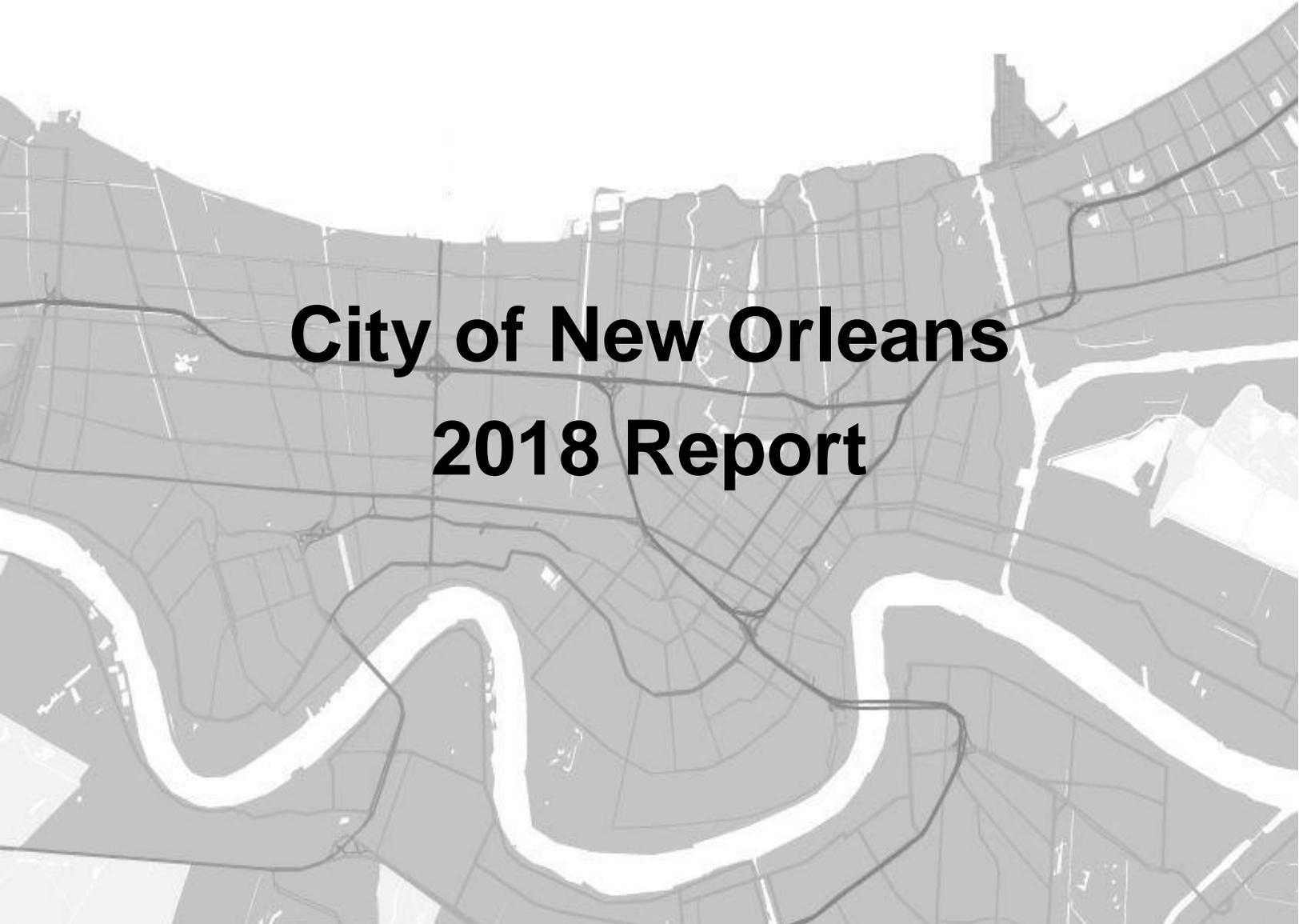


peoplesbudget™

CROWD-SOURCED BUDGET PLANNING



# City of New Orleans 2018 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](http://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.

### 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.

### 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.

## 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 52-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.

The Committee for a Better New Orleans was founded in 2000 with a similar commitment to comprehensive diversity, and with Task Forces in the areas of City Management, Economic Development, Education, Housing, Public Safety, and Transportation. Its initial objective was to create a citizen platform for the 2002 mayoral and city council elections, producing the highly regarded *Blueprint for a Better New Orleans*.

In 2001 the two organizations, sharing similar philosophies and a number of board members, decided to merge. Today, the resulting Committee for a Better New Orleans fills a unique role in our city. No other organization works so diligently to inform, engage and empower the community, and to connect neighborhoods, businesses and government so that all can come together to build trust, solve problems, and enable New Orleans to claim its rightful place among the great cities of the world.

In 2016, CBNO celebrated its 50th Anniversary of creating opportunities for community voices and advocating for civic engagement in New Orleans.

The current 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 community 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).

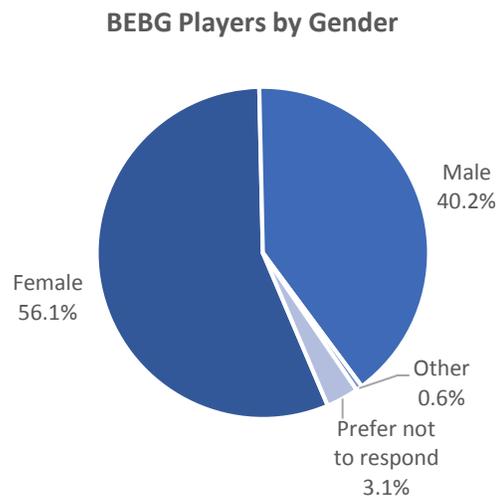
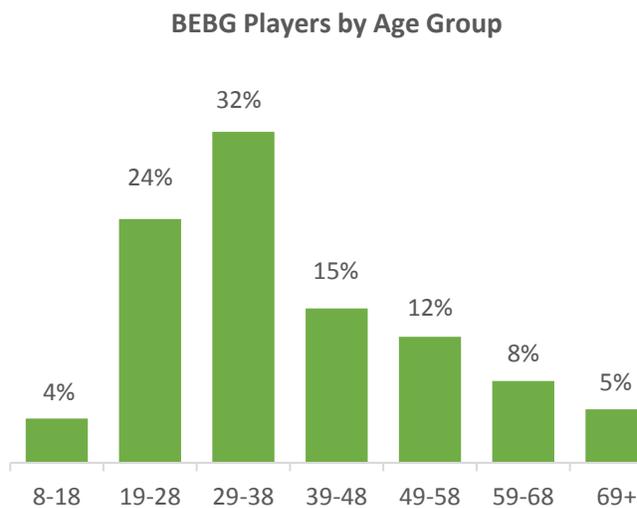
## WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET?

