
- 9% PB voters had household income less than $25,000 compared to 1% of the district’s voters in the 2009 election.

Brad Lander, District 39:
- Approximately 10% of the ballots for the PB vote were cast in a language other than English.
PB created deeper connections to government and community for participants, many of whom were disillusioned or disengaged from politics.

“Early in the process, Council Member Viverito got approached by someone from Douglass Houses [NYCHA public housing] and he told her, ‘I don’t vote, I don’t come to any meetings but this sounded really interesting,’ and he said, ‘You better be serious about this. You’re not gonna just bring us out here then go do whatever you want.’ And she gave her word and then I actually saw him come out to vote so he obviously went through with the whole process.”

— Joe Taranto, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of Melissa Mark-Viverito, District 8

**Before PB:**

- Almost half of the neighborhood assembly participants had not contacted an elected official in the year before PB.

- Almost 2 out of 3 (61%) neighborhood assembly participants think our system of democracy needs a lot of changes or that it needs to be completely changed, compared to 1 out of 3 (33%) in the general population.\(^{12}\)

- About 40% of PB voters either sometimes miss, rarely vote or never vote in local elections.

**After PB:**

- Budget delegates were more likely to be “very comfortable” contacting government agencies and officials after PB.

- 82% of budget delegates said they were more likely to participate in a community organization after PB.

- 78% of PB voters felt that they understood the needs of their council district better after voting.

“[The] benefit is that people feel they are part of the political process. It’s always that the government doesn’t do anything...but we make up the government too.”

— PBNYC participant
How did people find out about participatory budgeting and what motivated them to participate?

While there was variation across districts, overall, participants were most likely to hear about the neighborhood assembly and the PB vote through social networks, community organizations and their Council Member. In addition:

**Many low-income people heard about the PB vote through their social networks.**

- 49% of people with a household income less than $25,000 heard about the PB vote through family and friends.

**African American participants were also likely to hear about PB through family and friends.**

- 43% of Black/African American PB voters heard about the PB vote through family and friends.

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**Targeted Outreach & Engagement**

In year one of PBNYC, the city-wide Steering Committee identified "inclusion" as one of the core values to be advanced in the process:

*All voices in the community should be included—especially those of community members who feel disillusioned with the political process or face obstacles to participating. By making every effort to reduce obstacles to participation, we hope to prevent the 'usual suspects' or groups with more resources from dominating, and to generate projects that better reflect community needs.*

In order to involve people beyond the "usual suspects," extra efforts needed to be made. Community Voices Heard (CVH), the Lead Community Engagement entity for PBNYC, saw supporting and coordinating this work as one of its primary functions.

A city-wide Outreach Workgroup was established to bring together key Council staff, community organizing district partners—such as the Flatbush Development Corporation and the Fifth Avenue Committee in Brooklyn—and groups with inroads into local communities, such as the New York Immigration Coalition. This workgroup identified traditionally excluded communities and constituencies in the various districts, brainstormed organizations that might help to connect with these groups, and prepared memos to help guide the District Committees in thinking about their outreach plans in a holistic and inclusive manner.

CVH also worked with many of the District Committees and Council offices to develop targeted outreach and mobilization plans, teaching the basics of "organizing math" and the importance of "repetitive contacts" (i.e., how many people you need to talk to and how many times you need to talk to them to get them to come out), conducting rap trainings and overseeing group outreach sessions. This work was meant to both provide new tools to community members to engage their neighbors and to generate new ideas to reach people who were not already part of existing organizations and networks. Supplemental outreach teams were...
Community groups helped to bring Latino/as and people with lower levels of education into the PB process.

- 68% of Hispanic/Latino/a PB voters heard about PB through a community group.
- 24% of PB voters with a high school degree or less heard about PB through a community group, compared to only 12% of PB voters with a graduate degree.

Highly educated and higher income people were likely to hear about PB through their Council Member.

- 35% of PB voters with graduate degrees heard about PB through their Council Member.
- 31% of PB voters with incomes greater than $75,000 heard about PB through their Council Member.

Residents of Council District 8 participated in a neighborhood assembly where they heard more about PBNYC from Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito.
What did people learn from PB? Did PB expand social networks and build community?

