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City of Novato

Local Revenue Measure Feasibility Survey

June 2010

The City of Novato commissioned Godbe Research to conduct a survey of voters with the following research objectives:

- Assess potential support for a local revenue measure to offset and prevent additional budget cuts and maintain and restore city services;
- Identify the tax rate and duration at which voters will support any potential measure;
- Prioritize a list of city services and facilities that voters perceive are important to maintain with the funds generated by a measure; and
- Identify any differences in voter support due to demographic and/or voter behavioral characteristics.

- Data Collection Telephone Interviewing
- Universe Approximately 20,061 registered voters in the City of Novato who are likely to vote in the November 2010 election
- Fielding Dates May 18 through May 23, 2010
- Interview Length 18 minutes
- Sample Size 400 voters
- Margin of Error $\pm 4.9\%$



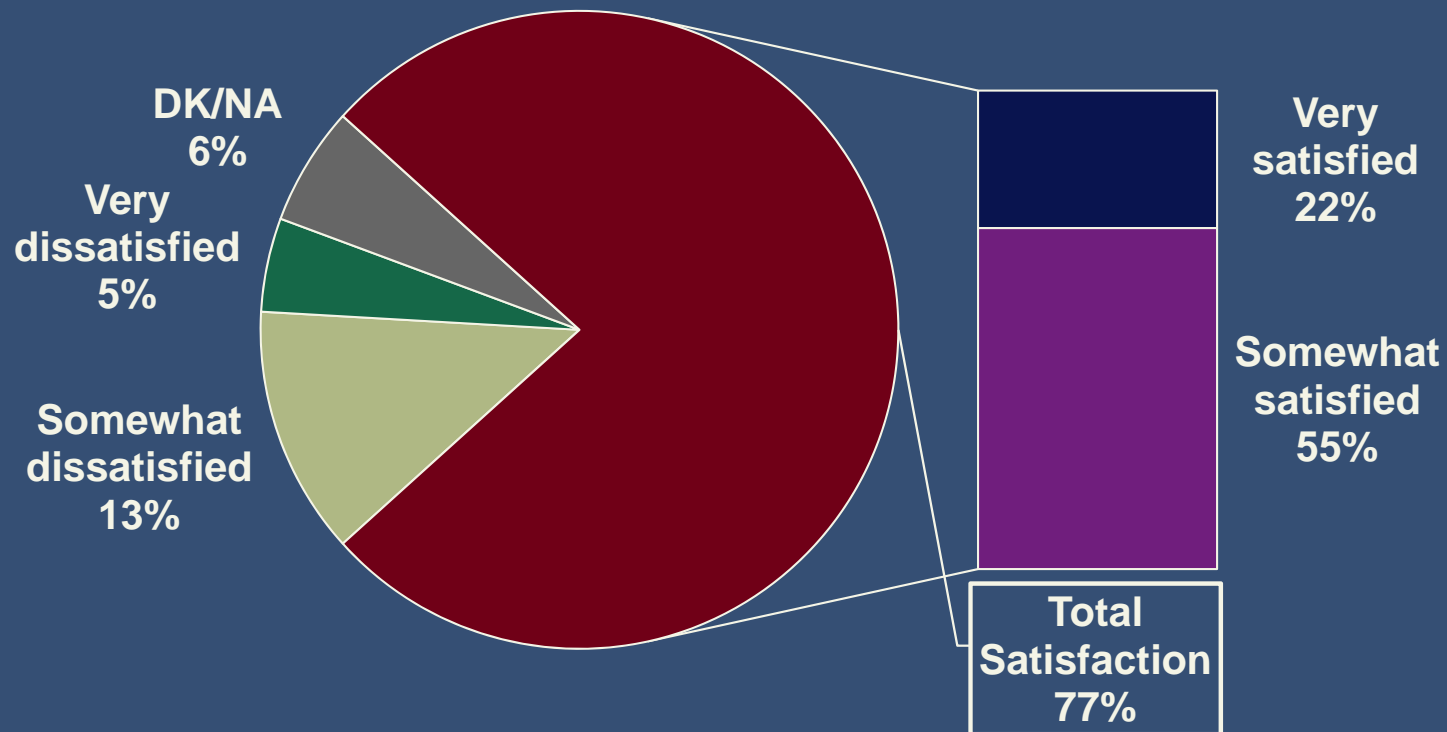
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Voters' Opinions of the City of Novato

