

# ENVIRONICS

RESEARCH

## EVALUATION REPORT [FINAL]

### Participatory Budgeting Pilot Evaluation

*Prepared for:*  
City of Toronto

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## Introduction

This report details the key findings of the evaluation conducted for the City of Toronto’s 2015 Participatory Budgeting (PB) Pilot. The purpose of the evaluation was to obtain feedback from participants – including area residents, City Councillors and City of Toronto staff – on their impressions, experiences and expectations of the PB Pilot in each of the three Pilot areas: Oakridge, Rustic and Ward 33.

Environics captured participant, City Councillor and City staff feedback at three distinct phases of the Pilot:

Phase	Method	Timeframe
1. Community outreach and proposal development	One-on-one interviews with area residents who attended public PB meetings	June – August, 2015
2. Community vote	Online resident survey	September – October
3. Post-vote/pre-implementation	City Councillor and staff one-on-one and small group interviews	September – October

This report includes results from all three phases of the evaluation and highlights the achievements and the challenges of the Pilot. Results are organized by the evaluation phase and linkages between the phases are highlighted, where relevant.

## Executive Summary

The City of Toronto engaged Environics Research Group to undertake an evaluation of the 2015 Participatory Budget (PB) Pilot, which was conducted in the areas of Rustic (Ward 12), Oakridge (Ward 35) and Ward 33. The evaluation involved three separate phases of measurement: 1) One-on-one interviews with residents of Pilot areas during community meetings they attended to identify, develop and select potential PB projects; 2) an online survey for PB participants and residents of the Pilot areas, and; 3) One-on-one in-depth interviews with City Staff involved in PB activities, as well as City Councillors from the three Pilot areas.

By-and-large, residents of each of the Pilot areas were compelled to participate in PB activities so they could obtain a better perspective of the desires and needs of their neighbours, as well as add their voices and preferences to the process. Participants were eager to learn about PB, to get involved in community discussions, to obtain insight into the City's budgeting process and to have a say in shaping and selecting projects to address community needs. While most expressed the intention to see the process through and vote for their preferred projects, few expressed interest in championing or developing individual projects.

Participants saw many benefits to PB in their community – ranging from the allocation of funds to their areas, to the fulfilment of selected projects, to the community-building nature of the activity itself. In general, skepticism around the process was limited among these engaged groups of community residents.

Participants at the various community meetings learned of the events primarily through their local community groups and through City Councillor communications. There was less awareness of the PB website, but those who were aware of it checked it for information regarding projects and subsequent meeting dates.

Public participation at the meetings attended by the evaluation team ranged from 20-40 participants. Residents were attentive to City Staff and Councillor presentations. They collaborated with each other, sought information from City Staff on project parameters, and followed the process without significant confusion or disruption. On one occasion evaluators observed that some area residents attended a community meeting expecting a discussion about a school closure, and not PB. In this instance, residents stayed and participated in PB activities, but were somewhat discontent about the misunderstanding.

Survey results, collected immediately following project voting in the three Pilot areas, reflected many of the insights gleaned during the initial community meetings. In particular, Participants learned about PB through their City Councillors and through social media more often than from the City website. In light of this finding, it is also important to note that survey respondents reported the belief that the best role the City Councillor could play in PB would be to *promote participation in the process*, rather than any other form of involvement or facilitation.

As well, survey respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with the different aspects of PB, including their ability to obtain information about participation. They were somewhat less satisfied with the information provided about the PB process itself. Participants reported feeling well-accommodated at PB meetings – including having convenient meeting times, locations, and number of meetings. Where participants expressed less agreement pertained to their observation of a “diversity” of neighbours in attendance at meetings, and their ability to discuss non-PB issues with City Staff at meetings. Satisfaction was also high among respondents regarding most aspects of the voting process, with the exception of “the types of projects on the ballot in my area”, where satisfaction was limited. Unfortunately, data does not reveal the source of this dissatisfaction – whether the result of the types of projects proposed by neighbours, or any administrative impediments encountered to having other/more desirable projects on the ballot.

Overall, satisfaction with the process was high, and respondents expressed an intent to participate in future PB activities, as well as recommend to others that they do the same. The learning and sense of fulfilment expressed by survey respondents suggests that it was a positive activity for most, and netted many benefits in terms of learning, community engagement, and local investment.

As a final phase of evaluation, interviews (one-on-one and small group) were conducted with the City Councillors from the three Pilot areas, as well as City Staff who had some involvement in the PB Pilot. Most reported having had positive experiences participating in PB in their various capacities, including deepening community connections, better understanding of community needs, and learning about PB along the way. A small number of Staff were discouraged by what they considered to be low turn-out at some community meetings, while others felt the budget associated with the project was not significant enough to attract broader participation or implement projects that would have significant impact in the areas. Other Staff were reserved in their positive perspectives on the Pilot due to the perception that PB participation was limited to engaged community activists and not reflective of the community at large.

Staff identified a number of challenges they encountered throughout the Pilot, including the limited budget, a perceived lack of representativeness, and even a lack of interest or motivation by some residents. In addition, there appeared to be agreement among Staff and Councillors that PB activities at the community level – as opposed to ward-wide – had the opportunity to be more effective and draw out more participants. Ward-wide activities were deemed by many to be challenging as a result of the diffuse nature of resident interests – there was the risk that the sheer geography of a ward would deter participation by residents who believed successful projects couldn’t or wouldn’t result in their immediate areas.

As a result, Staff and Councillors offered a number of suggestions and recommendations for future PB activities. These ranged from limiting the scope of projects to a community (rather than the whole Ward), to expand communications efforts well beyond social media to reach a larger cross-section of residents, and to better coordinate with community groups and agencies to partner in communicating and encouraging participation. Still others suggested the budget for each PB area needed to be larger than the 2015 allocation, while one participant felt the PB process could never be as effective as traditional resident/Councillor interactions that result in the undertaking of local capital investment. In general, Staff and Councillors were complementary of the City PB Project Staff. They found them to be well-informed and responsive to community needs. Some expressed the sentiment that Project Staff needed to be a bit more flexible and accommodating when it came to appreciating the nuances in the process between the three areas in the City. Others felt Project Staff should have been better informed

about community issues prior to going in to host PB meetings. Overall, however, Staff and Councillors (including their staff) generally felt well-supported through the process, and they had access to the information they needed in a timely manner.

## Conclusions

Stakeholders who participated in the evaluation of the 2015 PB Pilot, including Pilot area residents and City staff and representatives, were generally positive about the process and satisfied with their role in it.

From the perspective of the evaluator, participation at many of the community meetings, during the voting process, and in the evaluation process itself (the online survey) is lower than we would have expected. It is difficult to determine the root of this low level of engagement, however activities and considerations that may have played a role in the turn-out (and are based on stakeholder feedback) include:

- on-going City communications and promotion of PB activities (relying heavily on social media and direct mail/drop);
- the seasonality of the Pilot and meetings;
- legacy issues in Ward 33 following a 2014 PB undertaking (Section 37 funds which have not, as of yet, been delivered to implement successful PB projects).

It is important to note that satisfaction with the PB Pilot has been measured prior to project fulfilment. This last, important step will ultimately be key to determining if community residents who participated in the Pilot are satisfied with the outcome, including the timeline and the resulting projects.

## City of Toronto 2015 PB Pilot Public Meetings and Voter Turnout by Area

Area	Date	Meeting Type	Attendance
Oakridge	May 14, 2015	Info & Idea Workshop	40
	May 30, 2015	Info & Idea Workshop	8
	June 22, 2015	Ballot Selection Meeting	29
	September 9, 2015	Vote Location	21
	September 12, 2015	Vote Location	51
Rustic	May 9, 2015	Info & Idea Workshop	10
	May 20, 2015	Info & Idea Workshop	41
	June 27, 2015	Ballot Selection Meeting	17
	September 16, 2015	Vote Location	20
	September 19, 2015	Vote Location	55
Ward 33	May 12, 2015	Town Hall	2
	May 13, 2015	Town Hall	10
	May 16, 2015	Town Hall	5
	June 3, 2015	Idea Assembly	20
	June 6, 2015	Idea Assembly	10
	June 25, 2015	Project Development Meeting	27
	July 14, 2015	Ballot Review Meeting	16
	August 25, 2015	Champion's Display workshop	6
	September 17, 2015	Vote Location	27
	September 17, 2015	Vote Location	76
	September 17, 2015	Vote Location	37
	September 20, 2015	Vote Location	40
	September 20, 2015	Vote Location	155
September 20, 2015	Vote Location	49	

## Methodology

Environics consulted with City Councillors, City staff and residents who participated in the PB Pilot from each of the three Pilot areas:

1. Oakridge (Ward 35)
2. Rustic (Ward 12)
3. Ward 33

Findings are for all of the Pilot areas together, and where relevant by Pilot area.

The following table summarizes the number of interviews and completed surveys collected in each of the Pilot areas throughout the evaluation:

	Oakridge	Rustic	Ward 33
Initial engagement/proposal development – One on One interviews	6	3	4
Voting – Online survey	2	6	11
Implementation phase – Staff and Councillor interviews*	4	5	3
<b>Total feedback</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19</b>

\* Three of the 15 staff who participated in the evaluation, worked across all three Pilot areas

Due to the number of responses findings should be considered as indicators of broader themes, providing insights to overall trends, rather than statistically significant.



## PB Process

The evaluation was conducted through the first three phases of the PB pilot. The following infographic demonstrates the PB process, emphasizing the differences between the three pilot areas. It also indicates where Environics conducted evaluation activities.



## Phase 1: Community Engagement and Proposal Development

Environics staff attended six (6) out of 18 community meetings in the three PB areas to conduct brief, in-person interviews with residents participating in these events. The interviews lasted approximately five (5) to ten (10) minutes and captured overall participant experiences and expectations of the PB process. Consistent interview guides were used to capture feedback (see Appendix A).

