

2021 CITY OF BOULDER ISSUES SURVEY

Report

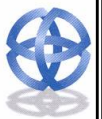
~June 2021~



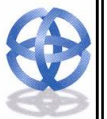
Drake
research & strategy, inc.

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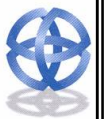
I. METHODOLOGY



METHODOLOGY

Drake Research & Strategy, Inc. conducted the statistically valid 2021 City of Boulder Issues Survey in late May, early June of 2021. A random sample was drawn from a list of City of Boulder active voters, containing both landline and cell phone numbers, which was then randomly sampled.

- *Interviews were conducted between May 25 to June 3, 2021.*
- *Results are based on 406 telephone interviews, 79% of which were conducted on respondent cell phones.*
- *The margin of error is plus or minus 4.9% about any one reported percentage.*

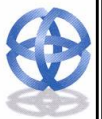


METHODOLOGY

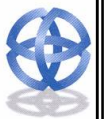
About Drake Research & Strategy, Inc.

Bob Drake has been conducting survey research since joining Talmey-Drake Research & Strategy in May, 1987. Prior to that, he ran the offices and campaigns for Congressman, then U.S. Senator Tim Wirth. Since joining Talmey-Drake Research and forming Drake Research & Strategy in 2003, Mr. Drake has personally initiated and overseen more than 2700 survey and focus group research projects, concentrating his efforts on public opinion, education, healthcare, telecommunications and political research.

Mr. Drake has served as a research advisor to the UN Foundation, a \$1 billion charitable foundation established in 1998 by Mr. Ted Turner. He has also served as past board Chair for Impact on Education, a charitable foundation that supports public school education efforts in the BVSD, as well as serving as a volunteer for Boulder County Legal Services.



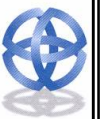
II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: KEY FINDINGS



KEY FINDINGS

The Climate Today

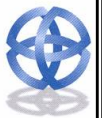
- #1.** While a majority of Boulder voters feel things in their city are going in the right direction, previous polling done by Drake Research shows that the 56% feeling good about things today is as low as it's been in the past 8 years. This may well be expected as we are just emerging from a year and a half of restrictions on our lives brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Regardless, a 56% right direction is not a bad figure for a city to have in today's environment.



KEY FINDINGS

Housing Issues in the City of Boulder

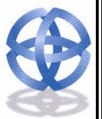
#2 To no one's surprise, housing is a huge issue in Boulder: 81% agree that CU should be building more student housing to free up homes for families and workers in the City; 76% agree with creating greater housing density along transit corridors; 72% agree with prioritizing high density housing at the Alpine—Balsam site; 68% agree the city should loosen restrictions on ADU's, duplexes and triplexes in single family home areas; and 67% of voters are in favor of building housing up to the maximum allowable height on a redeveloped Diagonal Plaza site. Further, the housing situation is getting worse. In 2016, just 53% of voters felt increasing the supply of affordable housing was "extremely" or "very" important. That figure now stands at 70%, up 17 points in just 5 years.



KEY FINDINGS

Housing Issues in the City of Boulder (cont.)

#3. Against the background of how voters feel about housing in the City, the folks backing the “Bedrooms are for People” initiative have really hit a nerve with their desire to change the occupancy limits in the City, as well as highlight the importance of increasing the supply of existing housing. A substantial 75% of voters say they support the ballot proposal, with 71% of them indicating strong support. Just 16% are opposed.

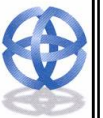


KEY FINDINGS

Creating a New Independent Library District

#4 In contrast to the large support for the “Bedrooms” initiative, just 50% of voters express support for creating a new independent Library District, funded by a property tax hike of \$250 on a one million dollar home in the City.

At this point in time, passage of funding for the new Library District seems unlikely. This is particularly true given the low level of support within the City, coupled with the fact that this survey does not include the voices of those who live outside the City but will have to be included in the new District. Homeowners living in the unincorporated County parts of the new Library District will be expected to pay, on a one million dollar home, \$275 more in property taxes to support the District. A tougher sell for sure.



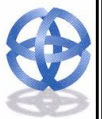
KEY FINDINGS

The Annexation of CU South Property

#5 Related to the issue of CU providing more student housing, 56% of voters feel the Council should approve the long negotiated annexation of CU South property so that flood mitigation infrastructure can finally be built on a portion of CU's land. In return, CU would be able to construct housing for non-freshmen students, faculty and staff.

The City's Homeless Issues

#6 Compared to survey results from back in 2016, it is immediately clear that the importance of dealing with the homeless in the City has increased dramatically, going from 49% saying "Extremely" or "Very" important in 2016, to 78% saying so today.



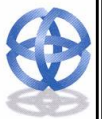
KEY FINDINGS

The City's Homeless Issues (cont.)

#7 Further underlining the importance of homeless issues in Boulder are the following: 65% of voters agree that police should be defunded by taking some money out of the police budget to pay for more services for the homeless; and a majority (56%) agree that until there is drug rehab assistance as well as a place for homeless to get sober and find mental health counseling, illegal encampments should be allowed to exist.

Other Possible City Initiatives

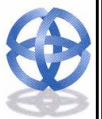
#8 Ranked Choice Voting is seen by a substantial majority of voters (73%) as the way to go in tabulating the results of future City Council elections.



KEY FINDINGS

Other Possible City Initiatives (cont.)

- #9** Perhaps reflecting an awareness of the increasing demands on members of City Council, 65% of voters are willing to consider increasing the pay of members in order to attract more diverse candidates.
- #10** Attracting business and jobs to the city is a important issue and getting more so. Not only do 83% of voters want the city to keep attracting new businesses to help the local economy and sales tax base, but voters feel much more strongly than they did 5 years ago that attracting good paying jobs to the city is an extremely/very important priority for the city (32% agreed in 2016; 42% agree today).



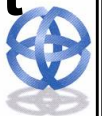
KEY FINDINGS

Disappearing Traffic Congestion

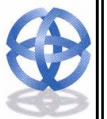
#11. In contrast to homelessness, the importance of addressing traffic congestion has actually gone down since first reported 5 years ago, very likely because of the greatly reduced car volume over the past year and a half of Covid-19 restrictions. Which suggests it could come roaring back as an issue in the near future.

New & Existing Enforcement on the Hill

#12 By clear majorities, voters feel that new and stepped up enforcement of existing noise and other nuisance ordinances are necessary on the Hill. Further, 65% feel there should be tougher measures and penalties on student behavior to avoid a repeat of riots that took place on the Hill earlier this year.



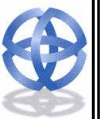
III. THE CLIMATE IN BOULDER TODAY



Climate and Overview

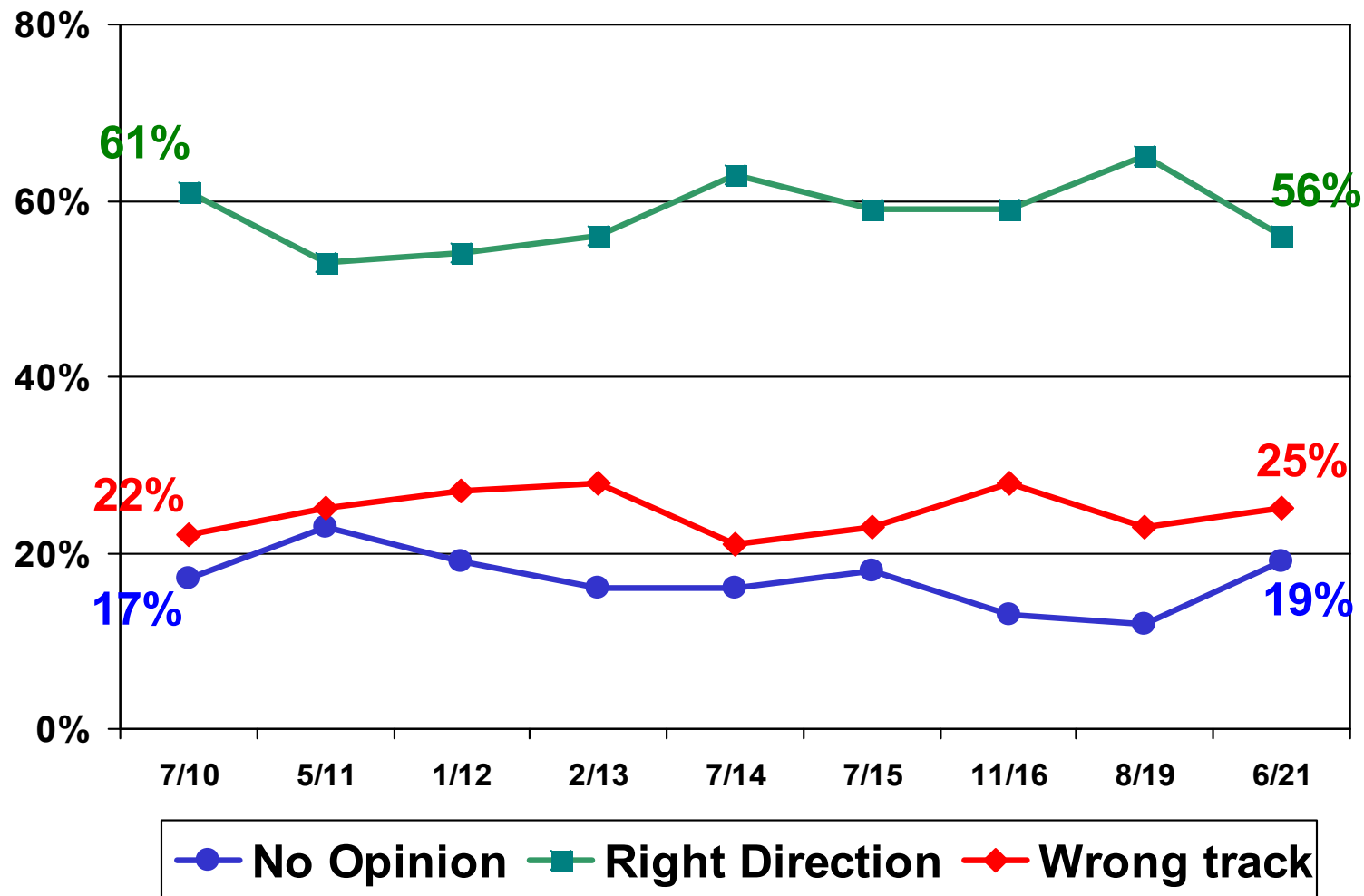
When looking at survey results, it is important to put them in perspective in terms of how voters overall think things are going in their community. If people think things are overall not so good, that will cast a negative halo affect over all the survey results.

