

THE URGENCY FOR PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

The People's Budget LA Coalition, led by Black Lives Matter-Los Angeles, undertook an urgent public process of participatory budgeting to solicit input from Angelenos about their priorities for the city and how they would like public resources to be invested. This participatory project exposes the secretive and undemocratic processes that shape Mayor Eric Garcetti's draconian spending plans year after year. We know that budgets are moral documents. Despite this, the mayor's budget routinely drains unrestricted revenues to resource an already-bloated police budget.

Against this backdrop, a Black Lives Matter-led uprising galvanized millions of people across the nation and around the world to lift the policy demands, "defund the police" and "reimagine public safety" in response to the murders of Black people at the hands of law enforcement. This coincided with a global health pandemic that disproportionately harms Black people, including the deleterious effects of an economic fallout.

In May 2020, we released the People's Budget, after collecting survey data and facilitating a series of community-based town hall meetings to center the priorities of Angelenos most harmed by spending plans that overinvest in traditional policing systems, which are rooted in white supremacy and anti-Blackness. Once the 2020-21 budget took effect, and in response to mounting public pressure following the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, the mayor publicly promised to divest \$150 million from the LAPD to, in turn, invest those dollars in Black communities. While the mayor's promise of resources was not nearly enough, we remain committed to holding the mayor accountable to the promise he made to invest \$250 million into Black communities.

Over the last year, we've gathered input from more than 44k Los Angeles city residents to document budget priorities. Our coalition has catalyzed a Participatory Budgeting process across Los Angeles, holding 10 sessions with thousands in attendance, both independently and in partnership with elected officials. We put forth a transparent Participatory Budgeting model for the mayor and City Council to use and several of them have committed to doing so. We have also met with several City Councilmembers to **provide specific recommendations** to them and to the mayor based on what we've heard from Angelenos. The mayor has repeatedly stated he would meet with us but to date, has not responded to our requests to schedule a meeting.

We have not yet seen the changes the people are demanding to our city budget. **Our data continues to reveal a clear referendum: invest in universal needs (e.g., housing security, public health, health care, mental health, and wellness, etc.) and divest from traditional forms of policing. The people want a participatory budgeting process and they want substantial changes in the budget priorities.** We continue to demand that these critical resources go to Black Los Angeles, specifically Black-led, community organizations. This report shares findings from our Participatory Budgeting Sessions and our People's Budget Survey, which the mayor and City Council must use to inform a much larger, direct investment in Black communities.

CONSISTENT DEMAND TO DEFUND THE POLICE

Black Lives Matter-Los Angeles has challenged spending on police since 2015. We have heard from thousands of Angelenos who continue to underscore the urgency of defunding the police, not only to fund the critical investments our communities need, but also to end the centuries of harm the police have caused.

In 2011, the Youth Justice Coalition surveyed 2,617 residents over the course of a 50-mile March for Respect. They asked what it would take to reduce violence in Los Angeles. People who were surveyed overwhelmingly prioritized youth centers, youth jobs, and intervention workers/peacebuilders in schools and communities over police, courts, and gang injunctions.

In 2017, Community Coalition collected over 4,000 surveys to highlight the needs of South Central LA, 25 years after the LA uprisings. Respondents overwhelmingly supported more money for the housing crisis and support services, while they scorned LAPD for their mistreatment of residents.

In 2019, the partners of the Brothers, Sons, Selves Coalition surveyed 3,378 youth and community members across LA county. Youth wanted to seek increased investments in youth development (91%) and jobs (93%) and a decreased investment in Law enforcement (41%).

Police presence often turns a nonviolent situation into a violent one. We must remove police and fund community workers and professionals who can provide the needed support. In June 2020, City Council put forward two motions: one to establish alternative crisis response for nonviolent situations and one to remove police from transportation and traffic. Changes like these must be expedited and funded by removing funds from LAPD. We are calling on City Council to reject the mayor's increase to LAPD and to reject any additional funds LAPD requests.

