

Engaging Budget Conversations:
How Online Simulations
Change Everything

NCLGBA Winter Conference

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Justin Amos, Moderator

Strategy & Budget Analyst
City of Charlotte

Presenters

- Jon Decker, Strategic Issues Analyst,
City of Greensboro
- Sam Smith, Administrative Officer II,
City of Charlotte
- Chris Adams, President,

Balancing Act

Agenda

- When it comes to Budget Participation, Simulations Rule
- Greensboro goes High-Tech and High-Touch
- Charlotte Uses Humor to Boost Participation
- *“Want a Receipt with those taxes, Ma'am?”*

Chris Adams

President, Balancing Act

Denver, Colorado

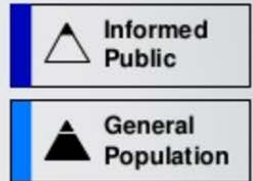
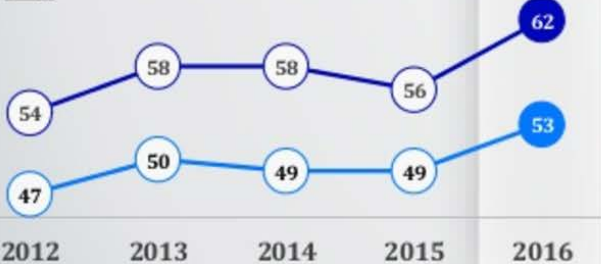
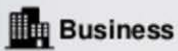
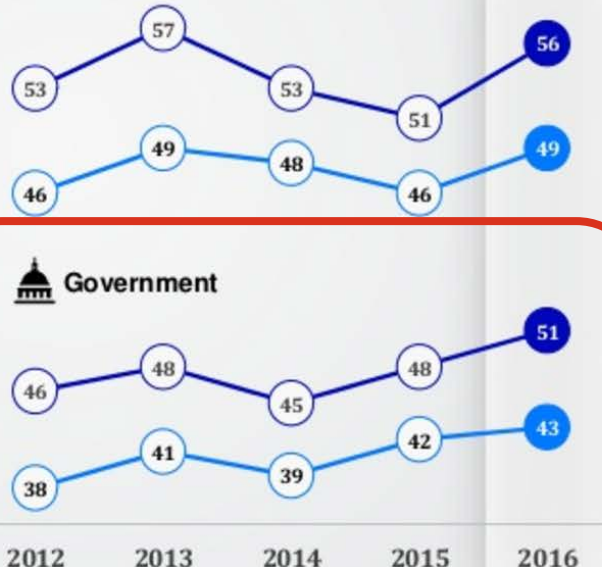
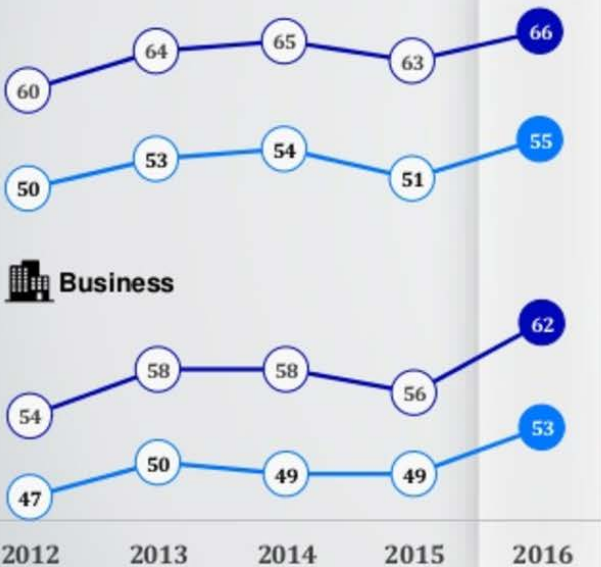
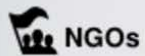
Why do Local Govs Need Budget Participation?

