



MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES

FROM: LORI WEIGEL / PARTNER / PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

DATE: JANUARY 5, 2016

RE: KEY FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY OF VOTERS THROUGHOUT THE CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS REGARDING SUPPORT FOR A BALLOT MEASURE TO FUND PARKS AND OPEN SPACE MAINTENANCE IN THE CITY

Public Opinion Strategies recently completed a statistically valid survey of Colorado Springs voters regarding their support for a tax increase to fund maintenance and investments in parks and open space areas in the City. The sample was drawn from registered voters throughout the City whose past participation in similar elections demonstrates they are likely to participate in the April 2017 election. Interviews were distributed proportionally throughout the City. The sample is also demographically representative of the profile of likely April voters. The survey was conducted November 29 –December 3, 2016, and has an overall margin of error of +5.66%. Sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. Interviews were conducted on both landline and cell phone to ensure the representativeness of the sample.

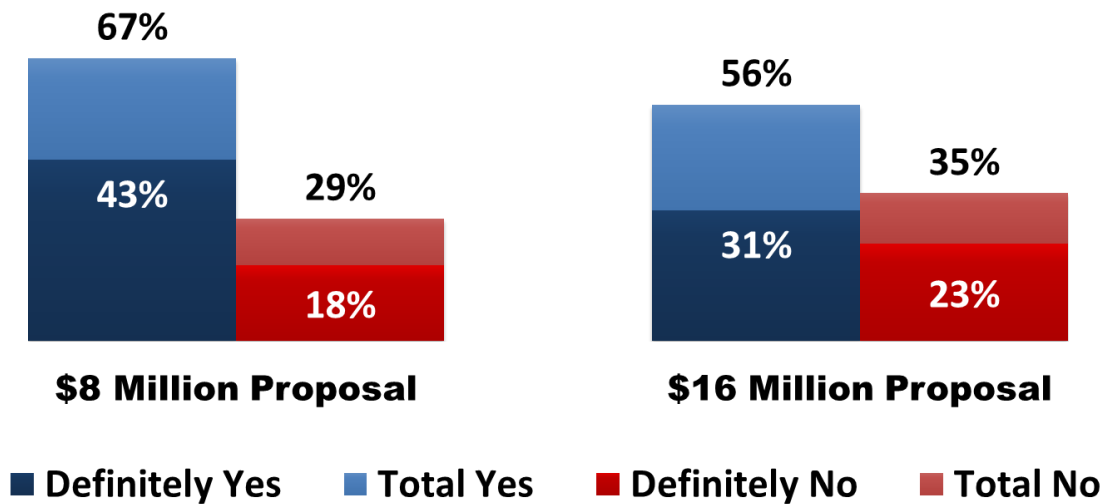
- A solid majority of likely voters indicate that they would vote Yes if the election were being held today for a ballot measure that would fund conserving water, protecting natural areas, and expanding parks and outdoor recreation through an increase in the sales tax. Respondents were presented with draft language of the proposal as it would appear on a future ballot, with half hearing about a one-tenth of one cent sales tax increase and the other half hearing about a two-tenth of one-cent amount with the corresponding figures also adjusted for accuracy:

“Shall city taxes be increased by up to (eight million/sixteen million) dollars annually with a temporary (one-tenth/two-tenths) of one cent sales tax for conserving water, protecting natural areas, and expanding parks and outdoor recreation?”

If approved, the City of Colorado Springs shall be authorized to impose a temporary sales tax, which would cost (13/26) dollars annually for the average household, for ten years to fund water conservation, protection of natural areas, and expansion of parks and outdoor recreation. This funding will sunset, or expire exactly ten years from the date of its implementation and is subject to recommendations of a citizens’ advisory committee and independent audit. All revenue will be placed in a dedicated fund to be used only for funding

the cost of protecting lands that conserve water; protecting and maintaining natural areas, wildlife habitat, and forests; and repairing and improving regional and neighborhood parks, and recreation opportunities such as trails and sports programs and facilities.”