This year, some 600 New Orleanians participated in the Big Easy Budget Game. The data included in this report comes from their responses. In addition to balancing the city budget, users were prompted to answer some demographic questions in a third-party survey. This survey also included some question about users' current understanding and engagement in the budget process, as well as their general spending preferences. 62% of Big Easy Budget Game players completed the survey and their responses indicated participation by residents from a variety of demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

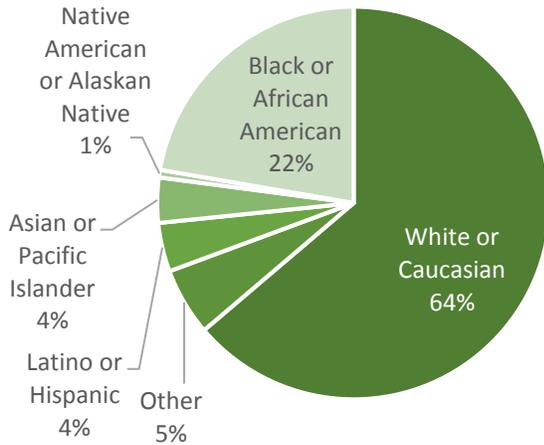
### DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The majority of Big Easy Budget Game players were young adults, with 56% being between the ages of 19 and 38. Our middle-aged players also represent an important group, as 27% of players were 39-58 years old. The Committee for a Better New Orleans works diligently to encourage participation of all segments of the population, and this year we had 4% of players younger than 18 and 13% 59 or older. The age distribution of our players is somewhat in accordance with the city demographics. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2017 estimates, the percentage of persons 65 years and over in New Orleans is 12%, and the median age is 34.6.

The Big Easy Budget Game had moderately more players that identified as female (56.1%) than male (40.2%), while some identified as other (0.6%) or preferred not to respond (3.1%). Although the gender identity was fairly evenly distributed among young and middle-aged players, a higher proportion of the players 49 years or older identified as female (60%-80%).



**BEBG Players by Race**



In relation to their primary race identity, the biggest groups of Big Easy Budget Game Players were White or Caucasian (64%) and Black or African American (22%), while the remaining 14% of players were distributed between other race groups such as Latino or Hispanic (4%), Asian or Pacific Islander (4%) and Native American or Alaskan Native (1%).

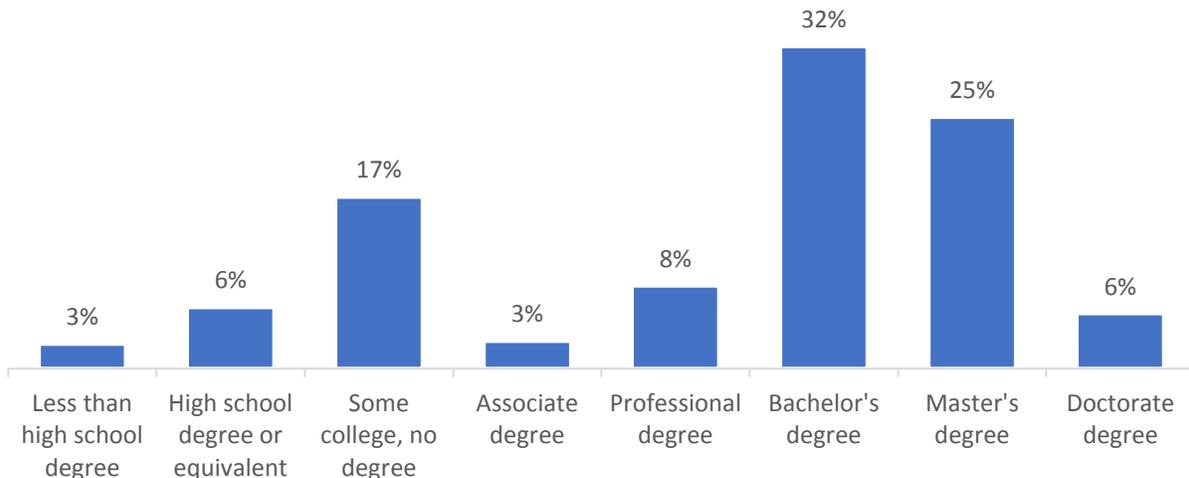
Despite substantial outreach by the Committee for a Better New Orleans and its partners, the racial data collected from users does not align with the overall racial breakdown of New Orleans as a city. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2017 estimates, 60% of New Orleanians are black, 30% are white, 5% Hispanic, 3% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 2%

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.

**SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

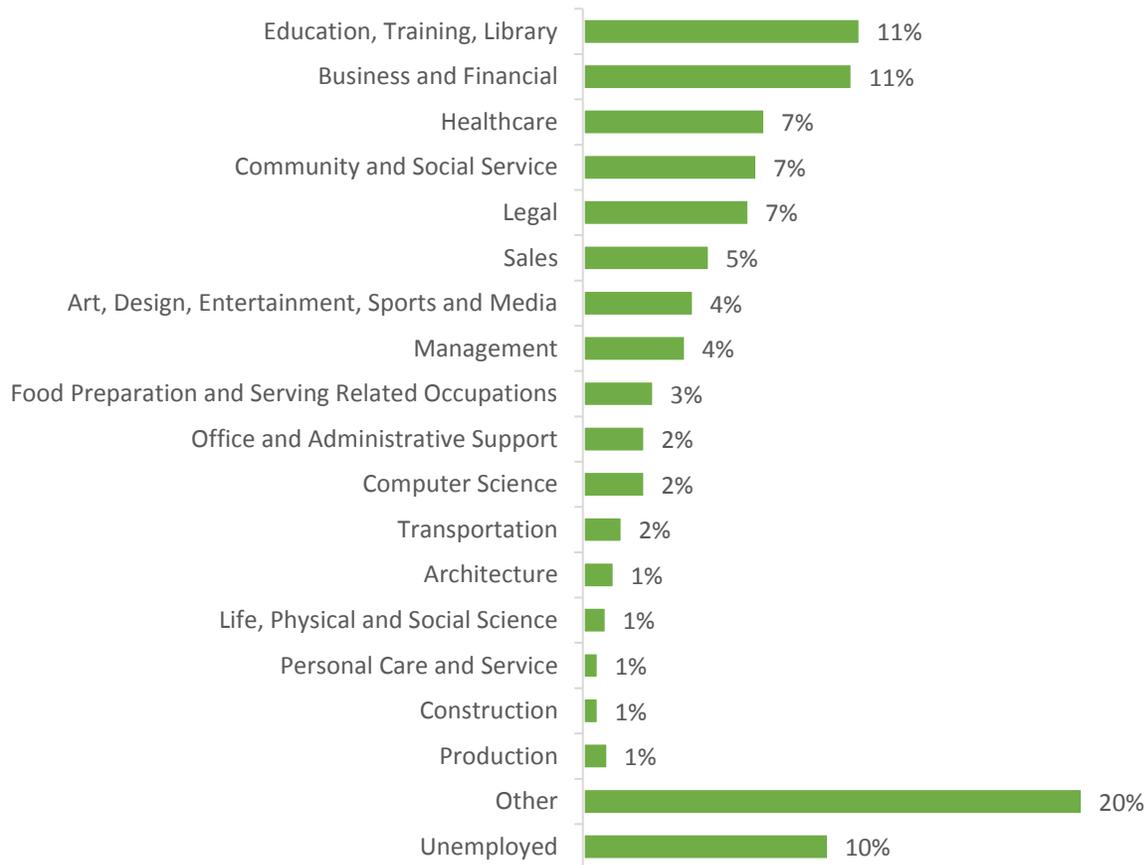
Users of the game tended to be more educated than the New Orleans population, with 63% of respondents claiming a bachelor’s degree or higher. This compares to 36% of New Orleanians 25 years or older having attained this level of education, as reported in the U.S. Census Bureau 2012-2016 indicators. It is important to note that only 3% of players have not completed a high school degree.

