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SERVICES

811 First Avenue
Suite 451
Seattle, WA 98104
(206) 652-2454 TEL
(206) 652-5022 FAX

436 14th Street
Suite 820
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 844-0680 TEL
(510) 844-0690 FAX

4041 North High Street
Suite 300M
Columbus, OH 43214
(614) 268-1660 TEL

EMCresearch.com

To: Interested Parties
From: Alex Evans; EMC Research
Date: October 15, 2014
Re: City of Oakland Voters Opinion Research EMC #14-5374 Findings

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The following are the key findings from a poll of likely City of Oakland voters conducted from September 30 - October 5, 2014. The purpose of the poll was to determine the attitudes of the Oakland community regarding a proposed Oakland Zoo expansion project.

SUMMARY

The Oakland Zoo is an important part of the Oakland community, and ranks highly favorably amongst Oakland voters, with nearly half visiting the Zoo at least once a year. When asked whether or not they support a Zoo expansion plan, voters initially support the plan but it is clear even from the initial ask that support is soft as only 22% strongly support the expansion.

While a majority of voters (57% overall) initially support the expansion plan, this support erodes as voters learn that the expansion will occur on environmentally sensitive and publicly accessible open space as access to public open space is highly valued in Oakland as 80% said such access was "very important."

After hearing more about the plan, a plurality of voters oppose the expansion plan. Finally, when voters are asked how the Zoo should move forward, a 75% supermajority says the Zoo should either not be allowed to expand into undeveloped public parkland or that any expansion should be built within or near existing zoo buildings, impacting the smallest amount of public parkland as possible, and minimizing impacts to threatened plant and animal species.

DETAILED KEY FINDINGS

While Oakland voters value and have highly favorable opinions of the Zoo, they also express strong support for the protection of open space and nature in Oakland.

- 80% rate access to open space in Oakland as very important to their quality of life.
- More than a third of voters report visiting Knowland Park hiking trails or open space areas at least once a year.
- 85% believe Knowland Park should be protected as a rare place where Oakland kids can go to learn and explore California's natural environment.

Voters find statements arguing against the expansion plan highly compelling, and they drive the level of opposition higher than the level of support.

- Opposition messaging included statements regarding the project's financial solvency, the negative effect it will have on native plant and animal species, and the importance of preserving access to open space for current and future generations.

- At least 75% of respondents agree with each of the opposition statements, with messaging relating to childrens' education or future generations reaching an 85% or higher agreement level.
- Opposition for the Zoo's expansion plan ends up at nearly 50% after opposition messaging, an increase of 22 points from the initial ask, while only 44% continue to support expansion into Knowland Park.

While levels of support for the expansion are initially high amongst uninformed voters, providing voters with details about the expansion plan causes support to drop and opposition to rise.

- Overall initial opposition for the plan starts with 25%, and nearly doubles to 47% by the final ask.
- Levels of opposition in the final ask are fairly consistent amongst demographic subgroupings and nearly equal within some, indicating opposition to the Zoo's expansion as currently planned is representative of the Oakland community of voters.
 - Parents (46%) and non-parents (47%) oppose the plan at near equal levels, as do males (46%) and females (48%).
 - While age and ethnic groups show a little more variation, voters age 18-39 (55%); 40-49 (51%); 50+ (42%); self-identified Hispanics (52%); African Americans (45%) and Whites (49%) all have a solid 40% or higher base of opposition.
- Opposition also reaches over one-third even amongst self-reported Zoo members or those who have family who are Zoo members.

Voters are not against the idea of a Zoo expansion, but when given a list of options of how the Zoo should proceed, an overwhelming majority express that any Zoo expansion should occur within or near existing Zoo buildings or that the Zoo should not be allowed to expand onto currently undeveloped parkland.

The Zoo's expansion as currently planned does not meet these conditions desired by the Oakland community.

METHODOLOGY

The survey population consists of City of Oakland likely voters. The interviewing was conducted by trained, professional interviewers from September 30- October 5, 2014. There were 351 total interviews, which has an overall margin of error of ± 5.2 percentage points.