The data shows that people did more than just show up to various PB meetings; they were transformed and energized by the process. Participants actively engaged in discussions and decision-making and worked collaboratively with other community members, Council Member staff and agency officials to make important decisions. As a result, participants gained skills and knowledge of complex issues, expanded social and organizational networks and forged connections to government and politics.

PB made people, particularly those with lower incomes and less education, more comfortable interacting with government and speaking in public.

- 50% of budget delegates with incomes less than $25,000 became more comfortable contacting government agencies and officials.

- 38% of budget delegates with incomes less than $25,000 became more comfortable with public speaking.

- 75% of budget delegates with a high school degree or less formal education became more comfortable contacting government agencies and officials.

- 100% of budget delegates with a high school degree or less formal education became more comfortable negotiating and building agreement.

People worked collaboratively with others in their community.

“People came out with a community agenda rather than a personal agenda.”

— Neighborhood Assembly Interviewee 11, District 8

“Many times participants fed off the ideas of others and expanded them; there was a very rich discussion of needs and ways to address them.”

— Neighborhood Assembly Observation 30, District 8

“The discussion was collaborative; some ideas led to thinking of other ideas, free from confrontation.”

— Neighborhood Assembly Observation 5, District 39
PB expanded social networks for participants, particularly for low-income people and Latino/as.

- While low-income people were more likely to have smaller social networks before PB, their participation in PB expanded these networks.

- 57% of budget delegates with a household income less than $25,000 knew more people in their district after participating in PB.

- 36% of Hispanic/Latino/a budget delegates knew more people in their district after participating in PB.

PB exposed participants to a variety of organizations.

- Budget delegates were affiliated with 250 organizations.

- 41 organizations served on the Steering Committee.

- Over 1/3 of Budget Delegates reported an increase in their participation with community organizations after completing the PB cycle.

### Table 1

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<th>Issue Area of Focus</th>
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How did City Council Members Benefit from Participatory Budgeting?

In addition to the benefits PB brings to participants, such as skill building, enhanced civic engagement, and leadership development, elected officials gained from the process in the following ways:

**During the PB cycle, Council Members received more media coverage than in the previous year.**

Participants valued the Council Members’ involvement in the process and felt it brought the Council Member closer to the community.

- Almost 70% of budget delegates felt that they got a lot of support from their Council Member throughout the PB process.

“We get to know our Council Member. Now I know what he looks like, not just his name. Usually we only see our elected officials when they need votes.”

— PB Participant (Neighborhood Assembly Interviewee 5, District 39)

“We're a big presence in the community and we're represented in probably every major community meeting and I think that people generally have a good rapport with her (Council Member Viverito) but I think she touched a lot more people through this process because there are a lot of people who just don't come to those community meetings.”

— Joe Taranto, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of Melissa Mark-Viverito, District 8

### Council Member Press Coverage Before and During PB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melissa Mark-Viverito</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Ulrich</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad Lander</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumaane D. Williams</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Council Members were able to identify additional community needs and make concrete improvements to neighborhoods, even beyond the projects that were eligible through the participatory budgeting process.

“There were a lot of things we couldn’t fund through the [PB] process because they weren’t capital projects, but, for example, we heard over and over again about the trash situation...hearing it in the context of the [PB]...I think it made us step up our game because we had a meeting with the sanitation commissioner. There’s this one corner that gets really bad and we got them [sanitation department] to put an extra trash can on each corner to deal with the waste. We’re also looking to invest some expense funding to purchase additional trash cans. That was a result of what we were hearing over and over in the PB process.”

— Joe Taranto, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of Melissa Mark-Viverito, District 8

“There are probably a dozen or more things that we’re doing or asking agencies to do that we learned about through PB but either couldn’t work through PB, didn’t get to the ballot or didn’t get enough votes but, it’s clear that there were many people that want them.”

— Alex Moore, Communications and Events Director, Office of Brad Lander, District 39

Table 2

Projects that did not win PB vote but will still be funded in FY ’13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional Garbage Cans</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50th Street Repaving</td>
<td>39th</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus Countdown Clocks</td>
<td>39th</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ft. Hamilton Street Subway</td>
<td>39th</td>
<td>$325,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Mother Tongue Monument</td>
<td>39th</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wi-Fi at Carroll Gardens Library</td>
<td>39th</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase street lights and underpasses</td>
<td>45th</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional speed bumps throughout the district</td>
<td>45th</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$935,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I’ve been in the area for 47 years so it feels really good. I’m glad the Council Members are really getting involved in the community.”

