

peoplesbudget™

CROWD-SOURCED BUDGET PLANNING



**City of New Orleans  
2018 Mid-Year Report**



Committee For A  
**BETTER**  
New Orleans

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# INTRODUCTION

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## WHAT IS THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET?

The People's Budget is the result of a crowd-sourced effort to gather data-driven insight into the budgetary priorities of New Orleans residents. The Big Easy Budget Game (**bigeasybudgetgame.com**) was launched in April 2016 as a first of its kind interactive website aimed at giving everyday New Orleanians a chance to learn how their budget works and to give input into the kind of spending they would like to see in their communities.

The Big Easy Budget Game is a budget simulation that effectively lets residents of New Orleans “play Mayor for a day.” After logging in, users are shown a list of city departments that receive general fund dollars, sorted by “results areas,” as defined by the city budget. Results areas are not actual funds, but a way of sorting city departments based on their primary objective, such as public safety or open and effective government. City department profiles include the minimum required spending amount, the amount the department received in the previous budget, and the amount of funding received from “other funds,” typically state or federal dollars that are restricted to particular projects. Department profiles also include a “learn more” button that pops up a description of the departments’ duties and consequences for providing more funding or decreasing funding. A link to most department websites can also be found under “Learn More.” By clicking +/- signs, users can dedicate funding to each department as they choose.

## QUICK POLLS

Some departments also include quick polls as a part of their department profile. Next to the “Learn More” button, users see a button indicating a quick poll. These polls ask users specific questions about spending within this department. Quick polls were designed to get users thinking about real life implications of these funding dollars and alternate ways to think about spending within a department.

## VERIFICATION

Users must create an account to play; by verifying players with an email or Facebook account, each player is assigned a unique player identification number, allowing administrators to ensure that players do not play more than once and that no automation bots are being used to artificially inflate the data received.

## RULES OF PLAY

All users were required to spend their entire allotted budget. This allowed the Committee for a Better New Orleans to see exactly where residents wanted funds to be spent the most. In the future the option to have a surplus may be allowed. However, per the New Orleans City Charter, deficit spending is not allowed.

Users were initially given the entire general fund budget to spend—a total of \$646.3 million in 2018. However, in order to make the game realistic and to show how much funding is

automatically allocated to required spending such as consent decrees and pension funds, minimum spending limits were added to departments. Minimum amounts are subjective, but meant to show a realistic bottom line approach to spending: how much does this department need to keep our city running? Minimums were created both to teach users how much of our budget is already spoken for on day one of budget season, but also to help us provide realistic, useable data to city leaders.

## WHO CREATED THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET?

The People's Budget and the Big Easy Budget Game were created by the Committee for a Better New Orleans, a 50-year old non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization in New Orleans, Louisiana. The Committee for a Better New Orleans is a result of a merger of the original Committee for a Better New Orleans and the Metropolitan Area Committee in 2002. The Metropolitan Area Committee was founded in 1966 as the first major community organization to reach across the lines of race and class. As other cities in the south grappled with the often violent effects of the civil rights era, the MAC was credited with beginning conversations between diverse local community, faith, business and higher education leaders. In 2016, CBNO celebrated its 50th Anniversary of creating opportunities for community voices and advocating for civic engagement in New Orleans.

Today the Committee for a Better New Orleans is governed by a board of local leaders from a diverse background of industries, interests, ages, faiths and cultures. CBNO was a founding and convening member of the Greater New Orleans Water Collaborative, Orleans Parish Education Network, and the New Orleans Coalition on Open Governance. Currently, CBNO is advocating to bring a formal citizen participation program, as called for by the city Master Plan, to fruition, and to further open our budget process through participatory budgeting.

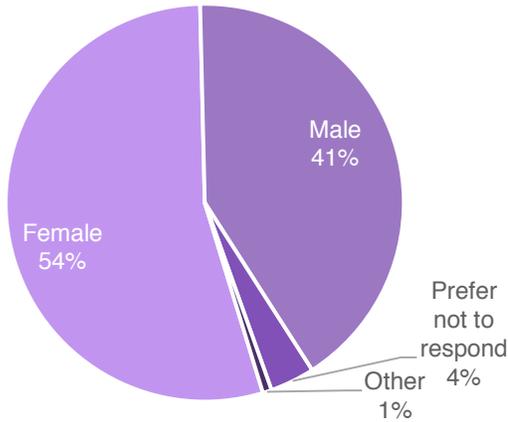
The Big Easy Budget Game and the People's Budget were created as a part of CBNO's People's Budget campaign, aimed at bringing better education, transparency and resident input into the city budget process to create more equitable neighborhoods. More information on CBNO and its work can be found at [cbno.org](http://cbno.org).

## WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET?

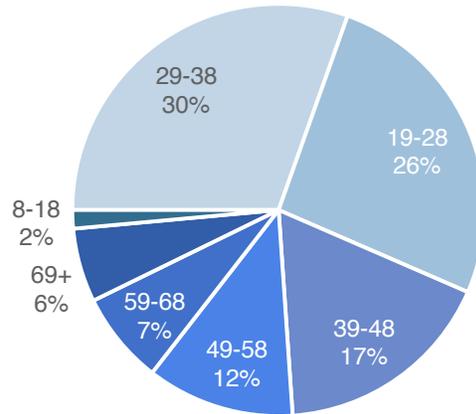
So far this year, over 300 New Orleanians have participated in the Big Easy Budget Game. The data included in this report comes from their responses. Demographic information was collected by a third-party survey. 58% of Big Easy Budget Game players completed the survey.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

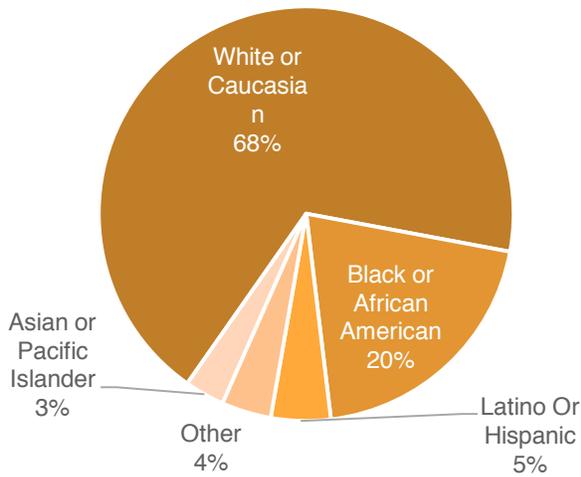
**Big Easy Budget Game players by Gender**



**Big Easy Budget Game players by Age**



**Big Easy Budget Game players by Race**



**Big Easy Budget Game players by Household Income**



**56%** of Big Easy Budget Game players **own homes**

**23%** of Big Easy Budget Game players **have children in their household**

Users of the Big Easy Budget Game were fairly evenly split over gender, with 54% of users identifying as female and 41% identifying as male. 1% of respondents identified as other, and 4% preferred not to respond.