### Participant Motivation for PB Participation

When asked for their main reason for attending PB meetings, the majority of respondents said they wanted to “see” what the turn-out and community interest would be. Respondents often hoped to hear



what other neighbours wanted or envisioned for the community, mentioned a general interest in the community, and wanted to be engaged and work as a group to bring about change. They could see the potential for the project and funding, with many participants feeling they knew the community’s needs. A few participants even mentioned that the City/politicians need assistance making decisions and that the community should help. Oakridge and Rustic residents mentioned community concerns about safety and inadequate facilities, attending the meetings with a sense of duty to be part of the community’s decision that could help improve these conditions.

### Participant Expectations for PB Process

While attending meetings, residents expected to learn more about the Participatory Budgeting process and what it entailed. Residents were also keen to

learn the definition of a capital project and how the community and individuals could be involved in allocating funds to these types of projects. There was a desire to hear more from the community than from the City; most attendees said they were interested in seeing what ideas the community and their neighbours would bring forward: there were a few people in each area who came with pre-determined ideas and projects, while others hoped to learn from their neighbours. Participants generally said their expectations of the meetings were met (with respect to hearing from community members in particular). A small group interviewed in Rustic at one particular community meeting said there was confusion about the purpose of the meetings, with groups of attendees focusing discussion on non-related complaints of community issues, such as the possibility of a high school being closed.



### Intent for Further PB Involvement

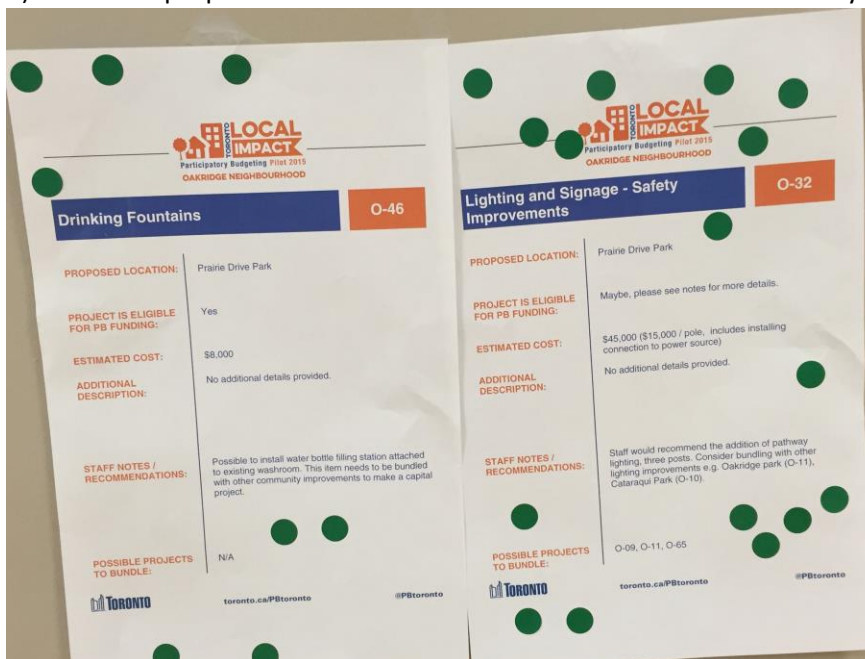
Most of the residents interviewed expressed general interest in attending subsequent PB meetings to watch the process, but showed reluctance to take on a more active role. A minority of those interviewed expressed interest in volunteering for subsequent activities. Most participants stated appreciation for the opportunity to participate, have a voice, and make decisions regarding funding.

All participants interviewed said they intended to vote for their favourite proposal. They were excited to be part of the process and change, and wanted to improve the community through being involved. Residents generally felt it was important to be part of the community voice and felt accountable for making a decision, suggesting they would vote out of a sense of duty, and in the words of one participant: *“if you don’t vote, you can’t complain”*.

## Community & Personal Benefits

Participants overwhelmingly expected PB to be good for the community, though sometimes this expectation was conditional on “*the right proposals*” being selected. Identification of community benefits ranged from the capital projects themselves (including the allocation of budget funds to the area, resulting projects aimed at improving community safety and recreation) to more intangible benefits like community engagement and a sense of “*ownership*” for residents who champion successful projects. Residents felt the Pilot introduced a democratic tactic to bring the community together to create lists of ideas and needs, while building trust with the City, Councillors, and the Mayor.

Personal benefits were generally related to voting outcomes and winning proposal(s) and the extent to which they would be closely located to where a participant lived. Residents felt they would personally benefit from the PB process in their area if a) the proposal they championed or preferred won the vote; b) successful proposals were located near to their homes or where they spent most of their time in the



area and c) if the community came together in engagement and learned more about each other.

Only a small few of the participants expressed scepticism about the Pilot meeting expectations with one stating “*if it materializes*”, and another declaring “*it might be good...[I] don't have strong expectations*”.

## Other Community Involvement

The majority of residents interviewed at meetings had previously attended community meetings or activities in their area, ranging from infrequent to very frequent involvement. Whether attending close-to-home meetings regarding a community centre, or larger issues affecting the entire GTA such as the Gardiner Expressway plan or cycling infrastructure, these attendees had at least some history of community engagement. This reflected sentiments in later interviews with City Councillors and staff that most attendees at PB activities were already active and vocal community members.



## PB Website Awareness

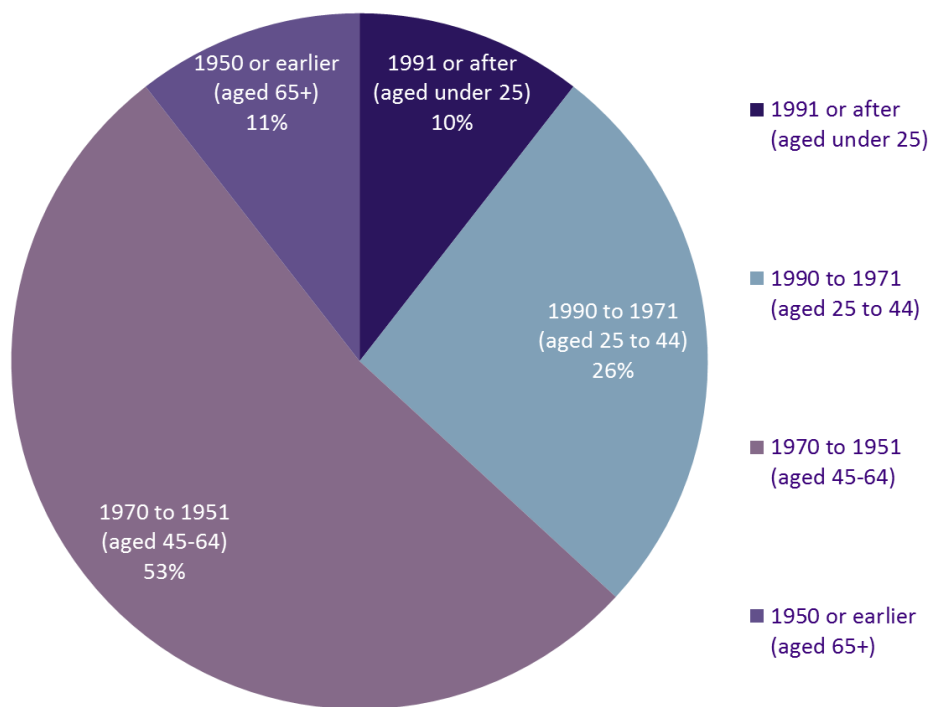
Awareness of the PB website varied across the three areas. Of those asked in Oakridge, only a few had previously visited the website and felt it included little information and left little reason to return. Rustic participants had little awareness of the website but were interested in visiting it once they had been made aware of it. Ward 33 participants were well aware of the website, mostly because it had been mentioned in Councillor Carroll's emails.



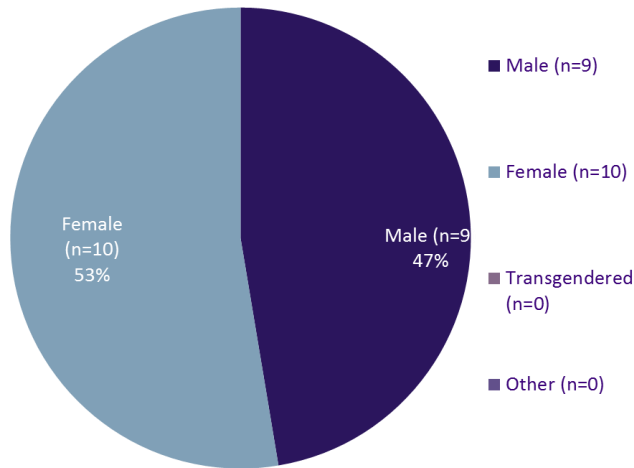
## Phase 2: Post-Vote Online Survey

An online survey was made available to PB participants and residents of the Pilot areas immediately following the completion of voting activities. The survey included 16 questions with three (3) open-ended questions (see Appendix B for the survey questionnaire). The survey lasted approximately 10 minutes in duration and could be accessed through the City of Toronto website. Some Councillors advertised the survey link through their Ward communications. Promotion of the survey was also conducted via Twitter, by emails to registered participants, on a special banner on the City's website homepage, on materials sent to every household in all three PB areas, and each person who voted was provided with a postcard with information about the evaluation and a link to the online survey. In total, 19 surveys were completed (11 from Ward 33; 6 from Rustic and 2 from Oakridge). Most were 45-64 years old, and only slightly more women than men completed the survey.

