Bond Feasibility Survey

Conducted for the
Santa Maria Joint Union
High School District

Presented By

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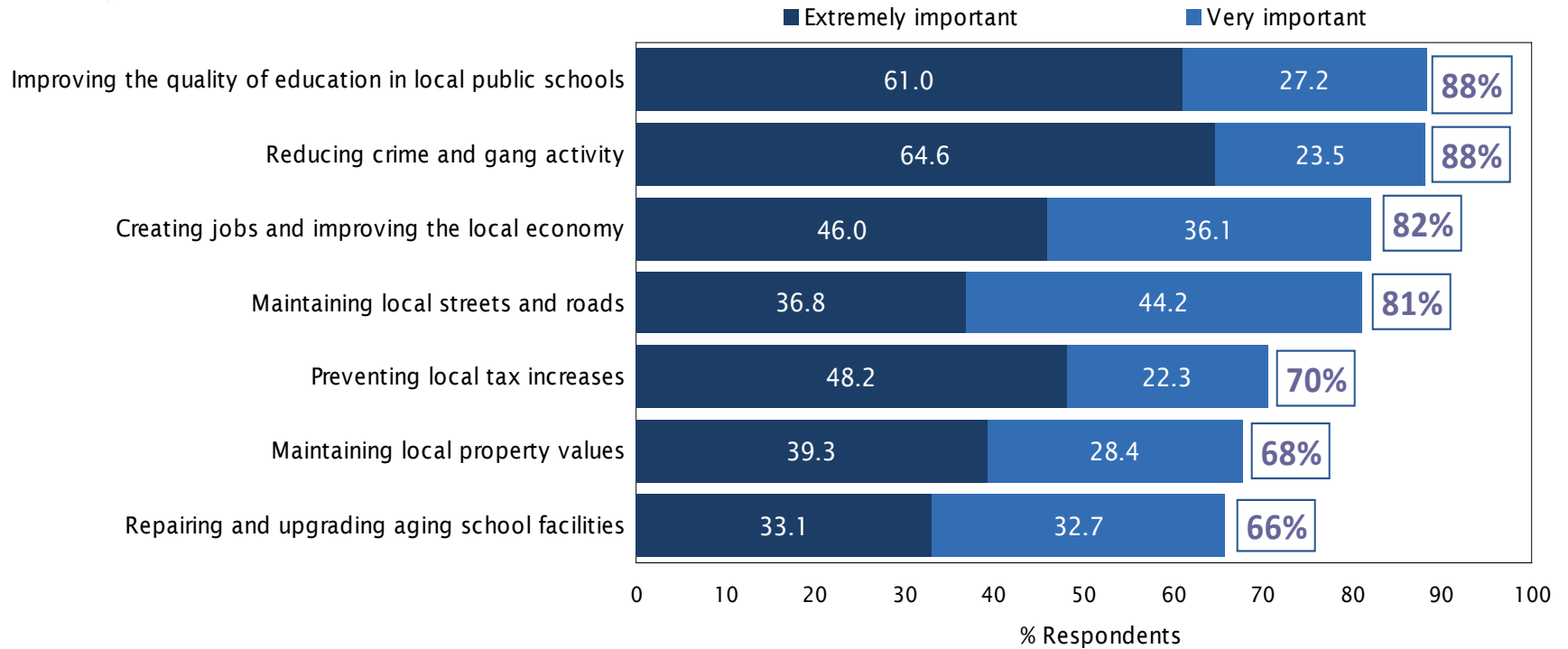
4/15/2024

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PURPOSE OF STUDY

o Determine if a bond measure is feasible

o Identify how to create a measure consistent with community priorities

o Gather information needed for communications & outreach

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METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

- **How did we select voters to survey?**
  - Stratified & Clustered Random Sample of likely voters (2024) using age, gender, partisanship, household party type, and sub-geographies
  - Ensures balanced, representative sample of likely voters
- **How did we recruit participation?**
  - Personalized email, text, and telephone calls
  - PINs to restrict access and ensure one complete per respondent
- **How were voters able to share their opinions?**
  - Secure, PIN-protected website that scales to the device
  - Telephone (land line or mobile)
  - English & Spanish
- **What was the sample size?**
  - 410 completed interviews
  - Overall margin of error of ± 4.8% @ 95% level of confidence