When Boulder voters were asked whether they think things in their community are going in the right direction or off on the wrong track, overall 56% say going in the right direction; 24% off on the wrong track. This current level of optimism is down nearly 10 points since I last surveyed Boulder voters in 2019, and at its lowest level since early 2013. However, given that we are just emerging from a year and a half of anguish caused by the Covid19 pandemic, the 55% figure looks pretty good.

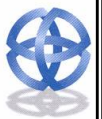


How are Things Going in The City of Boulder Today?

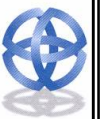
[2021 n=406]



Sample sizes are all approximately 400,



IV. BEDROOMS ARE FOR PEOPLE BALLOT INITIATIVE

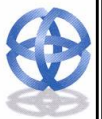


Bedrooms are for People Ballot Initiative

One citizen-based proposal that will most certainly be on the November ballot is the Bedrooms are for People initiative, which seeks to overturn the Boulder ordinance that in most areas of the City prevents no more than three unrelated persons from occupying a single housing Unit. This proposal reads as follows:

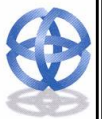
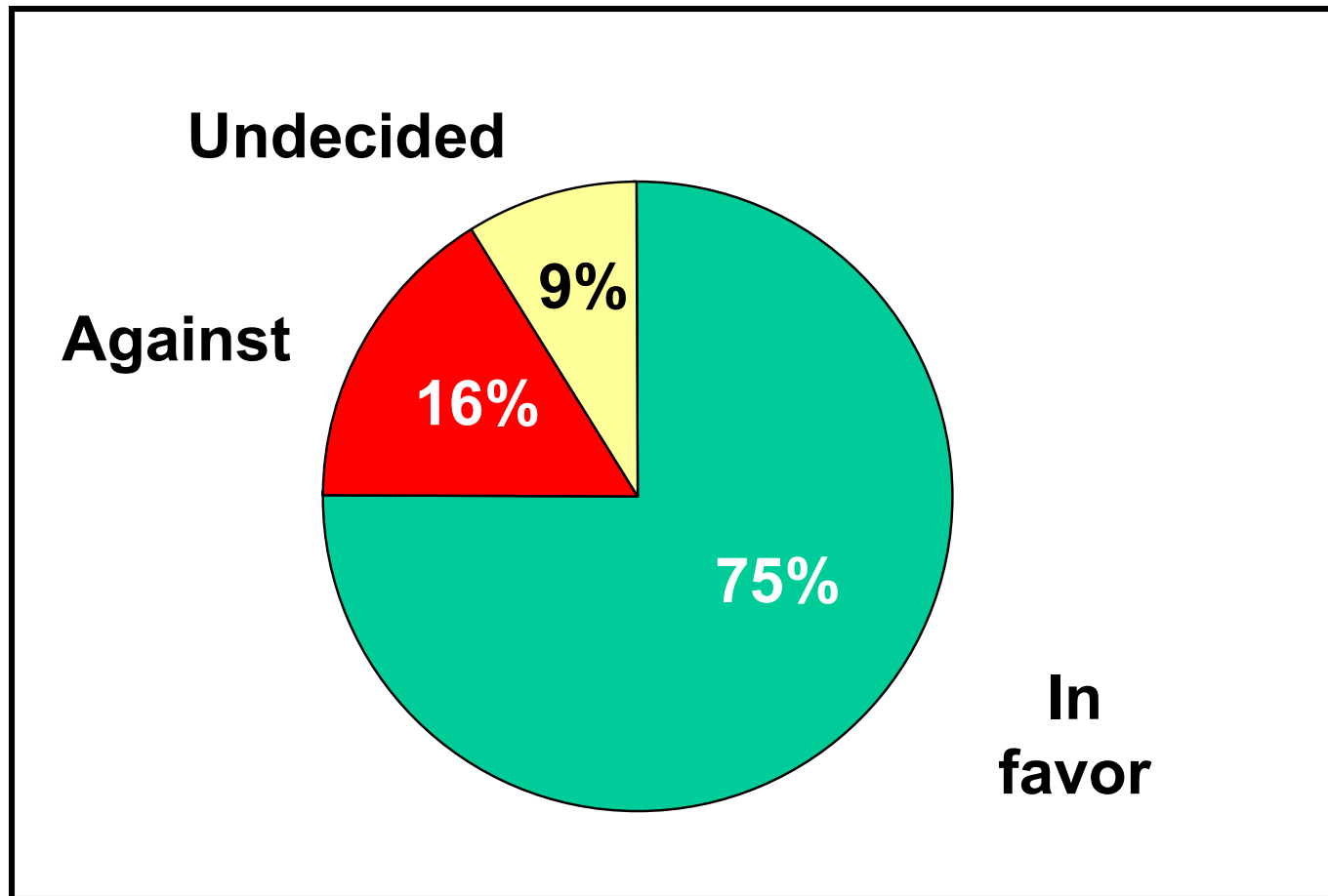
- Shall the City of Boulder expand access to housing by allowing all housing units to be occupied by a number of people equal to the number of legal bedrooms, plus one additional person per home, provided that relevant health and safety codes are met?

Voters were first asked whether they are in favor or against this initiative. As seen below, the initiative clearly enjoys broad support throughout the City.



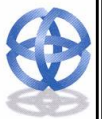
Bedrooms are for People Ballot Initiative

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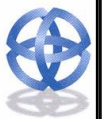
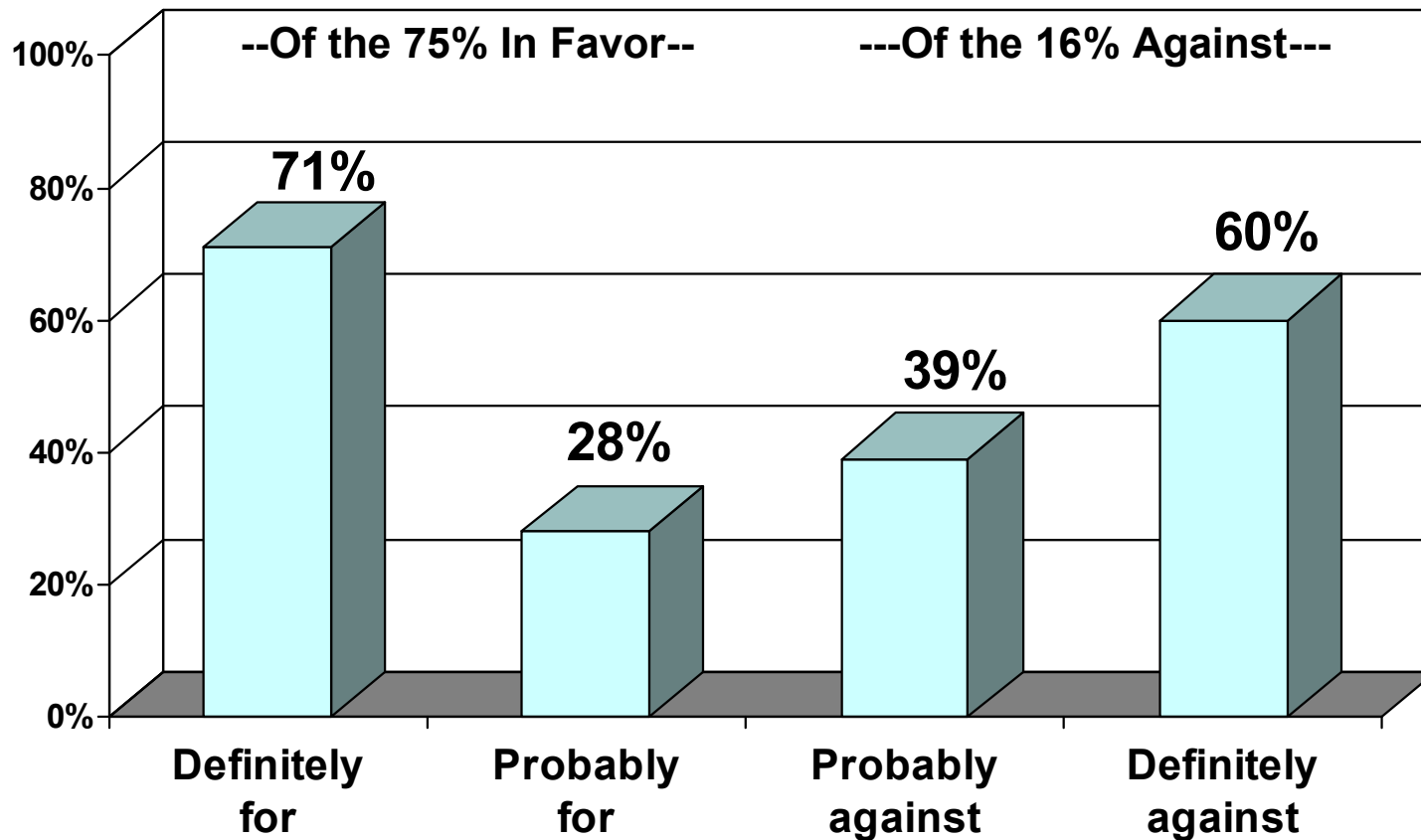
Bedrooms are for People Ballot Initiative

Voters were next asked whether their support or opposition to the Bedrooms initiative was strong or weak. It is clear in the following graph that even the strength of support among the 76% of voters who support the initiative is stronger than is the strength of opposition among the just 13% who say they oppose the Bedrooms initiative.



