


David Whitaker, Esq.
Director
Irvin Corley, Jr.
Executive Policy Manager
Marcell R. Todd, Jr.
Director, City Planning
Commission
Janese Chapman
Director, Historic Designation
Advisory Board

John Alexander
LaKisha Barclift, Esq.
Paige Blessman
M. Rory Bolger, Ph.D., FAICP
Lisa DiChiera
Eric Fazzini, AICP
Willene Green
Christopher Gulock, AICP
Derrick Headd
Marcel Hurt, Esq.

City of Detroit
CITY COUNCIL
LEGISLATIVE POLICY DIVISION
208 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
Detroit, Michigan 48226
Phone: (313) 224-4946 Fax: (313) 224-4336

Kimani Jeffrey
Anthony W. L. Johnson
Phillip Keller, Esq.
Edward King
Kelsey Maas
Jamie Murphy
Latawn Oden
Dolores Perales
Analine Powers, Ph.D.
W. Akilah Redmond
Rebecca Savage
Sabrina Shockley
Renee Short
Floyd Stanley
Thomas Stephens, Esq.
Timarie Szwed
Theresa Thomas
Ian Tomashik
Ashley A. Wilson

TO: The Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director 
Legislative Policy Division

RE: Youth Budget FY 2025

DATE: April 3, 2024

Council President Mary Sheffield requested the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) provide a report relative to the establishment of a Youth Budget for FY 2025. Please accept the following as our response.

Investment in the youth of our city is necessary to ensure healthy and productive futures. The benefits of empowering our youth flow not only to the young recipients, but to the community. Without question the future lies in the hands of our younger generations, their needs are ever changing depending upon economics, social standing, and simply the day and age in which we live. Healthy and positive outcomes require engagement from a wide range of agencies on various levels, the federal government, state, and local governments, as well as non-profits, educational institutions, and faith-based organizations to name just a few.

Council President Sheffield provided LPD a list of questions for the purpose of gaining insight to better inform on the development and execution of a youth budget and associated programs to build successful outcomes and brighter futures for the youth population of Detroit. Here we have provided responses to the questions that were presented in hopes that this might spur discussions and assist in the development of a framework for a youth budget.

1. What successful models from other cities can be considered as benchmarks for Detroit's youth budget?

There are several successful program models designed to address the needs of youth in this country. The issues facing our youth today are many, they range from homelessness, unemployment, mental health, and access to recreational and training opportunities. Equally as wide ranging are the programs designed to deal with these issues. Through participatory budgeting many school systems and municipalities have been successful in implementing effective programs specifically targeting youth issues. However, there have also been programs developed through public-private partnerships and traditional budgeting methods, that have been just as effective.

Baltimore, Maryland

The city of Baltimore is remarkably similar in size and demographic composition to Detroit. Although Detroit has a higher African American demographic, Baltimore has a population of approximately 569,931¹ residents (2022 Population), with over 60% African American representation to Detroit's estimated 603,000 residents.

Baltimore has successfully instituted two specific youth related initiatives that deserve mention and have the potential to be duplicated in Detroit. The Baltimore Youth Commission and the Baltimore Children and Youth Fund.

The Baltimore Youth Commission

The purpose of the Youth commission is to allow youth the opportunity to provide advice, recommendations, and information for the Mayor, the City Council, and municipal agencies on developed of community and government policies, programs, and services that support children, youth, and their families.

The youth commission is composed of 17 voting members and 14 non-voting members, The 17 voting members include one young person from each of the 14 Council Districts and 3 at large seats. The young people representing the 14-council districts are appointed by the mayor. The young people in the three at large positions are recommended by the City Council President.

Each voting member must be a resident of Baltimore City. The non-voting members represent various community and city agencies including the Baltimore city School system, the Department of recreation and parks, the Health Department, Police Department, Department of Social Services, State's Attorney's Office, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Mayor's Office of Employment and Development, the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, the State Department of Juvenile Services, the Family League of Baltimore City, and Baltimore City Community college.

The Youth Commissioners will work together to accomplish these tasks:

- Developing and maintaining a 3-year action plan outlining areas for study by the commission.
- Reviewing issues relating to programs and services for children and youth.