“We don't need more money for the police. We need to save our community.
Reinvest in our community.”

- Prentice Morris

[Watch the full session on Facebook](#)

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING SESSION TAKEAWAYS

Our Participatory Budgeting Sessions have each had thousands of participants due to our efforts to make them accessible online and in-person throughout the city. **[You can view some of these sessions on our website.](#)**

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROCESS

Our Participatory Budgeting process includes several key strategies to optimize active listening:

- **Prioritizing the Voices of Black, Brown, Working Class and Poor People**

For far too long, Los Angeles electeds have allowed the most privileged voices to carry the most weight. The People’s Budget prioritizes hearing from folks who have been marginalized or who come from an underserved community. This includes Black, Brown, and Indigenous Angelenos, as well as people who have been incarcerated or who have been without housing.

- **Working with Community Organizations to Invite Participation**

The People’s Budget process involves direct outreach through community organizations to make sure folks who are not online or who may be ignored in other public processes are heard.

- **Making Room for People to be Heard**

We focus on staying present and listening to people as they speak for the full time it takes to hear their stories and priorities. We center people, not arbitrary time limits.

- **Sharing Resources so Attendees Learn How They Can Get More Involved**

We have found that when we make an effort to let folks know about these sessions, they enthusiastically participate and want to learn more about how they can get involved. In response to this need, we’ve begun including small presentations in our sessions, so attendees can learn how the budget works and how they can get involved.

“I and many others are sick and tired of living in and being a product of a police state. We’re done paying for an institution that produces racism, violence, and poverty. We are done talking. It’s time to put money where the people are at.”

- Carlos Cázares

[Watch the full session on Facebook](#)

TOP THEMES FOR INVESTMENT

Top areas where Participatory Budgeting participants wanted to see *investment* are:

- **Housing Security**

Housing continues to come forward as a major theme. The dire need to offer dignified, permanent housing options to Black Angelenos living on the streets remains high priority. In particular, folks called for “safe Senior housing for Black Angelenos.” Participants also wanted to see financial support for Black people buying homes. We heard the continued demand for rent and mortgage relief in the wake of the pandemic and emergency rental assistance for people at risk of falling into homelessness.

- **Public Healthcare**

We heard the pain of a city without quality healthcare options. Underscoring the [Black LA demands](#), folks shared how inequitable our healthcare systems are for both preventing health emergencies and reacting to them. COVID-19 brought this sharply into focus as LA County’s Black residents died at twice the rate of other populations. We need to make urgent investments in healthcare for Black and Brown residents.

- **Mental Health Support**

Participants wanted to see significant investment in mental health, substance use programs, as well as “holistic interventions that promote family and community well-being and center culture as a central feature in wellness.” We also heard the need to focus on improving how “African-American males are supported in mental health systems” due to a history of misdiagnosis.

- **Support for Black Families and Children**

Prioritizing Black children, their education, and keeping families together was a central theme. Folks also wanted to see financial support given directly to families who have had loved ones killed by the police as well as reparations and a Universal Basic Income (UBI). Universal childcare and investments in preschool were highlighted. To foster community, participants had recommendations like Black History classes, culinary arts, African drumming and dancing, and open mics.

- **Support for Formerly Incarcerated People**

Folks highlighted the need for financial support to people exiting the carceral system with a focus on prioritizing Black mothers who have been incarcerated. The promise Measure M made to invest in social entrepreneurship “to assist communities hit hardest by the War on Drugs” has not been realized nearly five years later, and participants demanded that this funding be allocated rapidly. We heard the need to focus on both housing stability and income streams through jobs programs or entrepreneurship grants.

- **Education**

Education is a core investment theme, including free or low cost college, school supplies, and more financial support for teachers. Educators highlighted the immense disparities in schools where Black children face a drastic lack of technology and learning resources and where the buildings themselves are unsafe. We also heard the need to invest in training teachers who come from the communities they serve and the dire need for Black studies at every level of our education system from preschool to college.