Strength of Support/Opposition For Bedrooms Initiative

[n=304 In favor/ 66 Against]

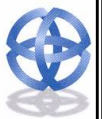


Bedrooms are for People Ballot Initiative

In order to possibly increase the appeal of the initiative, voters were then asked about the following prohibition on owners adding bedrooms simply to increase occupancy of their housing units.

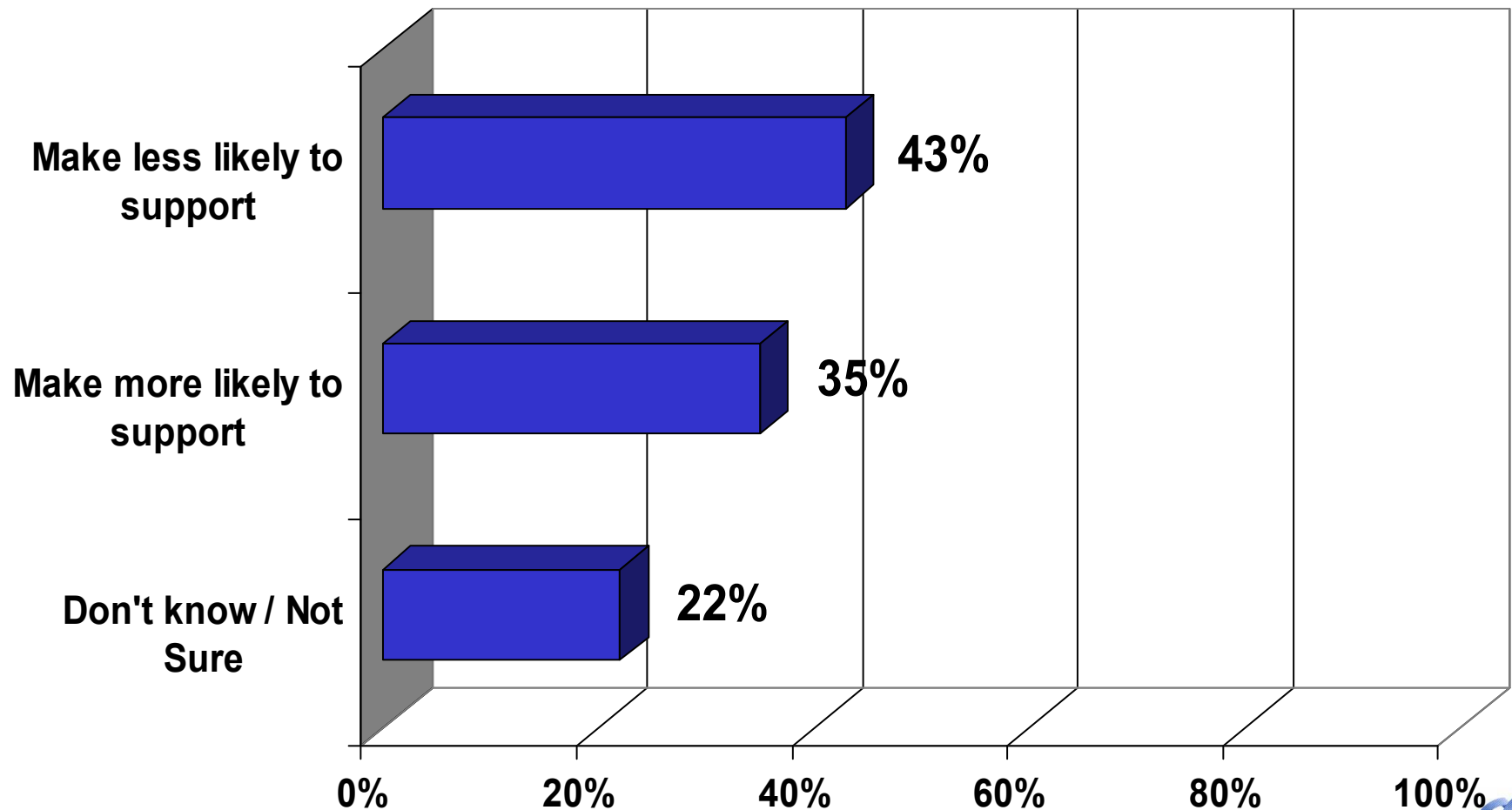
“Suppose the initiative I just read allowing more unrelated people to live together in each housing unit contained a provision that prohibited an owner from adding bedrooms to a house in order to increase the number of people who could legally live in that house. Would that provision make you more likely or less likely to support a ballot proposal allowing more unrelated people to live in a housing unit?”

It turns out that adding such a restriction would actually result in fewer, not more people supporting the initiative.



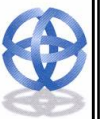
Prohibition On Owners Adding Bedrooms to Increase Occupancy

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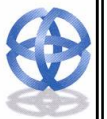


V. TESTING TWO MAJOR POLICIES CURRENTLY BEING CONSIDERED BY COUNCIL

- 1. Annexation of CU South Property**
- 2. Creation of a New Library District**



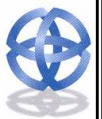
1. Annexation of the CU South Property



Annexation of the CU South Property

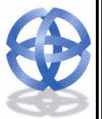
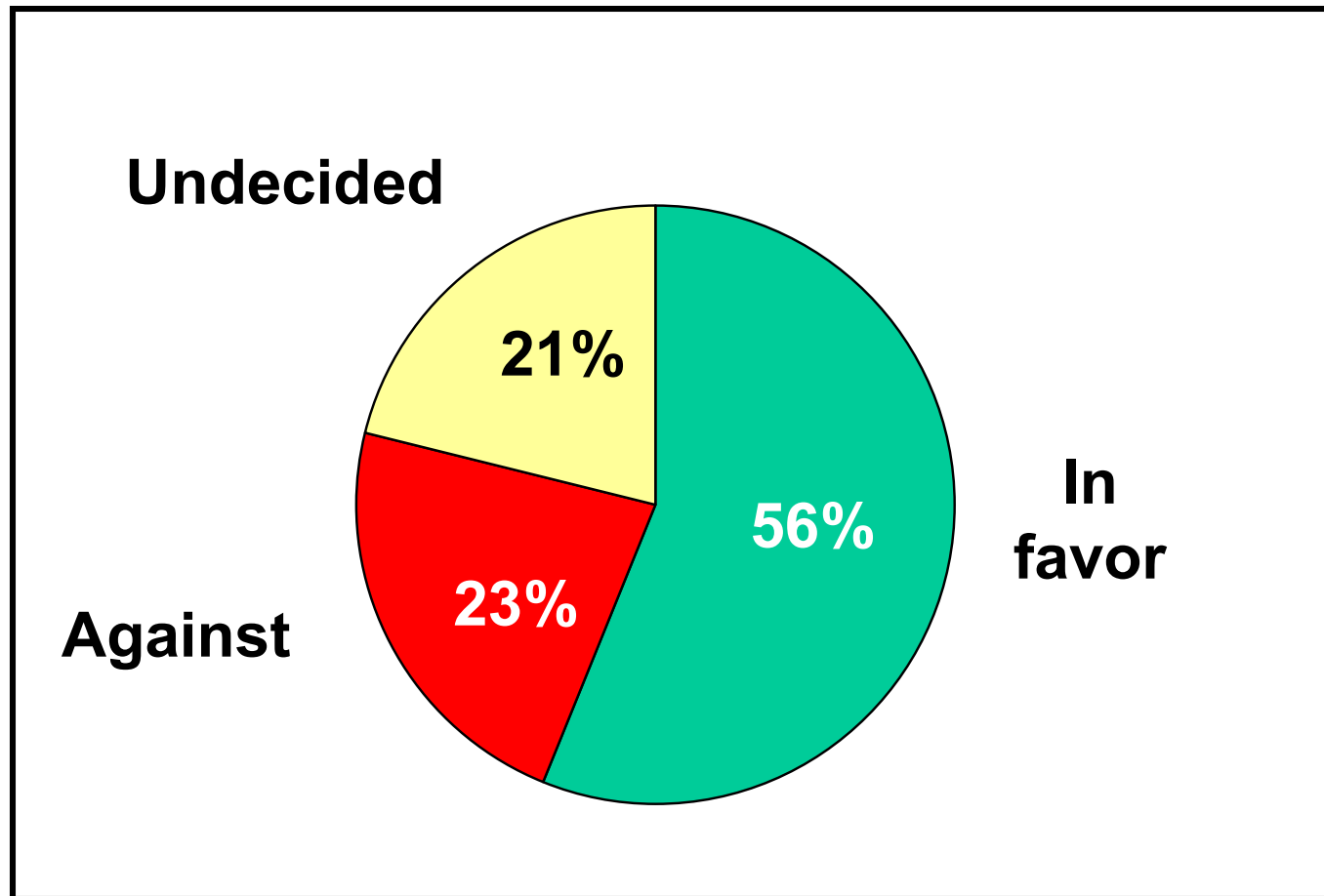
Voters were asked whether they favored or opposed the Boulder City Council approving the annexation of the CU South property into the City, in order to “allow Boulder to construct flood mitigation infrastructure on the CU South land and let CU build clustered, village-style housing no higher than allowed by Boulder’s Charter, for non-freshman students, faculty and staff.” The majority favor annexation.

While Council’s approval of annexation has the support of a majority of the voters, this survey was conducted as petitions were being circulated on an initiative to allow people to vote on this issue. The effect the petition may have on public approval of the Council acting alone on this issue is uncertain.