- “GFOA recommends that governments incorporate public participation efforts in planning, budgeting, and performance management results processes.”
 - It’s the “right thing to do” for good governance
 - Transparency
 - Accountability
 - **Participation**
 - Need to cut services
 - Need for a tax increase
 - Structural issues such as legacy infrastructure or pensions
-
- Get more value for sharing financial info beyond just transparency

The Trust Dividend

Post-Recession Highs

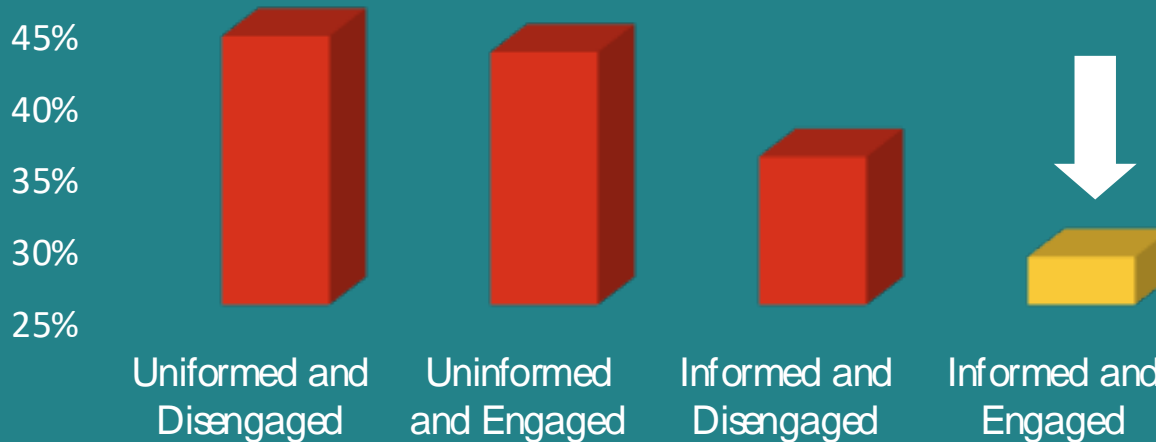
Percent trust in the four institutions of government, business, media and NGOs, 2012 vs. 2016



Source: 2016 Edelman Trust Barometer Q11-14. Below is a list of institutions. For each one, please indicate how much you trust that institution to do what is right using a nine-point scale, where one means that you "do not trust them at all" and nine means that you "trust them a great deal." (Top 4 Box, Trust) Informed Public and General Population, 25-country global total.

Improve Attitude Towards Taxes

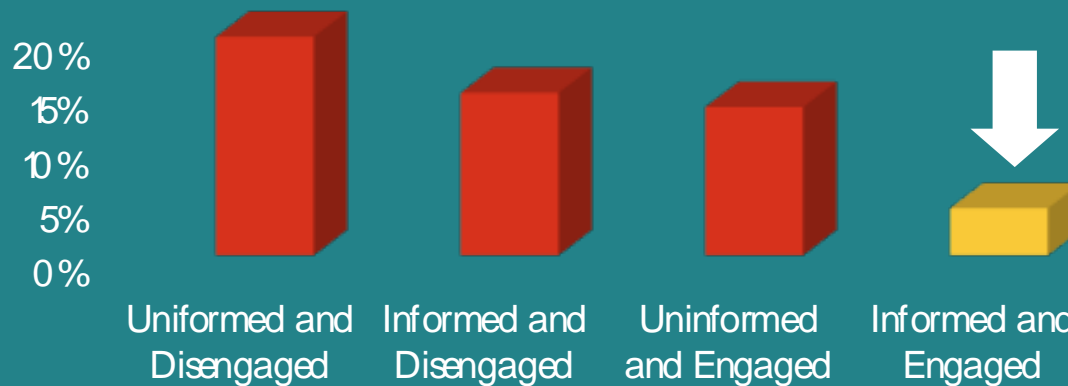
Belief that Sales Tax Rate is "Too High" when people are...



STATE OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE
GENERAL INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION
SURVEY OF CALIFORNIA RESIDENTS
FISCAL ATTITUDES 2013

Reduce Prevalence of “Magical Thinking”

Probability of Simultaneous Preference for *Minimizing Taxes and Investing in Services* when people are...