Users were asked which race they primarily identified with. Responses show that 66% of users identified as White or Caucasian, 19% as Black or African American, 5% as Latino or Hispanic, 6% as Other, and 4% as Asian or Pacific Islander. Despite substantial outreach by the Committee for a Better New Orleans and its partners, the racial data collected from users does not align with the overall racial breakdown of New Orleans as a city. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2014 59.2% of New Orleanians were black, 30.7% were white, 5.4% Hispanic, 2.9% Asian, and 1.8% other. This shows the importance of targeted outreach to communities of color, and this will be a major focus for the Committee for a Better New Orleans as we look to the 2019 fiscal year Budget Game.

Big Easy Budget Game users were also spread across a wide range of ages. Survey responses showcased that the higher percentages of age groups were usually young adults or middle-aged. 30% of respondents were aged 29-38, 26% were 19-28, and 17% were 39-48. Although, responses also represented significant groups of older individuals as well with 12% aged 49-58, 7% aged 59-68, and 6% aged over 69. 1% of respondents were in between the ages of 8-18. This is somewhat in accordance with the city demographics. According to the U.S. Census Bureau the percentage of persons 65 years and over is 12%, and the median age is 34.6.

Household income of respondents also fell across a large span of socioeconomic statuses. 32% of respondents claimed a household income of over \$100,000. 17% of users surveyed reported an income of \$70,000 to \$99,000. 30% of users surveyed reported an income of \$40,000 to \$69,999. 20% of users surveyed reported income below \$40,000. The U.S. Census Bureau identifies the 2012-2016 median income of a household in New Orleans at \$37,488.

Users of the game tended to be more educated than the New Orleans average, with 76% of respondents claiming a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 36.2% reported by the U.S. Census Bureau for 2012-2016.

Employment demographics received from user responses reported 72% employment, 16% other which could include other occupations besides the choices given and retirement, and 12% as unemployed. This is somewhat similar to the U.S. Census Bureau's 62% of individuals in New Orleans in the civilian labor force aged above 16 years.

Homeownership by users was split with 56% owned or under mortgage and 44% renters, which is higher than the New Orleans Data Center's 2011 report of 48% homeownership in Orleans Parish. 77% of users surveyed reported no children in their household, while 23% reported one or more children in the home. The New Orleans Data Center reported that 41% of homes in New Orleans claimed children in 2011.

Out of the 58% that completed the survey at the end of the game, 60% of users completed the Big Easy Budget Game on a laptop, compared to 36% who played on a smartphone, and 4% on a tablet. The average length of play was 11 minutes and 44 seconds raw. Data collected in the Big Easy Budget Game is available upon request.

## OVERVIEW

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### A FOCUS ON INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING



Overall, users dedicated 28% more funding to the Sustainable Communities results area when compared to the 2018 adopted operating budget. This results are is comprised of departments that maintain and improve city property, green space and infrastructure such as the Department of Public Works, Parks and Parkways, Property Management, and the City Planning Commission. Every department that falls under this category represented a significant funding increase except for the Department of Sanitation which sustained an 6.0% decrease.

The Mayor's Office of Community Development represents the largest percent increase under this results area. Compared to the 2018 adopted budget, users of the Big Easy Budget Game created an increase of 4,569%. This particular section of the Mayor's Office addresses blight, and this increase showcases the importance of the issue to the New Orleans community.

This investment by hundreds of New Orleanians is a clear vote for more and better affordable housing options, better investment and maintenance in infrastructure such as public buildings, roads, sidewalks and water management, and essentially, a higher quality of life for neighborhood residents.

### IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS WITH CITY GOVERNMENT SECTORS



Throughout the Big Easy Budget Game users allocated more money to departments that included a path for strengthening relationships with aspects of the city government.

Users supplied an increase of 114% to Civil Service which focuses on city employees and therefore facilitates easier and more effective interactions with city government for New Orleans residents. When compared to the 2018 adopted budget the Office of the Independent Police Monitor represents a 384% increase in funding. This department specifically works with the community and the New Orleans Police Department to build trust. The Office of the Inspector General/Ethics Review Board represented an increase of 69%.

This communicates the need for both effective and accountable government which in turn builds trust between City Hall and the people of New Orleans.

### SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR AT-RISK POPULATIONS



Perhaps a more proactive approach to New Orleans's violent crime epidemic, many users chose to increase spending for mental health care in the places it can be found in the city budget, namely the Department of Health and the Coroner's Office. The Coroner's Office, which manages all forensic investigations in addition to autopsies, is required by statute to evaluate any individual hospitalized during a mental health emergency in Orleans Parish hospitals.

Users chose to fund the Coroner's Office at an increase of 106% when compared to the 2018 adopted general fund allocation. The Health Department received a 34% increase over its 2018 budget.

## REDUCED FUNDING FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS



In almost every instance, users chose to reduce funding for administrative departments such as the City Council which suffered a 7% decrease, Chief Administrative Office which sustained a 16% decrease, and the Finance Department which represented a 23% decrease.

It is possible that because these departments are less visible in residents' day to day lives, they rank lower on the scale of spending priorities. It is also possible that users feel city government is overly bureaucratic and could operate more efficiently with a larger focus on capital projects as indicated by the increased spending in infrastructure.

The two stand-out exceptions to the administrative cuts were the Office of the Inspector General which showed a 69% increase and Civil Service which showed a 114% increase, two offices whose chief responsibility is seeing that our city operates more effectively and efficiently. This supports the idea that residents feel city government could work better for them with less focus on internal workings and a more outward, community-based approach to the quality of life issues effecting New Orleanians across the city.