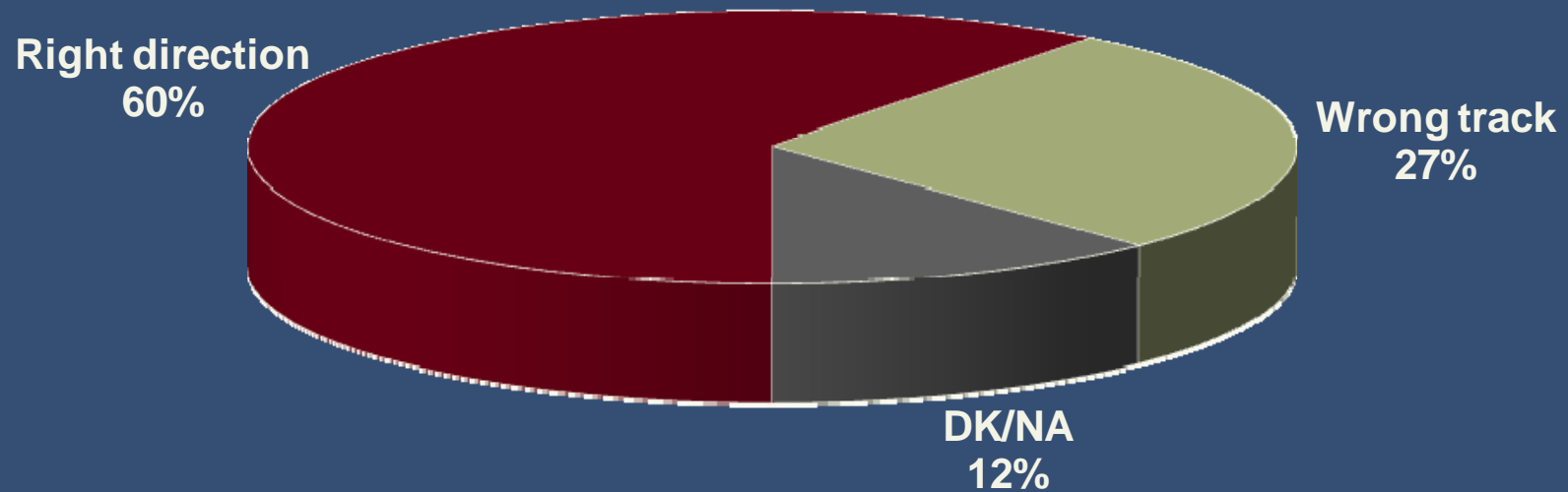
Satisfaction with City Services

Generally speaking, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the job the City of Novato is doing to provide city services?