Create Realistic Problem-Solvers

*“In participatory cities,
nothing is off the table
when dealing with a fiscal*



Budget Participation Goals

IAP2 Spectrum

of Public Participation



Increasing Level of Public Impact

Inform

To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

Consult

To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

Involve

To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

Collaborate

To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

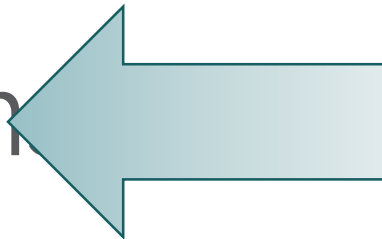
Empower

To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

Public participation goal

What are the Mechanisms for Budget Engagement?

- Public Meetings
- Focus Groups
- Advisory Committees
- Surveys
- Simulation



Budget Constraints & The Limitation of Surveys

*“Without being faced with the real **budget constraints** and service needs facing decision-makers, or **the cost of their choices**, citizens appear to find acceptable any government services that don't offend them. **Little is learned from such efforts.**”*

Sincere Preferences

“There is a disconnect between what citizens expect from government and what they are willing to pay — or, perhaps, we have not utilized participation techniques to adequately capture

ESPOUSED BY THE PUBLIC IN THE 1980S
“GIVEN THE INFORMATION.” PUBLIC

Early Paper Simulation Eugene Oregon: 1991-1992

This is BOB:
Build your Own Budget

HOW WOULD YOU BALANCE THE CITY BUDGET?

The City of Eugene is \$8 million short of the money needed just to maintain *current* services. The shortfall would be even bigger if the City were to *increase* services — such as increasing the level of police or fire services, building a new library, or increasing the supply of affordable housing.

How would *you* balance the City budget? Would you reduce services? Would you create user fees, such as a library fee? Would you increase the money available to pay for current and new services by levying a tax — say, a local retail sales tax? Or some combination of these strategies? These are tough choices.

1. THE BUDGET "SHORTFALL"



Directions: First, use a pencil with an eraser.

We start with the \$8 million budget shortfall.

The Budget "Shortfall" =
Box A 8.0 Million

2. SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Directions: Next, we have listed service improvements and their yearly cost. For each improvement you want, please write its cost in the column labeled "New Costs". (The number to the left of each item below corresponds to its description in the enclosed newspaper tabloid.)



	Estimated Cost (in millions)	New Cost
41 Affordable Housing Construction	.30	_____
42 Community Policing	4.00	_____
43 Fire Redeployment	1.50	_____
44 New Library	2.30	_____
45 Tourism/Arts	.70	_____

Add the "new costs" of the service improvements =
Box B _____

Parks Services		
8 Buildings & Park Amenities	1.55	_____
9 Turf & Grounds	.85	_____
10 Riverside Parks		_____
/Owen Rose Garden	.80	_____
11 Landscaping/Park Trees/ Hendricks Park	.65	_____
12 Downtown Mall Maintenance	.25	_____
13 Planning & Property Management	.25	_____
Recreation Services		
14 Community Centers	1.25	_____
15 Swimming Pools	.80	_____
16 Senior Centers	.65	_____
17 Athletics Programs	.35	_____
18 Specialized Recreation (for the disabled)	.30	_____
19 Outdoor/Environmental	.15	_____

Add the savings from
Cultural, Library, Parks & Recreation
Services reductions = Box 1 _____

Development Services		
20 Building Permits/Plan Checking	1.05	_____
21 Code Compliance	.40	_____
22 Business Licensing	.20	_____
23 Community Information/ Parking Permits	.10	_____
24 Business Assistance Team	.40	_____
25 Downtown Development	.20	_____
26 Affordable Housing/ Neighborhood Development	.15	_____
27 Metropolitan Partnership Contract	.15	_____
28 Land Use Permits	.65	_____
29 Community Planning	.50	_____
30 Metro Area Planning	.40	_____
31 Citizen Involvement/ Neighborhood Groups	.15	_____
32 Transportation: Street Trees	.45	_____

Add the savings from Development Services
reductions = Box 2 _____

Early Online Simulation Johnson County, Kansas: 2012

▶ HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

▼ PUBLIC SAFETY & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Community Corrections 3

Emergency Communications 3

Emergency Medical Services 3

Reduced: \$0

Service Category	Percentage
Community Corrections	6.6%
Emergency Communications	20%
Emergency Medical Services	73.3%