**BEBG Players by Highest Level of Education Achieved**



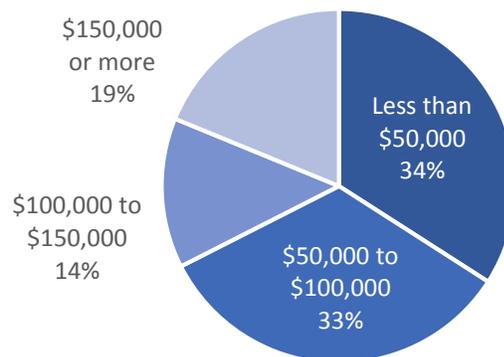
Only 10% of Big Easy Budget Game Players are unemployed. Among employed users, the most common working sectors are education and business, followed by healthcare, community and social services, and the legal sector. 20% of respondent reported a different area of occupation from the options given in the survey, and it is likely that most of them are seniors who are retired.

**BEBG Players by Area of Occupation**



Household income of respondents also fell across a large span of socioeconomic statuses. While the majority of users claimed a moderate household income of less than \$50,000 (34%) or between \$50,000 and \$100,000 (33%), a significant portion claimed to earn between \$100,000 and \$150,000 (14%) and even more than \$150,000 (19%). The U.S. Census Bureau 2012-2016 identifies the median income of a household in New Orleans at \$37,488.

**BEBG Players by Household Income**



44% of respondents reported renting a home while 56% reported owning a house (including those under mortgage), which is higher than the New Orleans Data Center's 2011 report of 48% homeownership in Orleans Parish. 76% of users surveyed reported no children in their household, while 24% 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.

Big Easy Budget Game players represent a large variety of areas in the city, with more than 80 neighborhoods listed by participants. Out of the 62% that completed the survey at the end of the game, 64% of users completed the Big Easy Budget Game on a laptop, compared to 30% who played on a smartphone and 6% on a tablet. The average length of play was 13 minutes and 47 seconds. Raw data collected in the Big Easy Budget Game is available upon request.

## ENGAGEMENT IN OUR CURRENT BUDGET SYSTEM

As a part of the 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.

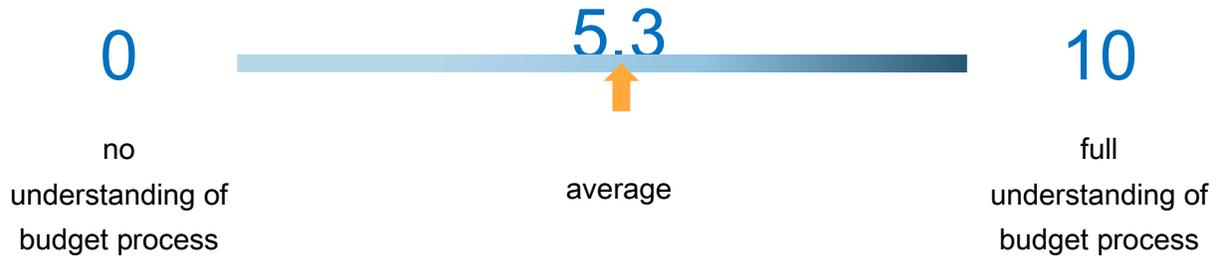
76% of survey respondents reported that they were not happy with the current budget system. The level of dissatisfaction was even higher for female (79%) and African-American respondents (80%). Additionally, 87% of users do not feel that they are part of the decision-making process that goes into creating the city budget each year.

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. 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 conducted a series of budget town hall meetings, held each year in each council district. However, only 22% of users have ever attended one of these meetings, with the attendance rate being lower among adults younger than 40 years (15%), users with a reported household income below \$30,000 (11%) and with the highest level of education being a high school degree (7%). Moreover, 80% of Big Easy Budget Game respondents reported that they do not feel that their input at these meetings is valued. This means the feedback provided in the People's Budget is representative of a group of New Orleanians not traditionally heard from during budget conversations.

## UPDATES FOR THE BUDGET PROCESS IN 2019

Certainly, attendance at the town halls, though standing room only in their first years, diminished significantly in the later years of the Landrieu administration. Often, the city employees, department heads, and elected officials in the room outnumbered 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 5.3 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.



However, the level of disenfranchisement in the budget process that Big Easy Budget Game users reported does not mean that they are not civically engaged in other ways. 79% of survey respondents reported voting in the last election, although this level of participation is not consistent throughout all demographic and socioeconomic groups. Voting rates were especially lower than the average among young adults 19-28 years (69%); Asian, Latino and Native Americans (67%), users with a reported household income lower than \$30,000 (48%); and with an education level below a Bachelor's Degree (55%).