- **Grants for Small Businesses and Nonprofits**

Participants wanted to see investments in Black and Brown Angelenos who are starting or growing their business or nonprofit. Small business grants, notably including street vendor grants, were highlighted. Specific needs include lease subsidies for brick and mortar shops,

technology assistance, entrepreneurship training, and an investment in BIPOC worker-owned cooperatives.

- **Access to Technology**

Municipal wifi, computers, phones, and expanded library programs came forward as a critical new theme. During the pandemic, many people lost access to school, work, health services, and other lifesaving information due to lack of internet or access to devices. This need was especially highlighted for school-aged children as well as for older adults who need assistance applying for public programs like CalFresh or Medi-Cal.

“As a longtime educator, the disparities we see cause a lot of schools to fall into lower performing categories even though a lot of our students are very bright.

During the pandemic, technology was a big gap.”

- Kenyatta Bakeer

[Watch the full session on Facebook](#)

TOP THEMES FOR DIVESTMENT

Top areas where Participatory Budgeting participants wanted to see **divestment** are:

- **Police and Policing**

Participants continue to share why it's important to them to not only fund the priorities listed above, but also to remove funding from the systems that cause harm to Black and Brown communities. People also spoke on the need to remove police from schools, from the Metro system, as well as eliminating other police contracts with city departments like the library. Folks also called out the grave expense of police surveillance, which research has shown, disproportionately targets Black and Brown people.

THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET 2021-22

We released the People's Budget survey on April 16, 2021, engaging over 4.6k LA residents. Our year-round Participatory Budgeting sessions have informed the 2021 survey design.

TOP PRIORITIES FOR INVESTMENT

Universal Needs

Respondents wanted to see substantial investments in housing security, public health and healthcare, environmental justice, climate change and food security.

Reimagined Community Safety

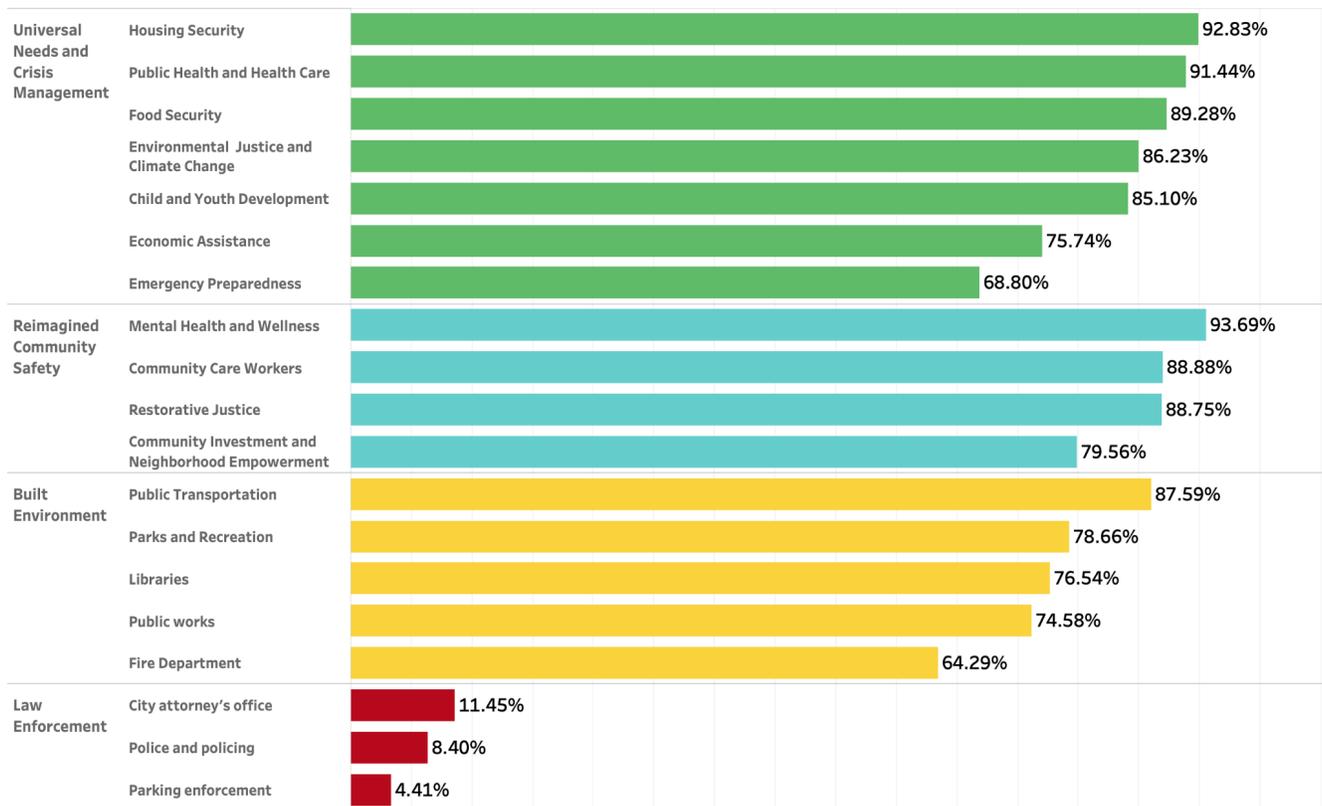
Respondents wanted to see significant increases to the city’s funding of mental health, wellness support, restorative justice models, community care workers, community investment and neighborhood empowerment.