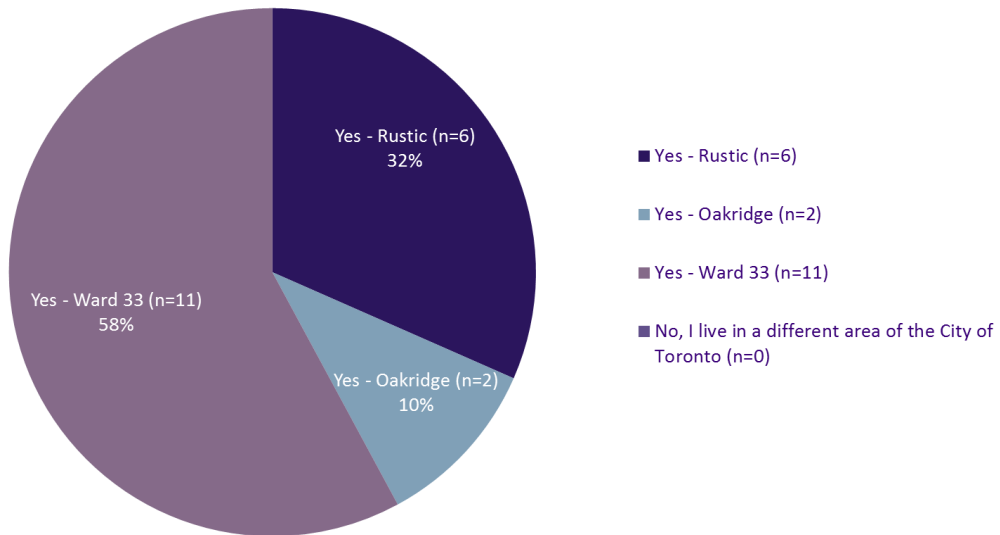
QB: In what year were you born?



**QC: What is your gender?**



**QD: Do you live in one of the three areas of Toronto that were part of the City's Participatory Budgeting Pilot?**



## Learning about PB

Survey participants first learned about the PB Pilot primarily through their City Councillor, with social media and community newsletters/newspapers also frequently mentioned.

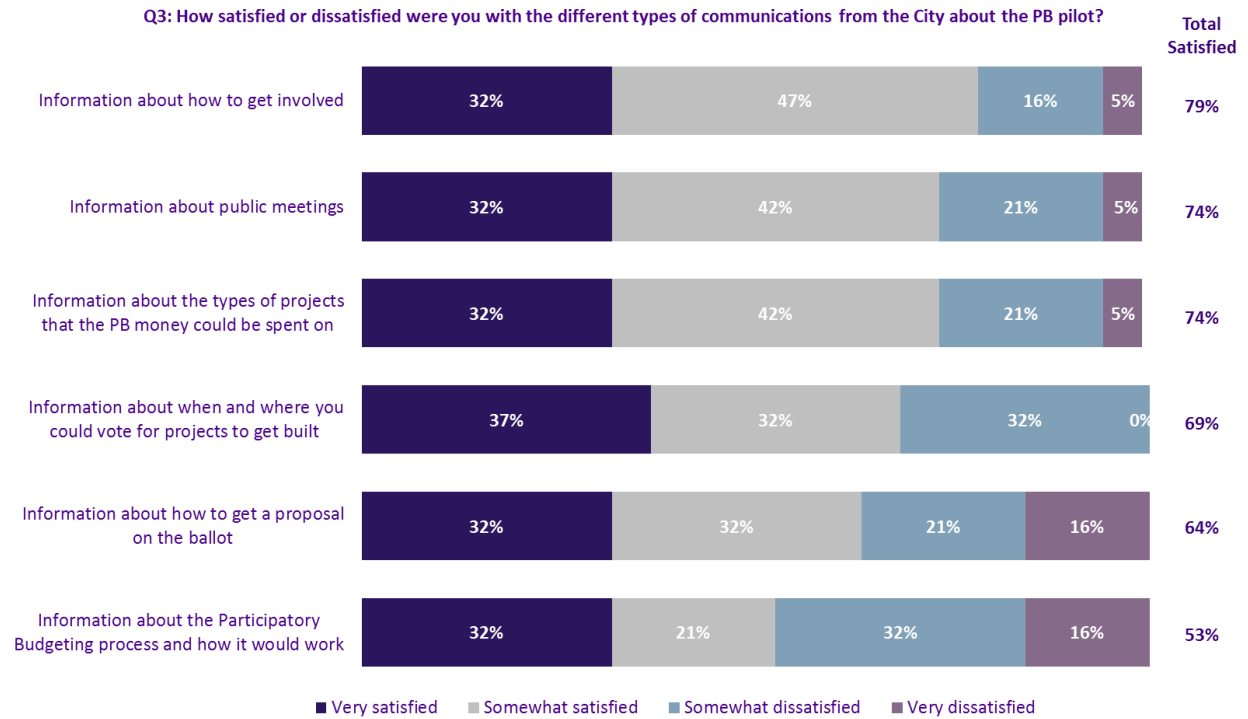
Note: Q1 asked *Did you participate in the Participatory Budgeting Process in your community this year?* For clarification, participation can include attending community meetings, submitting a project for consideration, following the process on the website and/or social media? All responses were positive.

**Q2: How did you first learn about the Participatory Budgeting Pilot?**





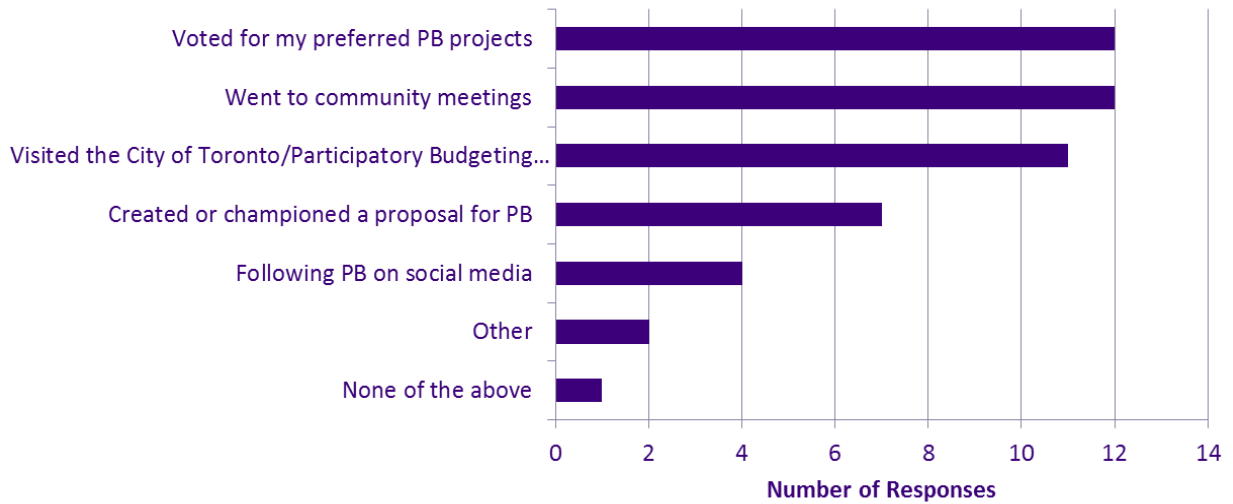
Satisfaction regarding different types of communications from the City about the PB Pilot was generally positive. Satisfaction was highest for information about how to get involved, public meetings, and the types of projects that the PB money could be spent on. Dissatisfaction was highest for information about the PB process and how it would work, with just under half somewhat or very dissatisfied (48%).



## Participation in PB

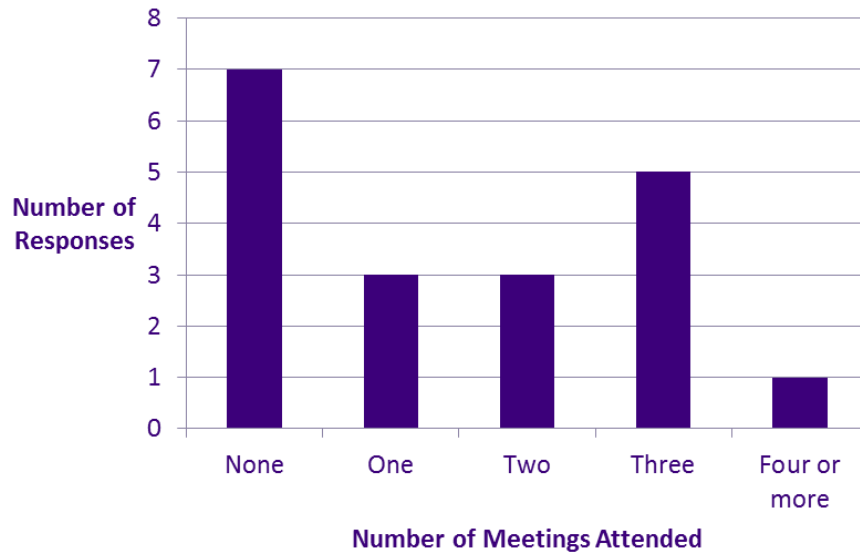
Residents were most likely to participate in PB through voting for preferred PB projects, attending community meetings, and visiting the City of Toronto/Participatory Budgeting website.

**Q4: In which of the following ways did you participate in Participatory Budgeting in your area?**



Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents attended at least one (1) meeting.