## DO NEW ORLEANIANS SUPPORT TRANSPARENCY AND ENGAGEMENT?

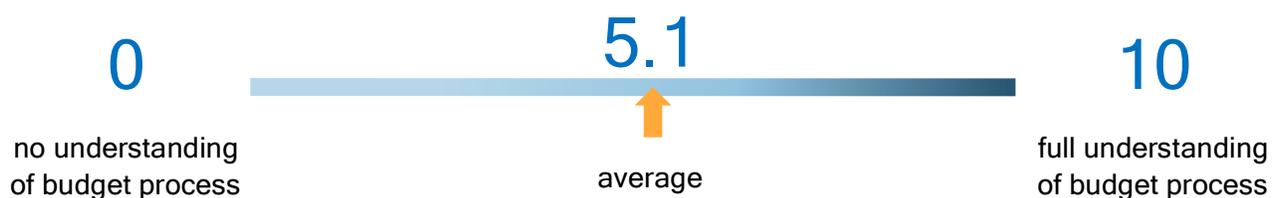
In a short survey users respond to on completion of the Big Easy Budget Game, we asked two questions about what different processes users would support. They mainly focused on systems that highlight government transparency along with civic engagement.

The first question asked if respondents would support the regular tracking and public reporting of all new or renewed property taxes. 97% of respondents said yes, alluding to a need for more transparency in government which in turn can lead to government accountability. The following question asked if users would support a public process to determine the use of unspent local disaster dollars. The survey showed that 96% of respondents answered yes.

## HOW DO NEW ORLEANIANS FEEL ABOUT OUR CURRENT BUDGET SYSTEM?

As a part of the demographic survey included at the completion of the Big Easy Budget Game, users were asked to describe their relationship with the budget process in previous years. Overall, users reported feeling deeply disenfranchised by the budget process, despite reporting a moderate level of understanding of the budget itself, and a significantly higher than average voting history, showing the majority of users are traditionally civically engaged in other ways.

78% of survey respondents reported that they were not happy with the current budget system. 87% do not feel that they are part of the decision-making process that goes into creating the city budget each year.



Historically, New Orleanians have never had a formal opportunity to provide input into the city budget before the proposed budget's release and review by City Council, though the Landrieu administration has begun a series of budget town halls, held each year in each council district. 88% of Big Easy Budget Game respondents reported that they do not feel that their input at these meetings is valued. Certainly, attendance at the town halls, though standing room only in their first years, has diminished significantly. Often, the city employees, department heads, and elected officials in the room outnumber actual residents. Moving the budget town hall meetings earlier in the year— to the late spring, when department heads make their initial budget offers— may provide residents a more meaningful experience in the budget process rather than waiting until the months before the budget is released to seek community input. We encourage the new mayoral administration to thoughtfully consider these changes as we prepare our budget for 2019.

Overall, residents rated their understanding of the city budget at 5.06 on a scale of 1-10, with 0 being not at all, and 10 being extremely well. This average understanding of the local budget may be a product of the slightly higher than typical education rates reported by users, or a reflection of learning that took place throughout the experience of using the Big Easy Budget Game.

Perhaps one of the greatest successes of the Big Easy Budget Game is the successful reach into communities of users who had never participated in the city budget process before. Although 81% of respondents voted in the most recent election, 75% of users surveyed had never attended one of the mayor's town hall budget meetings. This means the feedback provided here is representative of a group of New Orleanians not traditionally heard from during budget conversations.

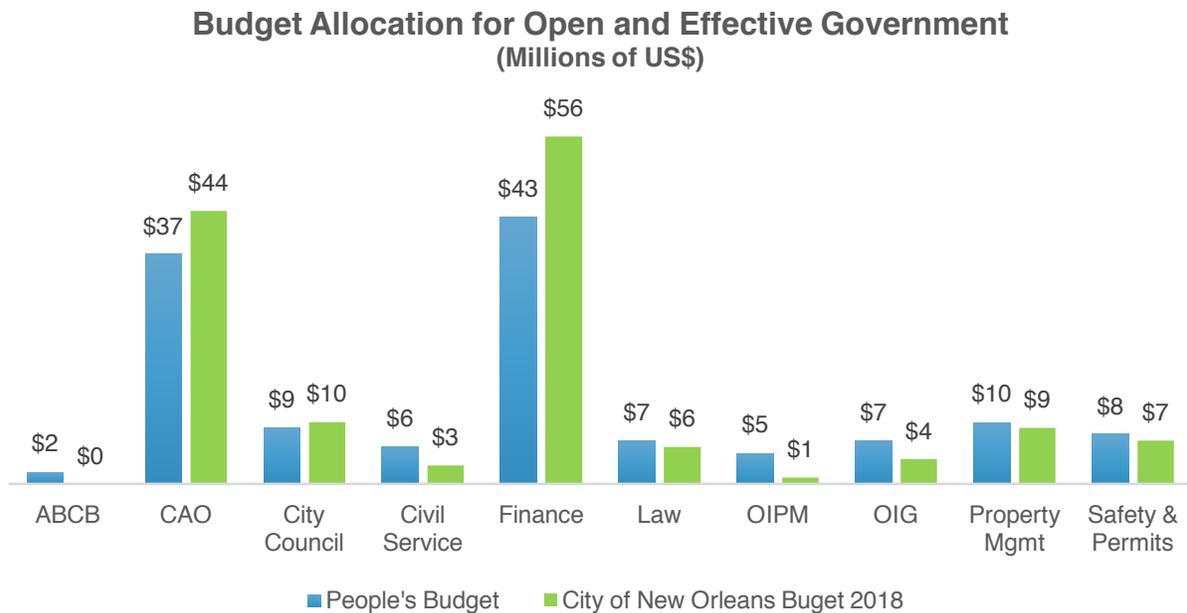
## SPENDING PRIORITIES BY RESULTS AREA

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Results areas are general areas of spending as defined by the City of New Orleans as a part of the Budgeting for Outcomes process. These results areas do not represent actual funds or departments in city government, but are used as a way of organizing and characterizing spending. In order to provide an analogous look at resident spending priorities and to help users play through the Big Easy Budget Game, the site was designed in keeping with a very similar structure. A few departments have been combined due to their similar functions or small budget allocations. These departments are noted in the report. Quick Poll percentages are rounded.