### TRUST IN GOVERNMENT AND TRANSPARENCY

Respondents of the survey rated their trust in local government at 4.4 on a scale of 1-10, with 0 being not at all and 10 complete trust. Although worrisome, this is not surprising, as New Orleanians have a historically perceived the government as corrupt and mistrusted local officials. Big Easy Budget Game users also expressed support for more robust processes that foster government transparency along with civic engagement. 97% of respondents said they would support the regular tracking and public reporting of all new or renewed property taxes, alluding to a need for more transparency in government which in turn can lead to government accountability. Additionally, 94% of users would support a public process to determine the use of unspent local disaster dollars.

## OVERVIEW OF BUDGET RESULTS

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### A FOCUS ON INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING



Overall, users dedicated 25.6% more funding to the Sustainable Communities results area when compared to the 2018 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 sustained an 6.0% decrease.

The Mayor's Office of Community Development represents the largest percent increase under this results area, due to the low amount of general fund resources that this department receives. Compared to the 2018 adopted budget, users of the Big Easy Budget Game created an average increase of \$9.5 million. This particular section of the Mayor's Office addresses blight, and this increase indicates the importance of this 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 in, and maintenance of, 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 128.5% 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 383.9% 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 received an increase of 69.3%.

This indicates the need for 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 indicating 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 104.0% when compared to the 2018 adopted general fund allocation. The Health Department received a 35.3% increase over its 2018 budget.

## REDUCED FUNDING FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS



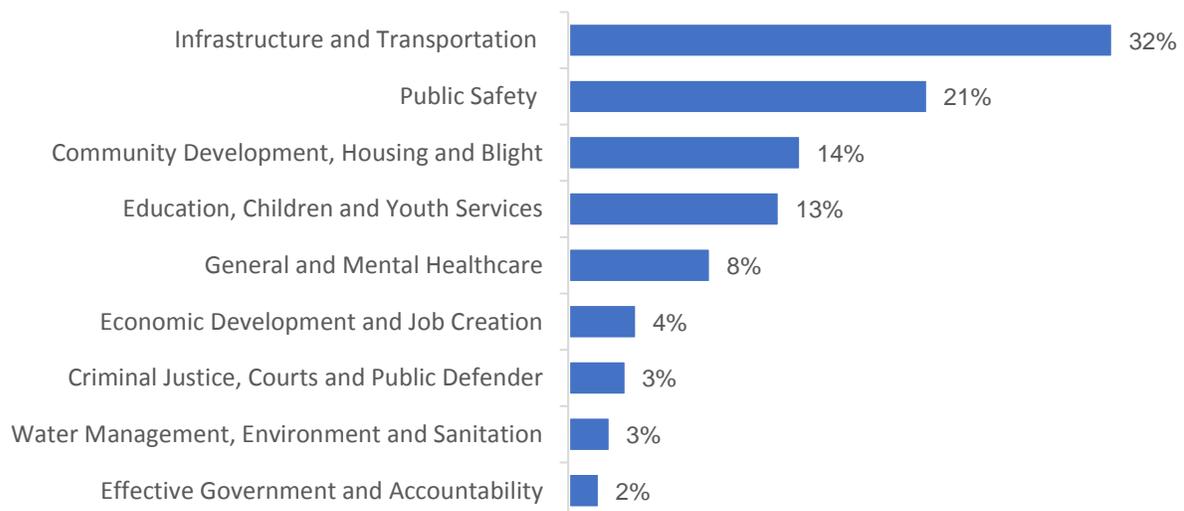
In almost every instance, users chose to reduce funding for administrative departments such as the Chief Administrative Office, which sustained a 14.1% decrease, and the Finance Department which received a 22.5% decrease. It is possible that because these departments are less visible in residents' day 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 69.3% increase and Civil Service which showed a 128.5% 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 affecting New Orleanians across the city.

## FUNDING PREFERENCES

When asked about their priorities for funding in the city, 32% of Big Easy Budget Game Players positioned infrastructure and transportation at the top, mentioning specifically the repair and maintenance of streets, parks and public spaces. Other areas mentioned in significant proportions were community development, housing and blight (21%); children and youth services, including education but also recreation (13%); and access to general and mental healthcare (8%).

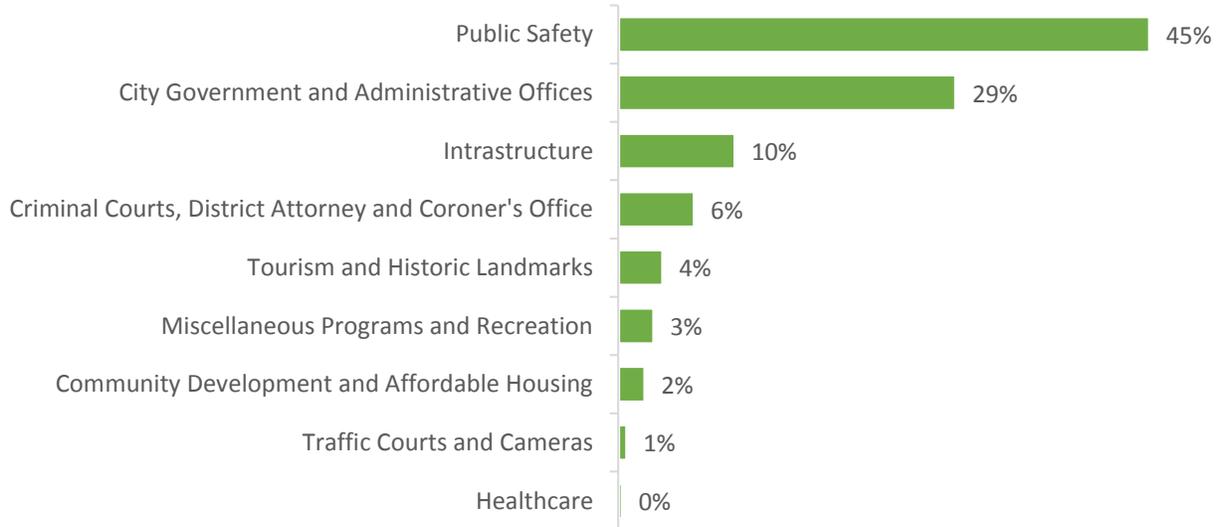
What area do BEBG players most want to see the city fund?



Interestingly, although Public Safety was the second most mentioned area for priority in funding with 21% of respondents, it was also the top area mentioned by users as receiving too much funding, with 45% of answers. This area includes answers related to the Police and Fire Departments, crime cameras and the Sheriff. This duality in answers might reflect a sense among New Orleanians that addressing the city's safety should be a top priority, but that the amount of funding received by some of these departments is not justified by the outcomes obtained. Other

areas that users identified as receiving too much funding were city government offices and employees (29%) and infrastructure (10%).

