



**Seattle**  
Office for Civil Rights

## Press Release

### For Immediate Release

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## Seattle Announces \$27M in Winning Participatory Budgeting Projects

*Six proposals selected through the community voting process*

**Seattle, WA** – Following a month-long voting period, Seattle's \$27 million participatory budgeting (PB) process resulted in six winning proposals to improve community safety through investments in education, housing, mental health, and economic development.

Over 4,000 people voted on PB proposals between October 10 and November 12. Voting was open to anyone over the age of 15 who lives, works, or plays in Seattle, and people were able to select their top four proposals through ranked choice voting. City Council will vote on legislation to implement these projects in early 2024.

#### AWARDED PROJECTS

- **Native Youth: Past, Present, and Future (\$7.2M):** Funds the construction of a community center to fostering cultural education, community building, and recreation
- **People Not Police Crisis Response Team (\$2M):** Invests in mental health professionals trained to serve as first responders to mental health crises
- **Housing Support (\$2M):** Provides housing navigation and assistance services for people experiencing homelessness or housing instability
- **Public Restrooms (\$7.2M):** Funds staffing and maintenance of public restrooms and hygiene facilities
- **Urban Farming and Food Equity (\$7M):** Leases green spaces to increase access to fresh food, local businesses ownership, and training for small-scale farmers



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- **Housing Support for Youth (\$1.85M):** Connect youth and young adults with supportive housing or rental assistance, while also convening and compensating a youth committee to oversee outreach efforts and resource connections

“Seattle’s investment in PB is the largest in the nation and originated as part of a \$100 million package to equitably invest in community-driven solutions addressing police violence and deep disparities caused by systemic racism. This package—which included this PB process, Equitable Communities Initiative investments, and Strategic Investment Funds—represented the City’s commitment to respond to community calls to action for justice and healing,” said Seattle Office for Civil Rights Director Derrick Wheeler-Smith. “Participatory Budgeting moves us closer to organizing systems and structures that increase agency for the underrepresented groups in Seattle. It’s been said that the people closest to the problem are closest to the solution but the furthest away from resources and power. PB gets more people into decision making spaces increasing co-creation, lifting perspectives we aren’t proximate to, and challenging us to expand our collective win story.” **Derrick Wheeler-Smith, Director, Seattle Office for Civil Rights**

Seattle first launched its PB process in 2015 with a focus on youth, then grew to include all residents in 2017. In 2020, the City Council voted to expand PB with a focus on engaging Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and a third-party administrator. Seattle’s 2023 investment in PB is the largest in the nation at \$27 million and the projects selected will expand access to mental health professionals as first responders, housing assistance, physical spaces promoting health and cultural education, and pathways to small business ownership.

Investment proposals were guided by research led by the Black Brilliance Research Project, who were awarded the contract by City Council, and centered the voices of those most impacted by barriers to critical decision-making processes, systemic racism, and violence. The ballot and voting process was supported and administered by a third-party administrator, the Participatory Budgeting Project. The Seattle Office for Civil Rights oversaw the third-party administrator contract and will help coordinate project implementation for the City.

### WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

"It was an honor to work with the budget delegates in proposal development for the participatory budgeting process. We used thorough vetting and ranking systems, spoke from our truth, and practiced deep listening in order to move through hundreds of ideas and craft project proposals for the ballot that brought in all of the intersections of our lived experiences. We researched and connected with entities within and outside of the state of Washington to review possibilities for how to realistically move forward the proposed work. Out of that process, we were able to create strong, viable proposals, and now the community engaged in participatory budgeting must continue to be engaged in a meaningful way in bringing these projects into fruition." - **Elaine Simons, Budget Delegate**



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“Through this PB process, I’ve learned that when people feel seen, heard, and empowered they are so eager to participate. Seeing the generational excitement to share ideas has been so beautiful to me. You have grandmothers speaking into existence ideas they’ve had for decades, then finding out their grandkids can participate, as well, and encouraging them to share. There’s never a shortage of brilliance when that brilliance is uplifted.” - **Aleyanna, People's Fellow**

“Every proposal on the People's Budget ballot included tangible impacts for communities which are too often ignored. The people of Seattle have made their voices heard, coming together to create a vision of the future for our city where everyone can thrive. The power of the community is undeniable and participatory budgeting is a testament to the commitment, innovation, and brilliance of the people of Seattle. We know that in order to address and begin to repair deep historical inequities, those closest to the pain must be closest to the power—this process and the winning project speak to what is possible if we not only listen, but act.” - **Telitha Floyd, Director of Community Engagement, PBP**

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*The [Seattle Office for Civil Rights](#) (SOCR) works to advance civil rights and end barriers to equity. We enforce laws against illegal discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and contracting within Seattle city limits. We also lead the Race and Social Justice Initiative, a citywide effort to end institutional racism in City government and to achieve racial equity across our community.*