— PB participant (Neighborhood Assembly Interviewee 14, District 8)
What changes did PB participants want for their communities?

In the year preceding participatory budgeting, the four Council Members focused their discretionary funds primarily on school improvements, park improvements and library improvements—and for the most part, the projects proposed by community members were consistent with previous allocations. However, some new trends emerged, with a large number of projects proposed for traffic and street repairs, lights and security cameras, public housing improvements and green space. In addition, some participants wanted projects that were ultimately ineligible for PB. The following trends emerged across the districts:

- School improvements were in the top five project ideas for every district.

- Park improvement, traffic improvements and security cameras were in the top five in two of the districts.

- Most ineligible project ideas were related to the proposal of funding for a new community center, a program or school improvements.

- Many traffic improvements were ineligible, since these are completed and funded through other funding streams.

- Over 75% of the ineligible projects were not eligible for PB because they were expense requests rather than capital projects, indicating the need for more education for participants.

- Some of the other reasons for ineligibility include: project cost too much or too little (5%), was outside of district (4%), was not a specific proposal (2%) or was traffic related and covered by federal funds (6%).

What projects made it on the ballot?

Total projects that were voted on city-wide: 78

Average cost of projects city-wide: $201,361

Most expensive project: $840,000 (for sidewalk bump outs in district 45)

Least expensive project: $35,000 (2 projects in district 32: dog run and trash receptacles)

The Education Committee had the most projects on the ballot in 3 of the 4 districts (8th, 39th, and 45th) at an average cost of $198,350 city-wide.
City-wide Summary

The city-wide data provides an important snapshot of the pilot year of PBNYC: who participated and why, what people learned, how PB shifted attitudes about government and civic engagement, and how participating Council Members and districts benefited from the process. PBNYC brought together thousands of New Yorkers from diverse backgrounds, many of whom do not typically participate in politics or have contact with government. These participants developed close connections with Council Members, neighbors and organizations in their districts, gained valuable leadership skills and knowledge about government and learned to work collaboratively to solve community problems.

To learn more about how PBNYC varied across the participating districts, researchers took a closer look at participation demographics, outreach and mobilization, project ideas and winning projects for each of the districts. The following chapters include data specific to council districts 8, 32, 39 and 45 as well as a highlighted budget delegate experience, a community that was mobilized by PBNYC and a winning project in each district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winning Projects City-wide</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total overall funds allocated to all winning projects:</td>
<td><strong>$5,600,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Projects:</td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average cost of a project:</td>
<td><strong>$196,370</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest cost project:</td>
<td><strong>$525,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest cost project:</td>
<td><strong>$39,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Winning Projects by Type

- Environment, Health, and Public Safety: 9
- Art, Community and Culture: 7
- Education: 6
- NYCHA Improvements: 2
- Senior/Social Services: 1
- Parks and Recreation: 2
- A+ Community and Culture: 1
- Community and Culture: 1
- Education: 1

Winning Projects:

- **Lowest cost project:** $39,000
- **Highest cost project:** $525,000
- **Average cost of a project:** $196,370
- **Total overall funds allocated to all winning projects:** $5,600,000
Recommendations for Future Participatory Budgets in NYC and Beyond

While the data indicates that PB succeeded in upholding the three guiding principles of transparency, equity and inclusion, it is helpful to build on past successes and identify areas for improvement. In order to strengthen the PB process in NYC and in other locations, we recommend the following:

**Participation**

Council Members should:

- **Reduce the voting age to 16**, to encourage youth participation.

- **Design the process with the community.** Engage a diverse group of organizations in deciding how the process will work, to build more support and ground the process in the local community.

- **Provide and publicize interpretation or special meetings and assemblies for non-English-speaking populations.** Districts that had assemblies in additional languages engaged more non-English speakers.

- **Hold community meetings specifically for youth.** Districts that organized youth assemblies engaged more young people.

- **Special PB events should be organized for seniors, who face unique participation barriers.** These meetings should be accessible for seniors, occur during the day and include materials with large fonts. When these techniques were used in the first year of PB, senior participation drastically increased.