**Q5: How many Participatory Budgeting community meetings did you attend?**

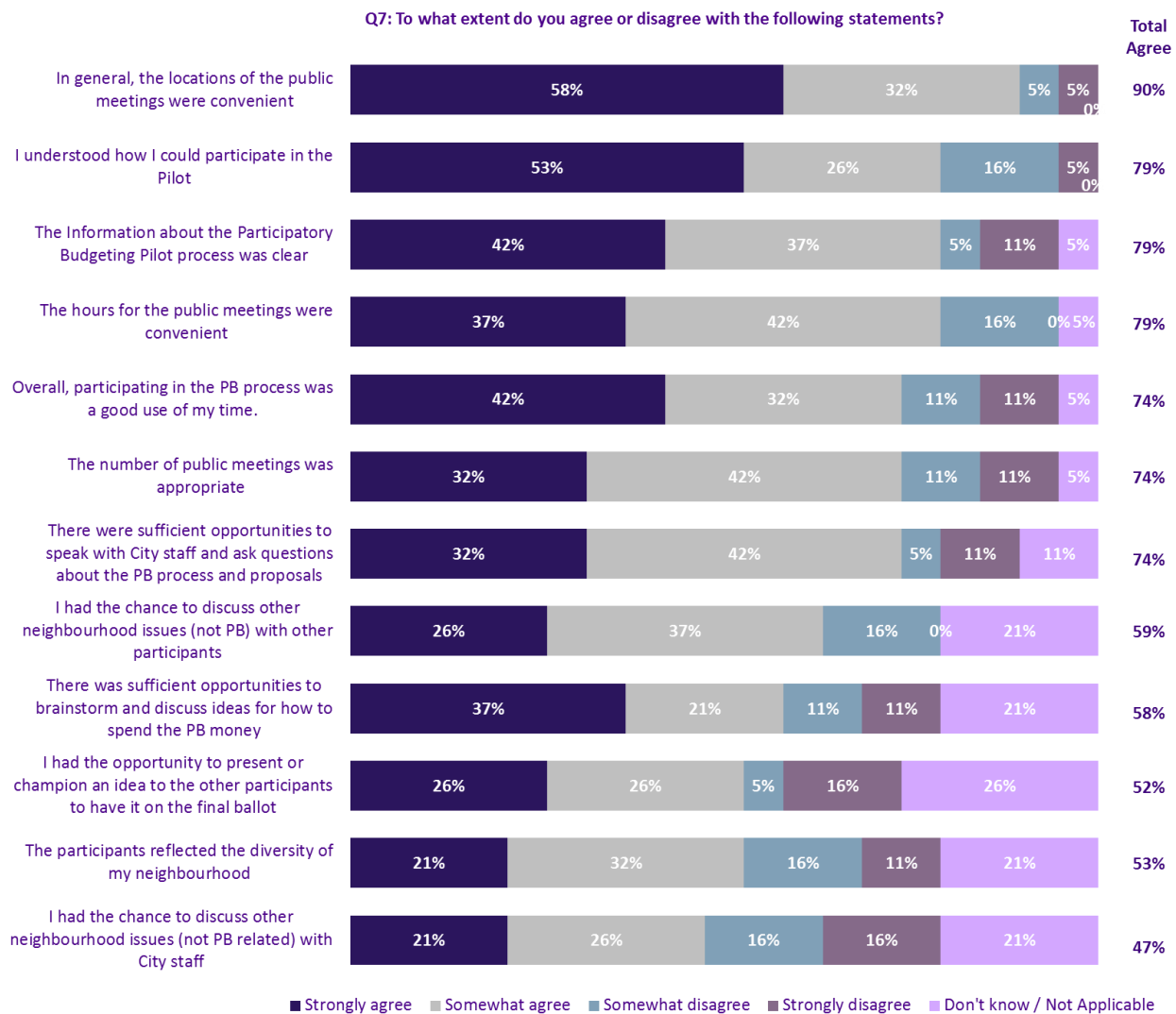


## Participation in PB

Q6 asked for the main reason why residents participated in the PB process. A portion of residents mentioned wanting to maintain and improve the community's safety and make it a more pleasant area to live in and visit. A few had participated to be more involved or engaged in the community; one stated they attended to *"ensure that neighbours who do not speak the language understood [the process] as well"*. Also mentioned was a desire to see change and to *"ensure something useful [was] done for the community"*. A few residents participated to understand and support the process; a small minority stated they gave ideas or championed proposals.

## Statement Review

When asked to think about various aspects of the PB process, nine in ten residents felt the locations of the public meetings were convenient, while eight in ten felt the hours were convenient. Almost eight in ten residents agreed to some extent with the statement ‘I understood how I could participate in the Pilot’. Three-quarters of residents strongly or somewhat agreed that the information about the PB process was clear, supporting the findings in Q3; however one in ten strongly disagreed about the clarity of the process. Overall, nearly three-quarters felt their participation in the PB process was a good use of their time (42% strongly agreeing, 32% somewhat agreeing). Almost three-quarters thought the number of public meetings was appropriate.



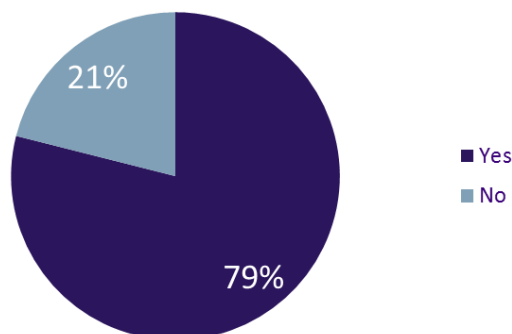
There was strong agreement (74% strongly or somewhat agreed) that participants had sufficient opportunities to speak with City staff and ask questions about the process and proposals. Just over half of residents felt there were sufficient opportunities to brainstorm and discuss ideas for how to spend the PB money; 21% strongly or somewhat disagreed with the statement and another 21% said they did not know or the statement was not applicable. Nearly half of residents said they had the chance to discuss other neighbourhood issues (unrelated to PB) with City staff, while three in ten disagreed. Nearly two-thirds said they had the chance to discuss the same neighbourhood issues with other participants, with only 16% disagreeing.

More than half said they had the opportunity to present or champion an idea to the other participants to have it on the ballot, however a quarter did not know or the statement was not applicable, and the remaining disagreed (5% somewhat disagreeing and 16% strongly disagreeing). Over half of residents said the participants reflected the diversity of their neighbourhood; a quarter disagreed, and the remaining did not know or said the statement was not applicable.

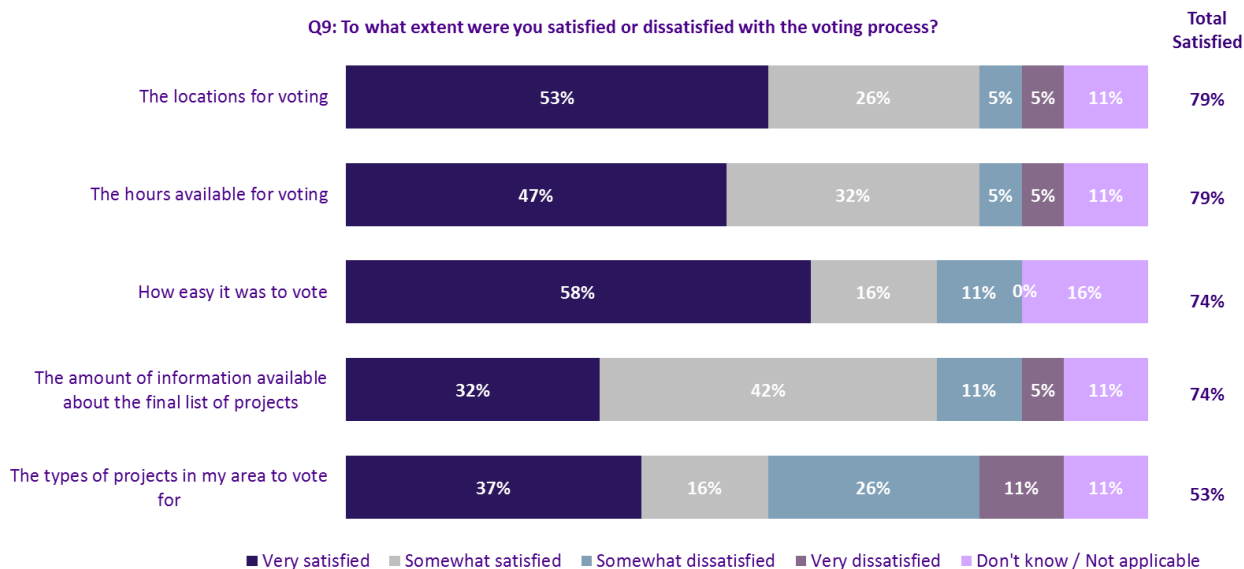
## Attitudes towards Voting

Eight in ten participants said they participated in the final vote. Another eight in ten were satisfied with the hours and locations available for voting. Three-quarters said they were very or somewhat satisfied with the ease of voting, as well as the amount of information available about the final list of projects. Over half were satisfied with the types of projects in their area to vote for.

Q8: Did you participate in the final vote?