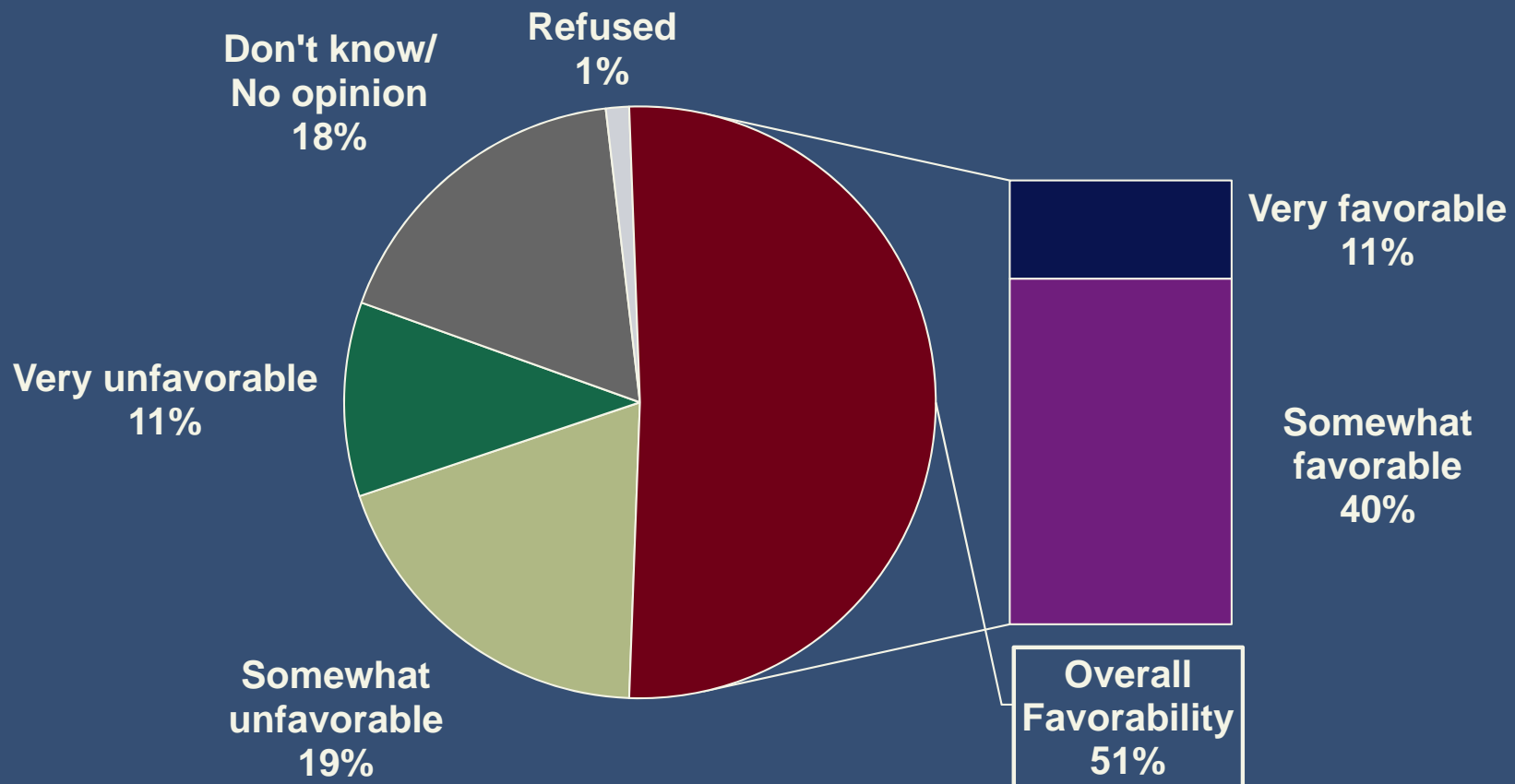
City Direction

Generally speaking, do you think things in Novato are going in the right direction, or do you feel things are seriously off on the wrong track?



Opinion of City Leaders

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the job City leaders are doing to solve the difficult problems as they arise?





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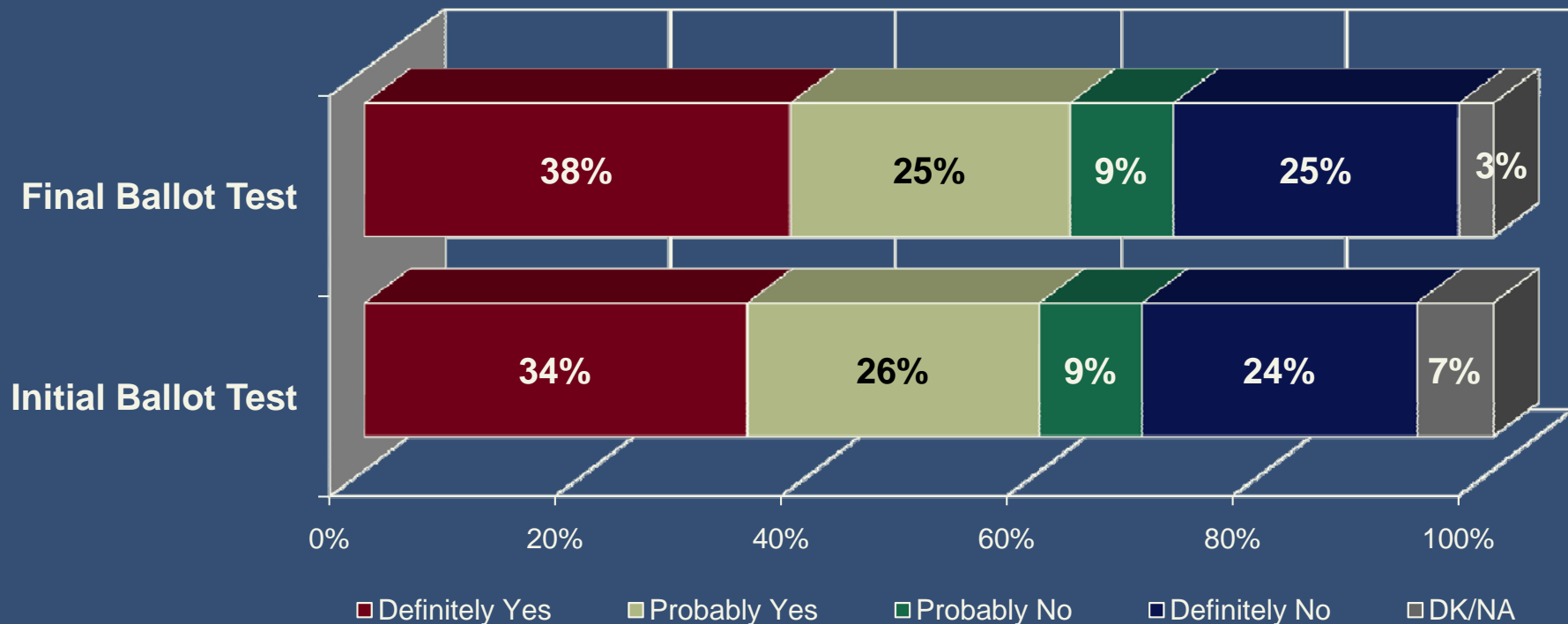
Support for a Local Revenue Measure

