

# Building a Better Budget Through Public Engagement

Presented to City of Houston Budget and Fiscal Affairs Committee

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# Today's Discussion

- Review an improved process for setting annual budget priorities
  - ✓ More input sooner from City Council and community
  - ✓ Use Plan Houston as a guide
- More informed decision-making
- Culminates in an annual work plan
  - ✓ List of initiatives to address highest priorities

# Plan Houston's Core Strategies

- ✓ Spend money wisely.
- ✓ Grow responsibly.
- ✓ Nature safe, healthy communities.
- ✓ Connect people and places.
- ✓ Support a global economy.
- ✓ Sustain quality infrastructure.
- ✓ Champion learning.
- ✓ Foster an affordable city.
- ✓ Protect and conserve our resources.
- ✓ Communicate clearly and with transparency.
- ✓ Partner with others, public and private.
- ✓ Celebrate what's uniquely Houston.

# Background: Annual Budget

- Previously: no formal channels for early input from public and City Council
- Stakeholders receive information after decisions made
- No overarching policy guide to inform decision-making
- E.O.1-53 and associated A.P. 4-10 highlight new Administration's commitment:
  - ✓ Focus on outcomes - return on City's investment
  - ✓ Increase public input ahead of budget development

# A New Approach

- Formal channels for engaging City Council and public as Mayor develops budgetary priorities
- Encourage input during Fall, before budget decisions finalized
- Use Plan Houston as a policy guide

# Community Engagement

- Online public feedback
- Plan Houston Steering Committee
- Citizen satisfaction survey
- Mayor-Council budget retreat

# Online Public Feedback

- Gather community guidance regarding Houston's strengths and opportunities for improvement
- [PlanHouston.org](http://PlanHouston.org)
- Council members asked to encourage community participation

# Plan Houston Steering Committee

- Reconvene Plan Houston Steering Committee
  - Broad-based representation
- Provides suggestions on priority issues facing City
- Ambassadors for encouraging public participation

# Citizen Satisfaction Survey

- Gauge level of satisfaction of various services
- Begin survey in late 2016
  - Set baseline measures of citizen satisfaction with City performance/direction
- Results inform discussions at Mayor-Council budget retreat

# Mayor and Council Budget Retreat

- One-day public meeting in Nov/Dec
  - Properly posted
- Led by Mayor
- Professionally facilitated
- Identify Council's suggested budgetary priorities
- Provides input to Mayor for use in preparing budget and directives to departments

# Expected Timeline

- September/October 2016
  - Reconvene Plan Houston Steering Committee
  - Initiate online public feedback
- November/December 2016
  - Citizen satisfaction survey
  - Budget retreat for Mayor and Council
  - Opportunity for Council members to suggest initiatives
  - Mayor finalizes FY18 budgetary outcomes/priorities and communicates to departments
- January 2017
  - Mayor begins FY18 budget development

# Linking Plan Houston and Budget

- Plan Houston serves as guide throughout process
  - Align resources with City goals and priorities
- A more proactive approach
  - Influence outcomes rather than just responding to problems
- Results in annual work plan
  - Initiatives that address priorities
  - Described in budget

## Result: A Better Budget

- Increased emphasis on outcomes in budget decision-making
  - Greater focus on goal-setting and monitoring
- Better scrutiny of spending proposals – focus on return on investment
- Earlier, more in-depth input for Mayor's use in budget development
- Align City budget with community wants and needs