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CROWD-SOURCED BUDGET PLANNING



City of New Orleans 2019 Mid-Year Report



Committee For A
BETTER
New Orleans

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Introduction:

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 \$317 million in 2019. 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 53-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.

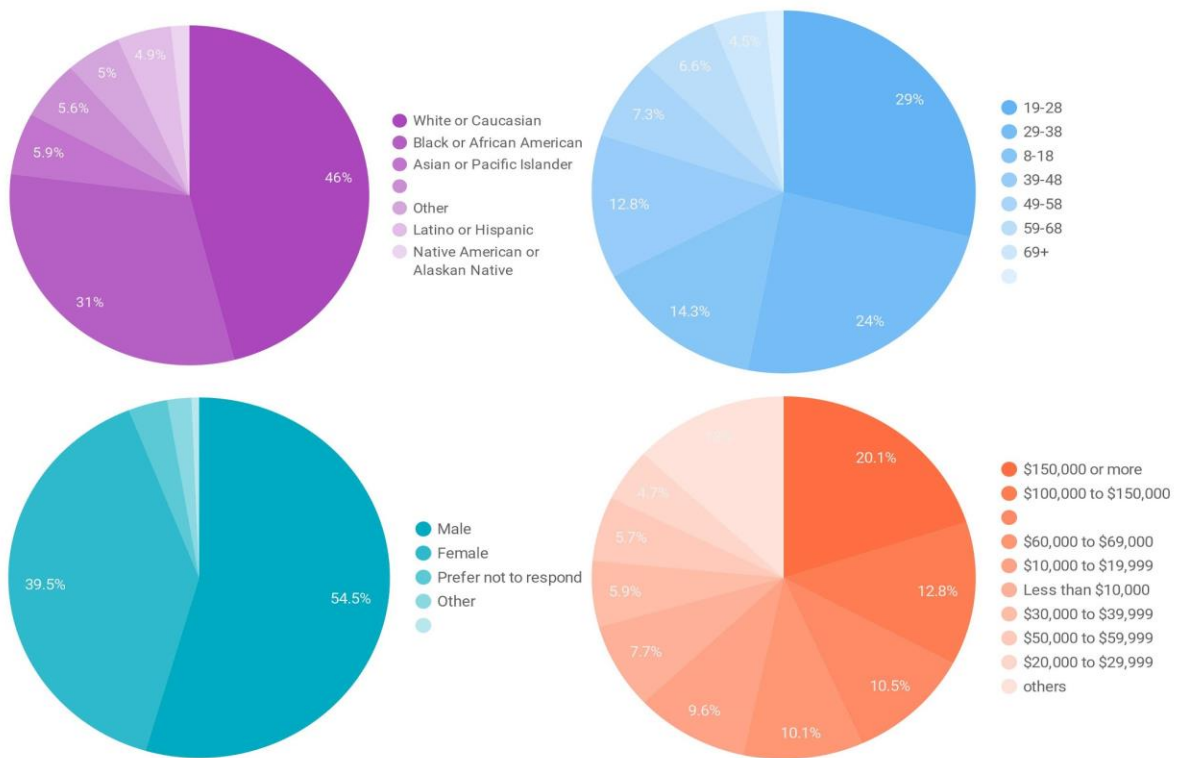
Today the Committee for a Better New Orleans is governed by a board of local leaders from a diverse background of industries, interests, ages, faiths and cultures. CBNO was a founding and convening member of the Greater New Orleans Water Collaborative, Orleans Parish Education Network, and the New Orleans 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.

Who Participated in the People's Budget?

So far this year, over 395 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. 42% of Big Easy Budget Game players completed the survey.

Demographic Data



51%
own homes

38%
have children in
their household

Users of the Big Easy Budget Game were fairly evenly split over gender, with 45% of users identifying as female and 50% identifying as male. 1.9% of respondents identified as other, and 3.2% preferred not to respond.

Users were asked which race they primarily identified with. Responses show that 51% of users identified as White or Caucasian, 30.9% as Black or African American, 5% as Latino or Hispanic, 7% as Other, and 5% 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. Targeted outreach to communities of color is a major focus for the Committee for a Better New Orleans as we look to the 2019 fiscal year Budget

Game. Thanks to partnerships with community groups across the city, participation by black or African American users increased 20% from the 2018 mid-year report.