¹ Population estimate: US Census Bureau

- Identifying and recommending priorities among programs and services for children and youth.
- Creating a forum for discussions with children, youth, and their families.
- Advocating for services and programs for children and youth.
- Making recommendations for programs, policies, and any necessary legislation to promote the health and well-being of children, youth, and their families.
- Work with both the public and private sector to bring forth the concerns of children and youth, as well as, evaluate programming that will enhance the development of children and youth.
- Develop a communication network to disseminate information about services to children and youth.
- Submit an annual report to the Mayor and the City Council.

Term, Meetings and Time Commitment

All voting members of the Youth Commission serve for a term which expires at the end of the mayor's term. At the completion of the term the voting member will continue to serve until a successor is appointed.

Members of the commission are compensated for their time. All Youth Commissioners MUST be residents of Baltimore City.

The Commission meets as frequently as required to perform its duties but not less than 6 times or more than 10 times each year.²

Baltimore Children and Youth Fund (BCYF)

The BCYF is a dedicated fund created to support programs for Baltimore's young people. Launched in 2015 by then City Council President Bernard "Jack" Young in response to the unrest in Baltimore following the death of Freddie Gray while in police custody, an event that sharply illuminated longstanding inequities in public funding in Black communities.

The fund is administered by an 8-member Board of Directors comprised of individuals with a history of community impact in the city of Baltimore and a staff of over 20 professionals with skills covering a wide range of disciplines such as HR, accounting, grant administration, programming, and strategic initiatives, to name a few.

The Baltimore City Council approved the fund through a charter amendment sent to the ballot in November 2016, approved by more than 80% of the voters. The charter amendment called for BCYF to receive an annual appropriation that is at least \$0.03 on every \$100 of assessed or assessable value of all property in the City of Baltimore.³

In 2017, a Task Force of community leaders, youth program service providers, City government representatives, and other key community representatives was convened to make recommendations on the Fund's governance and operations.

² <https://youth.baltimorecity.gov/>

³ <https://bcyfund.org/>

Since 2021, the fund has disbursed 23 million to 101 organizations with over 91% awarded to grassroots black led organizations.

Recognizing it is not the most opportune time to seek funding through a ballot initiative in

Detroit, as was done in Baltimore, this approach should not be ruled out as a viable option in the future. Detroiters have demonstrated that they will back certain initiatives they feel will contribute to the betterment of the community, e.g., demolition and blight remediation.

Long Beach, California

The city of Long Beach, California (2023 population: 451,307⁴) recently formulated a Youth and Emerging Adults Strategic Plan (YSP) which included not only youth, but also emerging adults between the ages of 18-24. The purpose of this plan is to uplift the social, emotional, and economic impact on youth of color in Long Beach.

The plan is set to ensure youth and emerging adults between the ages of 8-24 are healthy, productive, and engaged leaders with the necessary resources to develop their talents, skills, and competencies to excel and contribute to their communities.

In 2019, the Long Beach City Council authorized a \$200,000 expenditure to develop the plan that would serve as the guiding vision and a framework for responding to the needs of the city's youth and their families, over a 3-to-5-year period. Here are some of the steps taken by the city of Long Beach in developing the plan.

- A core team of city of Long Beach leaders and expert consultants recognized the importance of maintaining the voices and leadership of youth at the forefront of this work.
- Community engagement efforts by the Invest in Youth Coalition, which gathered input from 750 area residents and youth engagement efforts, were used as a framework for developing the strategic plan.
- YSP Youth Ambassador roles were created with 16 young adult representatives of diverse backgrounds between the ages of 16 and 24 from throughout the city, actively engaged in the development of the plan.
- 757 online surveys were collected, more than 30-key informant interviews were conducted, and all city council members were interviewed as part of the data collection efforts.⁵

Arizona School Participatory Budgeting (SPB) Project

Starting in 2013, the Phoenix SPB Project was instituted, and it now has become an Arizona Schools PB Project. Modeled after a municipal participatory budgeting program, the project went from one school in Phoenix in 2013 to 5 schools in 2016 and eventually it expanded to thirty-four schools in four cities of Arizona (Phoenix [2022 pop.: 1,644,409⁶], Chandler [2022 pop.: 280,711⁷], Tucson [2022 pop.: 546,574⁸],

⁴ Estimated population source: U.S. Census Bureau.

⁵ Youth @ Emerging Adults Strategic Plan Toward a New Generation of Hope, The Long Beach Strategic Plan for Youth and Emerging Adults, Long Beach Health, and Human Services

⁶ Estimated population source: U.S. Census Bureau.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

and Mesa [2022 pop.: 512,498⁹]). The program models are designed differently depending upon the school and school district, with each having unique features. For instance, some schools might have a steering committee comprised of only one class, on the other hand another school could have a committee of members representing certain demographics in the school, including teachers, parents, and community members.