● Community Corrections
● Emergency Communications
● Emergency Medical Services

Next Back Reset

Emergency Communications

Johnson County Emergency Communications Center (ECC) manages all 911 fire and emergency medical service requests by citizens in the county and provides radio dispatching services to all 11 fire departments and Med-Act ambulances. ECC dispatchers are trained to provide emergency medical direction to 911 callers to begin emergency care at the time of the 911 call. In 2013, 97% of the 54,146 fire and medical calls were dispatched within 60 seconds, which exceeds the 95% National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard. The rapid dispatching of fire and emergency medical calls enables the appropriate emergency responders to promptly begin their response to emergencies and thereby increases the opportunities for better patient medical outcomes and reduced property loss by fire. Emergency medical and fire calls increase annually at an average of 3.5%.

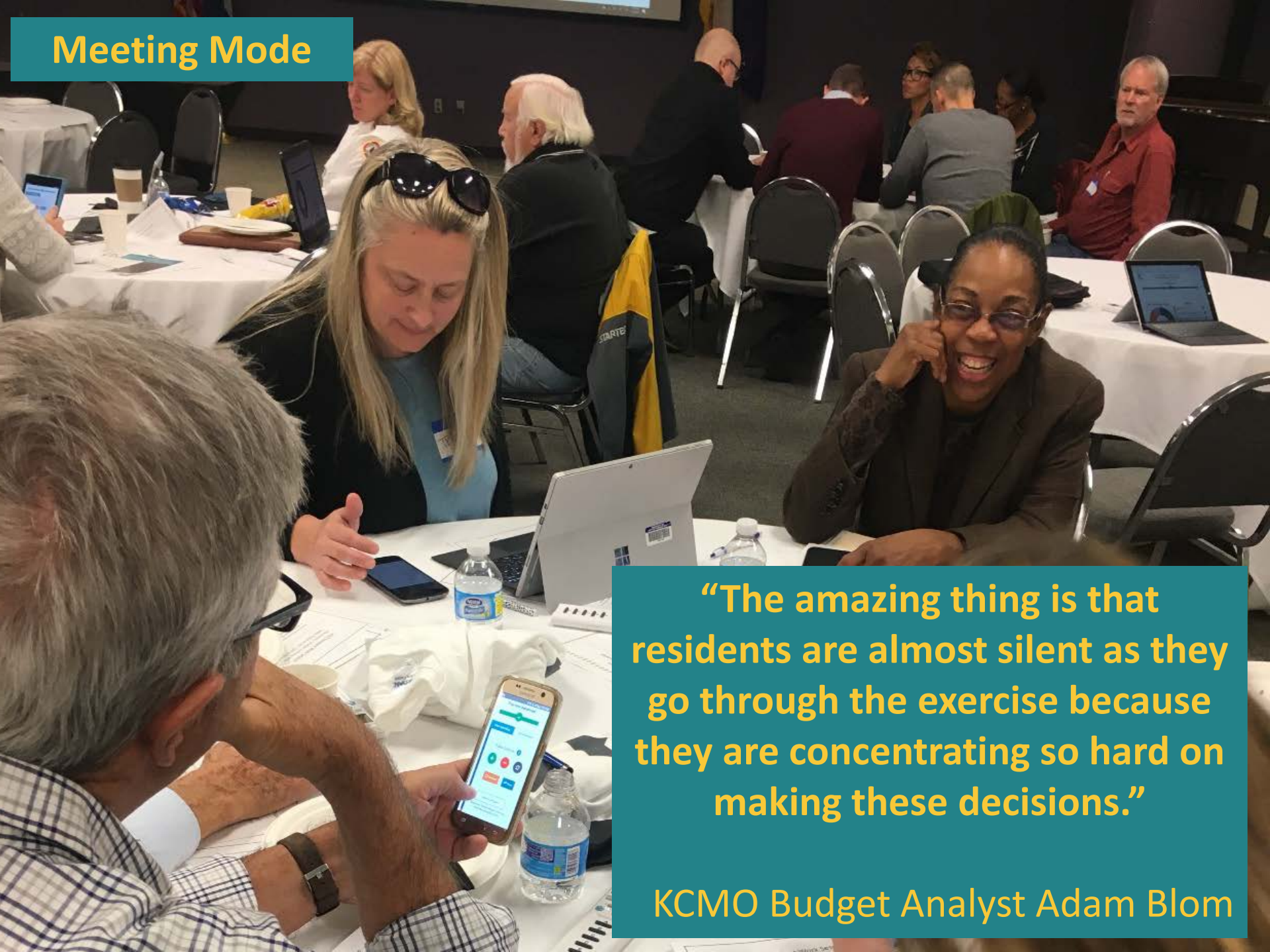
1. Resource reduction and drop below 95% time processing standard for 911 calls - reduce \$220,000
2. Resource reduction and meet 95% time processing standard for 911 calls - reduce \$90,000
3. Maintain current level of service
4. Increase service support to attain 98% time processing of 911 calls within 60 seconds - increase \$155,000
5. Increase service support to attain 99% time processing of 911 calls within 60 seconds - increase \$442,000