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IMPORTANCE OF ISSUES

Extremely important   **Very important**

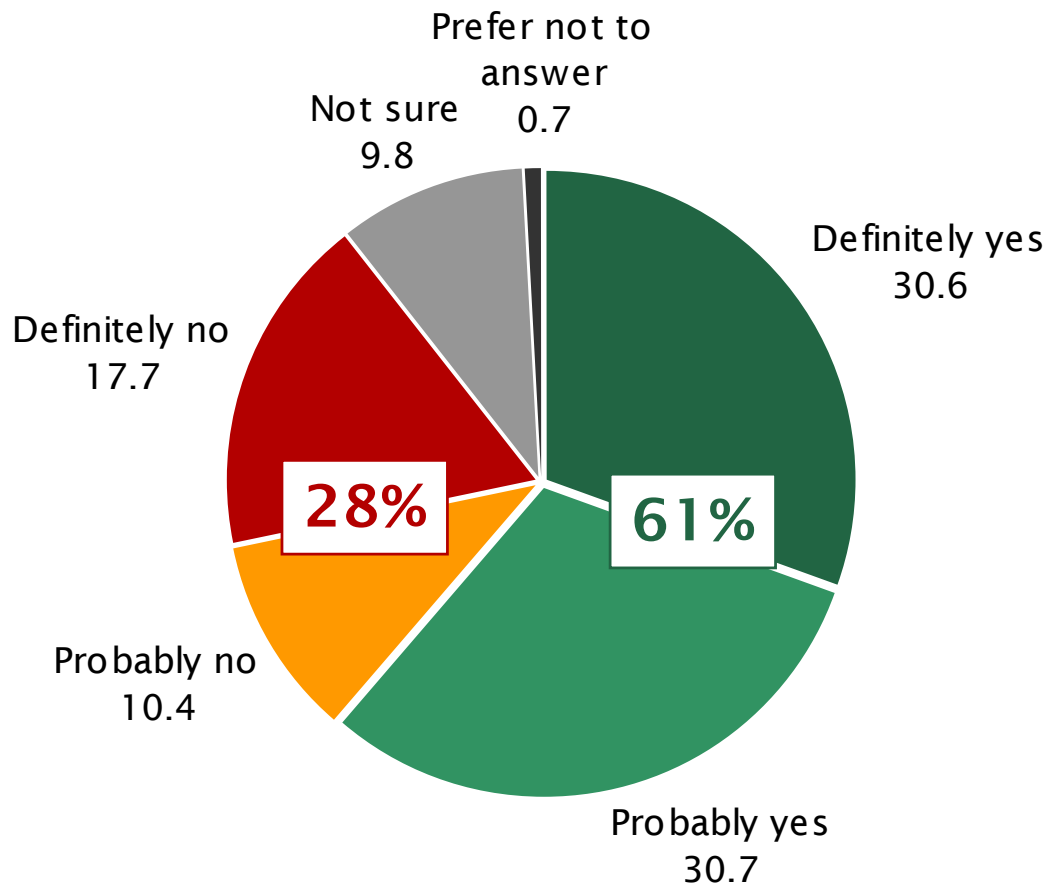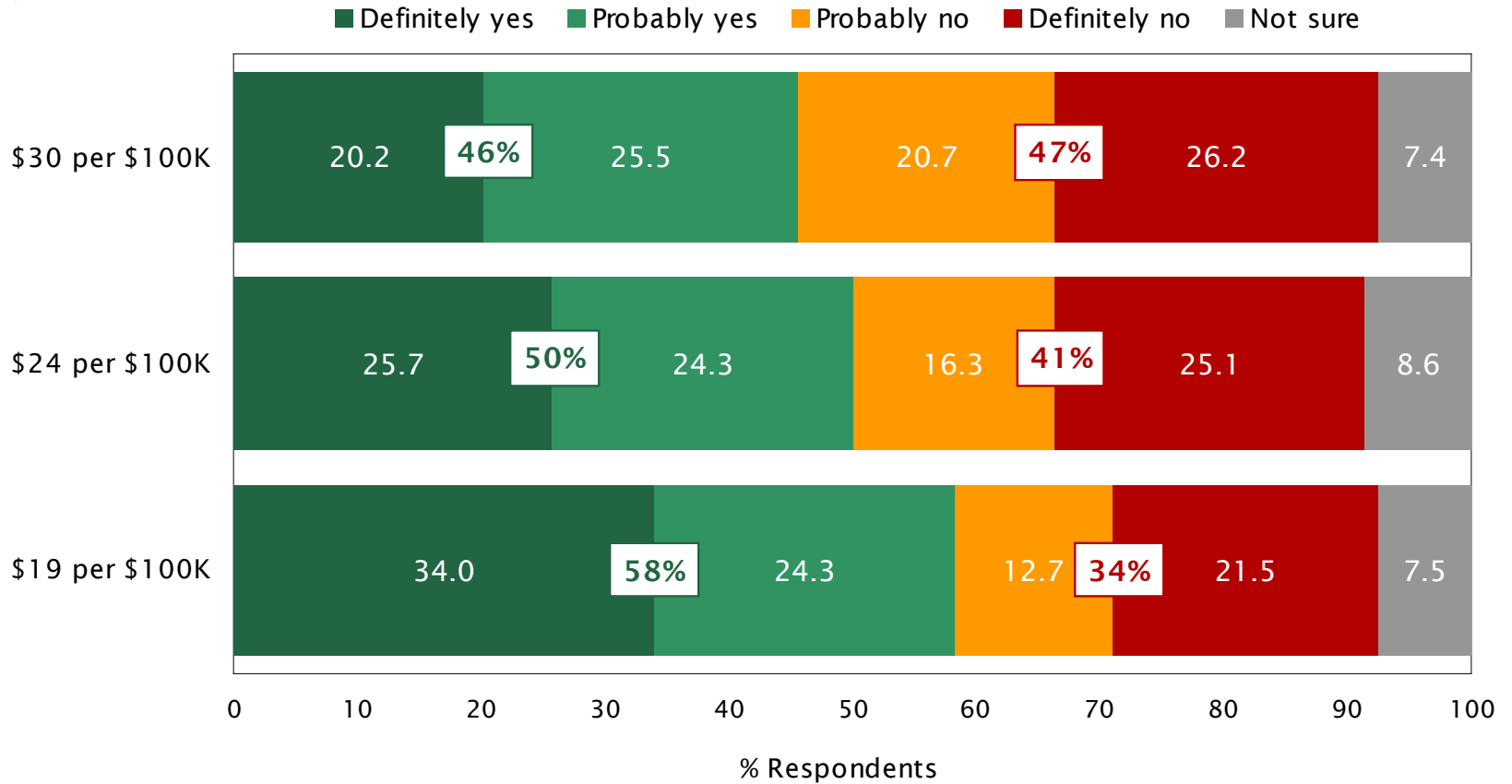| Issue	Extremely important	Very important	Total
Improving the quality of education in local public schools	61.0	27.2	88%
Reducing crime and gang activity	64.6	23.5	88%
Creating jobs and improving the local economy	46.0	36.1	82%
Maintaining local streets and roads	36.8	44.2	81%
Preventing local tax increases	48.2	22.3	70%
Maintaining local property values	39.3	28.4	68%
Repairing and upgrading aging school facilities	33.1	32.7	66%