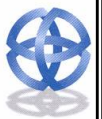
Annexation of CU South Property

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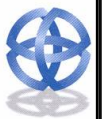
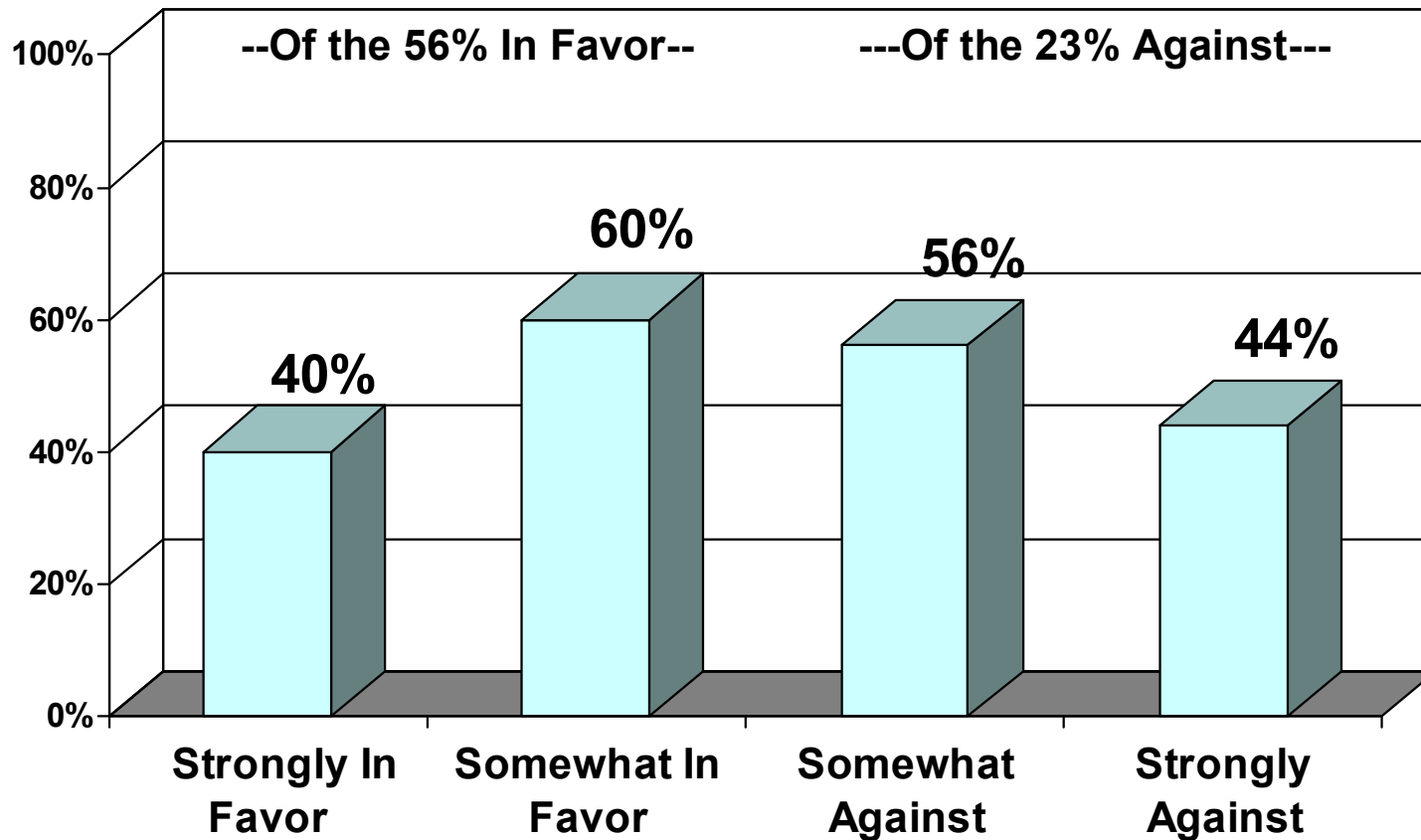
Annexation of the CU South Property

A look at the strength of voter support or opposition to Council acting to approve the annexation of CU South shows that support for annexation is softer than it is for Bedrooms, which reflects greater uncertainty towards the annexation. This uncertainty is also reflected in the rather high 21% who say they are undecided on this issue. Still, the data gives a green light to Council proceeding with annexation deliberations and ultimately a vote.

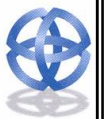


Strength of Support/Opposition For Annexation of CU South

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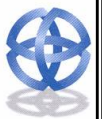
2. Creation of a New Library District



Creating a New Independent Library District

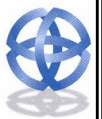
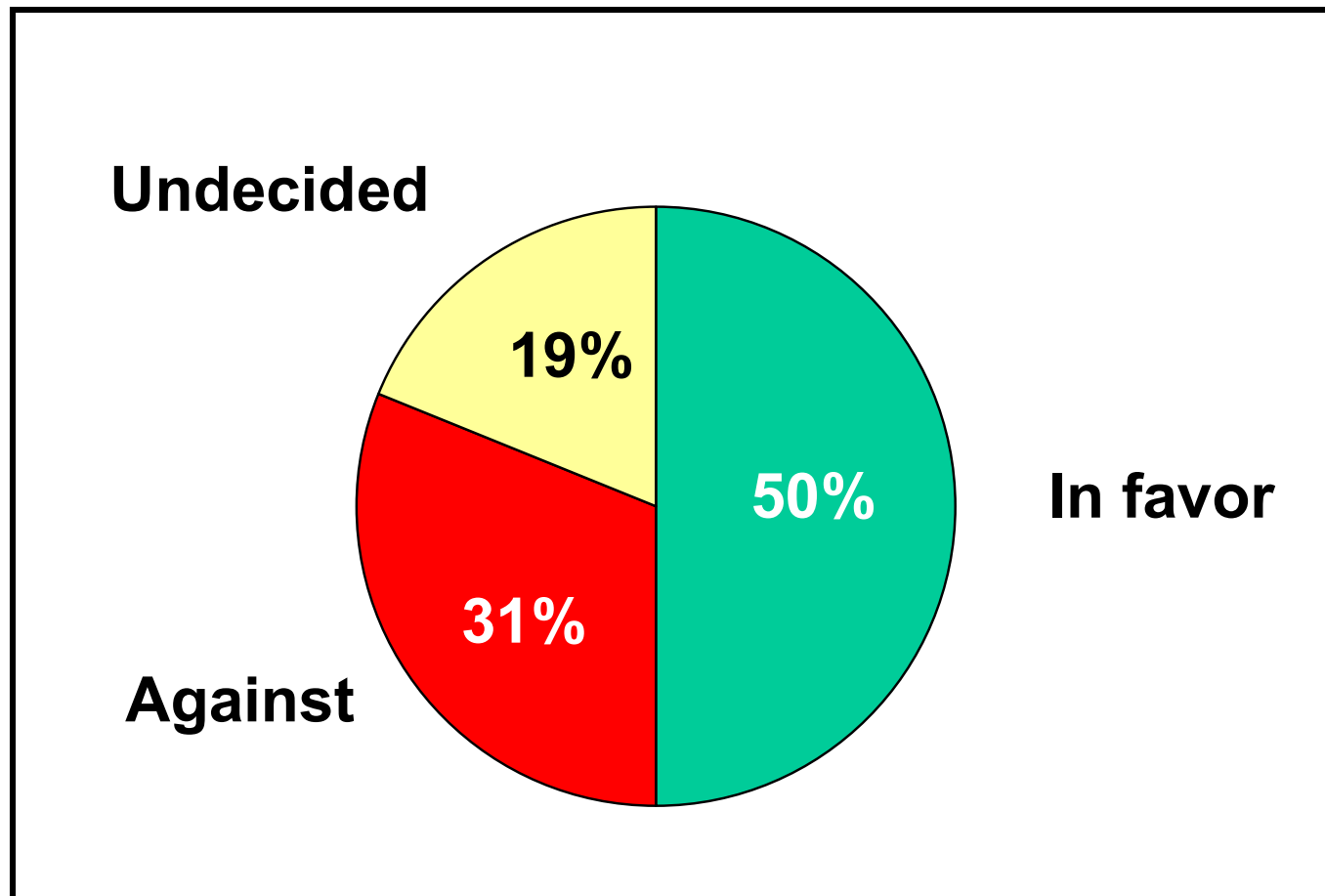
Voters were asked whether they favored or opposed creating a new Independent Library District, that would keep in place the existing sales tax currently funding the Library system, and increase property tax by about \$250 on a one million dollar home in the city, and about \$275 on the same value home outside the city, in order to fully fund the new District.

Reaction to creating the new District funded by an increase in the property tax is decidedly mixed, with just 50% saying they favor of creating this new district under these terms. One can argue that uncertainty over the rising cost of housing, and hence increasing property taxes, may play a role in holding down support for funding the District in today's environment.



