

Equity and the Budget

The City Council is responsible for managing the city's finances to meet current and future needs. As the national economy stabilizes after the Covid-19 pandemic and the recent rise in inflation and interest rates, Mountain View is at an economic turning point. We have a wide variety of impactful projects that we're pursuing, and City Council needs to prioritize how we're going to fund them.

Our low-income and minority communities have struggled recently. 31% of our population is considered low-income, making less than 80% of Area Median Income (AMI), or less than \$145,000 per year for a family of four. In 2010, the Latinx population comprised more than 21% of Mountain View residents. Now it's just over 17%. Displacement has left many households looking for a new place to live, and some have been forced to leave the city.

Many of the economic disparities in our city today were brought about by historical discrimination and unequal opportunity. In 2021 the city implemented equity-based budgeting in response to the murder of George Floyd, but it hasn't been a priority since. I believe that we should implement equity-based budgeting to ensure that the city grows sustainably across all neighborhoods. Equity-based budgeting analyzes investments through the lens of policy impacts on low-income and minority communities.

The 2020 National League of Cities Municipal Action Guide for Advancing Racial Equity identifies the following questions we can ask during the budgeting process:

- Who will be better/worse off through this policy?
- Who is deciding the goals, parameters or features of this policy?
- What historical structures or social norms drive the policy?
- Which systems will implement the policy?
- Who has access, both physically and socially to that system?
- What do data analyses say about where inequities have manifested due to previous policy changes?

To make sure no one is left behind, I propose allocating 40% of all capital improvement spending to projects that will benefit low-income and minority communities. My proposal is modeled after the Biden-Harris Administration's Justice40 Initiative, which commits 40% of federal spending in certain climate change investments to go to underserved and underrepresented communities. We can implement a similar program through a City Council Resolution and yearly equity-based budgeting.

You can count on me to analyze the budget with an equity lens and advocate for all members of our community.