Big Easy Budget Game users were also spread across a wide range of ages. Survey responses indicated that the higher percentages of age groups were usually young adults or middle-aged. 26% of respondents were aged 29-38, 29% were 19-28, and 13% were 39-48. Respondents also represented significant groups of older individuals as well, with 9% aged 49-58, 5% aged 59-68, and 5% aged over 69. 15% of respondents were in between the ages of 8-18, the largest demographic difference from the 2018 mid-year report, where only 1% of users were in this age group. 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. 35% of respondents claimed a household income of over \$100,000. 11% 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. 31% 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 63% of respondents claiming a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 38% reported by the U.S. Census Bureau for 2017.

Users were asked to report their occupation. Responses ranged from many service industry jobs, particularly in food service, to students, teachers, and white collar occupations such as data analysts, finance directors, and doctors.


Homeownership by users was split with 51% owned or under mortgage and 49% renters, which is slightly higher than the New Orleans Data Center's 2011 report of 48% homeownership in Orleans Parish.

63% of users surveyed reported no children in their household, while 38% 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 42% that completed the survey at the end of the game, 41% of users completed the Big Easy Budget Game on a laptop, compared to 49% who played on a smartphone, and 9% on a tablet. The average length of play was 13 minutes and 3 seconds. Raw data collected in the Big Easy Budget Game is available upon request.

Overview


A focus on infrastructure investments



Overall, users dedicated 23% more funding to the Sustainable Communities results area when compared to the 2019 adopted operating budget. This results area 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 saw a 15% decrease. It should be noted that the Department of Public Works, the agency tasked with filling potholes-- the budget request most commonly associated with New Orleans residents-- stayed neutral at \$36 million.

This investment by hundreds of New Orleanians is a vote for more thoughtful planning in our communities, 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 and tourists alike.

Improved relationships with city government




Throughout the Big Easy Budget Game users allocated more money to departments that included a path for strengthening relationships, transparency and accountability of city departments.

Users almost tripled their allocation 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 2019 adopted budget the Office of the Independent Police Monitor sees the largest overall difference in additional funding at almost ten times its actual allocation. Paired with a cut to the actual Police Department itself, this datapoint tells us that New Orleanians do want to invest in their police force, but they want to do it in a way that creates better trust, training, and accountability. The Office of the Inspector General/Ethics Review Board also saw just under a three-fold increase in funding.

This communicates the need for both effective and accountable government when interacting with residents which in turn builds trust between the government and people of New Orleans.

Supporting mental health care for at-risk populations



Perhaps indicating the desire for 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 146% when compared to the 2019 adopted general fund allocation. The Health Department received a 35% increase over its 2019 budget.

Funding affordable housing



The decision to separate the Mayor's Office of Community Development from the Mayor's central office was intended to give residents the direct ability to weigh in on funding for affordable housing. Particularly when playing as a group with older residents, the Committee for a Better New Orleans hears often from users that their biggest issues as residents is that they cannot make rent.

The \$13 million investment made, on average, by users shows the quantifiable lengths to which New Orleanians would like to see affordable housing addressed in our city.

Cuts to reactive public safety

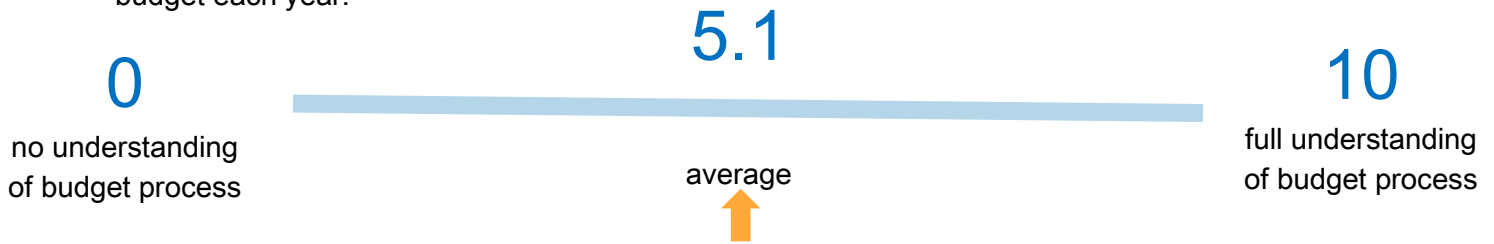


For almost every mid-year and final report of the People's Budget, traditional, reactive public safety such as police and prisons have seen a reduction in funding by users. Specifically, the Orleans Parish Prison has seen a consistent 25% deduction from their allocated funding, even after the consent decree has been fully funded, in almost every report generated. Additionally, the New Orleans Police Department saw a 20% reduction in funding. There is no doubt that public safety is an important issue for many New Orleanians, and just as certainly, fighting crime is a narrative told often about the relatively high crime rates of our city. However, the funding trends shown by large, diverse groups of New Orleanians consistently over time shows that residents would prefer to see the problem approached from a more proactive stance: one that prioritizes housing, mental health care and youth.

