June 16, 2021

TO: Interested Parties
FR: Strategies 360 Research & Manolatos Public Affairs
RE: New Poll Shows San Diego Voters See Increasing the City’s Supply of Middle- and Working-Class Housing as Central to Reducing Housing Costs

The skyrocketing cost of housing across San Diego County is a well-documented problem, one which requires no new polling to verify. This survey was therefore designed neither to validate existing concerns, nor to affirm the resulting openness of voters to almost any solution with the potential to help drive down costs – although both of those dynamics are present in the results.

Rather, this poll represents an in-depth examination of the perceived tensions fueling the local housing debate. The results challenge and upend conventional wisdom, and suggest that voters want to see a dramatic increase in housing built for middle- and working-class San Diegans. **The poll shows the housing landscape in the county has shifted significantly in several important ways:**

1. **San Diego voters want a balanced approach to housing, but they prioritize supply-side solutions targeted to regular middle-income people.** These voters understand San Diego’s housing problem not as simply the domain of the lowest-income residents, but rather as an issue that extends across socioeconomic strata. They view a choice between low- and middle-income housing as false, but when pushed, they consistently favor solutions that include or even prioritize the middle and working classes.

2. **Voters are willing to set aside traditional concerns.** Reflecting a growing understanding of what new housing could look like in practice, San Diegans believe that increasing the supply of homes that middle- and working-class people can afford would have a positive impact on the environment and climate rather than a negative impact by a 49-31% margin. Additionally, nearly two-thirds support reducing regulations on homebuilders so they can build more affordable housing.

3. **In the age of extreme ideological division, this issue transcends party lines.** Across the county¹, there is at least 84% support for building “as much new housing for middle- and working-class San Diegans as we do for the highest and lowest-income households” across parties. However, Democrats are slightly more likely than either Independents or Republicans to support this position. Moreover, nearly two-thirds of Democrats (66%)—along with 74% of Republicans—favor reducing regulations on homebuilders.

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¹ Includes combined data from San Diego, Chula Vista, and San Marcos.

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**ADDITIONAL KEY FINDINGS**

- **Soaring housing costs are driving widespread pessimism among voters.** More than 8-in-10 (83%) San Diegans anticipate cost increases and 84% conclude that the dream of home ownership is simply out of reach for average San Diegan due to a lack of attainable housing supply. Further, more than 6-in-10 (63%) have considered or would consider leaving San Diego County due to housing costs.

- **Voters know that we need to build our way out of this mess.** Increasing the supply of new homes, including for the middle class, is the approach that generates the highest level of support, and supply-side solutions outpace direct assistance-based proposals.

  ![Approaches to Reducing the Cost of Housing](chart)

- **People view many of the debates around housing as artificial, with an outcome that often leaves regular people behind.** Seventy-two percent of San Diego voters and 78% of Democrats across the county hold the viewpoint that “the lack of housing supply options in San Diego County hurts middle- and working-class San Diegans as much or more than lower-income households.” They don’t see housing as a zero-sum game or a competitive contest for resources: nearly 8-in-10 (79%) San Diego voters agree that “our approach to housing should not be “either-or”. Building more housing for middle- and working-class San Diegans is not the entire answer to the housing crisis, but it is an important part of the solution.”

- **Voters easily connect the production of new middle-and working-class housing to other positive societal outcomes for lower-income families and homelessness.** Nearly three-quarters (74%) believe that building more middle- and working-class homes will have a positive impact on jobs and the economy. And by a 16-point margin (45-29% positive-negative), San Diego voters think it will be a net benefit to homelessness.

- **San Diegans coalesce around an inclusive proposal that reflects the middle-class approach.** Voters overwhelmingly favor a proposal for “a middle-income housing incentive program, including grants and down payment relief as well as rent subsidies, for first-time homebuyers, veterans, firefighters, seniors, and other first-responders” (68-11% favor-oppose).

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2 Includes combined data from San Diego, Chula Vista, and San Marcos.
**ABOUT THE POLL**

On behalf of the Building Industry Association of San Diego County, Strategies 360 conducted a mixed-mode survey of 650 registered voters in the cities of San Diego, Chula Vista, and San Marcos, California. This memo details results among the 250 voters interviewed in the city of San Diego.

Interviews were conducted between May 11th and 21st, 2021. A combination of live landline, live cell phones, and online interviews were used to ensure greater coverage of the population sampled. The margin of error for the total sample of 650 interviews is ±3.9% at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error for the 250 interviews in the city of San Diego is ±6.2% at the 95% confidence level. The margin error is higher for subsamples. Other sources of error not accounted for by the stated statistical margin of error include, but are not limited to, question wording, question order, coverage bias, and response bias.

The sample reflects the demographic composition of registered voters per data from the U.S. Census Bureau, California Secretary of State, San Diego County Registrar, and several distinct voter files. The city of San Diego sample is 46% Democratic, 21% Republican, and 33% NPP/Other by party registration.