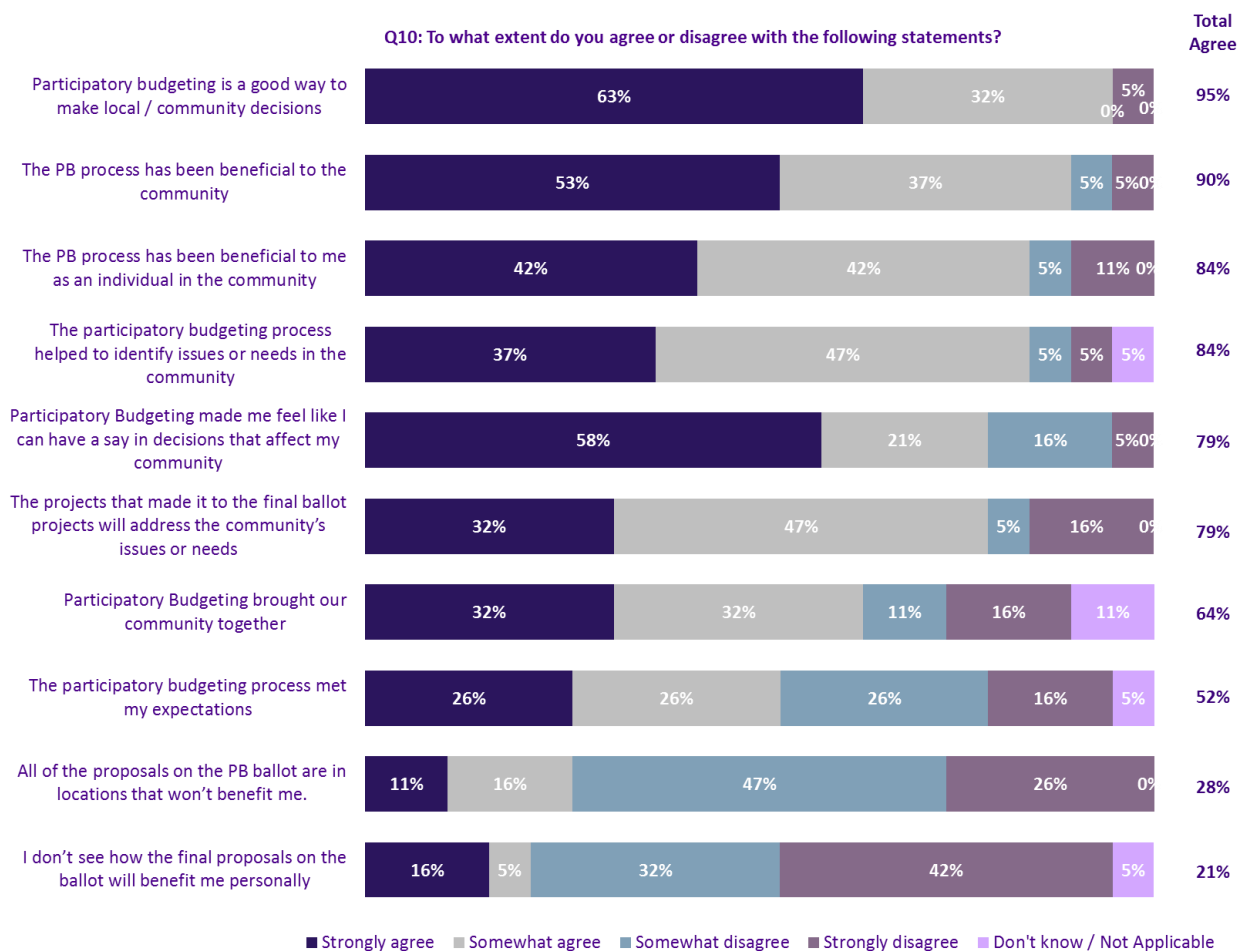


Q9: To what extent were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the voting process?

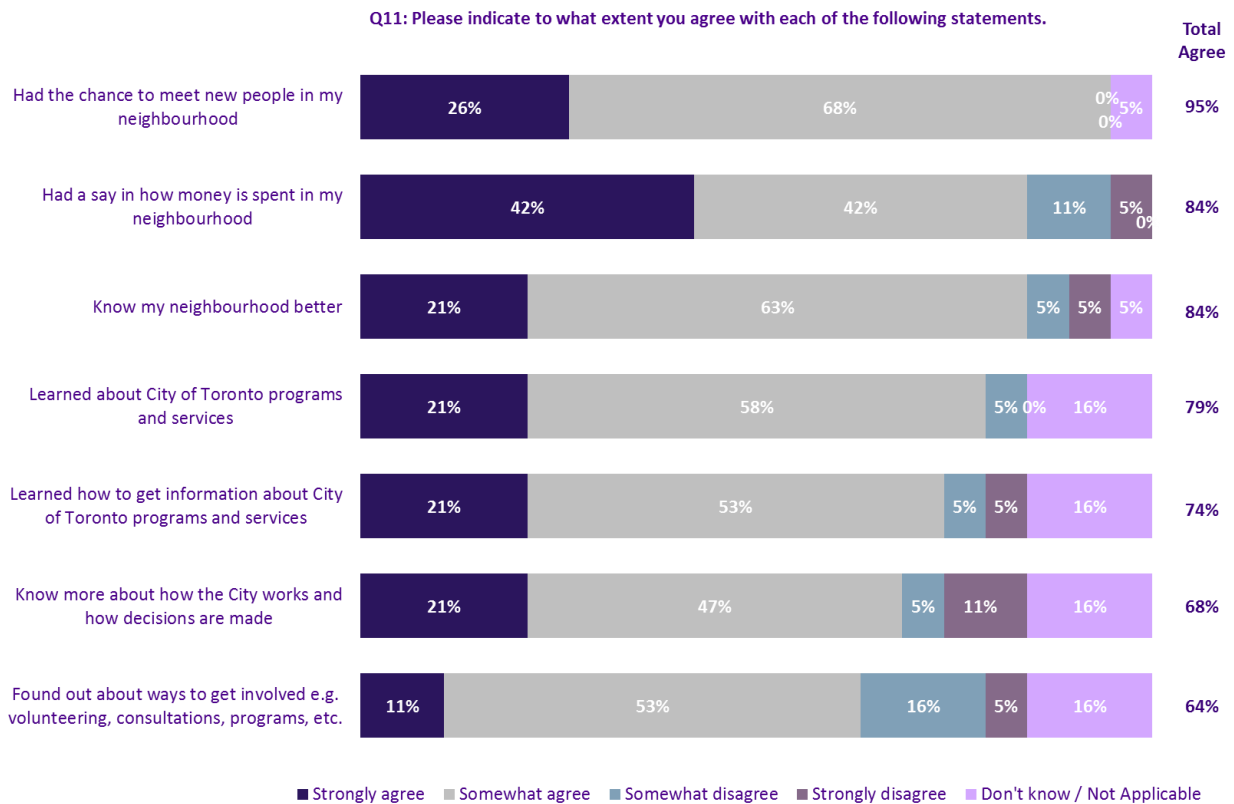


## Attitudes towards the PB Process

Nearly all (95%) felt that PB is a good way to make local/community decisions. Overall, more than half felt the PB process met their expectations. 84% of residents found the process helped to identify issues or needs in the community, with slightly less believing the projects that made it to the final ballot will address the community’s issues or needs. The majority found that PB made them feel like they can have a say in decisions that affect the community, and found the process was beneficial on both a personal and community level. Two-thirds thought that PB brought their community together, while a quarter disagreed.



Nearly all residents (95%) said they had a chance to meet new people in their neighbourhood, and slightly less (84%) said they had a say in how money is spent in their neighbourhood and got to know their neighbourhood better. The majority of residents felt that through the PB process, they learned about City of Toronto programs and services, as well as how to get information about those programs and services; residents also largely felt they found out about ways to get involved. Most residents also felt they learned more about how the City works and how decisions are made.

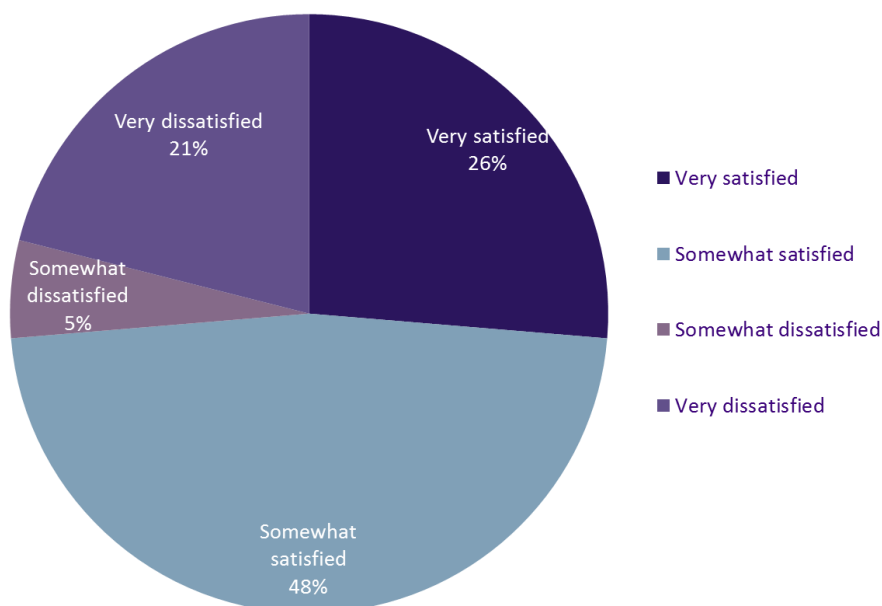




## Satisfaction with the PB Pilot

Overall, one-quarter of residents were very satisfied with the PB process; 47% were somewhat satisfied, 5% were somewhat dissatisfied, and 21% were very dissatisfied.

**Q12: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the participatory budgeting process?**



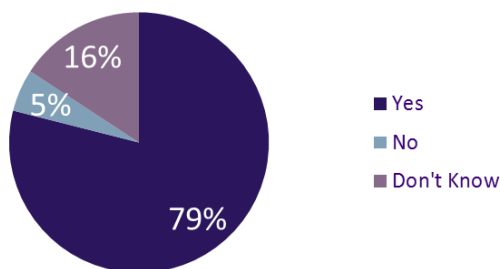
Of the 74% of satisfied participants, most mentioned the community improvement that the projects would create. A few residents recognized community integration, growth and participation in decisions affecting their communities. Residents liked the opportunity to be involved; one stated: *“community members can feel their vote really matters and that the projects are of interest to the community”*. A couple residents mentioned that through the process, they introduced more choices to the community and another said that *“it is fair, diplomatic and everyone in the community decides what gets funded”*. A further couple mentioned that participation was low, but stated that *“it is a start”*.

Of the 26% dissatisfied participants, most mentioned that the communication was poor and some residences did not receive flyers; one response stated that *“the printed material that was mailed out was not clearly set out and could easily be taken as an advertisement to be thrown out”*. Also mentioned was lack of interest and engagement from a Councillor. One resident felt the boundaries for voting were unclear and were not reflective of those who would use the winning proposal’s park. Another said that large neighbourhoods had a huge advantage in voting, with an additional resident stating that the community was not represented properly. It seemed these residents had frustrations with past City-funded projects regarding budgets and selected projects; these were further addressed in sentiments such as: *“the big money gets spent without pretending to be participatory”* and *“the implementation process was very ill-constructed with biased choices and unclear processes”*.

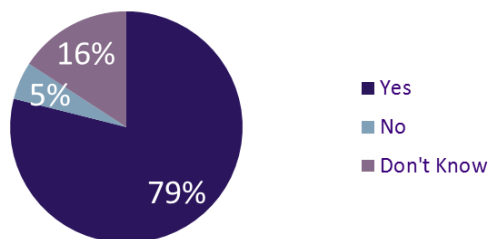
## Attitudes towards Future PB Projects

When asked if they would take part in potential future City of Toronto PB processes again, nearly all residents said they would (79%), reflecting those in the previous question who were satisfied with the Pilot. Only 5% said they would not participate and the remaining did not know if they would. The same sentiments were noted towards recommending others in the community take part.