Built Environment

Respondents wanted to see some investment in the built environment with public transportation as their highest priority in this category. Additional investment areas included libraries, parks and recreation, public works and the fire department.

Top Priorities for Investment

Survey Respondants selected either "maximum" or "moderate" investment from the following areas



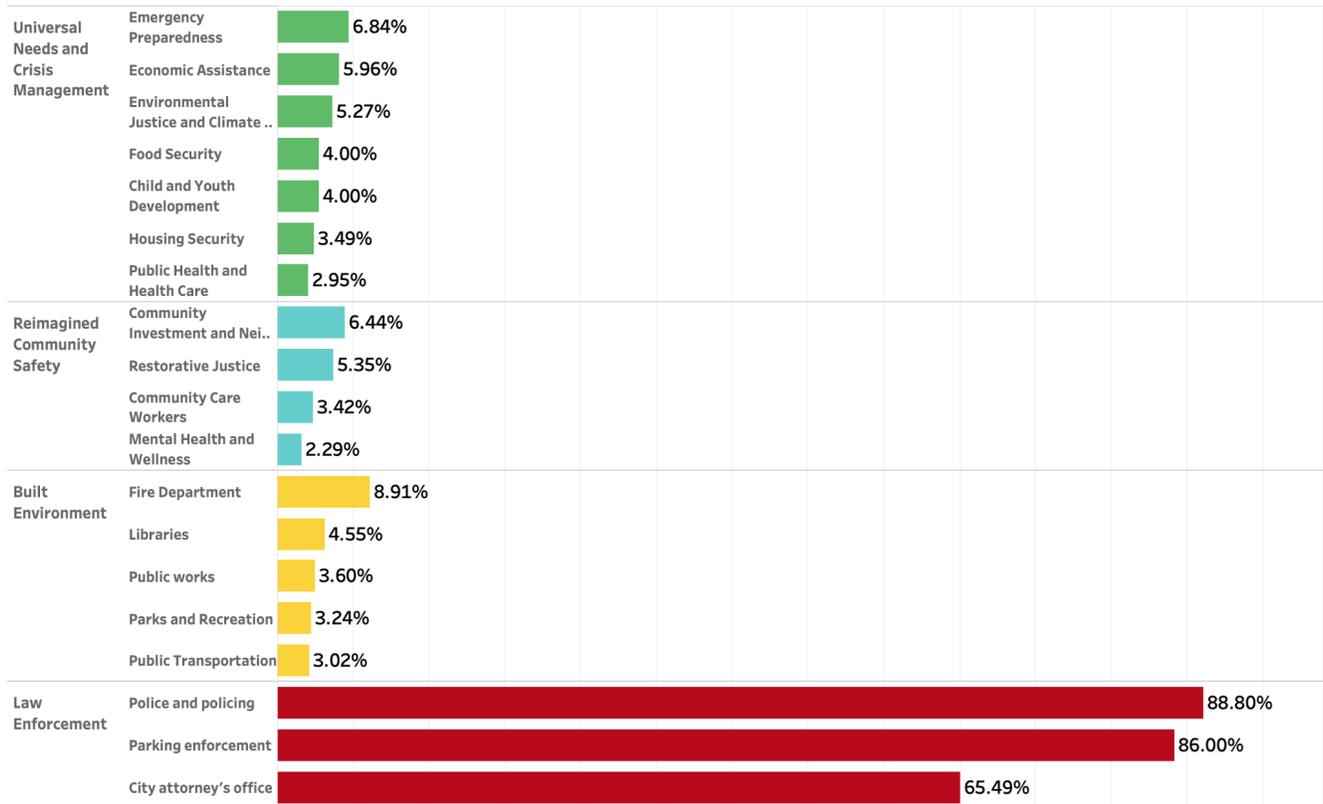
TOP PRIORITIES FOR DIVESTMENT

Law Enforcement

Respondents wanted to see a 88.8% decrease in the LAPD funding as well as major decreases to parking enforcement and the city attorney’s budget.

Top Priorities for Divestment

Survey Respondants selected either "no investment" or "divest money" from the following areas.



Our data demonstrates a consistent commitment: invest in universal needs and divest from traditional forms of policing.

DEMOGRAPHIC HIGHLIGHTS

Our survey data can be segmented by several dimensions. We collect data on council district, employment status, essential worker status, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, housing security, financial security, languages, education and several other factors.

