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Contact: Maria Hadden
Participatory Budgeting Project
maria@participatorybudgeting.org
Phone: (773) 575-0075
www.pbchicago.org

Contact: Thea Crum
UIC Great Cities Institute
tcrum3@uic.edu
Phone: (312) 996-4617
www.pbchicago.org

**PRESS RELEASE: ALDERMEN & COMMUNITY GROUPS PILOT NEW MODEL OF
DEMOCRATIC BUDGETING FOR CHICAGO**

Participatory Budgeting Lets Residents Decide How to Spend Millions in Public Money

Chicago, Illinois, October 3, 2012: Aldermen Joe Moore (49th), Leslie Hairston (5th), John Arena (45th) and James Cappleman (46th) joined partners from the UIC Great Cities Institute, The Participatory Budgeting Project, and several city-wide organizations today to announce a groundbreaking initiative in democracy. Participatory Budgeting Chicago (PB Chicago) will allow community members in these four wards to directly decide how to spend a combined \$4 million in discretionary capital funds ("menu money").

In 2009, Alderman Moore was the first elected official in the U.S. to implement a Participatory Budgeting (PB) process. Each year since then, residents of his ward who are over 16 years old have come together to discuss community capital needs, develop project proposals, and vote on ward priorities. Their work resulted in new playgrounds, disability access ramps at the beach, solar-powered trash compactors, bike lanes, sidewalk repairs, street resurfacing, and park improvements.

This is the first year that multiple wards have undertaken the process.

Alderman Joe Moore announced the results of his ward's third PB cycle in April (see below). "Over 1,300 residents came out to vote this spring for PB in my ward," he said. "Hundreds of community members attended assemblies and participated in meetings through the fall and winter to discuss local infrastructure needs and create specific projects to address them with a community vote deciding project priorities."

Alderman Leslie Hairston said, "Participatory Budgeting is a process that promotes the transparency, accountability and democratic oversight that Chicagoans deserve."

Alderman John Arena said, "This will further the transparency and accountability I established when taking office. The local budgeting process has the most direct effect on our quality of life. I'm proud to be part of this expansion of democracy in Chicago and to give 45th ward residents the chance to decide how to spend their tax dollars."

Alderman James Cappleman said, "The Participatory Budgeting process is a continuation of my commitment to have community involvement and transparency in how our tax dollars are spent."

Rachel Weber, Associate Director of the UIC Great Cities Institute, one of the lead community

partners for the initiative, said, "Through PB Chicago, residents will not just advise their representatives on capital spending; they will actively decide where that money goes through an organized process of community outreach, needs assessment, proposal development, and voting. Our goals are to insure that: the funding addresses the areas of greatest community need (**Equity**), the process involves the greatest number of residents, particularly those who have not previously participated in electoral politics (**Inclusion**), and the initiative results in a sense of solidarity and respect among ward residents (**Community Building**)."

Maria Hadden, Project Coordinator with the non-profit organization The Participatory Budgeting Project, the lead technical assistance partner for the initiative, said, "Chicago is a city of grassroots organizing and democratic values. The fact that participatory budgeting in the United States began here fits with the city's history of leading progressive change. The city of Chicago has joined over 1,500 other cities around the world in including meaningful, participatory community engagement in their public budgeting process."

Amisha Patel, Executive Director of The Grassroots Collaborative, a member of the PB Chicago Steering Committee spoke of her hopes for PB Chicago. "Participatory budgeting has the potential to bring forward the voices of thousands of Chicagoans normally on the outskirts of political process. It is a great opportunity for working families, immigrants, young people, and many others to make sure that there is equity in the spending of millions of dollars in their neighborhoods, benefiting all residents, and not just the well-connected.."

"Chicagoans want safer streets and better transportation choices," said **Ron Burke, Executive Director of the Active Transportation Alliance**, a non-profit that advocates for better biking, walking and transit. "Engaging people in the decision-making process is an important way to ensure that our streets will better meet the needs of all people who use them."

Participatory Budgeting began in Porto Alegre, Brazil where, since 1989, as many as 50,000 people have decided how to spend as much as 20% of the city budget annually. In the past twenty years, PB spread to over 1,500 cities in Latin America, Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America, with the United Nations promoting it as a best practice for democratic governance.

Winning projects in Alderman Joe Moore's 49th Ward from the 2011-12 PB Cycle

1. "Leaf Out the 49th Ward:" Trees for Rogers Park: Plant more than 100 trees in parkways throughout Rogers Park to provide beauty and relief from summer heat. Cost: \$75,000
2. Urgent Sidewalk Repairs: Replace sidewalks in six locations in the most critical need of repair, where missing sections of pavement or large cracks create risks to pedestrians. Cost: \$150,000
3. New Playground at Touhy Park: Replacement of the playground at Touhy Park with a new rubber-surface playground that has separate play areas for younger and older children. Cost: \$125,000
4. "Art = Rogers Park:" Underpass Mural Project: Creation of new murals at over 20 unpainted CTA and Metra viaducts ducts and the CTA embankment in Dubkin Park. Cost: \$120,000