Given this language, two-thirds of voters (67 percent) indicate initially they will vote yes for the one-tenth of one cent amount, with 43 percent of the electorate indicating they will “definitely” vote Yes. A majority also register support for the higher two-tenth of one cent increase, but the intensity is less significant (56 percent Yes; 31 percent definitely vote Yes). The higher amount also engenders somewhat greater opposition, as depicted in the following graph:



- Support for the measure to fund parks and natural areas is widespread and broad-based. While there is clear price sensitivity evident in the reaction to the ballot proposals, when taken as a whole, majorities of all key subgroups of the electorate statewide indicate support, including:
 - 63 percent of women and 59 percent of men;
 - 56 percent of voters under age 45, 65 percent of 45-54 year olds, 63 percent of 55-64 year olds and 62 percent of seniors;
 - 85 percent of Democrats, 56 percent of independents, and 53 percent of GOP voters; and
 - Among 60 percent or more of voters in every district in the City, with the exception of the fourth district although this is the smallest of any of the Districts (41 percent Yes).
- Water conservation is one of the key funding elements that stands out in the ballot language. Respondents who support the tax increase were given an opportunity to indicate the reasons

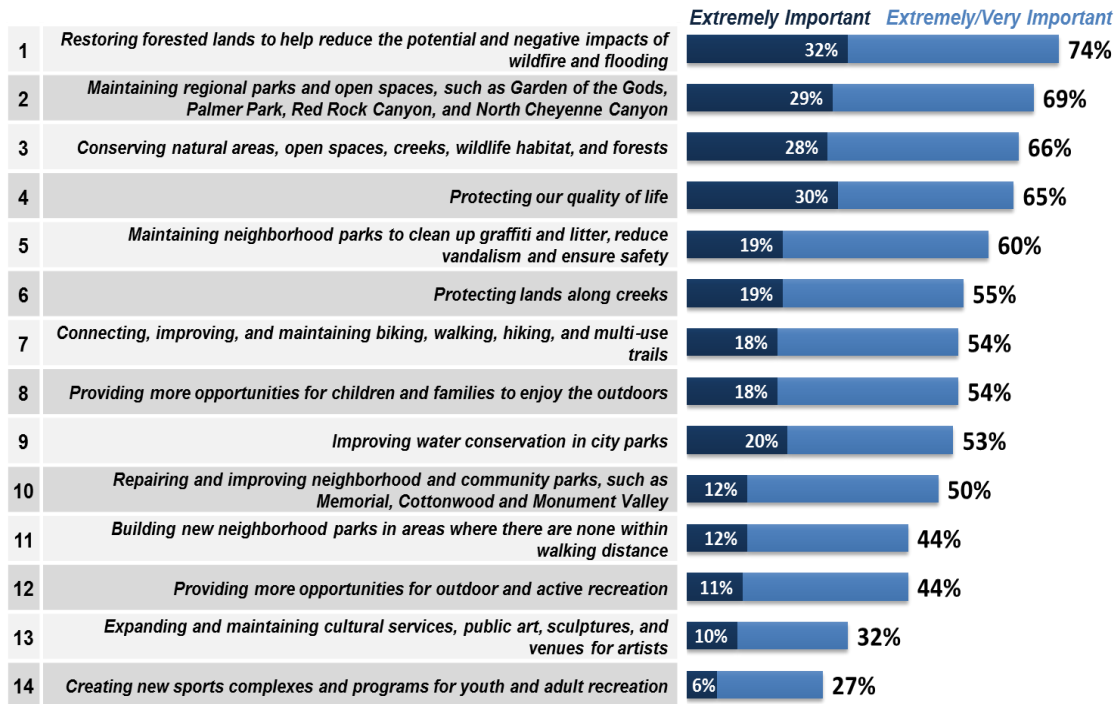
for this support. As the graph indicates, there is a strong sense that water conservation is important to fund. The key themes and language that residents used are depicted here, with larger font size indicating a more prevalent theme:



In contrast, there is no single concern that dominates the minority of City voters who oppose the proposal. They provide general concerns such as waste in the City, the timing of the tax or general anti-tax concerns.

- Voters respond positively to specific uses of new funds which involve restoring forested areas and conserving natural areas. In addition, there is a desire to maintain parks, especially the iconic and better known regional parks. The survey also reveals that voters are very positive about a number of ways in which funds from such a measure could be used, as the following graph demonstrates. The top tier funds are supported across the partisan spectrum by solid majorities of City voters, irrespective of their political affiliation.

Summary of Key Aspects ranked by % Extremely/Very Important



- The survey demonstrates that given adequate resources to communicate about the proposal, voter support will solidify. The survey simulated some of the communications that could take place over the course of a campaign both for and against a potential ballot measure. Overall support for a one-tenth of one cent sales tax to fund natural areas and parks in the City increases after hearing both sides. All of this suggests a solid effort communicating about the more modest measure and the need for these funds will solidify support for a parks proposal.