**What areas do BEBG players feel receive too much funding?**



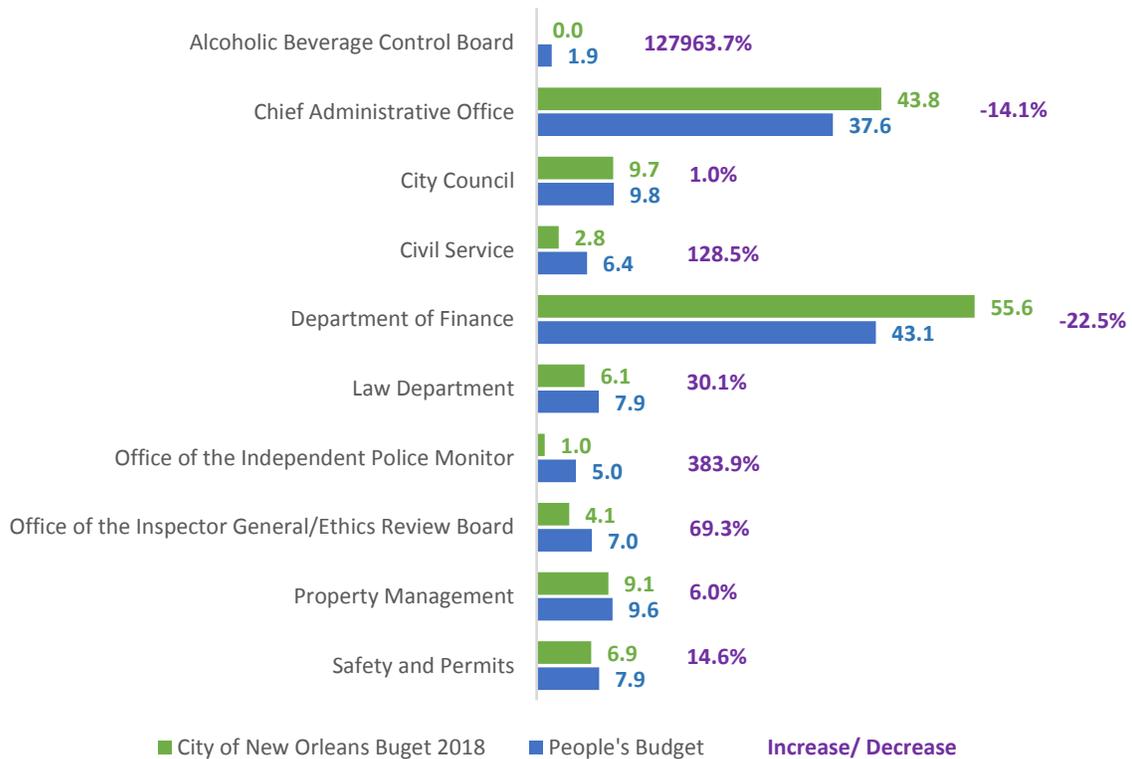
## SPENDING PRIORITIES BY RESULTS AREA

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. Mayor Cantrell’s administration has announced a “zero-based” budget system to replace the Budgeting for Outcomes system. The 2019 Big Easy Budget Game and report will reflect that new structure. A few departments have been combined due to their similar functions or small budget allocations and these are noted in the report.

### 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 \$136.4 million to the results area compared to \$139,219,151 in the 2018 adopted budget. This represents an **overall 2.1% decrease** in funding by users. In the 2019 proposed budget, this results area was assigned relatively the same funding, with an allocation of \$139,469,364.

**Budget Allocation for Open and Effective Government**  
(Millions of US\$)



### **Alcoholic Beverage Control Board**

The Alcoholic Beverage Control Board received the smallest average funding amount from users at \$1.9 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 **127,963.7% 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, as well as for the 2019 proposed budget. 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 \$37.6 million from users, a **14.1% decrease** compared to the \$43,799,561 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. In the 2019 proposed budget, this department was allocated even more funds: \$46,823,971.

### **City Council**

On average, users allocated an average of \$9.8 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 **1.0% increase**. The budget game users on average allocated relatively the same amount that was given to the department in last year's city budget. The City Council was assigned \$10,598,800 in the 2019 proposed budget.

### **Civil Service**

The civil service department received an average of \$6.4 million from Big Easy Budget Game users, over twice what the department was allocated in the adopted 2018 budget, \$2,800,500. This translates into a **128.5% increase**. 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.

In the 2017 adopted budget the department received \$2,415,000 and for 2019 the proposed allocation is \$3,118,773. The funding increase between these years is explained as specified for "additional tests, staff, and training" in the 2018 Adopted Budget Book.

**QUICK POLL – Users were asked if they would support a living wage of \$15 an hour to all city employees and contractors. 87% of respondents communicated that they would**

**support this whereas 11% said they would not. 2% responded that they would support it if city employees were qualified, but they have no faith in their qualification.**

### **Department of Finance**

The Department of Finance received an average of \$43.1 million from users, making it the most funded administrative department in city government and the third most funded department overall. It is important to note that users were required to allocate at least \$28 million to the department.

Despite this relatively high level of funding by users, this is a **22.5% decrease** from the 2018 adopted budget which allocated \$55,629,245. 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.

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. However, in the 2019 proposed budget the funding for this department decreased to \$49,940,375, closer to Big Easy Budget Game users' spending choice.

**QUICK POLL – Users were asked if they would support taxing the guests of short-term rentals like Airbnb and VRBO equally to hotels and motels. 79% of users responded affirmatively whereas 17% 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.**

### **Law Department**

On average, the Law Department received \$7.9 million from users. This is a **30.1% increase** when compared to the 2018 adopted budget, which allocated \$6,075,275 to the department. This increase in the allocation by users could be due to a desire to have more fairness and representation that is associated with law in general. For 2019, this department has a proposed allocation of \$6,091,965. Users may be indicating support for more cases to be adjudicated by the Law Department, such as trying issues of blight or illegal short-term rentals.

### **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, even though they were not required to fund this department at all. This represents a **383.9% increase or almost five times more funding** than the 2018 adopted budget allocation of \$1,034,083 million. 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. In the 2019 proposed budget, this office received \$1,117,085 in funding.

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

The Office of the Inspector General received an average of \$7 million from users, a **69.3% 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. However, the 2019 proposed budget allocation for this office is slightly smaller than before, at \$4,119,250.

### **Property Management**

Property management received an average of \$9.6 million from users, a **6.0% 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. For 2019, this department has been proposed to receive \$9,923,857, which is in line with the preferences of the players.