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.

70% of survey respondents reported that they were not happy with the current budget system. 74% 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 began a series of budget town halls, held each year in each council district. 74% of Big Easy Budget Game respondents reported that they did not feel that their input at these meetings was valued. Certainly, attendance at the town halls, though standing room only in their first years, diminished over time. Often, the city employees, department heads, and elected officials in the room outnumbered actual residents. Mayor LaToya Cantrell conducted telephone-only town halls regarding the city budget in 2018, and it is unclear what input process will be available in 2019.

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.

Overall, residents rated their understanding of the city budget at 5.1 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 68% of respondents voted in the most recent election, 80% 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

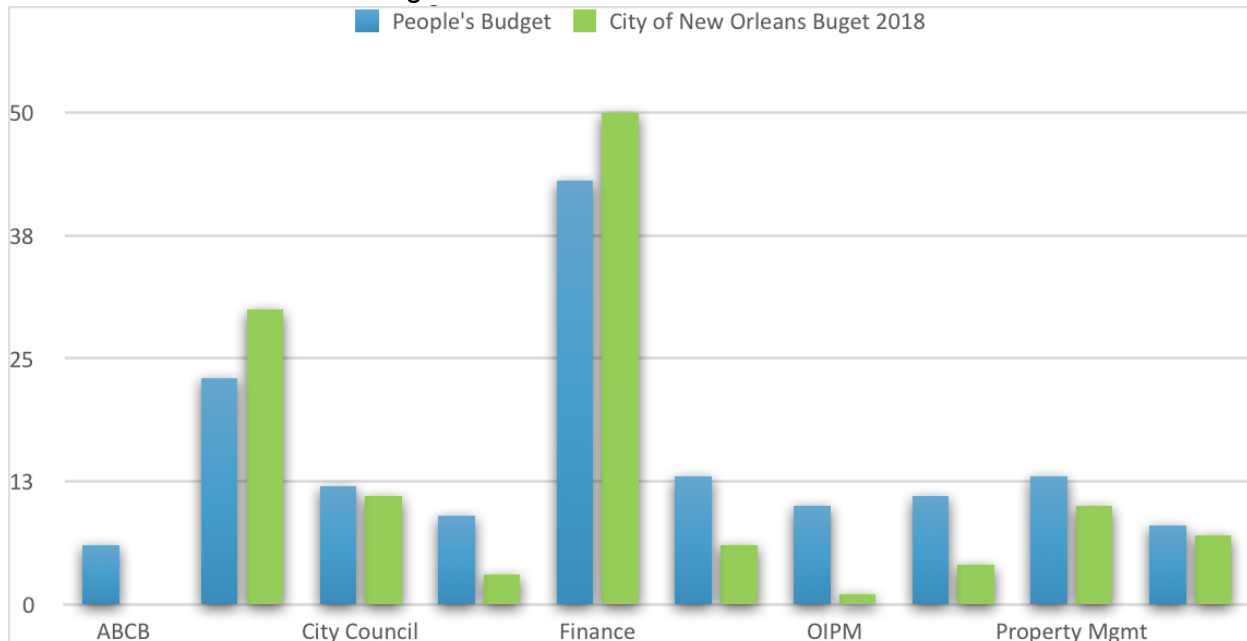
Results areas are general areas of spending as defined by the City of New Orleans as a part of the Budgeting for Outcomes process. These results areas do not represent actual funds or departments in city government, but are used as a way of organizing and characterizing

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. We anticipate continuing to use these categories to help users navigate the site as the city turns to a zero-based budgeting system in place of the Budgeting for Outcomes process. 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.

Data

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 \$153 million to the results area compared to \$123.3 million in the 2019 adopted budget. This represents an **overall 24% increase** in funding.



Alcoholic Beverage Control Board

The Alcoholic Beverage Control Board received the smallest average funding amount from users at \$6 million. This is still a larger amount than the department typically receives; in the

adopted 2018 operating budget, the department received only \$1,500. Funding for this department has oscillated throughout the years but has leveled off at \$1,500 for the 2017, 2018, and 2019 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 \$23 million from users, a **23% decrease** compared to the \$30 million the office received in the adopted 2019 budget.