SPB projects have primarily focused on campus improvement projects (capital investments). This includes water filtration systems, water bottle refill stations, shade structures, additional seating, cafeteria and library upgrades, bathroom renovations, lab equipment, printers, community gardens, school spirit and beautification projects, industrial washers and dryers, and social-emotional learning projects like a campus therapy dog and meditation or game rooms. In some schools, PB projects included programs and activities like driving lessons and field trips (e.g., visits to college campuses). Depending on the overall program objectives and budget capacity.

As of Spring 2023, SPB in Arizona involves approximately 60 schools across seven districts, engaging upwards of 70,000 students annually. Funding ranges from \$2,000 to \$20,000 annually.¹⁰

In Arizona's SPB they use the real machines that are used in general elections and additionally, schools combine voting in PB with encouraging voter registrations, so that students can go on to exercise their vote in municipal, state, and federal elections.¹¹

Chicago, Illinois

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson put forward a city budget proposal for 2024 that included approximately \$76 million for youth jobs (Chicago's 2022 pop.; 2,665,039). An \$11 million increase from last year. This will target high school aged youth and those just out of high school. The initiative comes while the city's administration seeks methods to engage an estimated 45,000 youth who are neither in school nor working and the city grapples with elevated levels of youth violence and crime.¹²

Boston, Massachusetts

Through the "Youth Lead the Change" participatory budgeting program established in 2014, young people aged 12-24 vote on how an annual allocation of one million dollars of the city of Boston's budget is spent (Boston's 2022 pop.: 650,706¹³). The program is managed by Boston Centers for Youth & Families (BCYF) Division of Youth Engagement & Employment in collaboration with a steering committee comprised of community and youth serving agencies for the citywide vote. Anyone aged 12-22 who lives, works, or goes to school in the City of Boston can participate in the process by submitting ideas, and voting on the finalists. Over the years many meaningful projects have been funded through the program. Below are just some of the projects funded in the past.

Youth Wi-Fi lounge

- An accessible lounge in Boston City Hall for students to connect and work with others on youth projects.

Fans in schools

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ School Participatory Budgeting 40 FAQs By: Tara Bartlett, Madison Rock, Kristi Tate, KaRa Lyn Thompson, and Daniel Schugurensk

¹¹ Arizona High School Participatory Budgeting - Youth PB

¹² <https://www.chalkbeat.org/chicago/2023/10/11/23913212/chicago-2024-city-budget-youth-jobs-brandon-johnson/>

¹³ Estimated population source: U.S. Census Bureau.

- Fans were installed in schools that lacked central air conditioning to provide a more comfortable learning environment.

Sunshine and Books

- Providing additional reading spaces in city parks.

Informative Homeless Resources

- A digital billboard displaying resources and job opportunities for homeless youth.¹⁴

2. What are the proposed implementation strategies for the youth budget?

There is a myriad of approaches to implementation. This can involve traditional budgeting, participatory budgeting, the utilization of public private partnerships, or grant funding.

Additionally, the forms of governance of programs also vary widely from one initiative to another. Managing the process can involve the creation of municipal departments, boards, commissions, steering committees, or receiving input from community and focus groups. These bodies can be comprised of any combination of professionals, students, parents, and/or community activists. Successful youth related projects have been instituted in communities utilizing all the various forms of governance and implementation.

3. What is the current demographic composition of Detroit's youth population?

According to the 2020 US Census, approximately 18% of Detroit's population is between the ages of 5 and 18. This equates to around 73,000 individuals.¹⁵

4. How can a budget tailored for youth specifically encourage increased community engagement and participation?

When considering ways to increase youth involvement in community engagement activities, voter registration and community building initiatives, such as youth councils and block clubs immediately come to mind. However, for youth to truly become engaged they must first feel empowered. Part of this is that the basic needs of our youth must be prioritized. There is a pressing need in the community for access to information and technology, in the form of tech hubs, Wi-Fi, and computer access for all youth in the city of Detroit. In addition, there is an ever-growing number of homeless youths in our city who are in dire need of resources and employment opportunities.

5. How might a youth budget be effectively utilized to implement strategies for crime prevention and intervention?

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22.6

Research has shown that when it comes to crime prevention and intervention, investments in high quality early learning programs for youth provide them with a pathway to a productive life and decrease the susceptibility of them falling victim to the lure of crime and drugs. Funding could be allocated for the following.

