



A Better Way To Budget For A Better Philadelphia

As our proposed spending nears \$5 billion for the operating budget alone, it is a tremendous undertaking to review the city's plan to spend our city's scarce resources. But, city council and the public at large deserve more in terms of information about city spending. We can do better in terms of preparing and presenting systems and data so we can make better decisions about our budgetary assumptions and spending priorities. Philadelphia's financial systems were once considered forward thinking, but they were designed for the 1950s. Nearly three quarters of a century later, the public and this city council deserve modern, accountable, and transparent government budgetary systems.

Today, there is no reasonable way city council, much less the members of the general public, can determine what will actually happen in terms of spending by looking at the city administration's budgetary testimony. Because it is the mayor who actually determines line-item spending, there is no way for the public or city council to hold the administration accountable for what is actually spent or not spent in a given fiscal year. Finally, because there is not enumeration and public scrutiny of actual public contracts before they are awarded, there is almost no ability for the public or city council to participate meaningfully in decisions about who actually gets city work.

As Mayor, I will give the public more information about city spending so we can budget better and make better decisions.

Today's city budget process is opaque and impenetrable.

The proposed FY20 budget projects FY19 revenues to be more than \$26 million higher than originally budgeted. That money could have been programmed to fund badly needed investments in our neighborhoods. Today, Philadelphia's mayor establishes the city's annual revenue estimate, which establishes a ceiling for budgetary expenditures. But, by setting an unnecessarily low estimate or an unreasonably high estimate, the mayor is able to budget to spend more than we have or to shortchange necessary investments.

In FY18, the Police Department budget was set at \$652 million, but the Mayor ended up over-spending that amount by more than \$60 million before the year was over. In our dirty city, the mayor budgeted for a Streets Department of more than 1,900 employees this year but recent payroll records showed 154 fewer positions filled in the department. Today, city spending is authorized by agency and by class so city council and the public have no true say

The Urban Art Gallery • 262 South 52nd Street • Philadelphia, PA • 19139

Tel: 215. 515.6077 • Fax: 215.965.9617

williamsin2019.com • Follow us on social media: [@williamsin2019](https://twitter.com/williamsin2019)



about a real spending plan beyond a vague idea that a certain amount will be devoted to each agency and that, within each agency, money will be allocated by category for such expenditures as salary and materials.

Today, the city charter only mandates annual budgetary planning for operating expenditures, but best practices call for longer-term financial planning. As we can finally anticipate the end of Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority oversight, we should be mindful to formally incorporate a more long-term view.

Today, the proposed budget represents almost \$1 Billion in increased spending from the last budget of the previous administration, exceeding the rate of inflation while, simultaneously, city services have deteriorated in many serious ways. Our streets have never been worse. Potholes are everywhere. And, we are living down to our Fithadelphia reputation. It is past time for our city to re-evaluate how public-resources -- our tax money -- connect to public-policy programs and services that are funded by those taxes.

Today, the end of the fiscal year occurs with little thought as to the accomplishments of the previous year's spending. But, we would be better served by a process that incorporates a consideration of how our spending plans affected the state of the city. In the future, the mayor should be required to reconcile the budget every year, just like people at home reconcile their bank balance at the end of the month.

Today, initiatives routinely continue year after year with little consideration as to their effectiveness or any regular justification to continue that spending.

Today, it is possible to view personal credit-card spending data online instantly to track our household spending and monitor our personal transactions, but the city still does not make available real-time information about its expenditures. Despite promises of openness and transparency, the current budget is still a mystery to the public, nearly impossible to understand.

Today, the city's most pressing and intractable problem is poverty. In the last three years, there has been no credible economic-development plan to create jobs and lift poor Philadelphians out of poverty.

To make Philadelphia's budget process a way to set priorities and provide accountability to the citizenry, I offer **A Better Way To Budget For A Better Philadelphia.**

The Urban Art Gallery • 262 South 52nd Street • Philadelphia, PA • 19139

Tel: 215. 515.6077 • Fax: 215.965.9617

williamsin2019.com • Follow us on social media: [@williamsin2019](https://twitter.com/williamsin2019)



A Better Way To Budget For A Better Philadelphia

Change The Budget Process To Engage Participation

Philadelphians deserve more information about city spending so we can make better decisions. As mayor I will:

- Establish an independent local budget office similar to the congressional budget office to estimate city budget revenues to avoid overly optimistic (or pessimistic) revenue estimates by the mayoral administration.
- Adopt line-item budgeting to detail proposed expenditures to give city council and the public real authority over city spending.
- Change the city charter to require five-year budgets and financial plans in detail that both citizens and council members can understand.
- Utilize sunset provisions in contracts and programs to ensure that the city finds worth in its spending and does not continue initiatives past their effectiveness.

The Urban Art Gallery • 262 South 52nd Street • Philadelphia, PA • 19139

Tel: 215. 515.6077 • Fax: 215.965.9617

williamsin2019.com • Follow us on social media: [@williamsin2019](https://twitter.com/williamsin2019)



Change The Budget Process To Provide More Transparency And Accountability

Philadelphians deserve to know where our money is going and what it is doing. As mayor I will:

- Require the mayor to produce a programmatic expression of the city budget and issue a report card on city services to track outcomes and citizen satisfaction.
- Require a comprehensive year-end report to detail how much of each line item in the budget was actually spent and to articulate the progress our city has made toward achieving outcome goals set forth at the beginning of the yearly budget process.
- Require comprehensive and real-time, line-item online budget and contract details with a goal toward making available all information the city is required to provide pursuant to a valid right-to-know law request.
- Publish a comprehensive economic-development plan that considers tax policy, infrastructure investments, arts and culture spending, and the leverage of city-owned utility and transportation assets to reach targeted employment goals.

Today, 21st-century Philadelphia faces challenges that 1950 Philadelphia could never have anticipated. But the passage of time has also seen the emergence of incredible advances of information technology and communication tools. The financial systems designed for the era of the Phillies Whiz Kids are insufficient for the modern Philadelphia of Bryce Harper's team and it is time to rethink how we consider the city budget and the tools we use to communicate about city spending.

We Deserve Better

The Urban Art Gallery • 262 South 52nd Street • Philadelphia, PA • 19139

Tel: 215. 515.6077 • Fax: 215.965.9617

williamsin2019.com • Follow us on social media: @williamsin2019