Creation of a new Library District

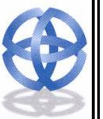
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Creating a New Independent Library District

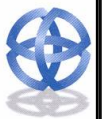
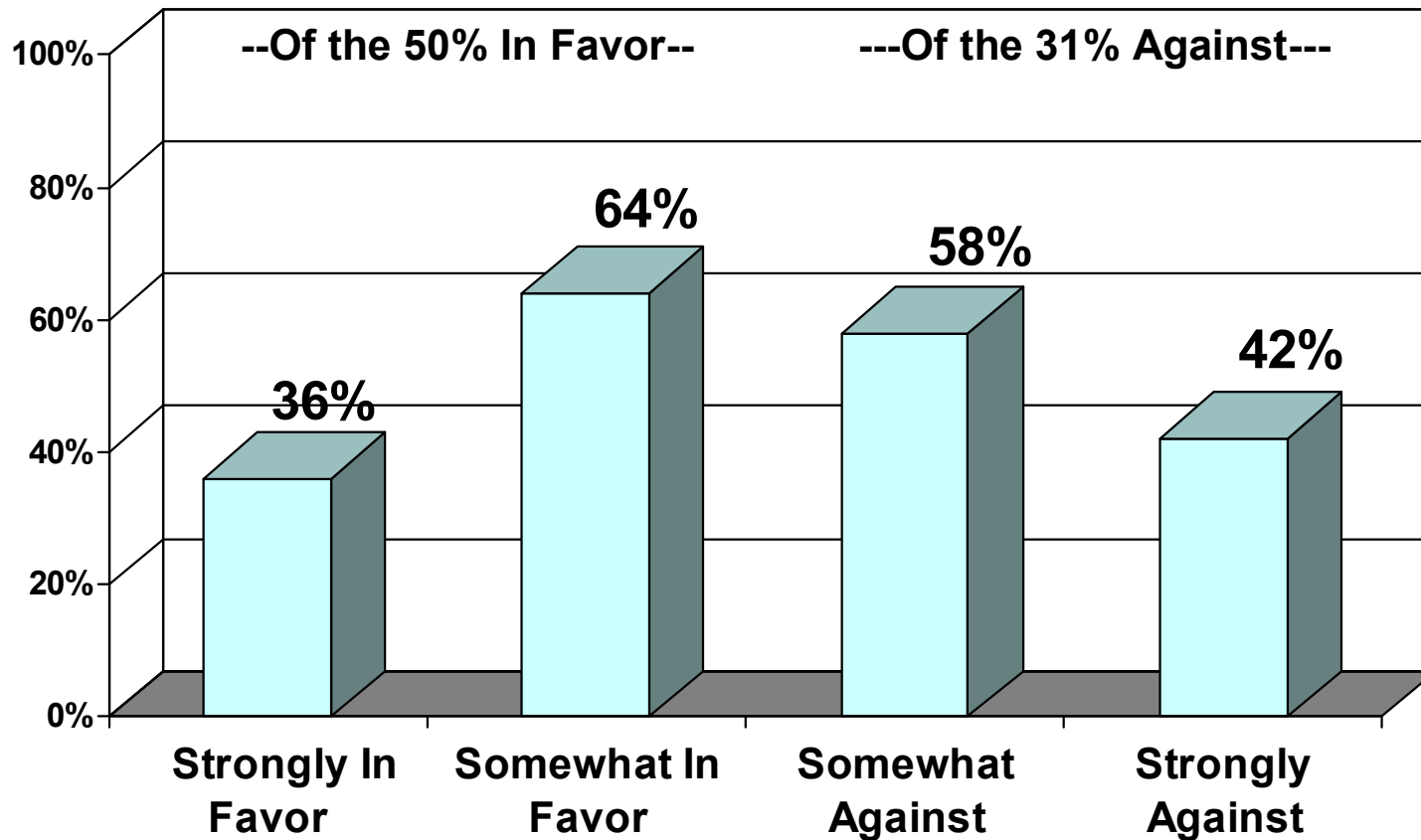
A look at the strength of voter support or opposition to the creation of a Library District shows that not only is overall support weak (50%), but the strength of that support is weak as well (just 36% strongly support). This reflects the voter uncertainty towards the creation of the Library District, confirmed by the fairly high 19% who say they are undecided on this issue.

Further, for the Library District to be approved, voters in certain areas of unincorporated Boulder County, as well as the City itself, must vote to approve a property tax increase. Such an increase is not likely to be viewed as favorably by voters in unincorporated areas as it is by voters in the City. For that reason, were the election held today, approval of a property tax increase for the District appears problematic as it garners just 50% approval within the City, a figure far lower than is typically necessary for a tax increase to pass on election day.

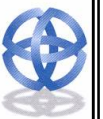


Strength of Support/Opposition For Creating a New Library District

[n=406]



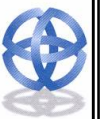
VI. DIFFERENT APPROACHES TOWARD THE HOMELESS IN BOULDER



Different Approaches Toward the Homeless

It is immediately clear that when compared to survey results from back in 2016, the importance of dealing with the homeless in the City has increased dramatically. Unfortunately, the solutions are hardly clear cut.

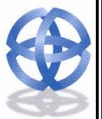
Voters were read two statements about the homeless in Boulder and ask to choose which comes closest to how they feel.



Different Approaches Toward the Homeless

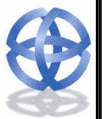
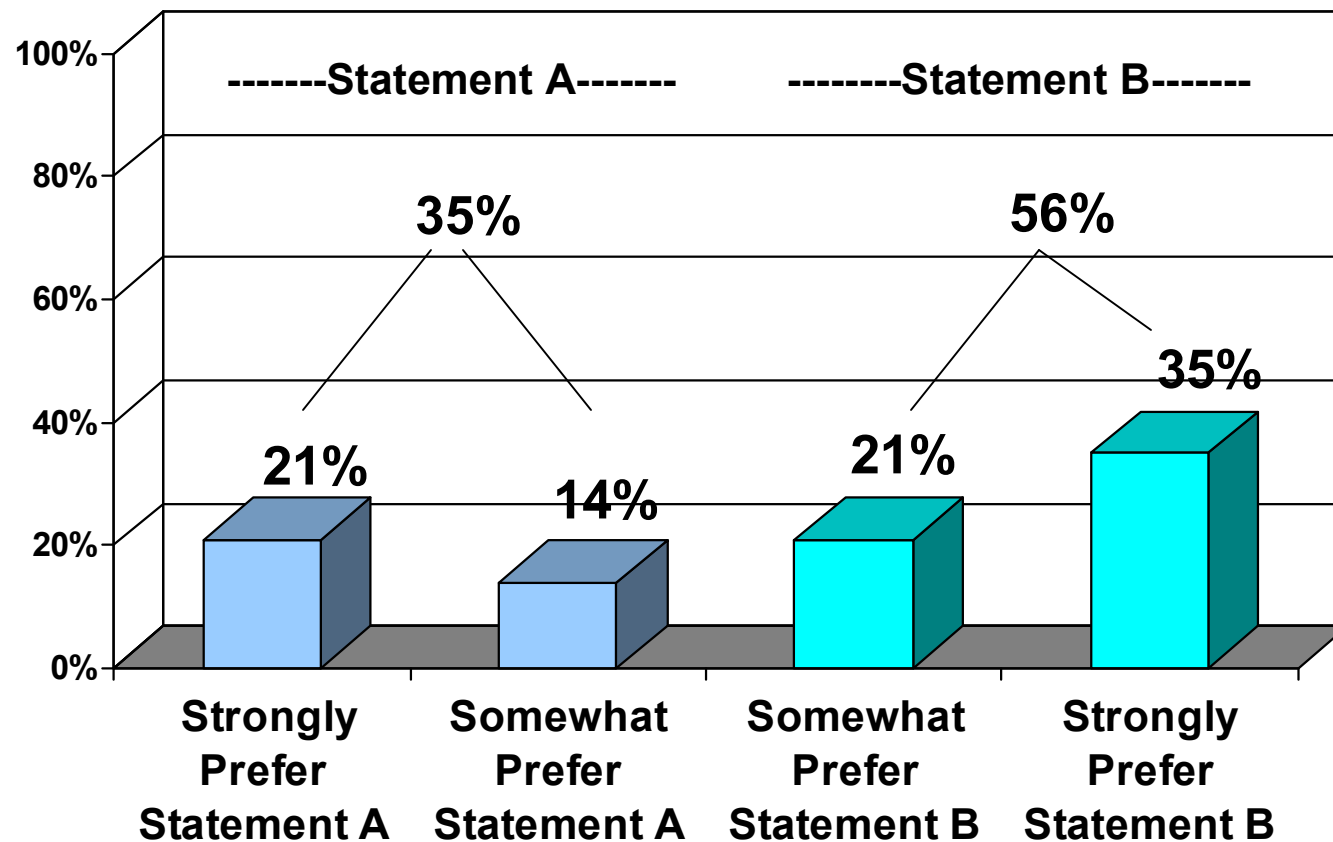
Statement A: The City's police should step up its removal of homeless camps along Boulder Creek and in other areas of the city. They are illegal, unsanitary, threaten water quality and pose a threat to residents who live near the encampments and to other residents or visitors who want to enjoy the creek paths and other public spaces; and

Statement B: Camping bans only serve to move the homeless from one place to another. Until the City of Boulder provides alternative authorized safe indoor or outdoor spaces where they can get sober, receive mental health counseling and drug rehabilitation assistance, the illegal camps should be allowed to continue to exist, as these people have no other place to go.



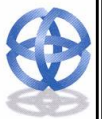
Two Different Approaches Toward the Homeless

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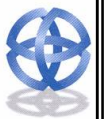


Different Approaches Toward the Homeless

While it is pretty clear to Boulder leaders that public health and safety are of critical importance driving the removal and clean up of illegal encampments, it is also clear that voters are looking for solutions that offer long-term help to address the underlying causes of homelessness in the City, which the City is currently trying to address. Any solutions will no doubt require help from the County, both institutionally and financially.