Q14A: If the City of Toronto were to repeat the participatory budgeting process again, would you take a part in the process yourself?



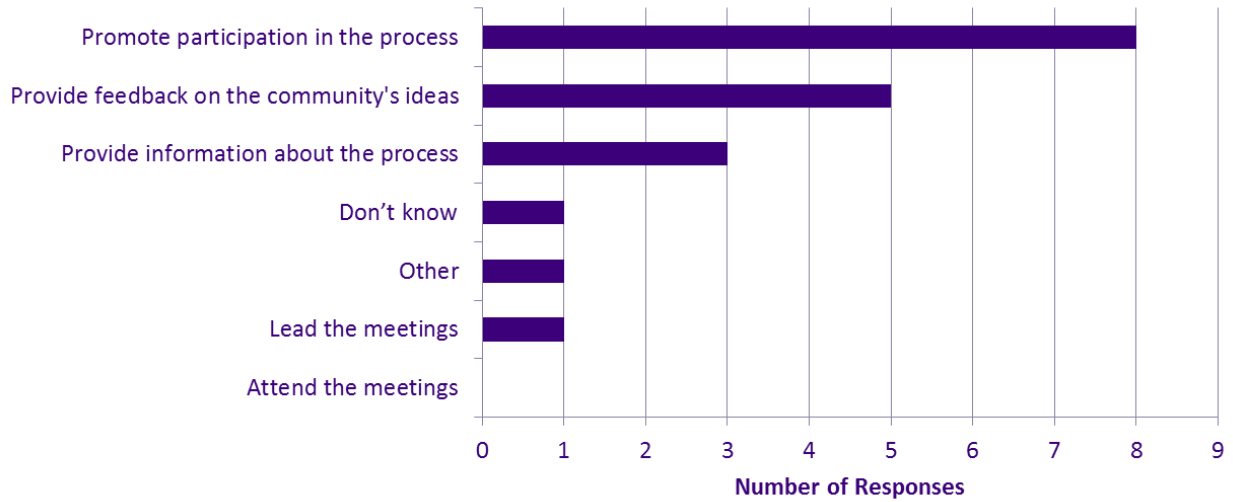
Q14B: If the City of Toronto were to repeat the participatory budgeting process again, would you recommend that others in the community take part?



When asked for recommendations to improve the PB process, residents had a variety of suggestions but many mentioned improving communication to residents to increase public awareness. Some mentioned allowing voting to take place online, or other online opportunities for participation. Others mentioned sending hard copy materials or putting up content around the neighbourhood to bring more attention to the Pilot – “A lot of seniors do not use Internet...but they do check their mailbox everyday!”. Similarly, another recommendation was to increase outreach to parents and youth. One resident said that there should be more meetings, with translators. Another said that there was not enough time given to the planning before the vote, so there should be more access to staff in the planning process to help get residents’ ideas across better. Residents stated that better clarity of the boundaries, and improved explanation of the process would be helpful. A few comments indicated that it needed to be made very clear who determines the voting outcome; in other words, some respondents felt there was a lack of clarity around the degree of power in the hands of residents. Some respondents summed this up by indicating they were unable to encourage family and neighbours to vote because they “were not convinced that their participation could make a difference” or that “their votes did not mean anything”. Regarding proposals, residents said there should be “more than one opportunity to get to the final proposals”. Another recommended “improved transparency of how the staff provided estimates of the project”.

When asked for the best role the City Councillors could play in the PB process, the majority selected ‘promote participation in the process’, followed by ‘provide feedback on the community’s ideas’.

**Q16: In your opinion, when thinking about the Participatory Budgeting process what would be the best role City councillors could play?**



## Phase 3: Interviews with City Councillors and Staff

In-person interview sessions of approximately 30 minutes were scheduled with City Councillors representing each of the Pilot areas (see Appendix C for interview guide). In addition two small-group discussions were held with City staff who participated in the PB process, each lasting 60 minutes in duration. A questionnaire (see Appendix D) was also made available to staff who were unable to attend the discussion groups to complete on their own time and submit electronically, of which seven (7) were submitted.

It is important to note that to ensure frank and objective input, the PB Pilot project management team was not included in the interviews.

### Familiarity with Participatory Budgeting

The majority of those interviewed were not very familiar with PB prior to the Pilot; the Councillors reported greater initial awareness than City staff. Now that the Pilot is almost complete, nearly all expressed feelings of increased familiarity with PB. Often, this was reported to have resulted from involvement in planning and the initial outreach meetings, as well as from content provided by the City Manager's Office. A small number of participants reported that they researched past PB projects in other geographic areas. Nearly everyone interviewed said the PB staff provided helpful information about the Pilot and the process. Respondents said the staff was very helpful in providing responses to questions, often in a timely fashion.

### Experience in the PB Pilot

When asked to reflect on their own roles in the PB Pilot, nearly everyone felt they had a positive experience. Participants mentioned positive feelings toward learning more about the PB process and their involvement in this specific Pilot. Participants whose jobs involved community engagement were happy to have made new connections, including with community residents, and to understand the community's needs and concerns in a way not previously possible. One respondent mentioned it was a good way for her to get the feel of the community as *she "got to see what [residents] were dreaming about"*.

A small group of respondents expressed frustrations regarding low attendance and participation at community meetings. One respondent said that meetings were a success, even when only a small number of residents attended. Some felt meetings provided opportunities for small groups of residents who would "take over" the discussion, and found it difficult in some instances to keep the meeting on-track. It was observed that some meeting attendees were unclear about the purpose of the meetings, which some respondents chalked-up to a lack of preparedness and awareness of community issues by the PB project staff. A small number of respondents felt their experience was negative, noting that too much time was required to attend meetings and get engaged by both themselves and residents. These respondents also found that the residents wanted the staff to do everything, and did not want to be involved in the process and details.

## Role in the PB Pilot

City Councillors and staff who provided feedback on the Pilot were involved in various roles including outreach and community engagement, political leadership, information gathering, facilitation and budget policy. Each had a varying level of involvement; a few focused a great deal of time on their PB activities while others incorporated duties into their daily workload. A small number of participants felt their roles were unclear and that there was a misunderstanding of the process; in particular, these staff felt they began the process with a different understanding than the PB project staff, and ultimately had to adapt to the PB staff vision as the process unfolded. The majority of participants were focused on one of the three Pilot areas, though a few worked with all areas (reflected by their role in the project). Nearly all had attended one to five public meetings; only a few reported not attending any. Respondents also participated in other PB activities, including training and information sessions, community planning meetings, internal and external outreach meetings, staff meetings, and voting days.

## Meeting Observations

Participants initially offered positive sentiments about the community meetings they attended, reporting they were fairly well attended by residents. Those involved in Ward 33 were more likely to express positive feelings about turn-out; Oakridge respondents were more likely to mention feelings of disappointment regarding turn-out. When asked for more details about resident turn-out, participants offered criticisms that meetings frequently involved ‘community leaders’ who had attended and ‘dominated’ or even “*hijacked the meetings*”. Some observed that the outreach strategy was not effective at reaching large groups of residents, with one indicating that they invested one month of administrative work to negotiate separate outreach strategies with local contacts and agencies. Weather seemed to have an effect on perceived attendance (summer months representing a difficult time to rally resident participation).

Some felt meetings were often off-topic, and were not sure residents knew the purpose of the meetings, often asking a lot of questions. One participant felt that “*residents needed to go to all meetings to really understand what to do*”, suggesting that the onus on participants to be informed was excessive. Residents of Ward 33 were more often observed to clearly understand their role and expectations in the PB process. Overall, the majority of respondents felt the meetings met their expectations, especially with the consideration that this was a Pilot undertaking.

## Reflecting on the PB Pilot

Nearly everyone interviewed as part of this phase of the evaluation was aware of the winning project in their area. Very few were aware of the winning projects in other areas. One comment included: *“community safety was big for residents, and the projects reflected this”*.

When asked to think about the entire PB Pilot, participants generally expressed the consensus that the process was worth both their individual effort and the City’s overall effort. Only a very few offered the view that the process was onerous for both participants and for political and City staff. Respondents thought it was important to engage participants and use this civic engagement exercise to help people get what they want in their communities. They liked the idea of empowering participants to make monetary decisions. On a personal level, one participant said that *“helping [residents] get what is needed for them to feel safe is important to me”*.

Some respondents felt that the \$150K allotment for each area was not enough money to justify the time and resources spent on the Pilot, or to result in a meaningful outcome for Pilot areas. One participant said the allotment was *“almost laughable”*. These participants found the budget made the process difficult as residents could not anticipate what projects would cost or which proposals would meet the guidelines; residents often had ideas turned down as a result. Residents were also observed to be surprised by how much certain projects would cost.

Most reported having had regular or frequent interactions with City PB project staff. Most felt staff was available when needed and always answered questions effectively. Some participants mentioned the staff was only ‘somewhat’ willing to bend on parts of the process, while others suggested that City staff provided some barriers to the process early in the project, but ultimately worked well with the community (and political staff) once everyone became more familiar with the process.

## Evaluation of Specific Successes and Challenges

Participants largely agreed the most positive outcome of the PB project was the resulting civic engagement in each area. Respondents also identified the allocation of budget and the execution of winning projects as the other main benefits. One participant was quick to mention that *“resident engagement was a huge win”* and another noted resident empowerment: *“[residents] feel like they’re part of the decisions made at City Hall”*.

From attending meetings, respondents felt in tune with the residents and the issues in each community. They were glad to have involvement from a *“broad spectrum of residents”* and felt there were few barriers to participation. Staff and Councillors felt they learned from the process and would be able to use this to shape other projects. They mentioned the new relationships with inter-divisional groups and community members that would help in their future work outside of the project.