A possible reason for this decrease could be that most residents do not interact with the CAO's office on a day to day basis-- or that they do not realize that their personal interaction with the department takes the form of a basic government functionality that the average resident may take for granted. This level of funding is consistent with general cuts to administrative departments by users throughout the site.

City Council

On average, users allocated an average of \$12 million to the New Orleans City Council. In the adopted 2019 budget, city council received \$11,018,358. Users' allocation is therefore very similar to the city budget allocation. 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 \$9 million from Big Easy Budget Game users, over twice what the department was allocated in the adopted 2019 budget, where the department received \$3.3 million, one third of the allocation from users. Users were only required to allocate \$1 million to civil service.

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.

Users were asked if they support a \$15 living wage for all city employees and contractors. 95% of respondents replied that they would support this wage.

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. This is a **14% decrease** from the 2019 adopted budget which allocated \$50 million. Users were required to allocate at least \$28 million to the department.

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.

Users were asked in a quick poll if they support using funds generated by tourism to be used to support those who work in tourism-related industries through programs such as better public transportation, childcare options, and affordable housing. 94% of respondents support using these tourism-generated funds to help local service and culture industry workers.

Law Department

On average, the Law Department received \$13 million from users. This is almost double the 2019 adopted budget which allocates \$6,075,275 to the department.

The additional funding for the law department might signify that residents want to see more blight adjudication or other investments in the city's litigation in court.

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 \$10 million from users. In the 2019 adopted budget the Office of the Independent Police Monitor received \$1,123,386. This represents a **ten-fold increase in 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 \$11 million from users, a **69.1% increase** from the \$4,139,528 allocated in the 2019 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 \$30 million from users, a **198% increase** from the \$10,204,487 allocated in the adopted 2019 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. A quick poll question in this department asked users if they would support the sale or joint public/private partnership model for the Municipal Yacht Harbor if the funds generated could be used to fund Sewerage and Water Board infrastructure projects. 69% of respondents said they would support such a sale or partnership, while the remainder responded no or that they would first want to see more information about how the land would be used.

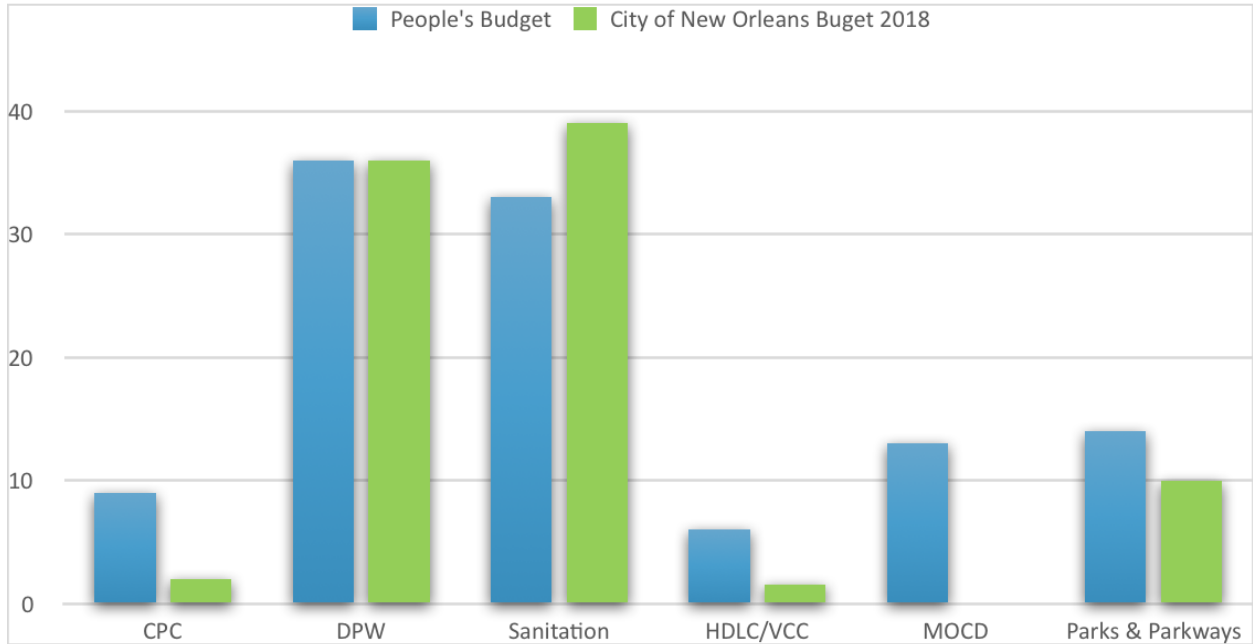
Safety and Permits

On average, safety and permits received \$13 million from users, a **65% increase** over the \$7,963,720 funded in the 2019 adopted budget. Users were only required to allocate \$3 million to Safety and Permits.

