

Budget Advocate Report to Neighborhood Councils #2

On July 18th, the Budget Advocates had their annual retreat to get to know each other better and develop plans for the coming year.

After introducing ourselves, including the skills we bring and what passions brought us to run for election as a Budget Advocate, everyone took a survey with the following results:

Topics and Cross-cutting Themes (top 3)

55%	Equity in the distribution of resources and City services
48%	Homelessness /Affordable Housing
32%	Impact of Covid-19 (cost savings and expenditures)
29%	Balancing the budget (cuts, savings, furloughs, layoffs)
23%	Efficiency in operations
19%	Radical transparency
19%	Ethics

Priorities (top 3)

45%	LAPD budget
45%	Infrastructure investment (street & sidewalk maintenance, trees, public facilities, bridges)
42%	City Services (e.g. sanitation, street services, lighting)
42%	Economic Development
32%	Public Safety
23%	Discretionary funds and their sources
19%	Emergency preparedness/management
19%	Finances (pension, deferred maintenance budget, MICLA)

A version of this survey will be expanded upon for use by the Budget Representatives and Neighborhood Councils.

This was followed by a discussion on planning for this coming year which generated different views on some of our ongoing issues:

- the pandemic and how it affects not only the City budget but also the lives of every Angeleno, especially those who have limited resources and /or are considered essential workers
- the City's budget that, even before the pandemic and projected revenue losses, had been compromised by having not included the substantial increases negotiated by its own unions
- the increasingly urgent issues of homelessness, affordable housing and public safety

With the advent of new Budget Advocates have come some inspiring ideas and suggestions we look at old problems from new angles including:

- replacing an annual White Paper with a series of papers on specific subjects to be more responsive to the changing needs of the City
- drawing on Neighborhood Councils' concerns, put more focus on regional disparities including a focus on Councilmembers' use of discretionary funds, and moving towards including local decision-making on priorities for each community
- becoming a Citywide source of information on what Council Files affect the budget and the services that are most important to stakeholders, and providing Neighborhood Councils with the information to write CIS so the City has to acknowledge and act on local input

The Budget Advocates focus in the next weeks will be to:

- improve two-way contact between the Budget Advocates and the Neighborhood Councils so every NC knows their Budget Advocate and those Budget Advocates know that NC's concerns
- provide expanded information on what the Budget Advocates do and solicit input through surveys and presentations
- explore how we can use the advent of virtual meetings to enhance our outreach to the NCs and stakeholders of Los Angeles through town halls and NC presentations

Our role is to magnify your voices to ensure the Mayor and City Council, in making necessary budget cuts, put the needs of the people above those of special interest groups.

Neighborhood Council Budget Executive Committee

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Vice-Chairs, Outreach: John DiGregorio and Julia Moser

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July 22, 2020