Support for Half-Cent Sales Tax

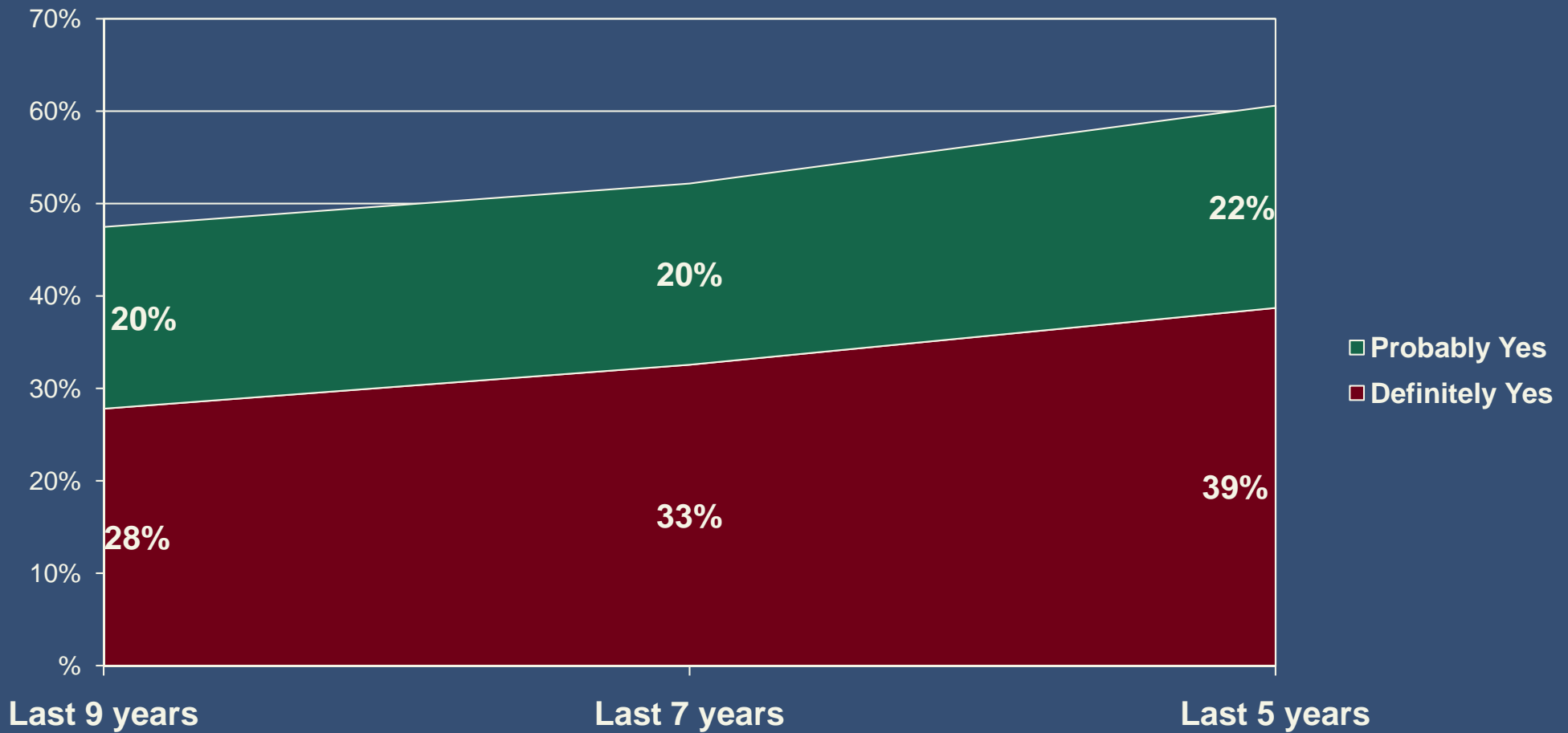
To offset and prevent additional budget cuts and maintain and restore essential general city services including, and not limited to:

- Neighborhood police patrols, crime prevention programs, 911 response times;
- Earthquake and disaster preparedness;
- City street and pothole repair;
- Park maintenance;
- Preventing closure or elimination of youth and senior centers and services,

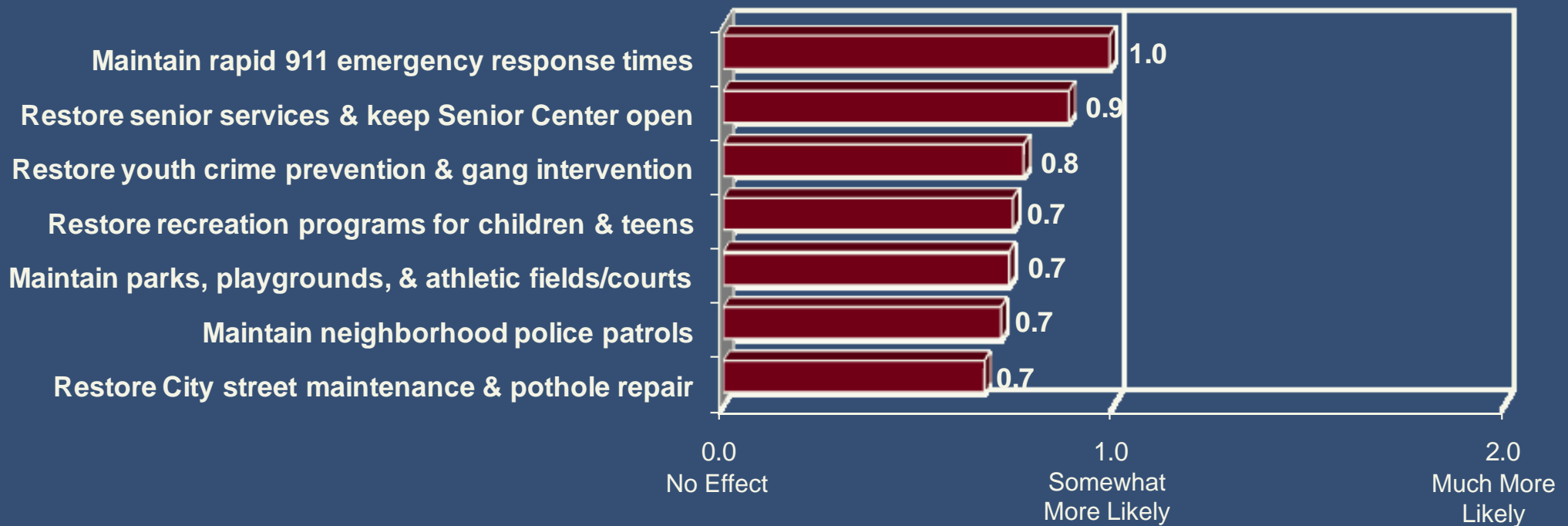
shall the City of Novato enact a half-cent sales tax with review by a citizen committee, annual independent audits, and all funds spent locally for the benefit of Novato citizens?