% Respondents

INITIAL BALLOT TEST

In order to:

o Construct a new high school to reduce overcrowding
o And repair, construct, and improve classrooms, career training facilities, science labs, and facilities at local high schools to support college/career readiness in math, science, engineering, technology, arts, and skilled trades

Shall Santa Maria Joint Union High School District's measure authorizing $194 million in bonds at legal rates be adopted, levying approximately 30 dollars per 100 thousand dollars of assessed valuation ($13 million annually) while bonds are outstanding, with citizen oversight, independent audits, and all money locally-controlled? If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure?
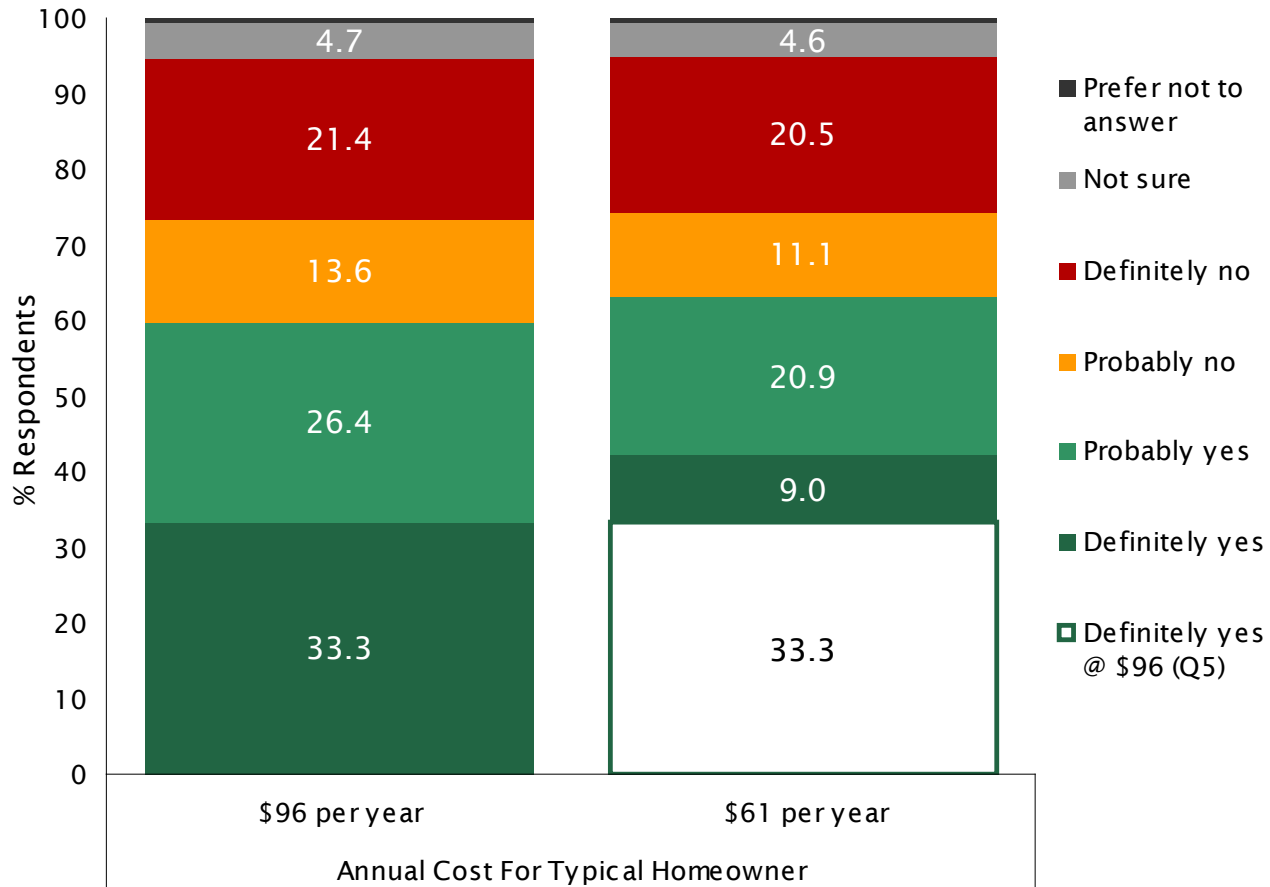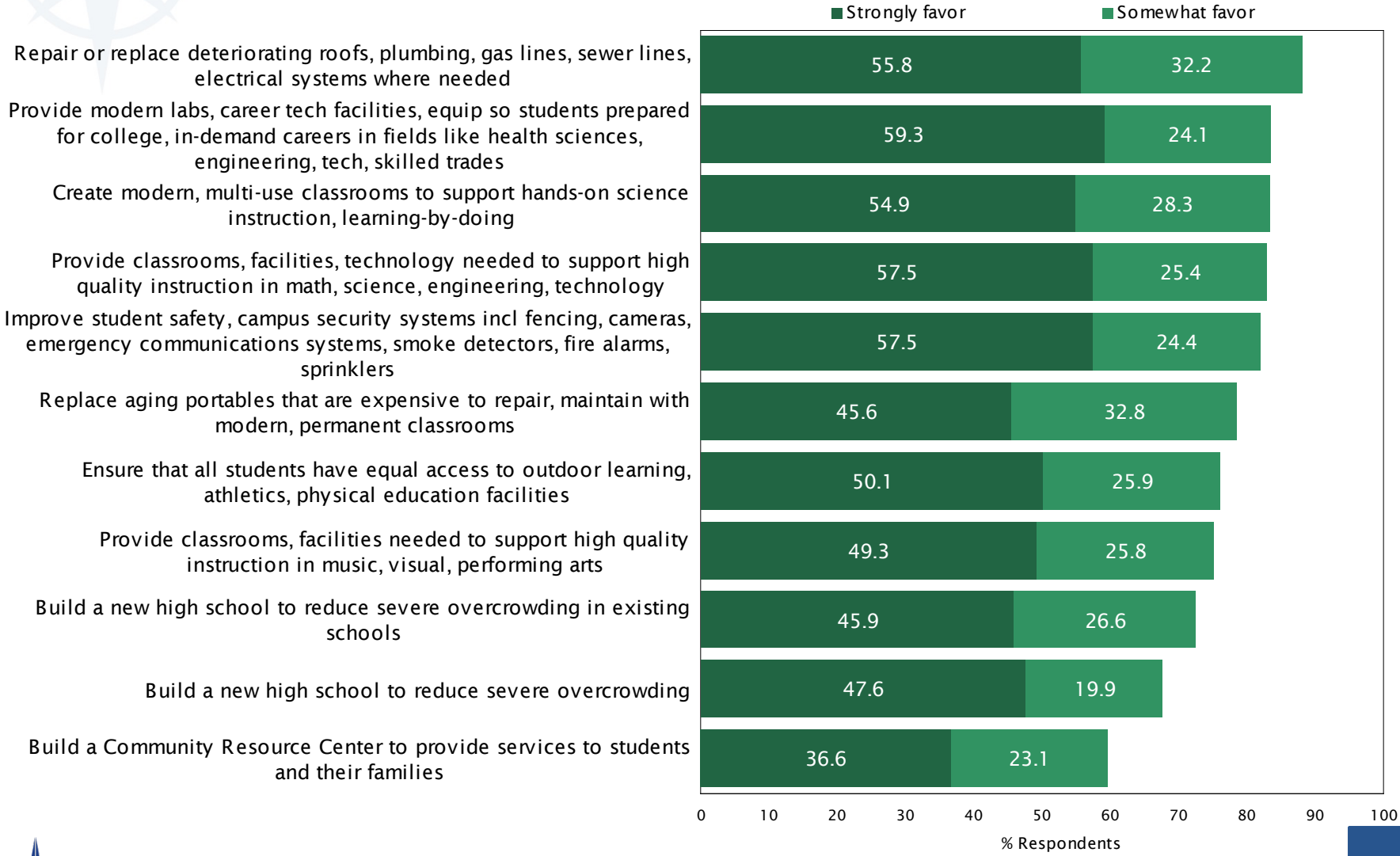
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INITIAL BALLOT TEST