### OPEN AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT

As defined by city government, this results area ensures sound fiscal management and transparency, promotes effective, customer-driven services and fosters active citizen engagement in city government. Overall, Big Easy Budget Game users allocated \$134 million to the results area compared to \$139,219,151 in the 2018 adopted budget. This represents an **overall 3.7% decrease** in funding.



### Alcoholic Beverage Control Board

The Alcoholic Beverage Control Board received the smallest average funding amount from users at \$2 million. This is still a larger amount than the department typically receives; in the adopted 2018 operating budget, the department received only \$1,500. **This is a 133,233.3% increase.** Funding for this department has oscillated throughout the years but has leveled off at \$1,500 for both the 2017 and 2018 adopted budgets. Users were not required to fund this department at all,

given the small funding they typically receive and the relatively large (\$1 million) increments available to players.

One possible reason for the significant increase in spending is that many players felt the need to allocate some funding to this department, but were not able to break down those funds to increments small enough to be comparable. Users' responses may also reflect concern about the number and character of ABOs throughout the city.

### **Chief Administrative Office**

The Chief Administrative Office received an average of \$37 million from users, a **15.5% decrease** compared to the \$43,799,561 million the office received in the adopted 2018 budget.

A possible reason for this substantial decrease could be an aversion to and disappointment in city government in general. Another possible explanation for this decrease is that the actual function of the department is difficult to quantify in real terms.

### **City Council**

On average, users allocated an average of \$9 million to the New Orleans City Council. In the adopted 2018 budget, city council received \$9,718,880. Users' allocation is therefore very similar to the city budget allocation with only a **7.4% decrease**. The budget game users on average allocated the same amount that was given to the department in last year's city budget.

### **Civil Service**

The civil service department received an average of \$6 million from Big Easy Budget Game users, over twice what the department was allocated in the adopted 2018 budget, where the department received \$2,800,500. This translates into a **114.2% increase**. In the 2017 adopted budget the department received \$2,415,000. The funding increase between these years is explained as specified for "additional tests, staff, and training" in the 2018 Adopted Budget Book. Users were only required to allocate \$1 million to civil service.

The Big Easy Budget Game included a quick poll question for this department which asked if users would support a living wage of \$15 an hour to all city employees and contractors. 83% of respondents communicated that they would support this whereas 13% said they would not. 4% responded that they would support it if city employees were qualified, but they have no faith in their qualification.

This increase in funding may be a sign that New Orleanians want to see continued investment in city employees to make interaction with city government easier and more effective and/or the desire to see easier hiring for city positions, making more jobs available to more New Orleanians through the local government.

### **Department of Finance**

The Department of Finance received an average of \$43 million from users, making it the most funded administrative department in city government and the third most funded department

overall. Although, this is a **22.7% decrease** from the 2018 adopted budget which allocated \$55,629,245. Users were required to allocate at least \$28 million to the department.

Users were asked if they would support taxing the guests of short term rentals like Airbnb and VRBO equally to hotels and motels. 84% of users responded affirmatively whereas 12% responded negatively. 4% of respondents suggested that the taxing not be equal but be something that can be allocated to the needs of local residents.

There was a large jump in funding between the adopted 2016 and adopted 2017 budgets. In 2016, \$48,252,642 was allocated whereas \$56,653,545 was allocated in 2017. According to the 2018 Adopted Budget Book, the increase was presented as being due to funding the UPL increase and restoration of operating funds and processing record requests. The city budget allocation for the adopted 2018 budget reflects this continued increase.

Some possible reasons for the game user decrease in funding to the Department of Finance could be that average residents see much more tangible, pressing needs in their communities that they would rather see funded, or a general lack of prioritization for investment in long term financial health. This funding decrease by users to the Department of Finance comes at a time when the city has taken specific steps to invest in paying off old debts and ensuring better overall financial health.

### **Law Department**

On average, the Law Department received \$7 million from users. This is a **15.2% increase** when compared to the 2018 adopted budget which allocates \$6,075,275 to the department.

This shows a willingness of users to allocate a similar amount to what the Law Department commonly gets in the city budget, alluding to neither strong feelings of concern or success. Although, the slight increase could be due a user emphasis on fairness and representation that is associated with law in general.

### **Office of the Independent Police Monitor**

The Office of the Independent Police Monitor, the department that works with the community and New Orleans Police Department to build trust, received an average of \$5 million from users. In the 2018 adopted budget the Office of the Independent Police Monitor received \$1,034,083 million. This represents a **383.5% increase or almost five times more funding**. Users were not required to fund this department at all.

A possible reason for this increase could be the great need for better relationships between police and citizens both nationally and specifically in New Orleans.

### **Office of the Inspector General/Ethics Review Board**

The Office of the Inspector General received an average of \$7 million from users, a **69.1% increase** from the \$4,139,528 allocated in the 2018 adopted budget. Users were required to allocate \$2 million to this department, showing a general commitment to additional funding from users.

The increased funding could signal support in the community for a strong inspector general who can enforce accountability in government.

### **Property Management**

Property management received an average of \$10 million from users, a **9.9% increase** from the \$9,099,026 allocated in the adopted 2018 budget. Users were only required to allocate \$4 million to the department.

The additional funding for the department could signal that residents want to see better investment and maintenance of city owned properties.