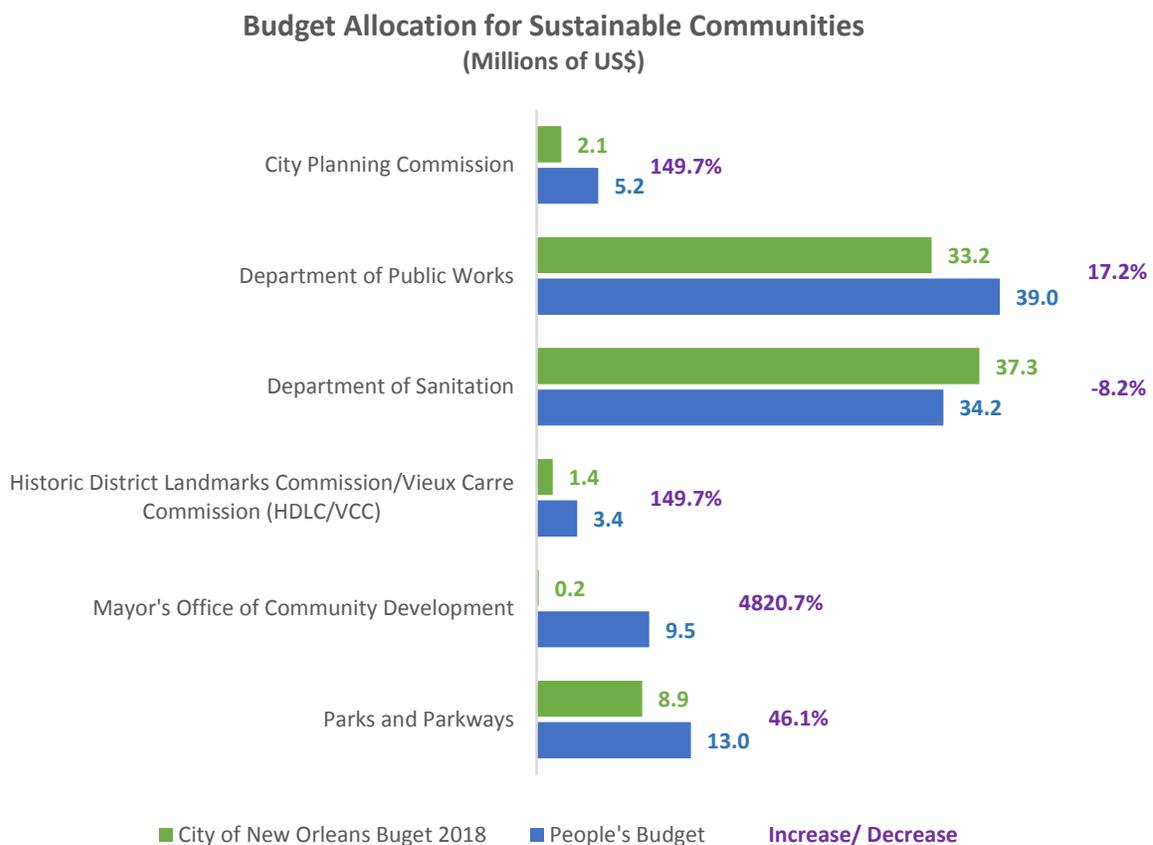
### **Safety and Permits**

On average, safety and permits received \$7.9 million from users, a **14.6% increase** over the \$6,921,553 funded in the 2018 adopted budget. Users were only required to allocate \$3 million to Safety and Permits. 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. Safety and Permits is also involved with flood plain regulations, which is a big issue for New Orleanians. The proposed budget for 2019 has increased the funding for this department to \$7,733,788.

**QUICK POLL – 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. 61% of respondents answered yes whereas 30% of respondents answered no. The remaining 9% of respondent provided custom answers, alluding to a possible conflict of interest for the department. They concluded that this type of funding could cause the department to collect more fines and operate more harshly so they could bring in more money.**

## 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. On average, users of the Big Easy Budget Game allocated \$104.2 million to this results area whereas the 2018 adopted budget funded this area with \$83,024,599. This represents an **overall 27.7% increase** in funding when comparing Big Easy Budget Game users and the 2018 adopted city budget. In the proposed budget for 2019, this area is set to receive \$90,141,649, representing a funding increase from the previous year but not in the magnitude that reflects the users' preferences.



### City Planning Commission

The City Planning Commission received an average of \$5.2 million from users, a **149.7% increase** over the allocated funding for the department in the adopted 2018 budget which was \$2,081,348. Users were required to allocate only \$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 housing and short-term rental crisis. In the 2019 proposed budget, the Planning Commission is set to receive \$2,307,585, relatively similar funding as last year.

**QUICK POLL** – 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 90% of game users responding yes and 8% of users responding no. 2% of users had reservations around this issue, stating that they would be in favor of water management benefits but were unsure about the housing benefits, and that the level of benefits should depend on the type and amount of public funds received.

### **Department of Public Works**

The Department of Public Works received an average of \$39 million from users, almost twice the required minimum funding level of \$20 million and an **increase of 17.2%** from the 2018 adopted budget, which allocated \$33,243,485. 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 the city's streets. This increase in funding is likely due to the widespread agreement that streets need to be repaired. For 2019, this department was allocated \$34,913,066 in the proposed budget.

**QUICK POLL** – 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. 83% of respondents supported incentives to property owners whereas 14% did not, and the remaining 3% didn't support the incentives because they think drainage is the city's responsibility.

### **Department of Sanitation**

On average, residents allocated \$34.1 million to the Department of Sanitation. This is an **8.2% decrease** from the \$37,250,000 allocated in the adopted 2018 budget. A possible explanation for the user decrease in funding is a collective feeling of using their allotted city dollars for other areas that affect residents in a larger way. This could also allude to residents not facing any pressing issues from this department, opening up options for other choices of allocation. In the 2019 proposed budget, this department was assigned \$39,678,984.

**QUICK POLL** – A quick poll under this department asked 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 62% responding yes and 35% responding no, with some users signaling that tourists should pay for the cleanup through hotel taxes and that Mardi Gras is cultural heritage, not a means of making money. 3% of users provided interesting perspectives in their custom answers, such as a suggestion to audit the costs of cleanup to make sure that they are not inflated and krewes are not charged unfairly, as well as the possibility that many krewes would not be able to afford riding in the parades if the fees are too high.

### **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 \$3.4 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.

Users' allocation translates to a significant **increase of 149.7%** in funding for these departments, although they were not required to allocate any funds to these departments. This 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; or 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. Both of these departments together received \$1,507,940 in funding in the 2019 proposed budget.