Pie chart:
- Definitely yes: 30.6
- Probably yes: 30.7
- Probably no: 10.4
- Definitely no: 17.7
- Not sure: 9.8
- Prefer not to answer: 0.7

61% (yes)
28% (no)

TAX THRESHOLD

Legend: Definitely yes | Probably yes | Probably no | Definitely no | Not sure

	Definitely yes		Probably yes	Probably no		Definitely no	Not sure
$30 per $100K	20.2	**46%**	25.5	20.7	**47%**	26.2	7.4
$24 per $100K	25.7	**50%**	24.3	16.3	**41%**	25.1	8.6
$19 per $100K	34.0	**58%**	24.3	12.7	**34%**	21.5	7.5

% Respondents

SUPPORT IF ANNUAL TOTAL IS $96 OR $61 FOR TYPICAL OWNER

PROJECTS & IMPROVEMENTS

Legend: ■ Strongly favor   ■ Somewhat favor

Project	Strongly favor	Somewhat favor
Repair or replace deteriorating roofs, plumbing, gas lines, sewer lines, electrical systems where needed	55.8	32.2
Provide modern labs, career tech facilities, equip so students prepared for college, in-demand careers in fields like health sciences, engineering, tech, skilled trades	59.3	24.1
Create modern, multi-use classrooms to support hands-on science instruction, learning-by-doing	54.9	28.3
Provide classrooms, facilities, technology needed to support high quality instruction in math, science, engineering, technology	57.5	25.4
Improve student safety, campus security systems incl fencing, cameras, emergency communications systems, smoke detectors, fire alarms, sprinklers	57.5	24.4
Replace aging portables that are expensive to repair, maintain with modern, permanent classrooms	45.6	32.8
Ensure that all students have equal access to outdoor learning, athletics, physical education facilities	50.1	25.9
Provide classrooms, facilities needed to support high quality instruction in music, visual, performing arts	49.3	25.8
Build a new high school to reduce severe overcrowding in existing schools	45.9	26.6
Build a new high school to reduce severe overcrowding	47.6	19.9
Build a Community Resource Center to provide services to students and their families	36.6	23.1