▶ INFRASTRUCTURE

▶ GENERAL GOVERNMENT

▶ Community & Recreation

Meeting Mode



“The amazing thing is that residents are almost silent as they go through the exercise because they are concentrating so hard on making these decisions.”

KCMO Budget Analyst Adam Blom

Jon Decker

Strategic Issues Analyst
City of Greensboro

Greensboro Challenge & Goal

Challenge: Challenge: Ongoing interest in engaging residents in city business; desire for input on priorities.

Public Participation Goal:

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Greensboro's Balancing Act

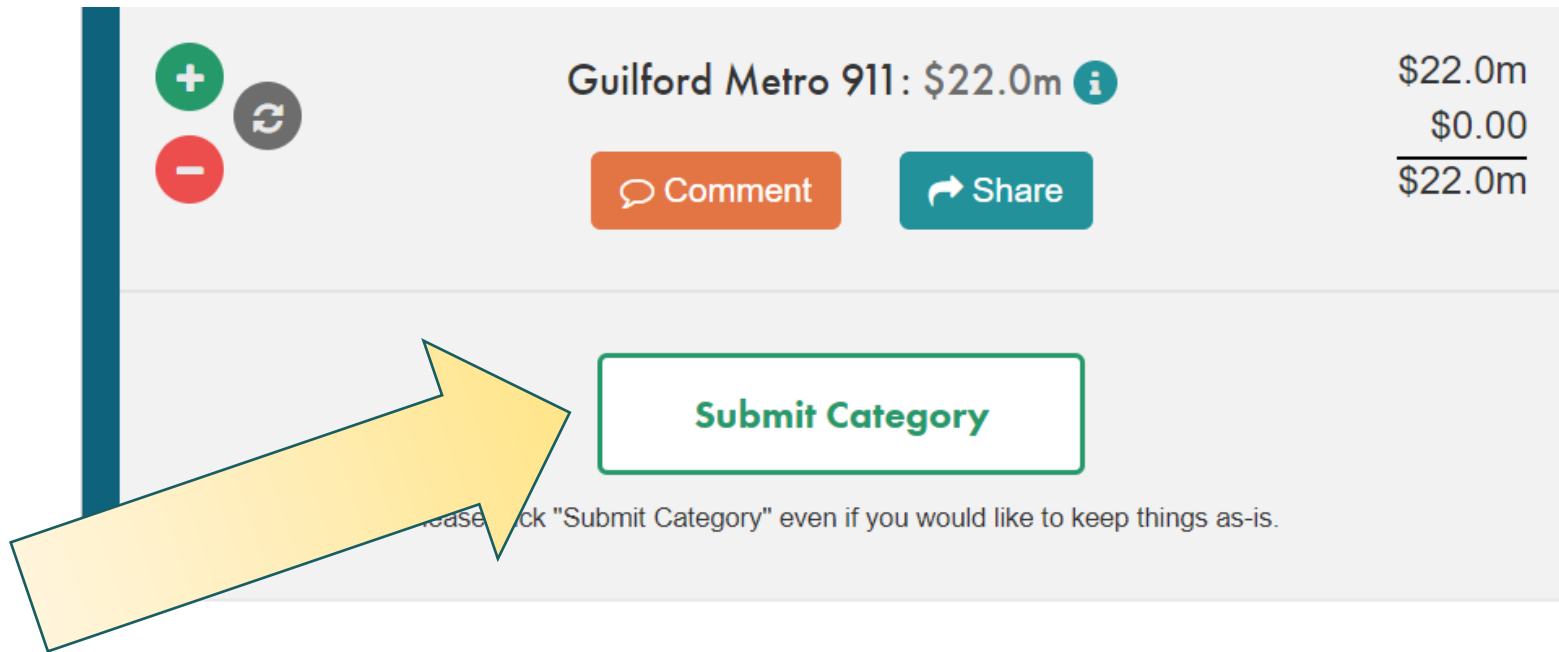
<http://GreensboroNCLGBA.abalancingact.com>

