



BENCHMARK POLL – DATA FINDINGS REPORT



**CAMPAIGN
RESEARCH +
STRATEGY**

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CITY OF
ASHEVILLE, NC

JULY 2016



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BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY



BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

In June 2016, the City of Asheville, N.C. commissioned **Campaign Research + Strategy**, a full-service consulting firm based in Columbia, SC to conduct quantitative research in the county on a number of items, concerns and issues.

The goal of this research is to determine perceptions and attitudes of residents who live in the City of Asheville on a number of issues which include: (1) their perceptions of the challenges facing Asheville, (2) their support of or opposition to potential ballot items that would affect tax rates, and (3) their agreement levels to several statements people could make in relation to the bond measures that may be on the ballot later this year.

CRS and **the City of Asheville** worked together to define the survey instrument and the final version of the questionnaire was approved by County staff before it was put “into the field.”



BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

403 telephone surveys were conducted with registered voters of the City of Asheville by CRS' in-house interviewers between the evenings of June 29th and July 1st, 2016. Interviews were conducted with respondents over land line and on mobile phones.

The representative sample of the City of Asheville, NC was randomly selected with respect to voter registration records of the county and are reflective of the turnout from the November 2012 election. All survey respondents were 18 years of age and older.

The margin of error for this study is 4.9% at a confidence interval of 95%. This means if the study were repeated 100 times, then the results would be within that 4.9% margin of error 95 times out of 100. The margin of error within specific demographic subsections would be higher.

There may be instances when figures do not always equal 100.0 percent, due to rounding of decimals.



RESULTS

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RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

What would you say is the number one challenge here in the City of Asheville?

Response	Percentage
Affordable Housing	25%
Roads / Traffic	8%
Growth / Planning	8%
Taxes / Spending	7%
Jobs	5%
Schools / Education	3%
Miscellaneous Responses	25%
No Answer / Not Sure / Don't Know	19%



RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

What would you say is the number one challenge here in the City of Asheville?

TOP MISCELLANEOUS RESPONSES

Response	Quantity
Water System	10 responses
Drugs	10 responses
Small Business, Local Preference	9 responses
Wages	8 responses
Structure of Council	8 responses
Sidewalks	5 responses
Racism	4 responses
Serving People, Accountability	4 responses



RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

How would you rate the performance of the Asheville City Council this past year?

Response	Percentage
Excellent	5%
Above Average	25%
TOTAL BETTER THAN JUST AVERAGE	30%
Just Average	40%
Below Average	8%
Poor	10%
TOTAL WORSE THAN JUST AVERAGE	18%
Not Sure	10%



RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

Would you say the property taxes (not federal, state or sales) you pay are too high, too low or just right considering the services you receive from city government?

Response	Percentage
Too High	52%
Too Low	2%
Just Right	36%
Not Sure	9%



RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

How would you rate the conditions of our roads and sidewalks in the City of Asheville?

Response	Percentage
Excellent	1%
Above Average	12%
TOTAL BETTER THAN JUST AVERAGE	13%
Just Average	32%
Below Average	26%
Poor	25%
TOTAL WORSE THAN JUST AVERAGE	51%
Not Sure	4%



RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

What kind of job would you say the City of Asheville is doing to support affordable housing, especially for low- to moderate-income families?

Response	Percentage
Excellent	1%
Above Average	12%
TOTAL BETTER THAN JUST AVERAGE	13%
Just Average	27%
Below Average	25%
Poor	23%
TOTAL WORSE THAN JUST AVERAGE	48%
Not Sure	12%



RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

If you could add one other item for City Council to consider upgrading as part of a bond package, what would it be?

Response	Percentage
Parking Downtown	11%
Train / Mass Transit / Transportation	9%
Homeless / Public Housing	8%
Jobs / Economic Development	6%
Schools / Education	5%
Arts Center / More Public Art	4%
Miscellaneous Responses	14%
No Answer / Not Sure / Don't Know	43%



RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

If you could add one other item for City Council to consider upgrading as part of a bond package, what would it be?