### **Safety and Permits**

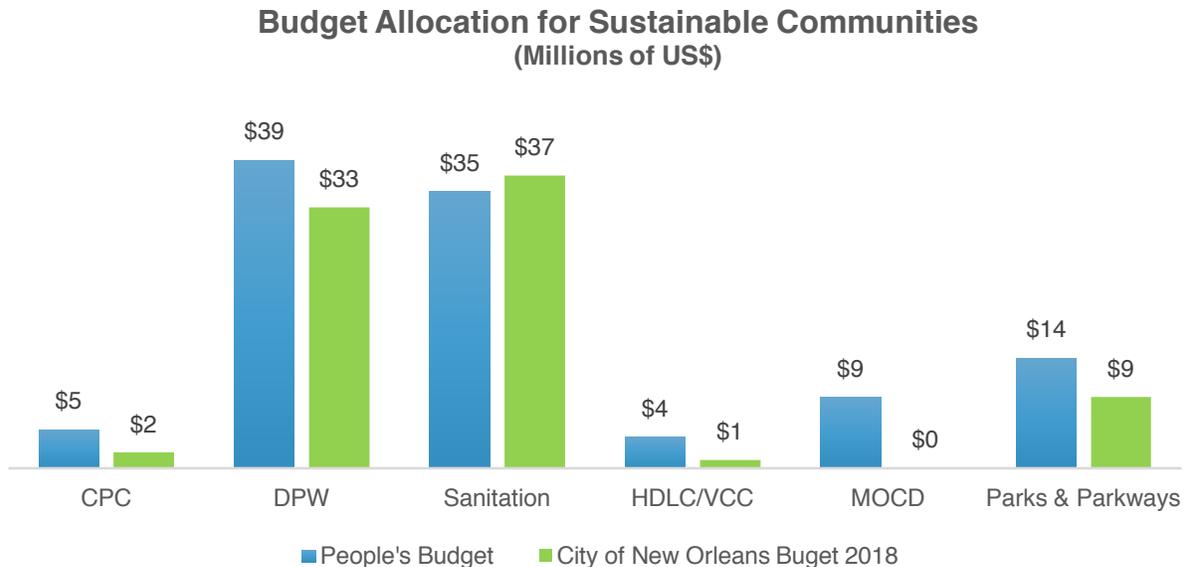
On average, safety and permits received \$8 million from users, a **15.6% increase** over the \$6,921,553 funded in the 2018 adopted budget. Users were only required to allocate \$3 million to Safety and Permits.

Users were also asked if they believe that the Office of Code Enforcement should be able to use the funds they collect to operate, freeing up other funding for other purposes. Currently, using the fines to pay for operations isn't allowed. 46% of respondents answered yes whereas 36% of respondents answered no. There was also a multitude of custom answers from respondents with this particular quick poll, a trend that isn't seen in any other question. All of the custom answers alluded to using funds they collect to operate causing a conflict of interest for the department. They concluded that this could cause the department to collect more fines and operate more harshly so they could bring in more money. 20% of respondents communicated this issue of personal incentive.

Additional funding for this department may indicate that users want to see more code enforcement on blighted properties, increased Efficiency at One Stop Shop, and/or better regulation of taxis. Safety and Permits is also involved with flood plain regulations which is a big issue for New Orleanians.

## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

As defined by the city, this results area supports sustainable communities that integrate quality housing, transportation, schools, commercial development, energy efficiency, parks and green space, flood protection and cultural assets. Overall, users of the Big Easy Budget Game allocated \$106 million to this results area whereas the 2018 adopted budget funded this area with \$83,024,599 million. This represents an **overall 27.7% increase** in funding when comparing Big Easy Budget Game users and the 2018 adopted city budget.



### City Planning Commission

The City Planning Commission received an average of \$5 million from users, a **140.2% increase** over the allocated funding for the department in the adopted 2018 budget which was \$2,081,348 million. Users were required to allocate \$1 million to this department.

Users were asked if developers should be required to provide community benefits such as affordable housing or water management when receiving public funds for their projects. Most respondents supported developers being required to provide community benefits with 91% of game users responding yes and 9% of users responding no.

The significant increase in funding to City Planning Commission from residents may signal the desire for more comprehensive, thoughtful city planning techniques, such as better water management to reduce flooding or increased resident participation in the planning process in neighborhoods. Another possible reason for the funding increase is the desire for the commission to find solutions to the present short term rental crisis.

### Department of Public Works

The Department of Public Works received an average of \$39 million from users, roughly twice the required minimum funding level of \$20 million and an **increase of 17.3%** from the 2018 adopted budget which allocated \$33,243,485 million

Users were asked if they think that any new revenue measures related to drainage should include incentives for property owners who reduce the amount of rainfall running off their property and into the drainage system. Owners can do this through actions such as using permeable pavement and regular cleaning of drains. 78% of respondents supported incentives to property owners whereas 16% did not, and the remaining 5% didn't support the incentives because they think drainage is the city's responsibility.

Residents and the administration both agree that we need to do more to fix the infrastructure of New Orleans. One of the most widespread issues that players of the Big Easy Budget Game want to address is fixing the potholes that plague New Orleans streets. This increase in funding is likely due to the widespread agreement that streets need to be repaired.

### **Department of Sanitation**

On average, residents allocated \$35 million to the Department of Sanitation. This is a **6.0% decrease** from the \$37,250,000 million allocated in the adopted 2018 budget.

It should be noted that the proposed reduction in city funding to the Sanitation Department is the result of a newly negotiated contract that has lowered the cost of trash collection by removing the previous contract's built-in cost to purchase a garbage truck fleet, which was not a known savings at the time users participated in the Big Easy Budget Game. By coupling the reduced cost of the new sanitation contract with the data received from users, the city could realize significant savings in this department.

A quick poll under this department asks users if parade fees charged to Mardi Gras krewes should be sufficient to cover costs to the city for policing and post-parade cleanup. This question caused the most statistically divisive answers out of the quick polls with 41% responding no, 53% responding yes, and 6% responding with a custom answer that doesn't support Mardi Gras krewes covering policing and cleanup costs.

A possible explanation for the user decrease of funding is a collective feeling of using their allotted city dollars for other areas that affect citizens in a larger way. This could also allude to citizens not facing any pressing issues from this department, opening up options for other choices of allocation.

### **Historic District Landmarks Commission/Vieux Carre Commission**

The Historic District Landmarks Commission and Vieux Carre Commission were combined for the purpose of the Big Easy Budget Game because of their relatively small general fund allocations and the similarities between their work. On average, users allocated \$4 million to these two departments as a whole. In the adopted budget for 2018, the Historic District Landmarks Commission received \$944,755 and the Vieux Carre Commission was allocated \$420,131 for a combined allocation of just over \$1.3 million. This represents a combined **increase of 193.1%**. Users weren't required to allocate any funds to these departments.

The almost four-fold increase in funding to these departments may be interpreted as a desired investment in the city's historic infrastructure— mirroring a similar increase in infrastructure

investment seen in the Department of Public Works, as an investment in our tourism market through our historic architecture, or as a call for better code enforcement in historic districts. This could also suggest an emotional attachment to the city's unique history along with simply tourism-focused priorities.