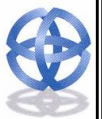
VII. VOTER SUPPORT FOR POSSIBLE NEW COUNCIL POLICIES



Voter Support for Other Possible Policies

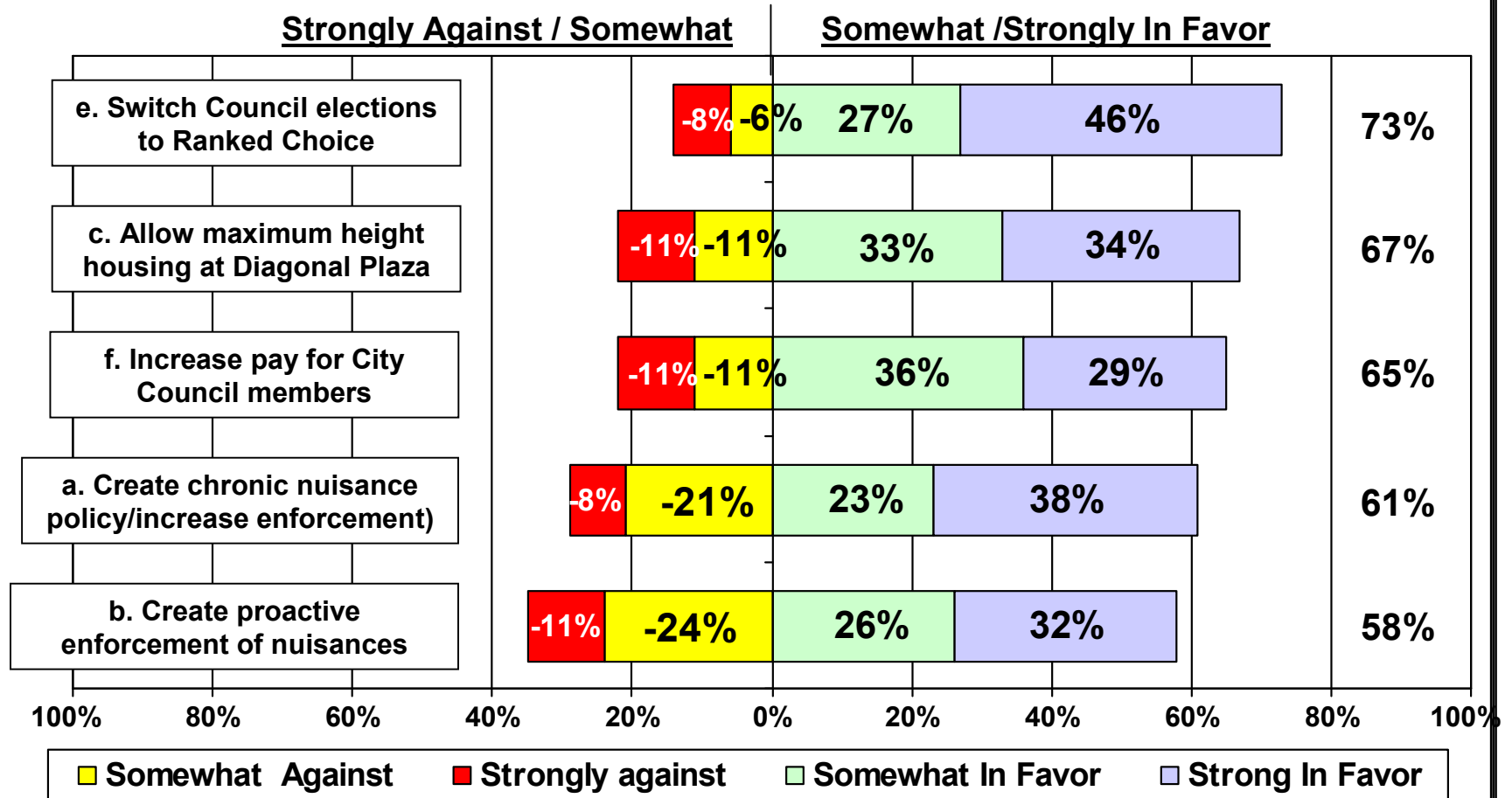
In addition to the annexation of CU South and the creation of a Library District, there are other possible policies that the Council might undertake over the next year. Voters were asked to weigh in on their level of support or opposition to each one. The policy that voters are by far most favorable toward is Ranked Choice Voting, which garners the “strong” support of 48% of city voters.

The second graph below shows how the support for all policies, including the Library District and the CU South annexation, stack up against each other.



Support for Possible New City Policies

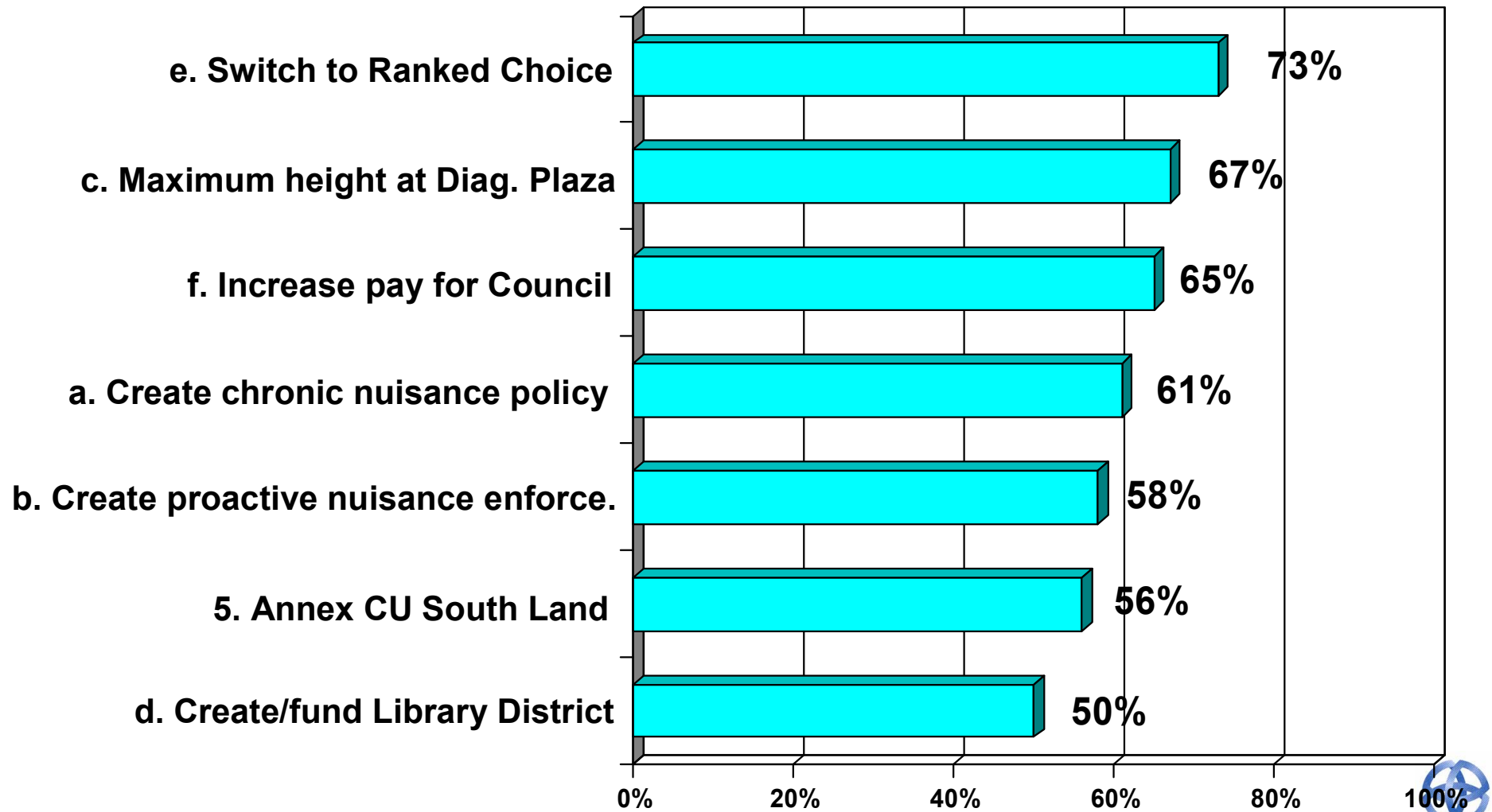
[n=406, Except ½ Sample each for a & b]



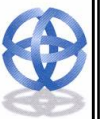
Support for Possible New City Policies

-Total Strongly/Somewhat In Favor-

[n=406 Except ½ Sample each for a & b]



VIII. RATING THE IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC CITY OF BOULDER PRIORITIES

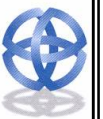


Importance of Specific City Priorities

Over the years Boulder City Council attempted to address at least five major issues facing the City:

- Lack of affordable housing;
- Need for more good paying jobs in the City;
- Achieving climate goals
- Managing traffic congestion; and
- Addressing issues relating to the homeless