% Respondents

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POSITIVE ARGUMENTS

Legend: ■ Very convincing ■ Somewhat convincing

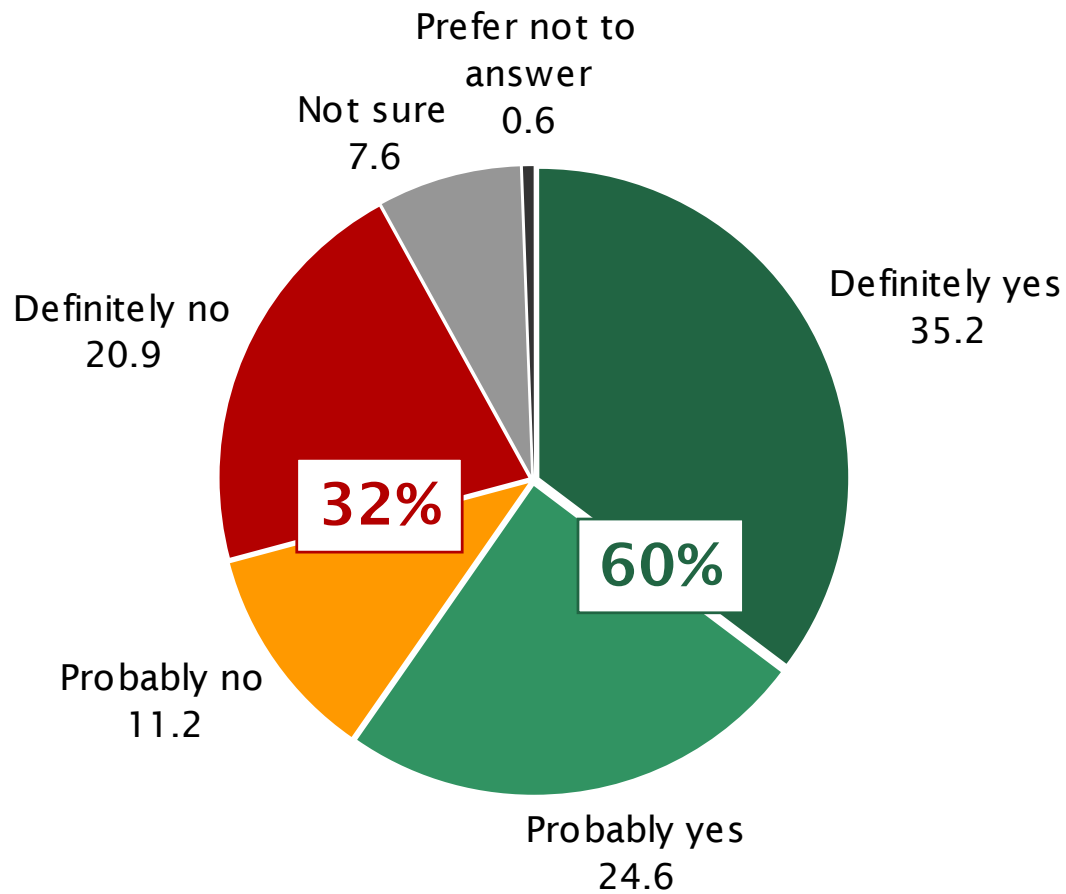| Argument	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing
If we want kids to succeed in college, careers, must be skilled in use of today's tech, have advanced classes in science, math, engineering, tech; measure helps make this possible	44.2	33.9
There are 50+ portable classrooms 20+ yrs old, deteriorating; some have structural damage, water leaks; expensive to keep repairing; need bond to replace portables with modern, permanent classrooms	50.7	25.0
Student safety, security has become a top priority for schools around nation; bond will provide funding for increased safety, security that will protect students, staff in case of an emergency	46.4	28.5
Studies have shown overcrowded schools not safe; overcrowding makes it hard to respond to fire, emergencies, increases health risks, violence on campus; students deserve better	45.1	29.7
All high schools severely overcrowded; with so many students crammed into existing schools, difficult to get into classes, programs, sports, activities they need for a well-rounded education	40.4	34.1
Measure will ensure students who plan to go to college prepared to succeed, those who don't, receive career training they need to compete for good paying jobs	47.2	27.0
All high schools severely overcrowded; most built for 2,000 students, majority now have 3,100+ students, area continuing to grow; need to build an HS, add classrooms	52.7	21.2
Measure requires transparent system of accountability, project list describing how money will be used, Citizens' Oversight Committee, public disclosure of how all funds are spent	45.6	26.3
Even with no school-age children, supporting school bond is a wise investment; good schools improve quality of life in community, protect value of homes	38.1	32.3
Crowded schools make it harder for students to learn, reduce time teachers spend with students; measure will construct classrooms, facilities to avoid overcrowding at high schools	43.5	26.7
Some high schools have modern classrooms, labs, career-training facilities, some don't; measure will ensure ALL students have equal access to classrooms, labs, facilities to succeed	41.3	28.0
All money raised by measure will stay local to support students; it can't be taken away by State or used for other purposes	48.3	19.8
If voters approve measure, schools eligible to receive ~$70M in State matching money when it becomes available that otherwise will go to other school districts	44.1	23.9