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

Users allocated an average of \$9.5 million to the Mayor's Office of Community Development, a division of the Mayor's Office that is responsible for fighting blight and the creation and upkeep of affordable housing in New Orleans. Users were not required to allocate any funds to this department, as this division received only \$192,766 from the general fund in the 2018 adopted budget. The vast majority of funding for this department comes from the federal government, specifically the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In the 2019 proposed budget, the only allocation of local money for this department coming from the general fund is \$1,500,000 that will be used for the Low Barrier Shelter program.

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 by separating this division from the rest of the Mayor's Office. The very substantial increase allocated by users is in line with affordable housing being a top priority for likely voters in New Orleans, as reported in a 2017 survey by Enterprise Community Partners Inc. Survey participants ranked affordable housing as the second most important issue for the City to focus on, behind Public Safety/Crime and ahead of other issues such as Flood Control, Jobs and Economy and Infrastructure.

Another 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.

**QUICK POLL – Users were asked 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 16% answered against. 3% 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.**

### **Parks and Parkways**

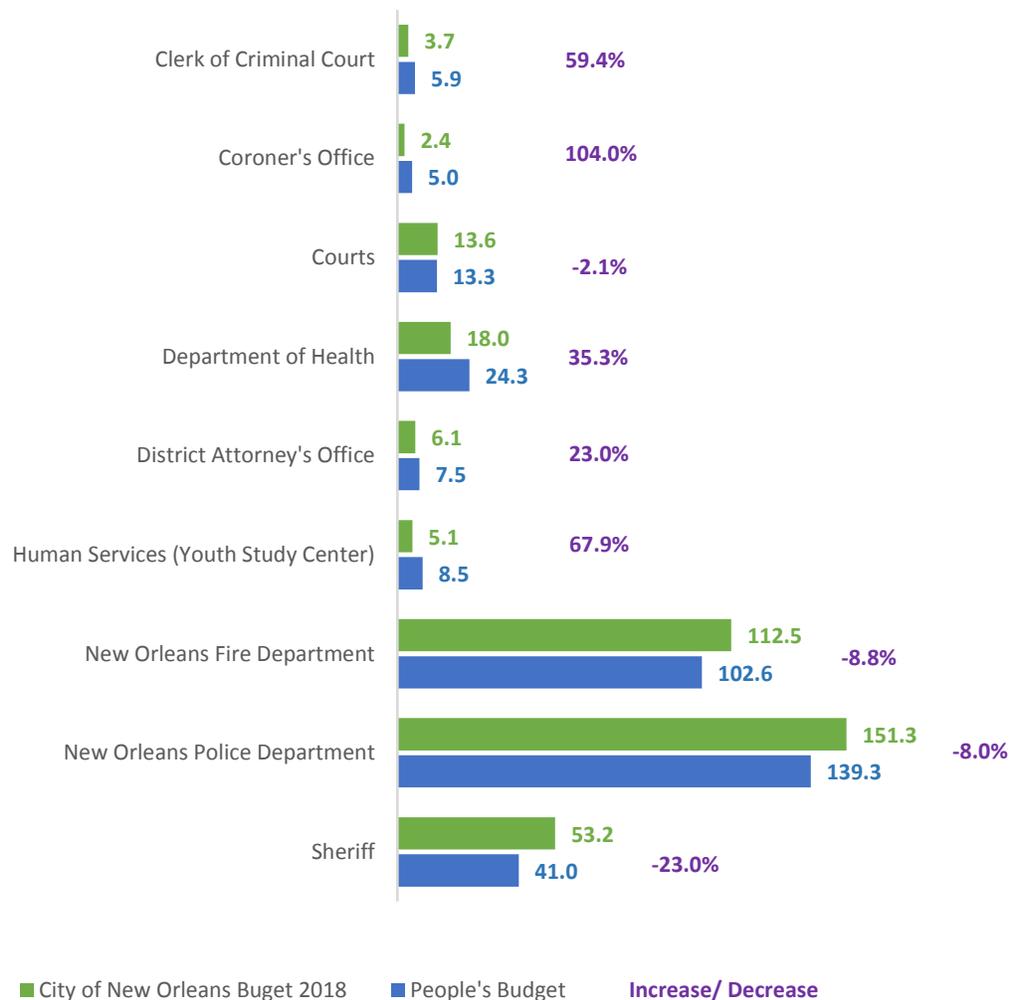
Users allocated an average of \$13 million to the Department of Parks and Parkways, the department responsible for maintaining green space such as neutral grounds and public right of ways in New Orleans. Users were only required to allocate \$4 million to this department, showing an average three-fold investment in public green space over the lowest funding option.

This **46.1% increase** in funding over the \$8,892,114 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. The funding for this department in the 2019 proposed budget is closer to users' preferences, at \$10,234,074.

## 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 \$347.3 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. However, this does not mean that New Orleanians want to spend less on keeping the city safe. As will be noted in each department's section, users allocated less funding on traditional means of safety, while focusing on alternative approaches, such as mental health and support. In the 2019 proposed city budget, this results area received additional funding compared to the previous year, with an allocation of \$397,963,125.

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



### **Clerk of Criminal Court**

The Clerk of Criminal Court received an average of \$5.9 million from users, a **59.4% increase** over the \$3,726,330 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. However, the funding for this department stayed the same in the 2019 proposed budget.

### **Coroner's Office**

On average, the Coroner's Office received \$5 million from users, even though they were only required to allocate \$1 million to this department. The **104% 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. It is a good signal that the proposed budget for 2019 has assigned \$3,244,516, more funding that this office received the previous year.

One of the more common questions asked by users while playing the game was where they could find mental health care in the budget. In addition, many were surprised to find forensic testing such as the handling of rape kits under the Coroner. Because one of the key goals of the Big Easy Budget Game is 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 been aware of.

### **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 \$13.3 million to the court system. This is a small **decrease of 2.1%** from the 2018 budget which allotted \$13,571,211 million. This indicates that, on average, users gave the department roughly the same of what was shown as being received the previous year. In 2019 it is proposed that the court system receives \$17,456,488, a significant increase due mainly to Criminal District Court's funding being doubled.

### **Department of Health**

On average, users allocated \$24.3 million to the Department of Health, a **35.3% increase** from the 2018 general fund allocation of \$17,960,839. In the 2019 proposed budget, the funding for this department is closer to the preferences of New Orleanians, at \$20,745,299.

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 increased 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 \$7.5 million to the District Attorney's Office. This represents a **23% 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. It may also reflect residents' response to repeated requests by the DA for more funding. This office was assigned \$6,678,029 in the 2019 proposed budget.