### **Mayor's Office of Community Development**

Users allocated an average of \$9 million to the Mayor's Office of Community Development, a division of the Mayor's Office that's responsible for fighting blight and the creation and upkeep of affordable housing in New Orleans. In the 2018 adopted budget, this division received \$192,766. The difference in funding represents a **4,568.9% increase**. Users were not required to allocate any funds to this department. The vast majority of funding for this department comes from the federal government, specifically the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Because issues of affordable housing have been front and center in New Orleans in recent years, we wanted to give residents the chance to weigh in. Though the percent increase shown here is large, it is mostly because the department received no local funding previously.

A quick poll refers to the issue of short term rentals, asking if more money generated by short term rentals that the city receives should go towards increasing funding for affordable housing. 81% of respondents answered in support whereas 14% answered against. 6% answered affirmatively but created custom answers stating either that affordable housing isn't enough to fix the bigger problem or that there can't be a built-in incentive to create more short term rentals.

A likely reason for this immense increase in user spending compared to the city budget is the desperate need for a solution to the wide-spread blight in New Orleans. Multiple surveys report that at least 20% of New Orleans properties are blighted, creating a large problem for citizens. There is no other department that directly addresses blight and affordable housing in the Big Easy Budget Game. Another reason for the vast increase could be users treating this as a department rather than a division, therefore allocating more money to it. It could also be more appealing since the description of responsibilities is more specific.

### **Parks and Parkways**

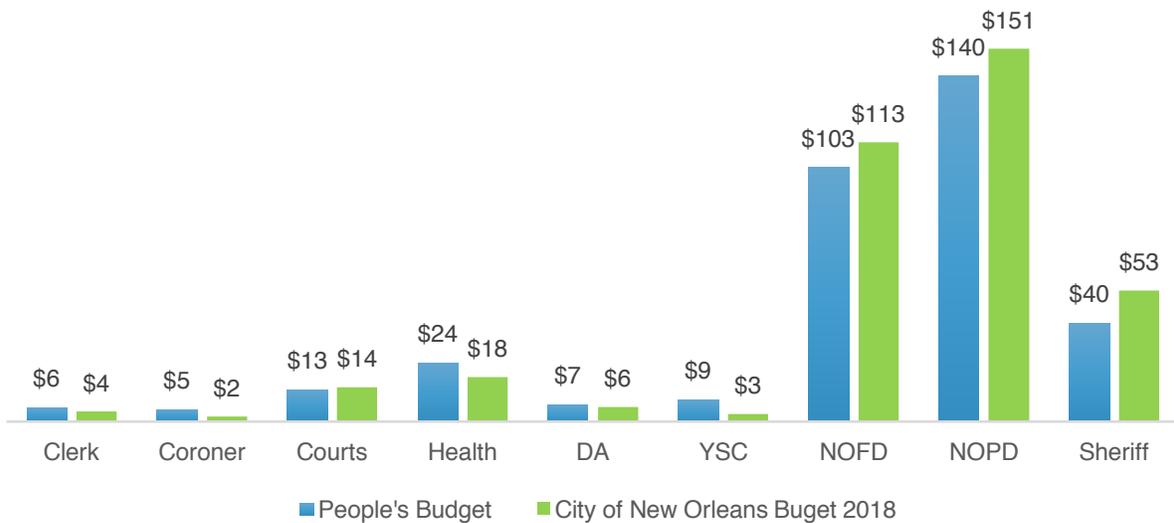
Users allocated an average of \$14 million to the Department of Parks and Parkways, the department responsible for maintaining green space such as neutral grounds and public right of ways in New Orleans. Users were only required to allocate \$4 million to this department, showing an average three-fold investment in public green space over the lowest funding option.

This **57.4% increase** over the \$8,892,114 million allocated in the adopted 2018 budget compliments similar spending by users on property management expenses. Users could also be indicating support for expanding the uses of our green spaces by funding more water management practices in flood prone neutral grounds, such as the inclusion of bioswales or rain gardens, and/or making better use of city-owned land under the purview of Parks and Parkways.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

As defined by the city, departments under the Public Safety results area include police, fire, EMS, the Sheriff's Office, courts, and other departments that ensure New Orleans is safe. Overall, Big Easy Budget Game users allocated \$347 million to the Public Safety results area. Comparatively, the adopted 2018 budget allocated \$365,874,596 million. This represents an **overall 5.2% decrease** in funding.

**Budget Allocation for Public Safety**  
(Millions of US\$)



### **Clerk of Criminal Court**

The Clerk of Criminal Court received an average of \$6 million from users, a **61.0% increase** over the \$3,726,330 million allocated in the 2018 adopted budget.

The increased allocation to the Clerk of Court may be in response to the Clerk's public demands for additional staff and funding over the years, or an interest in an efficient court system and appropriate handling of evidence in criminal cases.

### **Coroner's Office**

On average, the Coroner's Office received \$5 million from users. The **105.8% increase** over the 2018 funding of \$2,429,370 may signify support for the recent improvements made to the Coroner's Office, for better handling of remains after death in the case of a crime, and/or for some of the Coroner's lesser known responsibilities such as rape kit testing or mental health screenings. Users were only required to allocate \$1 million to this department.

One of the more common questions asked by users was where they could find mental health care in the budget, and many were surprised to find forensic testing such as the handling of rape kits under the Coroner. Because one of the initial goals of the Big Easy Budget Game was to educate

residents about how city government works, it is not surprising to see additional funding for an office that provides more duties than residents may have originally believed.

### **Courts**

All courts that receive general fund dollars were combined for the purpose of the Big Easy Budget Game. These include Juvenile Court, First City Court, Civil Court, Municipal Court, Traffic Court, Criminal District Court and the Judicial Retirement Fund, a pension plan no longer offered but continuing to pay out to retired judges and their widow/ers. Though the courts were consolidated, users can view specific funding for each court, as well as whether they receive funding from other sources such as the state.

On average, users allocated \$13 million to the court system. This is a **decrease of 4.2%** from the 2018 budget which allotted \$13,571,211 million. This indicates that, on average, users gave the department what was shown as being received last year.

### **Department of Health**

On average, users allocated \$24 million to the Department of Health, a **33.6% increase** from the 2018 general fund allocation of \$17,960,839.