% Respondents

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INTERIM BALLOT TEST

Prefer not to answer 0.6

Not sure 7.6

Definitely no 20.9

Probably no 11.2

Definitely yes 35.2

Probably yes 24.6

32%

60%

NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS

Legend: ■ Very convincing ■ Somewhat convincing

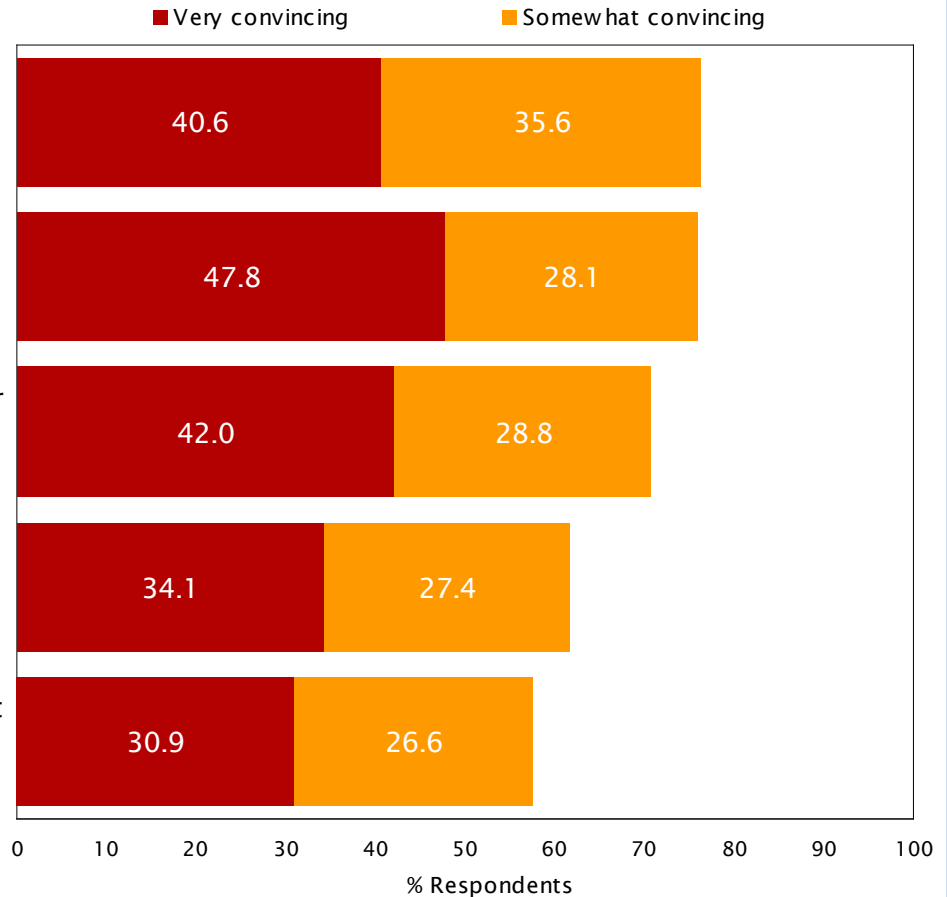| Argument	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing
Residents, local businesses hit hard by pandemic, now facing runaway inflation, high gas prices; many are struggling to stay afloat; now is not the time to raise taxes	40.6	35.6
Property owners are already paying too many taxes, incl multiple school bonds, local taxes; enough is enough; we can't afford to keep raising taxes	47.8	28.1
Community is already an expensive place to live, especially for young families, seniors, those on fixed incomes; passing bond will make it even less affordable	42.0	28.8
We can't trust District with this tax, they will mismanage the money, not build what they promise	34.1	27.4
Developers are the ones causing overcrowding problem at schools, so they should be the ones to pay for school improvements, not the taxpayers	30.9	26.6