Additional funding for this department may indicate that users want to see more code enforcement on blighted properties, increased efficiency at the One Stop Shop, and/or better regulation of taxis. Many users also mentioned anecdotally that they hope to see this funding better enforce illegal, unregistered short-term rentals.

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 \$111 million to this results area whereas the 2019 adopted budget funded this area with \$90,149,877. This represents an **overall 23% increase** in funding when comparing Big Easy Budget Game users and the 2019 adopted city budget.



City Planning Commission

The City Planning Commission received an average of \$9 million from users, a **273% increase** over the allocated funding for the department in the adopted 2019 budget of \$2,410,613. Users were required to allocate \$1 million to this department.

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.

Users were asked if they believe developers should be required to offer public benefits such as affordable housing or water management infrastructure when receiving public money or incentives for their projects. 97% of respondents supported these requirements.

Department of Public Works

The Department of Public Works received an average of \$36 million from users, almost exactly the \$36,072,398 allocated in the 2019 city budget.

Residents and the administration both agree that we need to do more to fix the infrastructure of New Orleans. The on-target allocation of funds by users may signal hope that recent revenue measures will provide the needed funding to fix streets and other public infrastructure.

Department of Sanitation

On average, residents allocated \$33 million to the Department of Sanitation. This is a **17.0% decrease** from the \$39,739,504 allocated in the adopted 2019 budget.

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.

Users were asked if they would support once a week trash pick up if it meant funds could be reinvested in other areas of the city. 6% of respondents did not support the reduction to once a week trash pick up, 16% would invest the saved funds in adding glass recycling to the curbside recycling program, 19% would invest those funds in street repairs, and 55% would put the money towards infrastructure repairs to Sewerage and Water Board projects.

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 \$6 million to these two departments as a whole. In the adopted budget for 2019, the Historic District Landmarks Commission received \$993,417 and the Vieux Carre Commission was allocated \$529,063 for a combined allocation of just over \$1.5 million. This represents a combined **increase of 300%**. Users weren't required to allocate any funds to these departments.

The three-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 the desire to invest in the tourism economy.

Mayor's Office of Community Development

Users allocated an average of \$13 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 2019 adopted budget, this division received no

general fund money, although the department receives a significant investment from the federal office of Housing and Urban Development and other federal funding.

A likely reason for this immense increase in user spending compared to the city budget is the desperate need for a solution to the affordable housing shortage in New Orleans. 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.

Users were asked if they support doubling the millage for the Neighborhood Housing Improvement Fund that supports affordable housing programs. 94% of users responded that they would support this millage.