¹⁴ Youth lead the change, Boston.gov

¹⁵ [2020 U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Detroit city, Michigan](#)

- Make high-quality early care and education available to all kids from birth to age five from families with low incomes.
- Offer voluntary home visits to at-risk parents of young children.
- Provide effective in-school and after school programs to all school-age children and youth to help keep them on track.
- Help kids who have had contact with the juvenile justice system by providing them and their parents with effective interventions to steer them away from crime.¹⁶

In addition to early education programs, funding for neighborhood conflict mediation, mentorships, violence intervention, and employment and training programs for older youths is sorely needed.

6. In what manners can a dedicated budget amplify cultural and recreational opportunities for the younger generation?

Cultural and recreational opportunities are critical to the growth and well-being of our youth. However, as recreational programs have gradually become more privatized, opportunities have become increasingly less accessible to some of our younger citizens. Funding is necessary to either modify existing programs or to create new innovative programs that are more inclusive of young people from lower income households.

Investing in youth recreation and cultural programs is a crucial endeavor with far reaching benefits. Here’s why:

Physical and Mental Well-Being

- Youth sports and recreation activities promote physical fitness, teamwork, and overall well-being.

Social Development

- Engaging in sports helps combat sedentary lifestyles, reduces obesity, and fosters healthy habits.
- Participation in cultural programs, such as music, dance, and theater, enhances creativity and emotional expression.

Academic performance

- Research shows that physically active children tend to perform better academically.
- Exposure to arts and culture enhances cognitive abilities, creativity, and critical thinking.

Long term impact.

- Investing in youth programs creates a positive cycle; active children become active adults who, in turn, support their own children’s participation.
- These programs contribute to healthier communities, reduced crime rates, and improved quality of life.¹⁷

7. How much is LPD recommending the Council allocate to the youth budget to effectively address the unique needs and challenges experienced by the city’s younger population?

As we know, the challenges are great, and the needs always outweigh the resources. There are new and innovative programs to assist our youth as well as tried and true programs that could be more effective

¹⁶ <https://www.strongnation.org/fightcrime>

¹⁷ <https://www.rootsofaction.com/youth-programs/>

given the opportunity to reach a wider audience. There is a genuine need for expanded recreational programs in the city. Equally important is the need for access to recreational opportunities for all our youth throughout the city. Programs such as The Police Athletic League (PAL), Midnight Golf, Grow Detroit's Young Talent (GTYP), and the Downtown Boxing Gym do a tremendous job in the community. However, too many of our youth are still falling through the cracks.

The school to prison pipeline is a reality for thousands of youths in our city. Therefore, it is imperative that we find a way to intervene before they encounter law enforcement and the judicial system. Students who are arrested are more likely to drop out of school, less likely to graduate and more likely to be arrested as young adults.¹⁸

City Council might wish to explore the creation of a Youth and Emerging Adult Advisory Commission for the purpose of:

- Establishing policies and procedures to address problems that affect youth in the city of Detroit.
- Evaluating the conditions and influences affecting youth in the Community.
- Evaluating the adequacy of existing service provided by the public and private agencies which are engaged in promoting the healthy development, education, and general welfare of the City's youth.
- Advising City Council regarding the findings of the Commission.
- Recommending to the City Council legislative action which are determined to be in the best interest of youth.

The Commission will provide a forum for interaction between agencies and organizations to produce a synergy where all youth related activities can be discussed and evaluated. While at the same time, the Commission would serve as a vehicle for our youth to directly participate in government. The commission would be empowered to gauge various programs and outcomes to better assess the needs of our youth by identifying gaps in programs and services and offering recommendations for funding through an annual report.

Suggested Commission Composition and Funding

If the Council wishes to appropriate funds for a youth budget, we recommend funding between \$300,000-\$600,000. We believe this would allow Council the latitude to tailor a program that would make a significant positive impact on the plight of our youth in the upcoming fiscal year.

The Commission should be comprised of youth ages 13- 17 representing the 7 Detroit City Council districts and two at large positions. In addition, the commission should include adult representatives from various agencies involved in youth activities and programs, including but not limited to government, non-profits, and Detroit Public Schools.

If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

¹⁸ ACLU Washington, Roxann Gomez, ACLU-WA Youth Policy Program Director, Friday, September 22, 2023