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

On average, users allocated \$8.5 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 to \$6,186,866 in the 2019 proposed budget. When comparing the funding from the 2018 adopted budget and user funding, this represents a **67.9% 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 in May and violence among adult inmates is common. This could also offer an inclination 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 \$102.6 million. Users chose to spend under the \$112,537,212 million received in 2018. Specifically, the user allocation showcases an **8.8% decrease** in funding. In the 2019 proposed budget, the Fire Department received \$113,968,981.

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 \$139.3 million. Users chose to spend less than the \$151,319,723 of funding received in 2018. This represents a **8.0% 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. However, the Police Department’s funding is likely to increase considerably, as it was allocated \$172,767,640 in the 2019 proposed budget.

## **Sheriff**

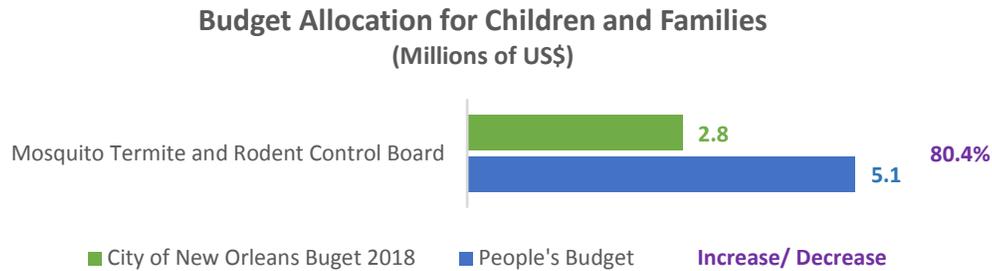
On average, the Sheriff’s Office received \$41 million. This represents a **23% decrease** in spending on this department from the 2018 budget, which allocated \$53,188,976. The 2019 proposed budget allocated the same amount of money to this office.

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.

**QUICK POLL – Users were asked if they support implementing a specific and more robust public process to gain input into the Orleans Parish Prison budget. Only 4% responded no, while 96% of said yes, further representing the strong feelings toward the sheriff and prison.**

## 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 \$5.1 million to this results area, whereas the city budget of 2018 allocated \$2,823,407. This represents an **overall 80.4% increase** in spending.

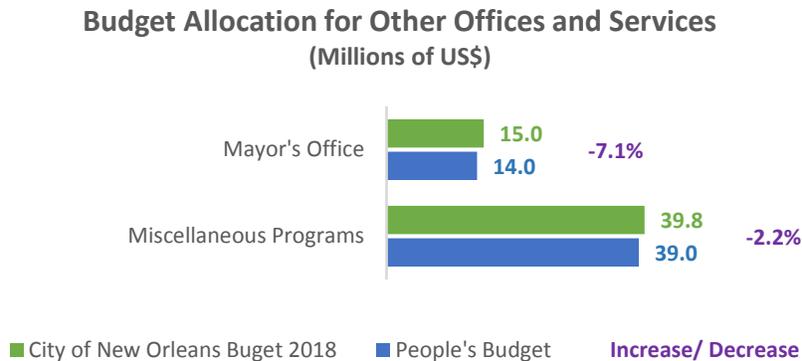


### **Mosquito, Termite and Rodent Control Board**

On average, users allocated \$5.1 million to the Mosquito, Termite and Rodent Control Board. This is a **80.4% increase** over the 2018 spending of \$2,823,407. 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. In the 2019 proposed budget, this Board was assigned \$2,869,907.

## 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 \$52.9 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. However, the 2019 proposed budget increased the combined funding of these two departments to \$67,219,111.



### 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 **7.1% decrease**. This decrease could be due to other areas being more important in citizens' communities. It could also reflect the sentiment that we heard commonly working with people on the budget game that the mayor's office already has enough money and won't use it wisely even if it receives more.

However, the 2019 proposed budget allocated significantly more funds to the Mayor's Office, \$20,131,745. This increase is due mainly to the funding for Public Safety and Homeland Security being almost doubled.

### Miscellaneous Programs

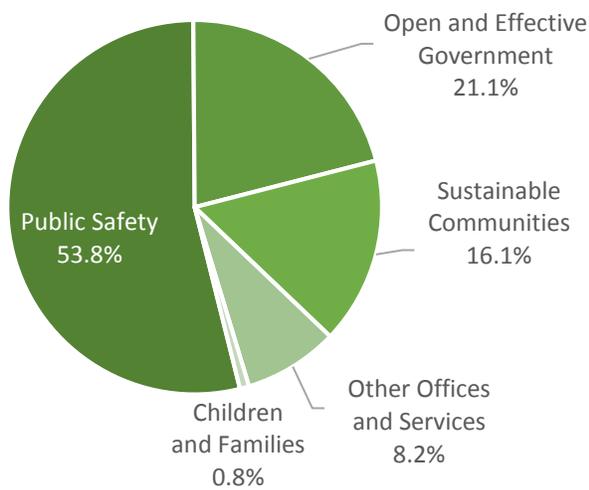
Miscellaneous Programs includes funding for any organization or service not mandated by the city charter. While many residents may feel this could be an easy place to cut money, the Committee for a Better New Orleans worked to directly call attention to the many important quality of life areas of the 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 \$39 million to Miscellaneous Programs. This is slightly less than the department's \$39,830,333 allocation in 2018, and it represents a **2.2% 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. In the 2019 proposed budget this department received \$47,087,366.

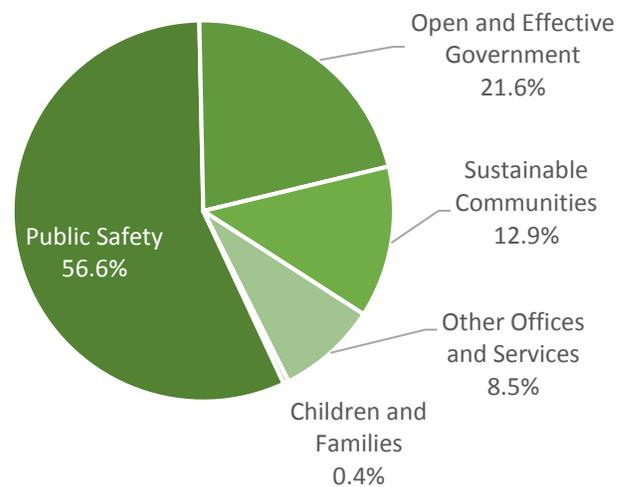
## CONCLUSION

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 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 2018 by Results Area



Adopted 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.