Echoing priorities seen in the Coroner's Office funding, many users wanted to invest in mental health care, access to health care for children, and programs to support vulnerable populations such as the homeless. Health education resources could also be a reason for inflated funding. Additional funding may also be a desire for shorter 911 response times, as addressed by the administration through changes to the Orleans Parish Communications District, or the 911 dispatch center.

### **District Attorney's Office**

On average, users allocated \$7 million to the District Attorney's Office. This represents a **15.2% increase** over the adopted 2018 funding of \$6,078,029. Users were required to allocate \$3 million to this department.

This funding may represent an interest in keeping criminal offenders off the street, or in alternatives to prison, such as diversion programs.

### **Human Services (Youth Study Center)**

On average, users allocated \$9 million to the Youth Study Center, called the Department of Human Services. The funding for this department jumped from \$3,267,396 in the adopted 2017 budget to \$5,062,906 allocated in the 2018 adopted budget. When comparing the funding from the 2018 adopted budget and user funding, this represents a **77.8% increase**.

This funding choice by residents may signal a desire to keep juvenile offenders out of Orleans Parish Prison, where 15-year old Jaquin Thomas committed suicide and violence among adult inmates is common. This could also offer an allusion towards more rehabilitative services rather than punishment. It is also possible that the titles such as Human Services and Youth Study

Center do not accurately portray to some users the actual function of the center. A description of the center's function was included with the department profile.

### **New Orleans Fire Department**

The New Orleans Fire Department received the second largest average allocation from users at \$103 million. Users chose to spend under the \$112,537,212 million received in 2018. Specifically, the user allocation showcases an **8.5% decrease** in funding.

The Big Easy Budget Game required a minimum allocation of \$80 million to the New Orleans Fire Department partly to fund the pension fund— a court mandated cost. The Committee for a Better New Orleans felt it was important for users to understand how much of our general fund is already mandated by pensions and consent decrees before actual spending may begin.

It is possible that users felt the minimum number was high enough, and opted not to give as much additional funding to the New Orleans Fire Department as other departments. Some users may have disagreed with the pension ruling and expressed that through their allocation. It is also possible that users do not prioritize fire safety and preparedness as much as other issues facing their communities.

### **New Orleans Police Department**

The New Orleans Police Department received the largest average allocation from users at \$140 million. Users chose to spend well below the \$151,319,723 millions of funding received in 2018. This represents a **7.5% decrease** in spending.

The adopted 2018 budget book stated that “one of the primary goals of the 2018 budget is to improve NOPD manpower by investing in recruitment.” While federal consent decree funding is mandatory, and the administration and police leaders have long sought to grow our police force, it seems that to a small degree the additional funding for NOPD is out of step with resident spending priorities in relation to spending on the whole. Although the New Orleans Police Department still seems to be a major aspect of the budget, considering it is the most-funded, it seems as though residents are trying to communicate a focus on other approaches through this decrease in funding. The choice to spend less on police could also be related to the mounting tension between police forces and citizens both nationally and in New Orleans.

### **Sheriff**

On average, the Sheriff's Office received \$40 million. This represents a **24.8% decrease** in spending on this department from the 2018 budget which allocated \$53,188,976 million.

The Big Easy Budget Game did clarify to users that the Sheriff's office no longer received funding on a per diem, or per inmate, basis. The minimum amount of funding for the Sheriff was \$28 million as a way of enforcing the funding of the federal consent decree. While users were required to give a fairly substantial amount of money— roughly the average operating budget for the prison before the consent decree was funded in full— average funding does not reflect the full investment made into the prison.

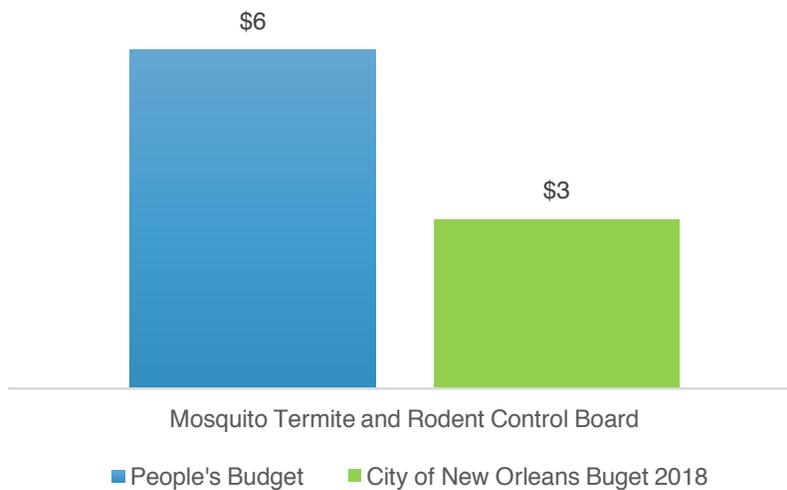
Users participated in a quick poll that asked if they support implementing a specific and more robust public process to gain input into the Orleans Parish Prison budget. 100% of respondents responded yes, further representing the strong feelings toward the sheriff and prison.

Most likely, the already-high mandatory spending amount did not encourage users to allocate significant amounts of additional funding to the prison. Also likely, many users did not want to give significant amounts of funding to a prison many in our city feel is too large, too violent, and too ineffective. A general sense of distrust for our prison system may have contributed to the largest decrease in spending shown by users in the process.

## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

As defined by the city, departments under Children and Families promote health and well-being of youth and families by ensuring that educational, economic, health and recreational programming opportunities are available for all. Overall, Big Easy Budget Game users allocated \$6 million to this results area whereas the city budget of 2018 allocated \$2,823,407. This represents an **overall 112.5% increase** in spending.