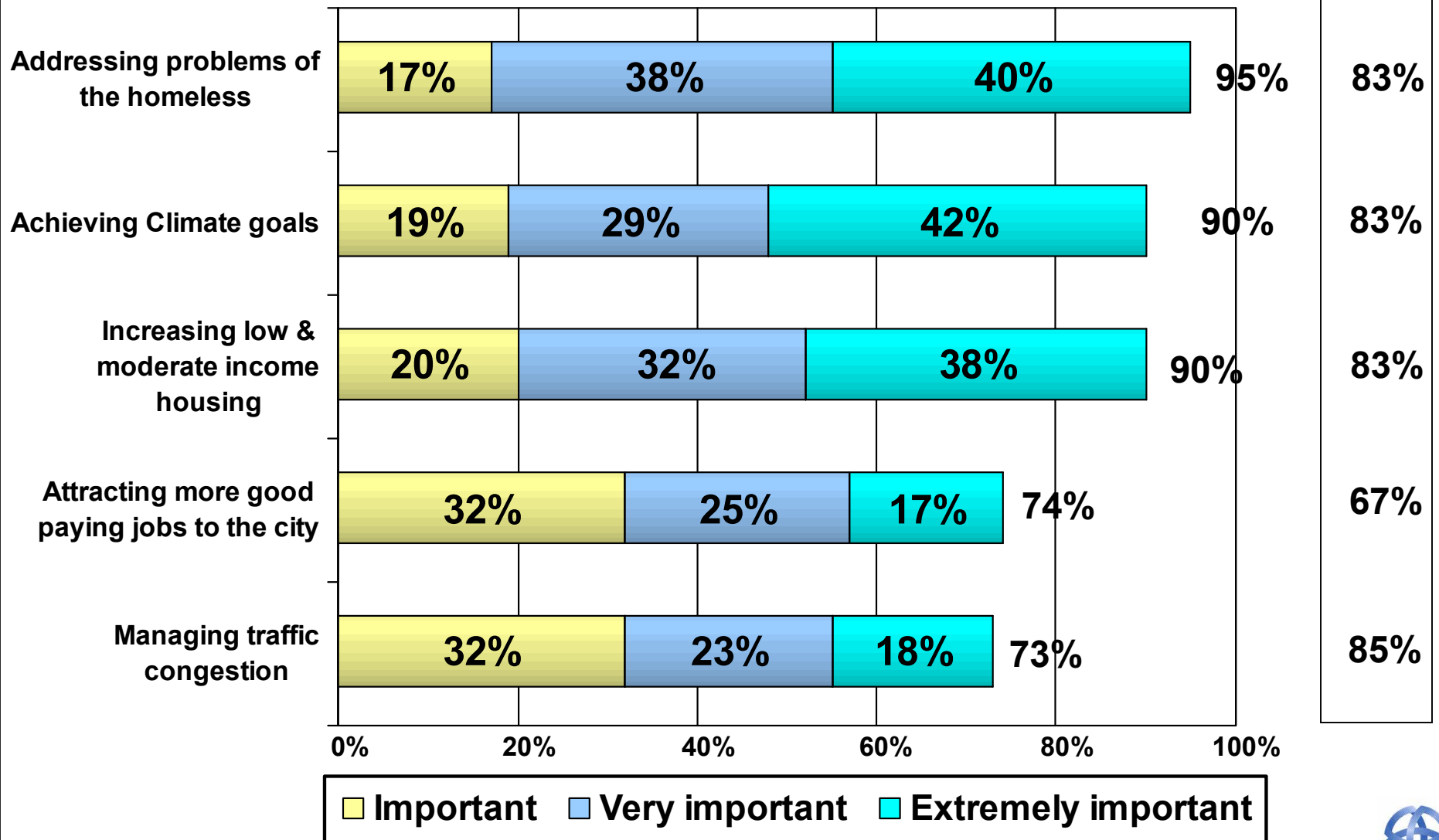
In 2016, as part of a joint survey conducted by the Daily Camera and Drake Research, voters were asked how important they feel each one of these is. This exact question is repeated in this 2021 study. The graph below shows how the importance of each issue stacked up against the others on total saying “Important,” “Very important” and “Extremely important” in 2021, including 2016 data for comparison.



Importance of Specific City Priorities*

-Percent saying "Important," "Very" or "Extremely Important"-

[n=406]

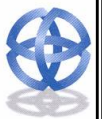


Q8 *Not too and Not at all important responses are not charted

Importance of Specific City Priorities

The graph below charts just those rating each as “Extremely” or “Very” important, which are better indicators of the intensity of feelings once those merely saying “Important” are removed from the data.

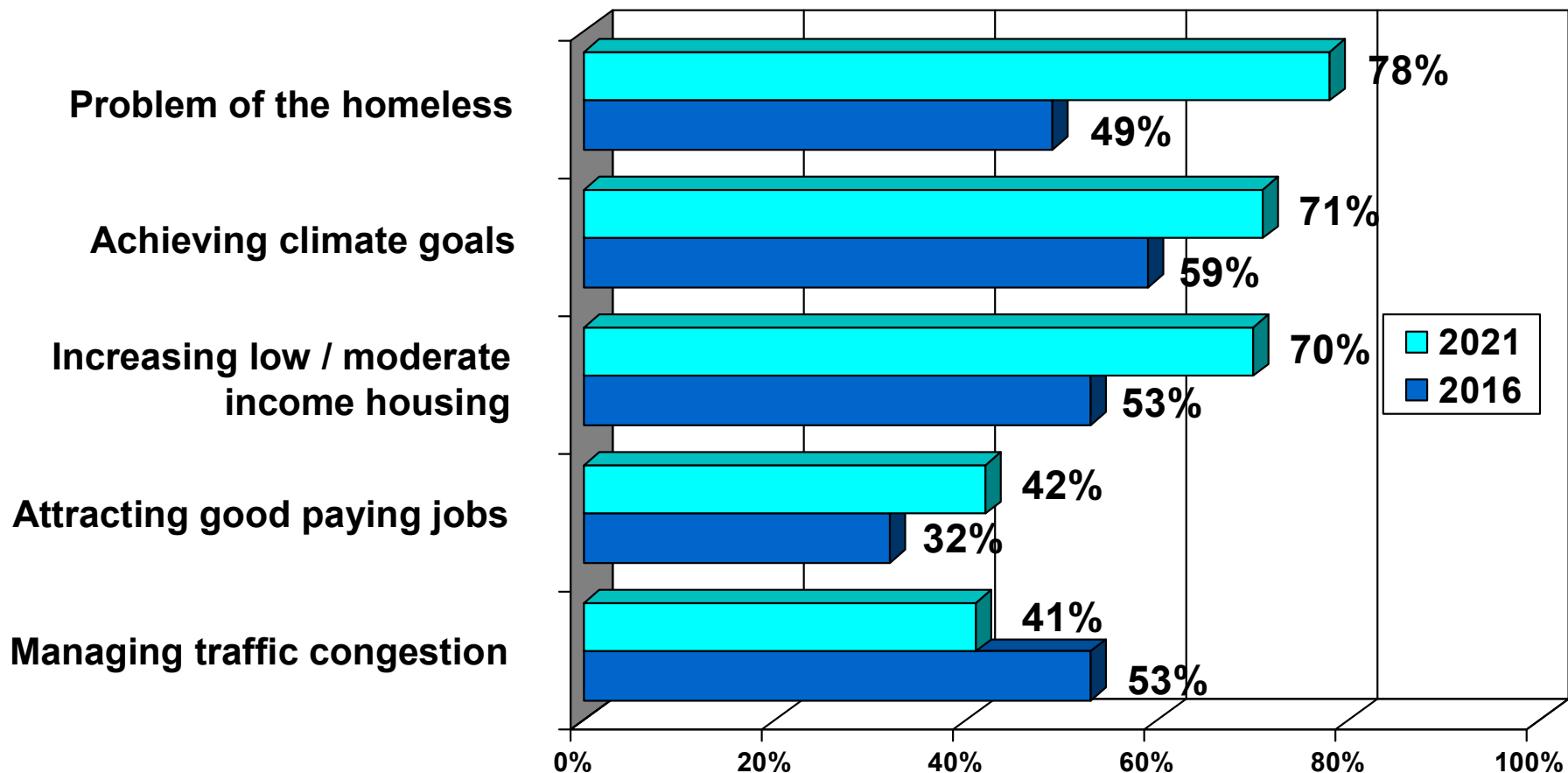
It is immediately clear that when compared to 2016, the perceived importance of dealing with the homeless in the City has increased dramatically. Interestingly, the importance of addressing traffic congestion has actually gone down since reported 5 years ago, very likely because of the greatly reduced auto usage over the past year and a half of Covid-19 restrictions.



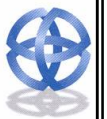
Importance of Specific City Priorities

-2016 v. 2021 Combined Very & Extremely Important-

[n=406]



IX. VOTER ALIGNMENT WITH TOP ISSUES FACING CITY COUNCIL

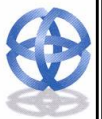


Voter Alignment with Issues Facing Council

Finally, City voters were read statements about various issues facing the City, and were asked whether they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with each statement. The following graphs rank the issues based on the total agreeing with each statement.

The top scoring issue, continuing “efforts to attract businesses,” is followed by four that all relate to city housing policies.

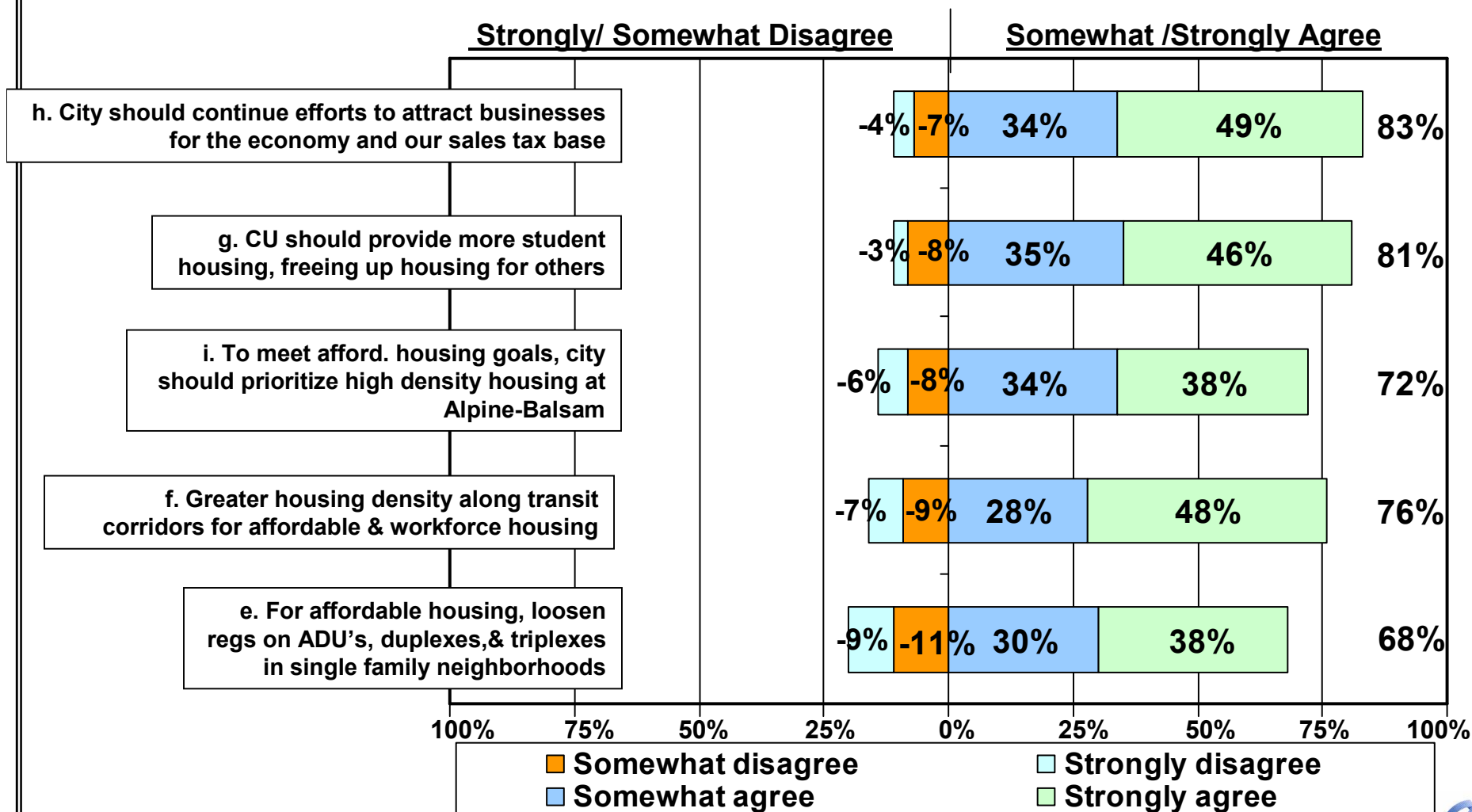
Two statements were included on “de-funding the police,” one to provide some funding for homeless services, another to provide some funding for affordable housing. While neither was expected to receive high agreement, surprisingly 65% did agree with shifting some money from Police to fund homeless services.