A frequently mentioned challenge was the limited capital budget available for each area; respondents felt it was not a large enough budget for the project. In line with funding, a few participants also mentioned that the final proposals included in the vote were not particularly *“glamorous”* and residents were often disheartened when projects were identified as ineligible and little explanation was provided. Again, there were a few who mentioned the level of engagement they witnessed as disappointing. One

participant recalled the outreach process was like *“trying to pull teeth”* and another suggested that local youth in particular *“just didn’t care about it”*. One participant felt that an opportunity was missed to involve Community housing residents who were reluctant to venture to other parts of their ward or area to participate in meetings and voting. This participant felt that these activities could/should have been held in TCHC buildings to boost participation and draw these residents into the process.

Some remarked that they found it difficult to find the time to attend the meetings and to properly promote the PB process. A small group of participants said the length of the project was too long (in terms of residents having a *“short attention span”* and not seeing the project built before they lose interest), but others mentioned it was too short (in trying to fit the process into the timeframe).

There was some agreement among City Councillors that the PB process was more effective when held at the community level, as opposed to the ward-wide level. Some Councillors suggested that ward geography could pose challenges for some participants wanting to promote their projects, while other well-organized groups within a ward could dominate the process. Most felt that the process was more manageable at the community level, and should be considered for future City initiatives of this nature.

## Recommendations from City Councillors and Staff

When asked if the City of Toronto should undertake PB projects in other areas of the city in future budget years, most agreed upon that with the right changes, it should. Respondents strongly valued the community engagement and empowerment that resulted from the process, and were open to the idea of trying additional Pilots in new areas. A few proposed conducting a subsequent Pilot round of the project in the same areas to allow the City to see cumulative benefits of the project.

Due to the challenges mentioned above, many interviewees were somewhat hesitant to undertake more PB projects. One respondent noted that there are *“only so many lights and benches you can put in the community”*. Another felt that the same results could be achieved through traditional community outreach and engagement between residents and their elected officials. Others felt that it would be difficult to implement PB across all wards of Toronto as a fair, equal process. It was felt that it would be difficult to apply the same principles and process across all wards, in particular those that already benefited from robust development and investment.

Participants were glad to offer recommendations to help improve the PB process in Toronto. Respondents were quick to point to the low turn-out and noted stronger outreach efforts would be needed, especially for hard-to-reach residents. One respondent recommended making outreach materials more interesting and more accessible (to a greater demographic). A few participants said that shifting meetings to be scheduled during weekday evenings and outside of the summer could help improve turn-out. A handful of participants felt fewer meetings than what had been scheduled would be sufficient to carry-out the PB process. Some said that a goal-setting exercise with staff and council prior to public involvement would help with more efficient planning. Participants also mentioned setting clear roles and responsibilities would help ensure time and effort would be well-used.

With regards to budget, the majority of staff and Councillors felt the funds for capital projects needed to be increased to be meaningful. By introducing clear guidelines on what the budget can accomplish, perhaps via a dedicated capital team, respondents felt residents would be better equipped to participate. Thoughts also included introducing an example list of possible proposals prior to idea

generation to help residents get started in the process. One participant mentioned reversing the process in a way to use the idea generation to inform the budget (instead of presenting a budget and trying to incorporate proposals to fit it). A minority felt staff needed to be more educated about the geography of each area to better understand the issues affecting the communities and as a result be better able to speak to them. Also mentioned was using consistent branding, including the global PB branding to help residents identify the project easier. One participant felt that it could be helpful for the PB team to present at other community groups to increase participation, while another mentioned setting up voting at successful events that are already busy with residents.



## Appendices

### Appendix A – Resident Meeting Interview Guide

City of Toronto Participatory Budgeting Pilot Project

Community Participant Interviews

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I work with Environics, a public opinion research firm that has been hired by the City of Toronto to evaluate the Participatory Budgeting Pilot project and to get feedback from the people who participate in it. May I have five minutes of your time to ask you a few questions about your experience at today's meeting? I don't need your name, and all of your comments will be kept confidential. I'm just interested in your general observations and impressions of this project.

1. What is the main reason you decided to attend this meeting?
2. What were you hoping to learn at this meeting? What were you hoping to hear? PROBE: Did you?
3. Will you attend other community meetings about the participatory budgeting project in your area? PROBE: Why? Why not?
4. Will you vote for your favourite proposal at the end of this process? PROBE: Why? Why not?
5. How do you think the participatory budgeting Pilot project will be good for your community? PROBE: How do you think the project could be good for you personally?
6. Have you ever attended any other community meetings or activities in your area? PROBE: How many in the past year? How recently? What were they about?
7. Were you aware that there is a website for the Participatory Budgeting Pilot project in your area? Now that you know, will you visit it?

Thank you for your time.

Interview date: \_\_\_\_\_

Ward/Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer initials:

## Appendix B – Online Survey Questionnaire

### City of Toronto Participatory Budgeting 2015 Evaluation survey ONLINE Questionnaire

#### Introduction

This survey is being conducted on behalf of the City of Toronto to collect your feedback on the City's recent Participatory Budgeting Pilot. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. All responses will be kept confidential and the findings will be used to help us report on options for Participatory Budgeting in Toronto for the future.

To help us make sure we are including different groups of people in our evaluation, we need to first ask for some basic information about you.

- A. What are the first three digits of your postal code?

- B. In what year were you born?

- C. What is your gender?

01 – Male

02 – Female

03 – Transgendered

04 – Other

- D. Do you live in one of the three areas of Toronto that were part of the City's Participatory Budgeting Pilot?

Yes - Rustic

Yes - Oakridge

Yes - Ward 33

No, I live in a different area of the City of Toronto

**IF NO IN D:** Thank you for your interest in Toronto's Participatory Budgeting Pilot study. For more information, please [click here for our WEBSITE](#) and stay tuned for the results of project voting in the participating communities

**THANK AND TERMINATE PARTICIPANTS WHO SELECTED NO IN D**

\*\*\*\*\*

1. Did you participate in the Participatory Budgeting Process in your community this year? For clarification, participation can include attending community meetings, submitting a project for consideration, and voting for your preferred project on the final ballot.

Yes  
No

**IF NO IN Q1**

1b. Which of the following best represents why you did not participate in the Participatory Budgeting process in your community this year?

- I did not know about Pilot, until now
- I knew about the Pilot but chose not to participate
- I knew about the Pilot but was unable to participate
- Other
- Don't know

1c. Using your own words, please tell us a little bit more about why you didn't participate in Participatory Budgeting this year.

**OPEN END**

**THANK AND TERMINATE PARTICIPANTS WHO SELECTED NO IN Q1**

2. **IF YES IN Q1:** How did you first learn about the Participatory Budgeting Pilot?  
**SELECT ALL THAT APPLY**

- 01 – Community newsletter / newspaper
- 02 – My City councillor
- 03 – City of Toronto website
- 04 – Social media – Twitter, Facebook, etc.
- 05 – Signs/posters in the community
- 06 – A flyer/piece of mail
- 07 – From City staff
- 08 – A local agency/organization
- 09 – Word of mouth/ friends / family / neighbours
- 10 – Other websites
- 11 – Other (please specify)

3. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the different types of communications from the City about the Participatory Budgeting Pilot?

**ROWS - RANDOMIZE**

- a) Information about public meetings
- b) Information about the Participatory Budgeting process and how it would work
- c) Information about how to get involved
- d) Information about the types of projects that the PB money could be spent on
- e) Information about how to get a proposal on the ballot
- f) Information about when and where you could vote for projects to get built

- 01 – Very satisfied
- 02 – Somewhat satisfied
- 03 – Somewhat dissatisfied
- 04 – Very dissatisfied

4. In which of the following ways did you participate in Participatory Budgeting in your area?  
**SELECT ALL THAT APPLY**

**RANDOMIZE**

- Went to community meetings
- Visited the City of Toronto/Participatory Budgeting website
- Following PB on social media
- Created or championed a proposal for PB
- Voted for my preferred PB projects
- Other (ANCHOR)
- None of the above (ANCHOR; SINGLE SELECT)

5. IF “COMMUNITY MEETINGS” IN Q4

How many Participatory Budgeting community meetings did you attend?

- 01 – None
- 02 – One
- 03 – Two
- 04 – Three
- 05 – Four or more

ASK OF ALL WHO PARTICIPATED IN Q3

6. What was the main reason you participated in the Participatory Budgeting Process in your community?

99 – Unsure

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

ROWS – RANDOMIZE

- a) The Information about the Participatory Budgeting Pilot process was clear
- b) I understood how I could participate in the Pilot
- c) There were sufficient opportunities to speak with City staff and ask questions about the PB process and proposals
- d) There was sufficient opportunities to brainstorm and discuss ideas for how to spend the PB money
- e) I had the chance to discuss other neighbourhood issues (not PB related) with City staff
- f) I had the chance to discuss other neighbourhood issues (not PB) with other participants
- g) In general, the locations of the public meetings were convenient
- h) The hours for the public meetings were convenient
- i) The number of public meetings was appropriate
- j) The participants reflected the diversity of my neighbourhood
- k) I had the opportunity to present or champion an idea to the other participants to have it on the final ballot
- l) Overall, participating in the PB process was a good use of my time. ANCHOR

- 01 – Strongly agree
- 02 – Somewhat agree
- 03 – Somewhat disagree
- 04 – Strongly disagree
- 05 – Don't know/Not Applicable

8. Did you participate in the final vote?

- 01 – Yes
- 02 – No

9. To what extent were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the voting process?

**ROWS - RANDOMIZE**

- a) How easy it was to vote
- b) The types of projects in my area to vote for
- c) The amount of information available about the final list of projects
- d) The hours available for voting
- e) The locations for voting

- 01 – Very satisfied
- 02 – Somewhat satisfied
- 03 – Somewhat dissatisfied
- 04 – Very dissatisfied
- 05 – Don't know/Not Applicable

10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

**ROWS - RANDOMIZE**

- a) The participatory budgeting process met my expectations
- b) The participatory budgeting process helped to identify issues or needs in the community
- c) The projects that made it to the final ballot projects will address the community's issues or needs
- d) Participatory Budgeting brought our community together
- e) Participatory Budgeting made me feel like I can have a say in decisions that affect my community
- f) Participatory budgeting is a good way to make local / community decisions
- g) The PB process has been beneficial to me as an individual in the community
- h) The PB process has been beneficial to the community
- i) I don't see how the final proposals on the ballot will benefit me personally
- j) All of the proposals on the PB ballot are in locations that won't benefit me.