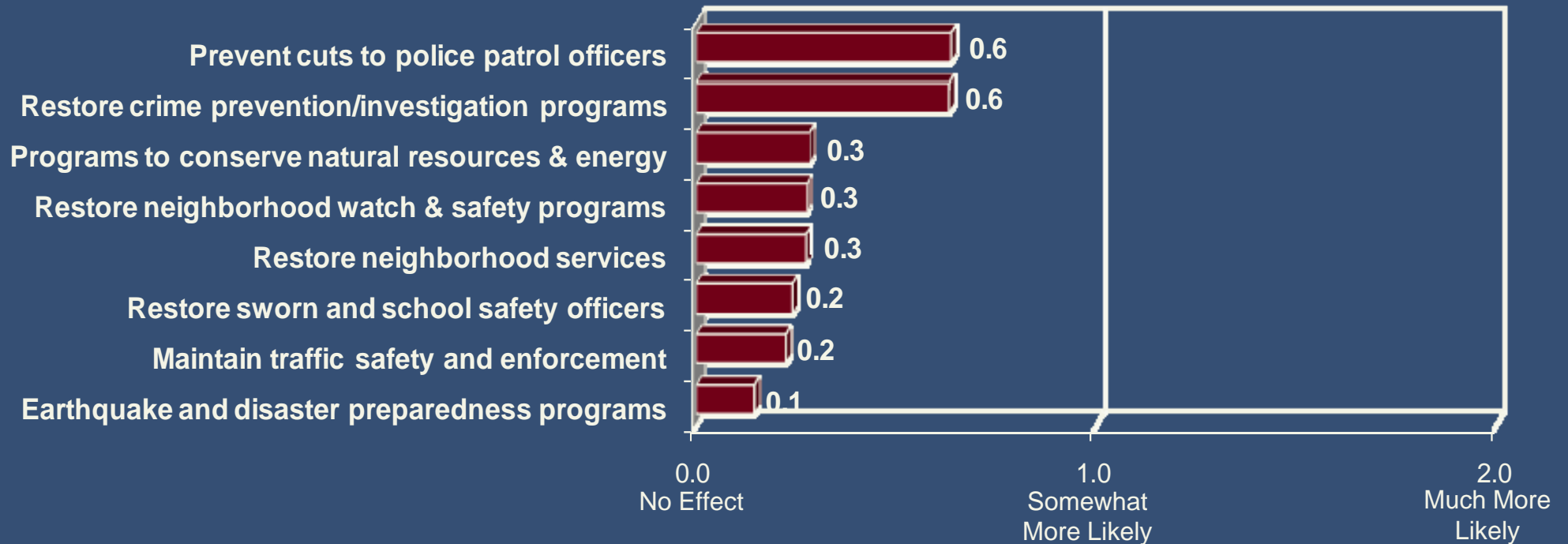
Support for Different Measure Durations



Features of the Measure I



Features of the Measure II

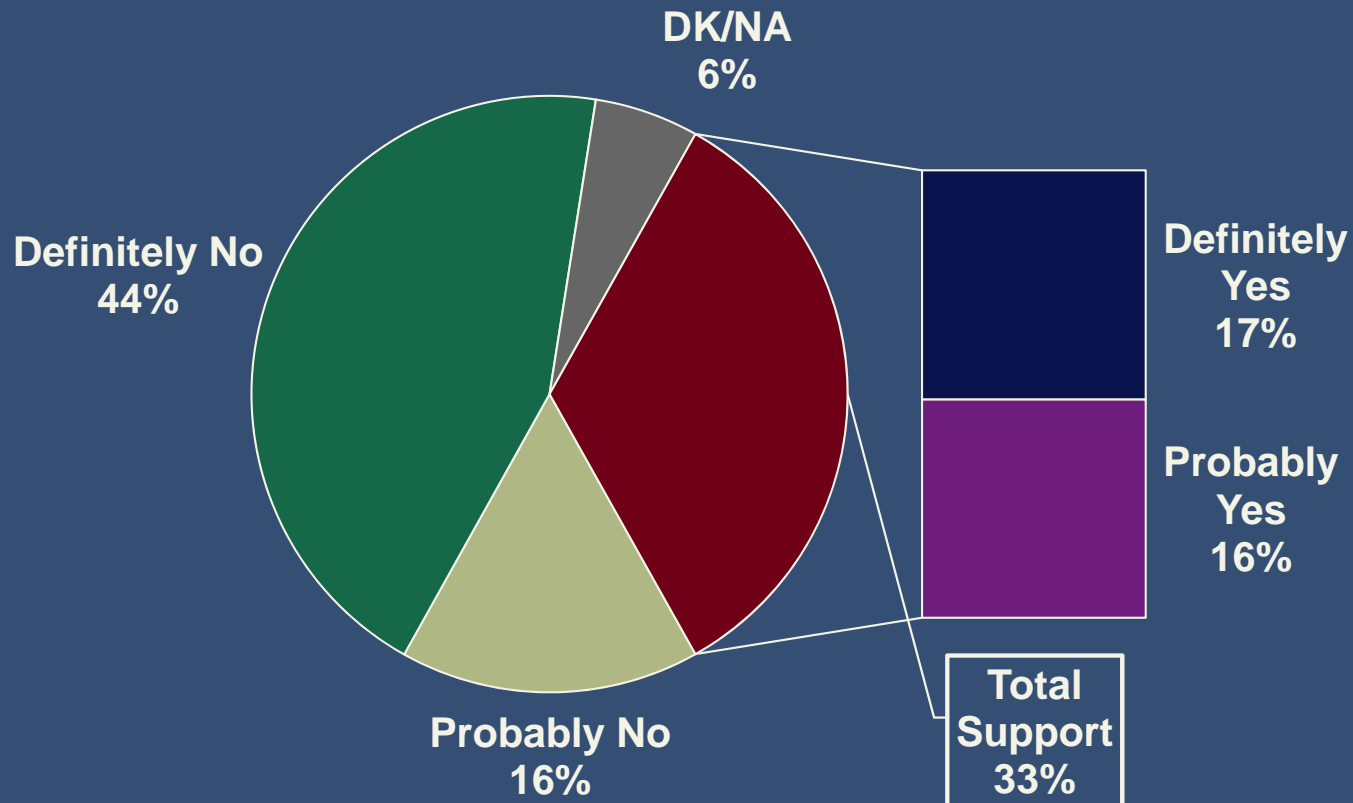


Support for Parcel Tax

To maintain, restore and offset budget cuts to:

- Neighborhood police patrols, crime prevention programs, and 911 response times;
- Earthquake and disaster preparedness programs;
- City street and pothole repair;
- Park maintenance;
- and to prevent closure or elimination of youth and senior centers and their services,

Shall the City of Novato levy \$180 per parcel annually, exempting seniors, with review by a citizen committee, annual independent audits, and all funds spent locally for the benefit of Novato citizens?



- ***A majority of voters have a positive opinion of the City of Novato, though the results suggest that many voters would benefit from additional information.***
- A majority of voters are satisfied with the job the City of Novato is doing to provide city services. More specifically, 77 percent of the voters surveyed were satisfied and just 18 percent were dissatisfied.
- Further, when asked whether things in Novato are going in the right direction, 60 percent of the voters thought that things are going in the right direction, whereas 27 percent felt that things are on the wrong track. It is also important to note that more than 1 out of 10 voters did not have an opinion which suggests that a substantial percentage of local voters would benefit from additional information from the City.
- When asked to rate the job City leaders are doing to solve the difficult problems as they arise, voters with a favorable opinion outnumbered voters with an unfavorable opinion by close to 2 to 1. In this case, 18 percent of the voters did not have an opinion which further emphasizes the need for the City to communicate with voters.