- **Conduct targeted outreach to specific populations that tend not to participate.** Districts that used targeted outreach were able to engage more community members from the targeted groups.
Outreach

Council Member offices should:

- **Commit sufficient resources to ensure that effective outreach and mobilization work can be done.** Create outreach workgroups to focus on outreach and mobilization in the community.

- **Set up a series of group outreach and phone banking days in each district** so that more people can become familiar with how to do effective outreach and begin to employ these skills.

- **Ensure that outreach materials are translated** into the variety of languages represented in the districts.

- **Use ethnic and local media** (newspapers and radio shows) strategically to reach out to particular populations.

- **Enter into partnerships with groups that work directly with youth, non-citizens and the formerly incarcerated** as a way to ensure that these traditionally excluded populations are encouraged and supported to participate in PB.

- **Run the voter mobilization work like a traditional Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaign,** by which people are contacted three to six times (in person, by phone, by mail) in order to inspire participation.

Project Ideas

Council Members should:

- **Develop a clear and consistent methodology across districts for determining whether or not a proposed project is eligible for PB.**

- **Consider allocating expense funding for PB.** Many neighborhood assembly participants proposed projects that can only be funded through expense funds.

- **Increase funding allocations in areas that residents prioritized.**
Expansion of PB to Cover Other Pots of Money

While the nearly $5.3 million allocated through PB is a huge step forward for democratic decision-making, it is a tiny fraction of the full New York City and City Council budgets (.008% of the total NYC Budget; .06% of the NYC capital budget and 1% of capital discretionary funds allocated by City Council).

New York City council, City agencies and the Mayor should:

• **Expand PB to additional pots of money:**
  
  • **Expense Funds**: Many desired projects were ineligible by virtue of being expense fund projects, indicating an interest in more participation for these funding decisions.
  
  • City agencies such as New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), NYC Department of Education (DoE) and Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) should implement PB for their budgets.

• **Full City Council budget.**

• **Overall City budget.**

• **Dedicate more funding for implementation of participatory budgeting.** If the City wants to meaningfully engage residents, more resources are necessary to facilitate inclusive participation.

District 39 handed out stickers to participants after they voted.
Participatory Budgeting in NYC 2011–12:
Participating Council Districts

- Melissa Mark-Viverito District 8
- Brad Lander District 39
- Jumaane D. Williams District 45
- Eric Ulrich District 32
District 8
Winning PB Projects

Council Member
Melissa Mark-Viverito

- Transportation for Seniors and Meals-on-Wheels Delivery Van, $103,000
- Playground Improvements at Millbrook and Douglass Houses, $500,000
- New Technology for NY Public Library Aguilar Branch, $60,000
- Installation of Security Cameras at Public Housing Complexes, $525,000
- A Home for Harlem RBI and Dream Charter School, $513,000
- Ultrasound System for Metropolitan Hospital Center, $105,000
- Additional Project: New garbage cans for specific corners, funded by the Department of Sanitation, $10,000
- An Additional Project: Installation of Security Cameras at Public Housing Complexes, $525,000
District 32
Winning PB Projects

Council Member
Eric Ulrich

- Water pump for Volunteer Fire Departments to Alleviate Flooding, $39,000
- Technology Upgrades at PS 47, PS 317/MS 318, PS 114, $230,000
- Pagers for four Volunteer Fire Departments, $48,000
- Gazebo/Grandstand/Outdoor Performance Space on Shorefront Parkway, $150,000
- Library Vending Machine in Breezy Point, $200,000
- Gazebo/Grandstand/Outdoor Performance Space on Shorefront Parkway, $150,000
- Six Argus Security Cameras for 100th Precinct (3 locations) $100,000
- Knights of Columbus, Rockaway Council: Handicapped Bathroom Upgrade, $45,000
- Cascade (Oxygen Refill) System for Fire Departments $60,000
- Library Renovation/Upgrade at Peninsula Library Branch, $500,000
Council Member
Brad Lander