% Respondents

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FINAL BALLOT TEST

Prefer not to answer 0.4

Not sure 8.2

Definitely no 22.0

Definitely yes 30.4

36%

55%

Probably no 14.1

Probably yes 24.9

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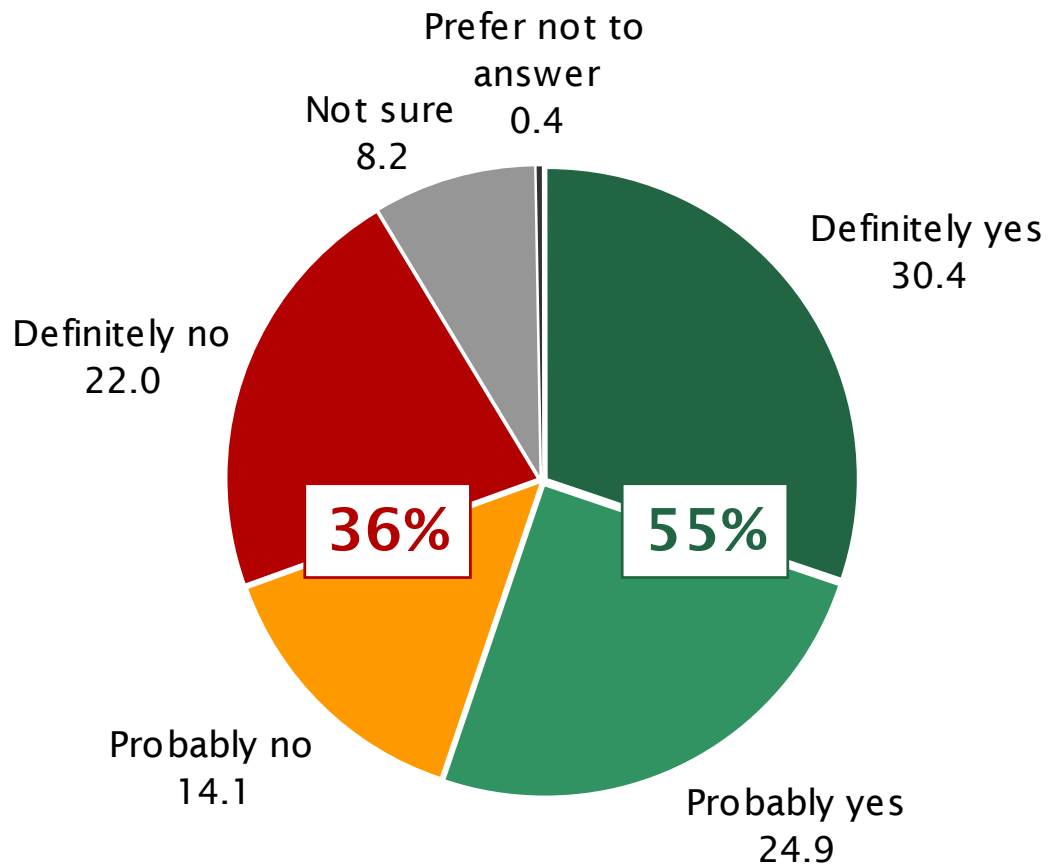
KEY CONCLUSIONS

Does a bond appear to be feasible for a 2024 ballot? *Yes, but it will require some adjustments.*

Positive Signs
- o Voters rank improving the quality of education in local schools as the *most* important issues facing the community
- o Solid *natural* support for bond measure (61%)
- o Popular projects and improvements
- o Strong positive arguments
- o All ballot tests meet or exceed 55%, even after opposition arguments

Challenges
- o Tax rate sensitivity
- o Receptiveness to potential opposition arguments (-5%)
- o Electoral climate: Hyper-partisanship & overlapping tax measures

Unknowns
- o Trajectory of economy, inflation, and statewide initiatives

OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

o **Snapshot in time, not a crystal ball**

o **Tax Rate:** Keep affordable

o **Project Priorities:** Repairs to older facilities/bring them up to code, STEM, Career Tech, relieve overcrowding

o **District Communications**: Expand the conversation with the community to build awareness of facility needs and consensus on a bond proposal.

o **Independent Campaign:** Need to have solid independent campaign to navigate through the election cycle, communicate key messages, turn out supporters, and weather uncertainties.

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Next Steps

✓ Develop informational messaging and stakeholder outreach target list

✓ Begin informational communications and stakeholder outreach

✓ Finalize bond financing plan

✓ Develop bond measure resolution, ballot language and project list

✓ Identify leadership for an independent advocacy campaign