Parks and Parkways

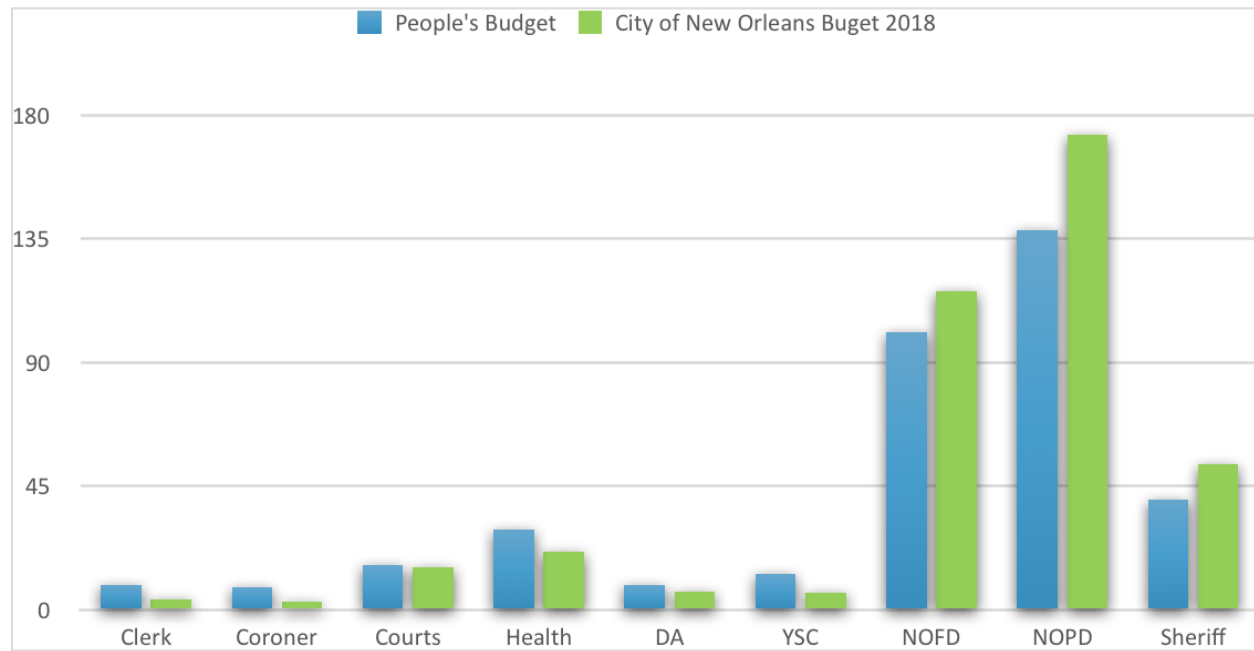
Users allocated an average of \$14 million to the Department of Parks and Parkways, the department responsible for maintaining green space such as neutral grounds and public right of ways in New Orleans. Users were only required to allocate \$4 million to this department, showing an average three-fold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

This **40% increase** over the \$10,404,882 allocated in the adopted 2019 budget compliments similar spending by users on property management expenses. Residents have indicated that they would like better investment in public facilities such as libraries and police stations. 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.

Users were asked if they would support an increase in the budget for Parks and Parkways if it meant neutral grounds could be used to store more stormwater during heavy rains. 92% of respondents supported this budget increase, with some write-in answers indicating that users would want to know more about what that water management infrastructure would look like, and where the water would be stored.

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 \$363 million to the Public Safety results area. Comparatively, the adopted 2019 budget allocated \$399,911,445. This represents an **overall 9.2% decrease** in funding.



Clerk of Criminal Court

The Clerk of Criminal Court received an average of \$9 million from users, almost triple the \$3,726,330 million allocated in the 2019 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 \$8 million from users. The **146% increase** over the 2019 funding of \$3,250,516 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 \$16 million to the court system. This is an **increase of 3%** from the 2019 budget which allotted \$15,500,589 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 \$29 million to the Department of Health, a **35% increase** from the 2019 general fund allocation of \$21,452,006.

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 \$9 million to the District Attorney's Office. This represents a **34% increase** over the adopted 2018 funding of \$6,678,029. 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 \$13 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 and again to \$6,374,611 in 2019. When comparing the funding from the 2019 adopted budget and user funding, this represents a **104% 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 \$101 million. Users chose to spend under the \$116,374,074 million received in 2019. Specifically, the user allocation showcases an **13% 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 \$138 million. Users chose to spend well below the \$173,366,314 of funding received in 2018. This represents a **20% decrease** in spending.

Although the New Orleans Police Department still comprises major investment in our city budget, 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 nationally.

Sheriff

On average, the Sheriff's Office received \$40 million. This represents a **25% decrease** in spending on this department from the 2019 budget which allocated \$53,188,976.