Winning PB Projects

District 39

- New books and equipment for the Kensington public library to enhance the branch's use for meetings, storytelling, rehearsals, and small performances promoting Kensington's cultural diversity, $80,000
- Renovation of two dysfunctional bathrooms at PS 124, $150,000
- Planting 100 new trees on blocks throughout the district with few or no trees, $100,000
- Repairing Prospect Park pedestrian paths to prevent flooding, and adding trash cans in the park, $205,000
- Repairs and safety improvements at the dangerous Prospect Expressway/Church Avenue pedestrian crossing, $200,000
- Innovative community composting system near Gowanus Canal to turn 1 ton/day of food waste into soil, $165,000
- New technology for PS 130 and PS 154, $140,000

Manhattan

Brooklyn
District 45
Council Member
Jumaane D. Williams

Funding towards the purchase or renovation of a space for a proposed community resource center, $350,000

The installation of two security cameras at several locations district-wide, $400,000

Field lights for Tilden Educational Campus, $350,000

The purchase of desktops, laptops, a security cart, and a smartboard for students at the CAMBA Beacon Program located at PS 269 Nostrand, $150,000

The installation of floodlights in each park in the district, $150,000
Endnotes

11. Salazar, Cristian and Howard David King. "The 2012 Guide to City Pork." Gotham Gazette, July 1, 2012. http://www.gothamgazette.com/index.php/city/1406-guide-to-nyc-pork/ The Gotham Gazette's individual Council Member analysis only adds up to $33.5 million because they removed projects funded by more than one Council Member. When jointly funded projects are added back in, the total City Council Expense funding comes to $50 million, as stated in the article.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
24. The number of projects on the ballot varied across the districts: 20 in the 39th, 16 in the 32nd, 29 in the 8th, and 13 in the 45th.
35. Estimate does not include second-round Neighborhood Assembly; includes some duplicates (people who attended Neighborhood Assembly and were also a budget delegate and voted) and includes some online participation but not a full count of all those who participated online.
36. Based on weighted average of City Council districts 8, 32, 39 and 45 from 2010 Census.
43. This list is not exhaustive. Information obtained directly from Council Member Offices.
2011-12 PBNYC Steering Committee

Council Member Brad Lander
Council Member Mark-Viverito
Council Member Eric Ulrich
Council Member Jumaane D. Williams
Community Voices Heard
The Participatory Budgeting Project
Building Movement Project
Center for the Study of Brooklyn
Center for Urban Pedagogy
Common Cause NY
Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center
CUNY, Brooklyn College
CUNY, Hunter College School of Social Work
CUNY, John Jay College
Demos
Fiscal Policy Institute
Hester Street Collaborative
Manhattan Institute
Marymount Manhattan College
New York Civic
New York Civic Participation Project
New York Immigration Coalition
New Yorkers for Parks
NYC Independent Budget Office
Pratt Center for Community Development
Pratt Institute
Project for Public Spaces
Right to the City Alliance
VOCAL-NY
Children's Aid Society (8th District)
Little Sisters of the Assumption (8th District)
Union Settlement (8th District)
West Side Federation for Senior & Supportive Housing (8th District)
East Flatbush Village, Inc. (45th District)
Erasmus Neighborhood Federation (45th District)
Flatbush Development Corporation (45th District)
Rockaway Task Force (32nd District)
Fifth Avenue Committee (39th District)
Manhattan Community Board 11 (8th District)
Manhattan Community Board 7 (8th District)
Brooklyn Community Board 17 (45th District)
Queens Community Board 14 (32nd District)
Brooklyn Community Board 6 (39th District)
Brooklyn Community Board 7 (39th District)
Brooklyn Community Board 12 (39th District)
About the Authors

The Community Development Project (CDP) at the Urban Justice Center strengthens the impact of grassroots organizations in New York City's low-income and other excluded communities. We partner with community organizations to win legal cases, publish community-driven research reports, assist with the formation of new organizations and cooperatives, and provide technical and transactional assistance in support of their work towards social justice. CDP's Research and Policy Initiative partners with and provides strategic support to grassroots community organizations to build the power of their organizing and advocacy work.

For more information about CDP please visit:
www.cdp-ny.org
www.researchfororganizing.org

About the Designers

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement. CUP collaborates with designers, educators, advocates, students, and communities to make educational tools that demystify complex policy and planning issues.

MTWTF is a graphic design studio specializing in publications, exhibitions, environmental graphics, and interactive work with clients in other disciplines such as art, architecture, and urban planning.