- The Balancing Act budget simulation tool allows you to adjust budgets for various city departments to align resources with the services that matter most to you.
 - The key is that you have to balance the city's revenues and expenses – in the same way the city has to balance the budget each year before budget adoption.
 - This simulation represents the City's FY 17-18 Adopted budget. All expenses are included, but some services have been combined for simplicity's sake.
-

Your Turn: Meeting Mode

- Turns simulation into face-to-face facilitation tool
 - Responses from individuals or groups instantly displayed
 - Let's try it out: MeetingMode.city
-

Be Sure to Click Submit



The screenshot shows a budget item interface. On the left, there are three circular icons: a green plus sign, a red minus sign, and a grey refresh icon. The main text reads "Guilford Metro 911: \$22.0m" followed by an information icon. Below this are two buttons: "Comment" (orange) and "Share" (teal). To the right, a financial summary shows "\$22.0m", "\$0.00", and "\$22.0m" with a horizontal line under the final amount. A large yellow arrow points to a "Submit Category" button, which is outlined in green. Below the button, a small note reads: "Please click 'Submit Category' even if you would like to keep things as-is."

\$22.0m
\$0.00
<hr/> \$22.0m

Submit Category

Please click "Submit Category" even if you would like to keep things as-is.

Sam Smith

Administrative Officer II

City of Charlotte

Charlotte's Challenge & Goal

- Challenge: Challenge: How to inform the public about the contents of the most important policy document for the City of Charlotte, the annual budget, in a manner that results in complete understanding. The underlying premise is to explain the budget in a way that is most receptive (moving away from simply directing someone to a 200+ page budget document) to the general public.

- Public Participation

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Must this be boring?



Size Need Not Limit Creativity

- Cambridge, Minnesota. Pop 8,677.



Taxpayer Receipt

Try it out:
TaxReceipt.
city

YOUR TAX RECEIPT	
Community Safety	\$292.38
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department ⓘ	\$198.47
Charlotte Fire Department ⓘ	\$93.91
Environment	\$43.37
Solid Waste Services ⓘ	\$43.37
Housing and Neighborhood Development	\$15.18
Housing and Neighborhood Services ⓘ	\$14.40
Community Relations Committee ⓘ	\$0.78
Transportation and Planning	\$40.51
Engineering and Property Management ⓘ	\$15.27
Planning ⓘ	\$5.25
Transportation (CDOT) ⓘ	\$19.99
Economic Development	\$4.11
Economic Development ⓘ	\$4.11
Well Managed Government	\$50.56
Mayor and City Council ⓘ	\$1.23
City Manager's Office ⓘ	\$2.07
City Clerk's Office ⓘ	\$0.55
City Attorney's Office ⓘ	\$2.01
Human Resources ⓘ	\$3.65
Strategy and Budget ⓘ	\$1.63
TOTAL: ⓘ	\$506.81

ARE THESE THE RIGHT PRI
TRY AN INTERACTIVE SIMULATION T
BUDGET AND SHARE IT WITH PUBLIC OFFICIALS.

What Taxes Make This Up?

The following amounts make up this total:

Sales Tax	\$267.46
Property Tax	\$239.35

Discussion

Thanks for Attending!

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Sam Smith: Samuel.Smith@ci.charlotte.nc.us

Chris Adams: Chris@aBalancingAct.com