- 01 – Strongly agree
- 02 – Somewhat agree
- 03 – Somewhat disagree
- 04 – Strongly disagree
- 05 – Don't know/Not Applicable

11. Please indicate to what extent you agree with each of the following statements:

Through the Participatory Budgeting process I:

- a) Learned about City of Toronto programs and services
- b) Learned how to get information about City of Toronto programs and services
- c) Know more about how the City works and how decisions are made
- d) Found out about ways to get involved e.g. volunteering, consultations, programs, etc.
- e) Had the chance to meet new people in my neighbourhood
- f) Had a say in how money is spent in my neighbourhood
- g) Know my neighbourhood better

- 01 – Strongly agree
- 02 – Somewhat agree
- 03 – Somewhat disagree
- 04 – Strongly disagree
- 05 – Don't know/Not applicable

12. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the participatory budgeting process?

- 01 – Very satisfied
- 02 – Somewhat satisfied
- 03 – Somewhat dissatisfied
- 04 – Very dissatisfied

**IF DISSATISFIED IN Q12**

13. What would you say is the main reason you are dissatisfied with the participatory budgeting process?

99 – Unsure

**IF SATISFIED IN Q12**

13b. What would you say is the main reason you are satisfied with the participatory budgeting process?

99 – Unsure

14. If the City of Toronto were to repeat the participatory budgeting process again, would you . . . ?

**ROWS - RANDOMIZE**

- a) Take part in the process yourself
- b) Recommend that others in the community take part

- 01 - Yes
- 02 – No
- 03 – Don't know

15. What, in your opinion, could be done to improve the participatory budgeting process?

99 – Unsure

16. In your opinion, when thinking about the Participatory Budgeting process what would be the best role City councillors could play?

**RANDOMIZE. SINGLE SELECT**

- Lead the meetings
- Attend the meetings
- Provide information about the process
- Promote participation in the process
- Provide feedback on the community's ideas
- Other (ANCHOR)
- Don't know (ANCHOR)

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

D1

In addition to being Canadian, what is your ethnic or cultural background? (Select all that apply)

- 01 – English, Irish, Scottish or Welsh
- 02 – French/Quebecois
- 03 – Italian
- 04 – Portuguese
- 05 – Greek
- 06 – Jewish
- 07 – West Indian (Caribbean, Jamaican, Guyanese, etc.)
- 08 – South Asian (East Indian, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, etc.)
- 09 - Chinese
- 10 – Other East Asian (Japanese, Korean)
- 11 – West Asian, Middle Eastern or Arab (Armenian, Egyptian, Afghan, Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian, Turkish, Saudi, etc.)
- 12 – Southeast Asian (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian, Filipino, etc.)
- 13 – South or Latin American
- 14 – Other European (Russian, German, Dutch, Scandinavian, Polish, Ukrainian, Dutch, Spanish, Hungarian, etc.)
- 15 – Native Canadian (Inuit, Aboriginal, Metis)
- 16 – African (black)
- 19 – American
- 98 – Other (specify) **[ANCHOR HERE]**
- 20 – Only Canadian **[SINGLE RESPONSE. ANCHOR AT BOTTOM]**

D2 Do you currently rent or own your primary residence?

- 01 - Rent
- 02 – Own
- 03 – Don’t know/prefer not to say

D3 How long have you lived in your community?

- 01 – Less than one year
- 02 – One to five years
- 03 – Six to 10 years
- 04 – 11 to 20 years
- 05 – More than 20 years

**Thank you for completing this survey. Your views and opinions are important to the City of Toronto.**

## Appendix C – Councillor Interview Questionnaire

### City of Toronto – Participatory Budgeting Pilot Survey

The City of Toronto has retained Environics Research Group to conduct a formal evaluation of the 2015 Participatory Budgeting Pilot. In addition to collecting feedback from residents in the Pilot areas, Environics is seeking input from City staff who was involved in the Pilot through attending public meetings, developing budgets or potential locations for proposals from the public, or through outreach, engagement and assisting at the public vote days.

Please be assured that the responses you provide are completely confidential and your feedback will not be attributed to you specifically.

Thanks in advance for your assistance with this research project.

1. How familiar were you with Participatory Budgeting prior to this year's PB Pilot?  
Very familiar  
  
Somewhat familiar  
  
Not very familiar  
  
Not at all familiar
2. Now that the PB Pilot is almost complete, how familiar do you feel with PB?  
More than when the Pilot started?  
About the same?
  - a. What resources, if any, did you rely on to learn about PB?
  - b. Did the PB project staff provide you with any information about the PB Pilot or process?  
If yes, did you find it helpful? Why? Why not?  
Yes  
No  
Why/why not?
3. Overall, when you think of the role you had in the PB Pilot, would you describe your experience as positive or negative? Why did you say that?  
Positive  
Negative
4. Can you please describe your role in the PB Pilot in detail?
  - a. Did you attend public meetings? Approximately how many?  
Yes  
No  
How many?



- b. What other meetings, events or activities did you participate in during the PB Pilot project?
5. IF ATTENDED PUBLIC MEETINGS: What are your general observations of these meetings?
  - a. Were they well attended by residents?
    - Yes
    - No
  - b. Did residents understand what they were there to do?
    - Yes
    - No
  - c. Overall, how was the level of engagement of residents at the meetings you attended?
  - d. Did they meet your expectations?
    - Response:
    - Yes
    - No
6. Are you aware of the winning projects that were chosen by residents in each of the Pilot areas?
  - Yes
  - No
7. When you think about the entire PB Pilot, start to finish including the public meetings, outreach, project ideas, the number of residents who participated and the result of voting in your PB Pilot area – do you believe it justifies the effort the City put into the process? Does it justify the effort you or your office put into the Pilot process? Yes/No – why did you say that?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Why?
8. How often, if ever, did you interact with the PB project staff?
  - Often
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never
9. How helpful did you find the PB project staff when it came to answering any questions you had about PB or providing you with the resources you needed?
10. What did you observe to be the main benefits of the PB Pilot in the Pilot areas? For you personally?
11. What did you believe to be the main challenges of the PB Pilot in the Pilot areas? For you personally?

12. Do you believe that the City of Toronto should undertake PB projects in other areas of the City in future budget years? Why? Why not?

Yes

No

Why/Why not?

13. What would you consider to be the most positive outcome of the PB project?

14. And what, if any, recommendations would you make to improve the PB process in Toronto in the future?

Thank you for your time.

## Appendix D – Staff Interview Questionnaire

# ENVIRONICS RESEARCH

### City of Toronto – Participatory Budgeting Pilot Survey

The City of Toronto has retained Environics Research Group to conduct a formal evaluation of the 2015 Participatory Budgeting Pilot. In addition to collecting feedback from residents in the Pilot areas, Environics is seeking input from City staff who was involved in the Pilot through attending public meetings, developing budgets or potential locations for proposals from the public, or through outreach, engagement and assisting at the public vote days.

Please be assured that the responses you provide are completely confidential and your feedback will not be attributed to you specifically.

Thanks in advance for your assistance with this research project.

1. How familiar were you with Participatory Budgeting prior to this year's PB Pilot?  
Very familiar  
  
Somewhat familiar  
  
Not very familiar  
  
Not at all familiar
2. Now that the PB Pilot is almost complete, how familiar do you feel with PB?  
More than when the Pilot started?  
About the same?
  - a. What resources, if any, did you rely on to learn about PB?
  - b. Did the PB project staff provide you with any information about the PB Pilot or process?  
If yes, did you find it helpful? Why? Why not?  
Yes  
No  
Why/why not?
3. Overall, when you think of the role you had in the PB Pilot, would you describe your experience as positive or negative? Why did you say that?  
Positive  
Negative

4. Can you please describe your role in the PB Pilot in detail?
  - a. Did you attend public meetings? Approximately how many?  
Yes  
No  
How many?
  - b. What other meetings, events or activities did you participate in during the PB Pilot project?
  
5. IF ATTENDED PUBLIC MEETINGS: What are your general observations of these meetings?
  - a. Were they well attended by residents?  
Yes  
No
  - b. Did residents understand what they were there to do?  
Yes  
No
  - c. Overall, how was the level of engagement of residents at the meetings you attended?
  - d. Did they meet your expectations?  
Response:  
Yes  
No
  
6. Are you aware of the winning projects that were chosen by residents in each of the Pilot areas?  
Yes  
No
  
7. When you think about the entire PB Pilot, start to finish including the public meetings, outreach, project ideas, the number of residents who participated and the result of voting in your PB Pilot area – do you believe it justifies the effort the City put into the process? Does it justify the effort you or your office put into the Pilot process? Yes/No – why did you say that?  
Yes  
No  
Why?
  
8. How often, if ever, did you interact with the PB project staff?  
Often  
Sometimes  
Rarely  
Never

9. How helpful did you find the PB project staff when it came to answering any questions you had about PB or providing you with the resources you needed?
10. What did you observe to be the main benefits of the PB Pilot in the Pilot areas? For you personally?
11. What did you believe to be the main challenges of the PB Pilot in the Pilot areas? For you personally?
12. Do you believe that the City of Toronto should undertake PB projects in other areas of the City in future budget years? Why? Why not?  
Yes  
No  
Why/Why not?
13. What would you consider to be the most positive outcome of the PB project?
14. And what, if any, recommendations would you make to improve the PB process in Toronto in the future?

Thank you for your time.