- ***The survey results indicate strong support for a half-cent sales tax measure among likely November 2010 voters, and Godbe Research recommends that the City of Novato move forward with placing a measure on the ballot.***
- After hearing only a summary of a half-cent sales tax measure, fully 60 percent of the voters surveyed indicated support.
- Support increased to 63 percent after voters had heard additional information on the measure, including potential city services and facilities to be funded. In contrast, 34 percent of the voters were opposed and the remaining 3 percent were undecided.
- Given the 5 percent margin of error for the study, we can conservatively estimate that informed support among all likely November 2010 voters is not below 58 percent, well above the simple majority required in an election.
- The survey results also show that a shorter duration would garner stronger voter support. More specifically, a measure lasting 7 years received 53 percent support, and a measure lasting 5 years received 61 percent support.
- ***In contrast, the survey results indicate that a parcel tax measure to fund city services and facilities is not viable among likely November 2010 voters.***
- Support was significantly below the two-thirds majority required in an election. Given that close to half of the voters reported that they definitely would vote no, additional information on the benefits and need for a parcel tax measure would be unlikely to build adequate support.

- *The consulting team recommends that the City continue its tradition of keeping its constituents informed about its budget situation, service delivery challenges, and potential revenue solutions in a factual, fair and balanced manner.*
- *The ballot question should be clearly stated and consistent with consultant and legal recommendations.*



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