51 Alignment with Top Tier Issues Facing The City

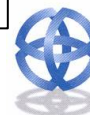
-Agree/Disagree Statements*-

[n=406]



Q7

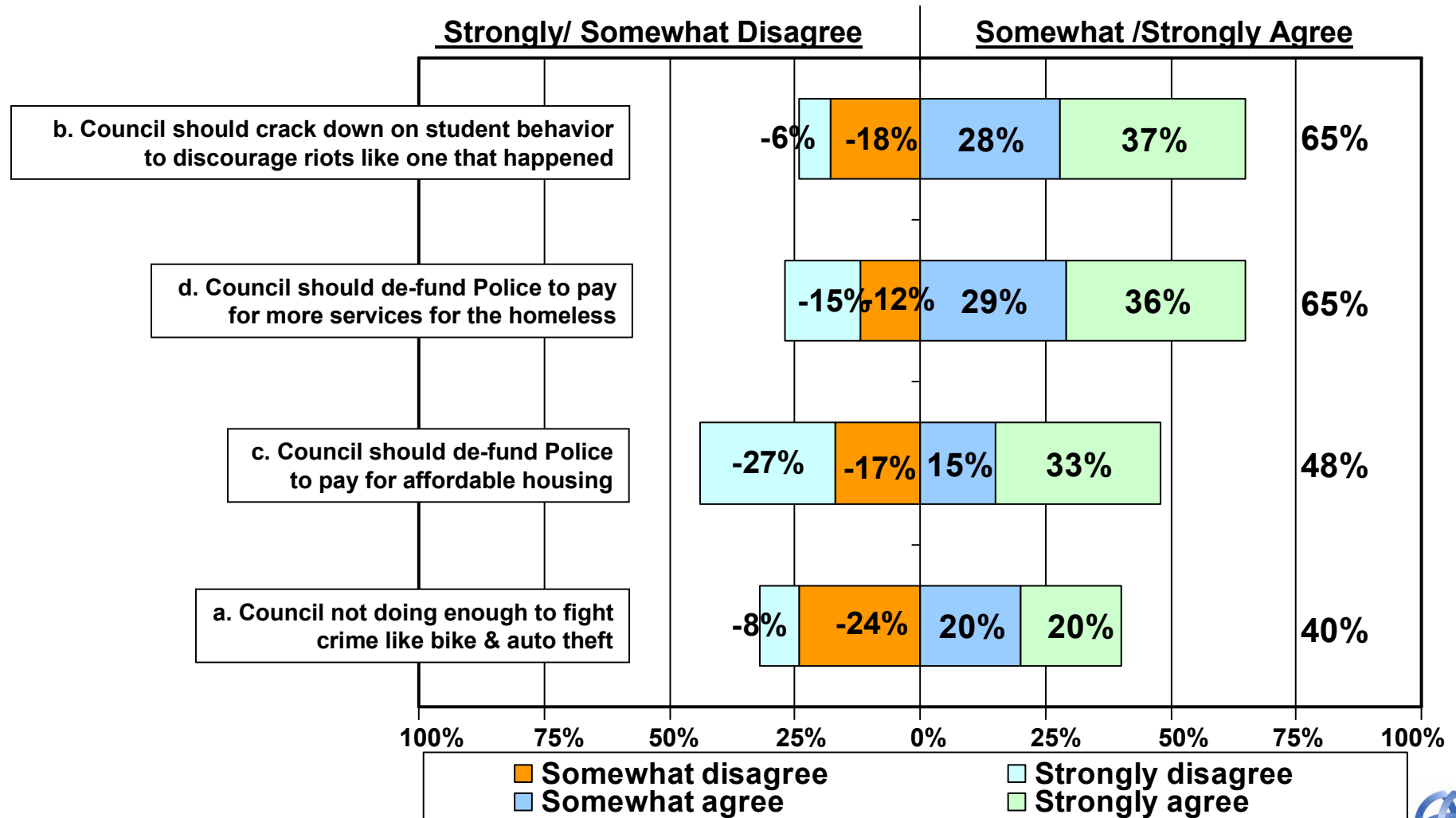
*Don't Know and Neutral responses not charted



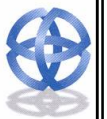
52 Alignment with Lower Tier Issues Facing The City

-Agree/Disagree Statements*-

[n=406, Except ½ Sample each for c & d]



XI. DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKOUTS ON PROPOSALS TESTED

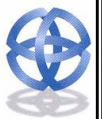


Demographic Breakouts

The four charts that follow show how the support for the various proposals and policies discussed above differs by key demographics, such as:

- Gender
- Age
- Own v. Rent homes
- Students v. Non-students
- Political party
- Income
- Race

There are many statistical differences based on Age and Student v. Non-students. Otherwise, noted differences are far less frequent.

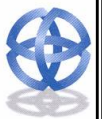


Demographic Breakouts

- Shows percent total “In Favor” -

Proposal	Total	Student	Not Student	R's	D's	U's
Bedrooms are for People	75%	92%	72%	73%	77%	72%
Switch to Ranked Choice Voting	73%	81%	72%	52%	77%	71%
Max height at Diagonal Plaza	67%	85%	63%	48%	70%	64%
Increase pay for Council	65%	71%	63%	53%	70%	59%
Create Nuisance Policy	61%	39%	65%	73%	60%	61%
Proactive Nuisance Enforcement	58%	42%	60%	68%	60%	54%
Annex CU South	56%	67%	53%	65%	57%	53%
Create/Fund Library District	50%	63%	47%	54%	56%	42%

 Shading indicates there is a statistical difference

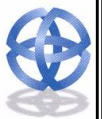


Demographic Breakouts

- Shows percent total “In Favor” -

Proposal	Total	18-34	35-64	65+	Own	Rent
Bedrooms are for People	75%	92%	75%	50%	64%	86%
Switch to Ranked Choice Voting	73%	82%	73%	61%	69%	77%
Max height at Diagonal Plaza	67%	74%	70%	48%	63%	70%
Increase pay for Council	65%	69%	59%	69%	63%	65%
Create Nuisance Policy	61%	43%	59%	90%	71%	51%
Proactive Nuisance Enforcement	58%	47%	58%	77%	67%	50%
Annex CU South	56%	61%	51%	58%	56%	56%
Create/Fund Library District	50%	63%	47%	42%	40%	60%

 Shading indicates there is a statistical difference

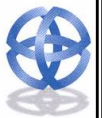


Demographic Breakouts

- Shows percent total “In Favor” -

Proposal	Total	Male	Female	White	Latino	<\$60K	>\$60K
Bedrooms are for People	75%	73%	76%	74%	92%	83%	69%
Switch to Ranked Choice	73%	76%	69%	74%	70%	77%	71%
Max height at Diagonal Plaza	67%	67%	66%	68%	51%	70%	66%
Increase pay for Council	65%	64%	65%	66%	60%	62%	67%
Create Nuisance Policy	61%	60%	62%	62%	45%	54%	65%
Proactive Nuisance Enforcement	58%	54%	63%	59%	81%	62%	55%
Annex CU South	56%	61%	51%	58%	31%	56%	56%
Create/Fund Library District	50%	51%	49%	51%	56%	57%	46%

 Shading indicates there is a statistical difference



Demographic Breakouts

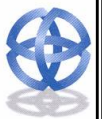
- Shows percent total "In Favor" -

Proposal	Total	Male	Female	White	Latino	<\$60K	>\$60K
Prefer Statement A	34%	39%	31%	37%	5%	33%	37%
Prefer Statement B	56%	54%	58%	54%	81%	64%	52%

Proposal	Total	Student	Not Student	R's	D's	U's
Prefer Statement A	34%	28%	35%	54%	30%	38%
Prefer Statement B	56%	69%	54%	38%	61%	52%

Proposal	Total	18-34	35-64	65+	Own	Rent
Prefer Statement A	34%	25%	40%	37%	41%	29%
Prefer Statement B	56%	73%	51%	43%	47%	66%

 Shading indicates there is a statistical difference



X. APPENDIX: PERCENTAGE RESULTS