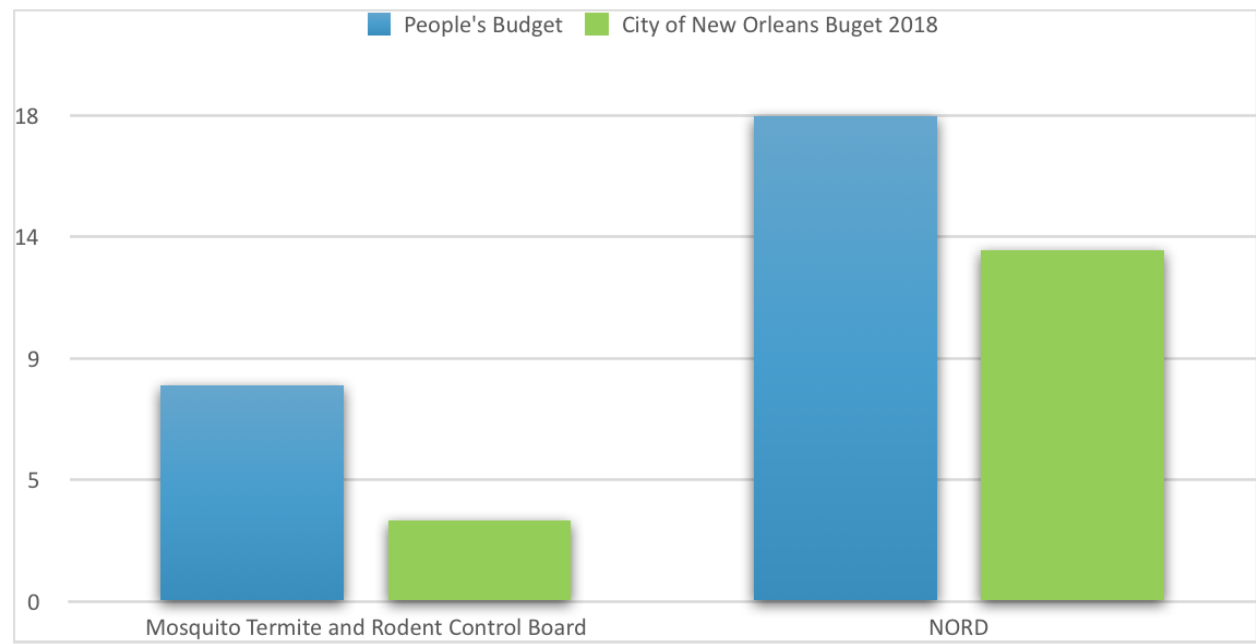
The Big Easy Budget Game did clarify to users that the Sheriff's office no longer received funding on a per diem, or per inmate, basis. The minimum amount of funding for the Sheriff was

\$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.

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. A roughly 25% cut to the Orleans Parish Prison has been common in every People’s Budget report of the past four years.

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 \$26 million to this results area whereas the city budget of 2019 allocated \$16 million. This represents an **overall 63% increase** in spending.



Mosquito Termite and Rodent Control Board

On average, users allocated \$8 million to the Mosquito Termite and Rodent Control Board. This is over three times the 2019 spending of \$3 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. It is also possible that continued additional funding for this department over time is related to its location in the Children and Families results area, a place many residents want to see investment, or simply that it is located at the top of the page.

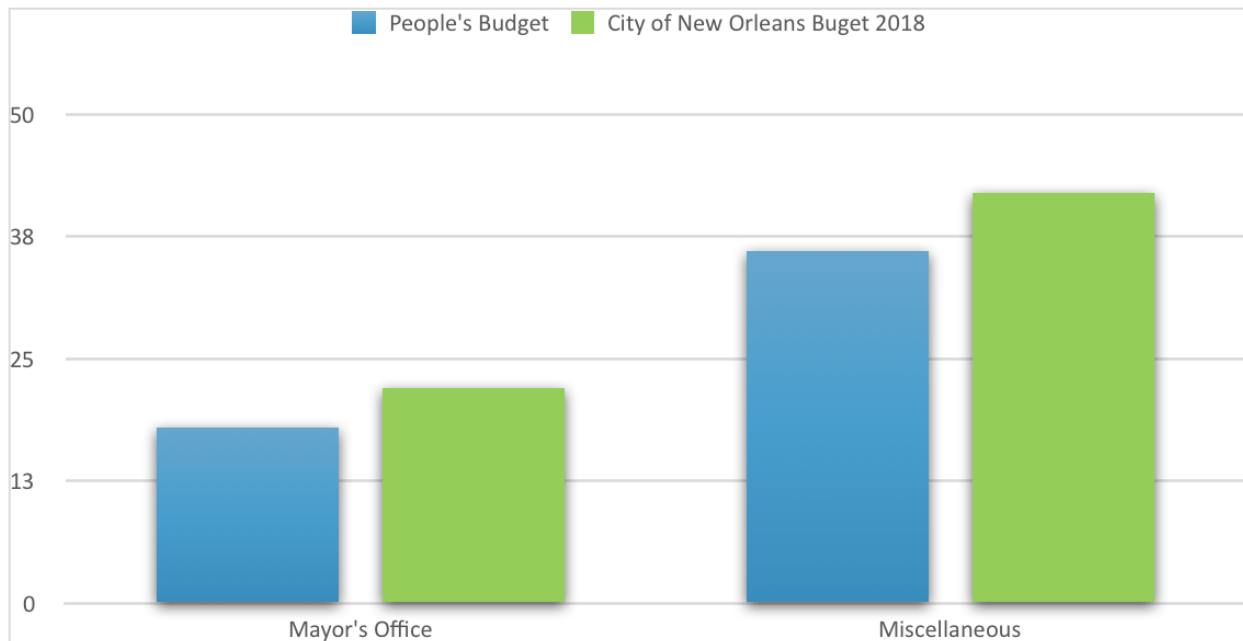
New Orleans Recreation Development Commission