**Budget Allocation for Children and Families**  
(Millions of US\$)



### **Mosquito Termite and Rodent Control Board**

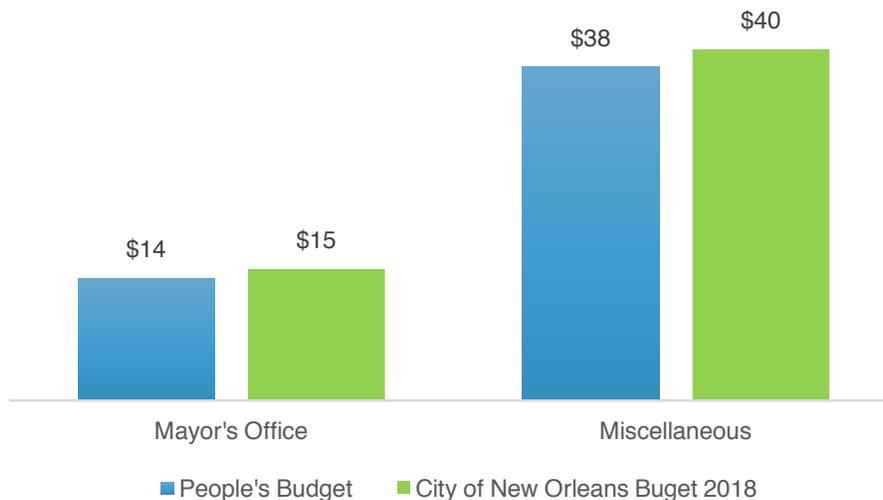
On average, users allocated \$6 million to the Mosquito Termite and Rodent Control Board. This is a **112.5% increase** over the 2018 spending of \$2,823,407 million. Users were not required to allocate any funding to this department.

The increase may be due to concerns about the Zika and West Nile Viruses affecting other cities and countries in tropical climates.

## OTHER OFFICES AND SERVICES

Though not a results area as identified through the city budget process, we have identified two departments which allocate money fairly evenly across all results areas and have listed them as Other Offices and Services. Overall, Big Easy Budget Game users supplied \$52 million to fund this results area. The 2018 adopted budget allocated \$54,854,657. This is an **overall 5.2% decrease** in funding based on users.

**Budget Allocation for Other Offices and Services**  
(Millions of US\$)



### **Mayor's Office**

For the purposes of the Big Easy Budget Game, several departments that fall under the Mayor's Office have been combined. Included here are the traditional Mayor's Office: communications directors, staff, budget staff, etc., the Department of Homeland Security, Criminal Justice Coordination, and the Office of Resilience & Sustainability.

On average, the Mayor's Office received \$14 million from users. This funding is slightly under the \$15,024,324 million the Mayor's Office received from the general fund last year, not including the Office of Community Development because it's separately evaluated. This represents a difference of a **6.8% decrease**.

This slight decrease could be due to other areas being more important in citizens' communities. It could also be the sentiment that we heard commonly working with people on the budget game that the mayor already has enough money and won't use it wisely even if they receive more.

### **Miscellaneous Programs**

Miscellaneous Programs includes funding for any organization or service not mandated by the city charter. While many residents may feel this could be an easy place to cut money, the Committee for a Better New Orleans worked to directly call attention to the many important quality

of life areas of the budget that are included in Miscellaneous Programs, such as the New Orleans Recreation Development Corporation, the Public Defender's Office, and the Arts Council. In the department profile, divisions of the department were shown and explained.

On average, residents dedicated \$38 million to Miscellaneous Programs. This is slightly less than the department's \$39,830,333 million allocation in 2018, and it represents a **4.6% decrease**. Users were required to spend \$25 million in Miscellaneous Programs, much of which was required funding for the New Orleans Police Department Consent Decree.

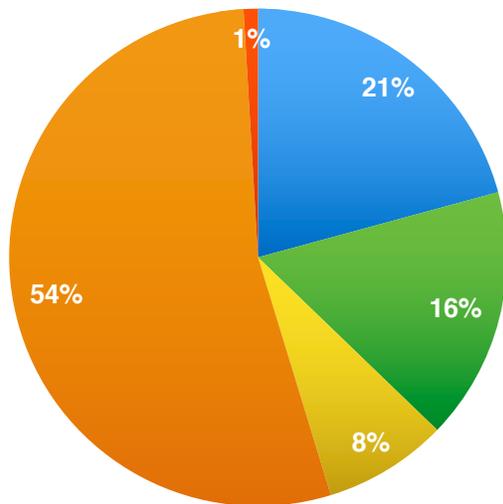
The lower level of funding for this department may have been a function of the seemingly trivial title of Miscellaneous Programs, or an indication that residents want to see less focus on the programs housed under this budget area.

## CONCLUSION

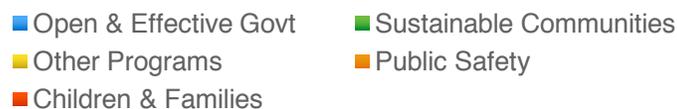
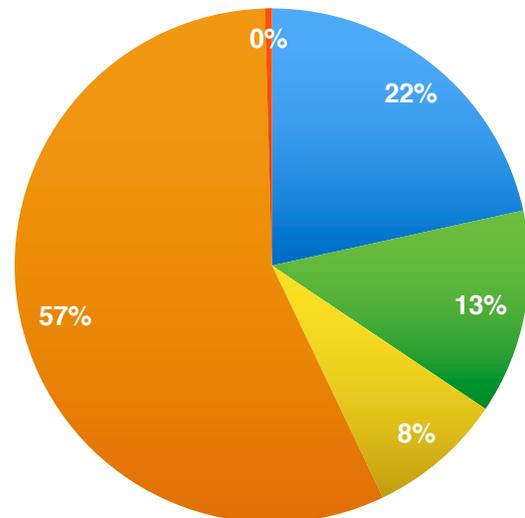
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In conclusion, the data supplied by hundreds of New Orleanians from across the city and from a variety of ages, races, and socioeconomic statuses does not significantly contradict the 2018 city budget. In many ways, the administration and the people of New Orleans have said with their money that they want the same things: a better quality of life. In the differences that do exist, much can be learned about the daily life of communities across New Orleans. This quantitative look at the needs of our neighborhoods is another way to approach solving the issues facing our city with limited funding.

**People's Budget  
by Results Area**



**City of New Orleans Budget 2018  
by Results Area**



This most basic common goal is exactly the reason that New Orleanians deserve a greater voice in their city budget. While the Landrieu administration's town hall budget meetings were a first step towards involving citizens in spending decisions, they did not fully serve that function, qualitatively or quantitatively. With better education about how city government works and how it spends money, residents can make better, more informed decisions, empowering local leaders to do what is best for our communities.

The Committee for a Better New Orleans is proud to present this data from the people of New Orleans, and looks forward to further outreach to the community to provide even more insight into the needs of residents in the next fiscal year. We welcome all partners, public and private, to join us in making sure that the People's Budget is the first step to a more meaningful public input process into our city budget.