We included a few new questions to this year's survey to gain more understanding of the responses.

Impacts of Failed Systems

- 36.3% Of respondents identify as a crime survivor
- 11.9% Of respondents have been directly impacted by the carceral system
- 31.8% Of respondents have had a family member impacted by the carceral system

Experiences with Law Enforcement

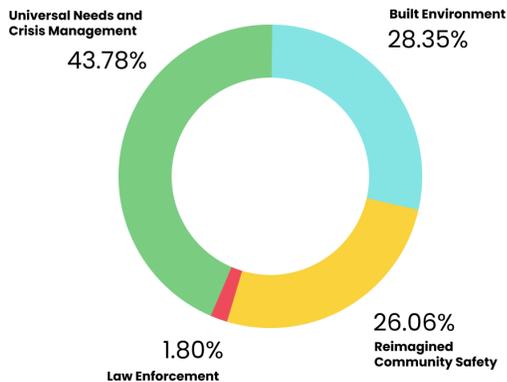
- 14.3% Of respondents have been directly harmed by law enforcement
- 24.3% Of respondents have had a family member harmed by law enforcement

Perspectives

- 91% Of respondents support nonviolent direct action
- 93% Of respondents say police associations should not have a role in the city budget

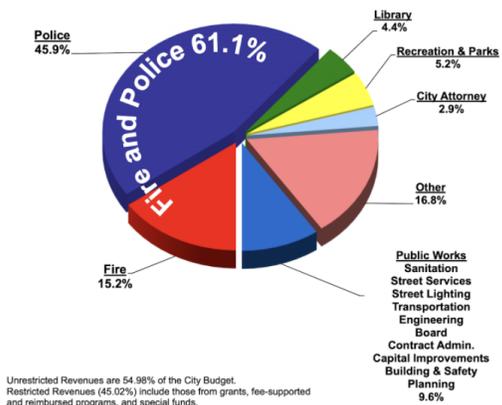
COMPARISON WITH THE MAYOR'S BUDGET PRIORITIES

THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET



THE MAYOR'S BUDGET

2021-22 PROPOSED BUDGET
DEPARTMENTAL SHARE OF UNRESTRICTED REVENUES(\$6.2 Billion)



THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET PRIORITIES (By Category)

Universal Needs	43.78%
Built Environment	28.35%
Reimagined Community Safety	26.06%
Law Enforcement and Policing	1.80%

THE MAYOR'S BUDGET PRIORITIES

Police and Policing	45.9%
Other	16.8%
Fire Department	15.2%
Public Works	9.6%
Recreation & Parks	5.2%
Library	4.4%
City Attorney	2.9%

“There are more people investing in the problem, than in the solution. It took money to build the system. It’s going to take money to break the system.”

- Phillip “Rock” Lester

[Watch the full session on Facebook](#)

CITY'S COUNCILS CALL TO ACTION

Tens of thousands of Angelenos have joined us in the streets, at our town halls and in public comment sessions. We want to remind City Council of the people's urgent call to defund the police and we want to share the specific actions that City Council can and should take:

1. **Reject the increase to the LAPD budget**, and reject the \$67M additional funding that LAPD is requesting.
2. **Make the People's Budget an official part of the city's budgeting process.**
3. **Implement the two motions from last year** (removing police from traffic stops and removing police from non-violent emergency calls). We want to see these move beyond report backs and into implementation in the immediate term.
4. **Prioritize funding Black-led organizations.** We sent a list in February, also [available on our website](#).
5. **Remove police from places they don't belong** (parks, schools, after school programs, housing, libraries, metro). We've shared some [spaces for abolition](#) at past town halls.

JOIN THE PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING MOVEMENT

We believe that the government should be responsive to the needs, priorities, and demands of the people. There is clearly a wide chasm between the budget proposed by the mayor (and directly or indirectly endorsed by the City Council) and the one envisioned by Los Angeles residents. The City Charter enables Council to pass or revise the mayor's budget proposal or submit a new budget for implementation. In a democracy, the Council should listen to the will of the people and pass a People's Budget that centers the priorities that Angelenos have listed as central to them.

Under the leadership of BLM-LA, our fight for a People's Budget has engaged the residents of Los Angeles in a way that has never been done before. More people are paying attention, and are willing to hold our politicians' feet to the fire. We have taken local politics by storm and our ideas have reverberated in cities across the country.

The cuts to LAPD proposed by some councilmembers and the mayor are not enough; we will not be satisfied with crumbs. We are fighting for transformative change. We are fighting for the abolition of police and prisons. We are just getting started.

We encourage all Angelenos to continue to write and call the mayor and City Council to demand they conduct a participatory, transparent budgeting process.

ABOUT THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET LA COALITION

The People's Budget LA is a coalition convened by Black Lives Matter-Los Angeles. The coalition includes community organizations, faith leaders, parents, teachers, students, nonprofit leaders, and individuals from across Los Angeles.

Organizations who have signed onto the People's Budget LA initiative include:

Africa Town Coalition	Healthcare for All Los Angeles	Students Deserve
Bend The Arc: Jewish Action, Southern California	The Justice Collaborative	Sunrise Movement LA
Black Lives Matter-Los Angeles	Ktown for All	Third World Power
Clergy for Black Lives	LA Defensa	TransLatina Coalition
CLUE	LA Voice	VyBe Local, LA Tenants Union
Community Coalition	Labor/Community Strategy Center	Westside Local, LA Tenants Union
Crenshaw Subway Coalition	Los Angeles Community Action Network	West Valley People's Alliance
Dignity and Power NOW	March For Our Lives	White People 4 Black Lives
DSA-LA	People's City Council	Youth Justice Coalition
Ground Game LA	Stop LAPD Spying	
	Street Watch LA	

You can find this report and learn more at peoplesbudgetla.com