On average, users allocated \$18 million to the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission. The adopted 2019 budget allocated \$13 million to NORDC, showing users allocated a 38% increase to this department.

Users were also asked if they support a master planning process for all public parks in New Orleans. 93% of respondents to the quick poll said that they would support such a process.

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 allocated \$54 million to fund this results area. The 2019 adopted budget allocated \$64 million. This is an **overall 16% decrease** in funding based on users.



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. The newly created offices of Transportation, Youth and Families, and Utilities were highlighted in the "About" section of this year's game to help users learn about changes in this office.

On average, the Mayor's Office received \$18 million from users. This funding is slightly under the \$22 million the Mayor's Office received from the general fund last year, not including the Office of Community Development which is separately evaluated in this year's game. This represents a difference of an **18% decrease**.

Users were asked if they would support hiring additional workers to staff the newly created Mayor's Office of Transportation. 97% of respondents supported hiring new staff.

This slight decrease could be due to other areas being more important in citizens' communities or a general unfamiliarity with the programming within the Mayor's Office.

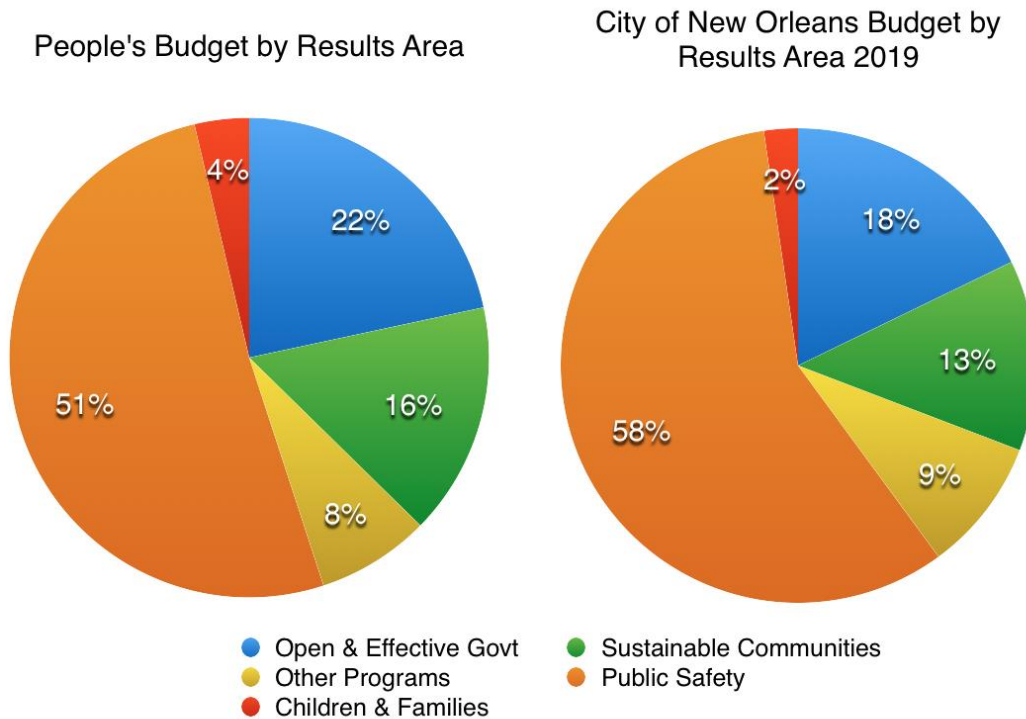
Miscellaneous Programs

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 Public Defender's Office, LASPCA, Council on Aging, and the Arts Council. In the department profile, divisions of the department were shown and explained.

On average, residents dedicated \$36 million to Miscellaneous Programs. This is slightly less than the department's \$42 million allocation in 2019, and it represents a **14% 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



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 2019 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.

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. We hope to see the Cantrell administration continue and improve upon the official city budget input process.

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.