TOP MISCELLANEOUS RESPONSES

Response	Quantity
Police & FireFighters	7 responses
More Green Spaces, Parks	6 responses
Raise Wages	6 responses
City Hall, Council Chambers	5 responses
Bike Lanes	5 responses
Neighborhoods	4 responses
Promote / Aid Local Businesses	4 responses



SUPPORT OF POTENTIAL BOND ISSUES

There could be a bond measure for \$32 million which would make improvements to our transportation networks. Nearly half of this amount would be dedicated to resurfacing many roads and bikeways. The other \$16 million would be used to improve and build new sidewalks, build the Swannanoa River Greenway, build bus shelters and projects aimed to improve pedestrian safety and calm traffic. If the election were held today, would you vote YES or NO on the bond measure?

Response	Percentage
Strongly YES	50%
Somewhat YES	17%
TOTAL YES	67%
Somewhat NO	6%
Strongly NO	15%
TOTAL NO	21%
Not Sure/Don't Know	12%



SUPPORT OF POTENTIAL BOND ISSUES

Another bond measure could provide \$17 million that would be used to improve parks and recreation centers. Among projects are building a gymnasium and program space at the Wesley Grant Center, and upgrades to Memorial Stadium, Jake Rusher Park in south Asheville, the Montford Complex and Richmond Hill Park, as well as citywide outdoor courts and playgrounds in the city, lighting at ball fields and the purchase of additional land for recreation. If the election were held today, would you vote YES or NO on the bond measure?

Response	Percentage
Strongly YES	41%
Somewhat YES	19%
TOTAL YES	60%
Somewhat NO	6%
Strongly NO	21%
TOTAL NO	27%
Not Sure/Don't Know	13%



SUPPORT OF POTENTIAL BOND ISSUES

A third and final bond referendum could provide \$25 million to address the city's need for affordable housing. Individual projects would dedicate funds for home ownership loan programs, a trust fund to enhance rental housing, a community land trust aimed at providing permanent affordable housing options, and using City-owned land for affordable housing. If the election were held today, would you vote YES or NO on the bond measure?

Response	Percentage
Strongly YES	56%
Somewhat YES	11%
TOTAL YES	67%
Somewhat NO	8%
Strongly NO	15%
TOTAL NO	23%
Not Sure/Don't Know	9%



TAX INCREASE IMPACT ON BOND SUPPORT

Currently bond packages have not been finalized and the total for all three measures comes to \$74 million. Revaluation could increase the estimate slightly, but if approved the bonds could increase property taxes by about \$110 a year, or a little less than \$9 a month, if you own a home valued at \$275,000. After hearing this information, are you more or less likely to support the bond referenda?

Response	Percentage
Much MORE LIKELY	27%
Somewhat MORE LIKELY	21%
TOTAL MORE LIKELY	48%
Somewhat LESS LIKELY	9%
Much LESS LIKELY	28%
TOTAL LESS LIKELY	37%
No Difference	5%
Not Sure	9%



TAX INCREASE IMPACT ON BOND SUPPORT

As mentioned before, bond packages have not been finalized and revaluation could increase the following estimates slightly. If the total for all three bond measures were reduced to \$50 million, it could raise property taxes by about \$83 a year, or a little less than \$7 a month, if you own a home valued at \$275,000. After hearing this information, are you more or less likely to support the bond referenda?

Response	Percentage
Much MORE LIKELY	29%
Somewhat MORE LIKELY	19%
TOTAL MORE LIKELY	48%
Somewhat LESS LIKELY	10%
Much LESS LIKELY	25%
TOTAL LESS LIKELY	35%
No Difference	5%
Not Sure	11%



TAX INCREASE IMPACT ON BOND SUPPORT

If the total for the bond packages were reduced to \$30 million, it could raise property taxes in the City by \$55 a year, or a little more than \$4.50 a month, if you own a home valued at \$275,000. Again, this estimate could increase a bit based on the results of revaluation. After hearing this information, are you more or less likely to support the bond referenda?

Response	Percentage
Much MORE LIKELY	31%
Somewhat MORE LIKELY	20%
TOTAL MORE LIKELY	51%
Somewhat LESS LIKELY	17%
Much LESS LIKELY	19%
TOTAL LESS LIKELY	36%
No Difference	5%
Not Sure	9%



STATEMENT TESTING – AGREE/DISAGREE

The bond measures would help make the City of Asheville an even more attractive place where people from all backgrounds want to live and visit.

Response	Percentage
Strongly AGREE	41%
Somewhat AGREE	22%
TOTAL AGREE	63%
Somewhat DISAGREE	7%
Strongly DISAGREE	15%
TOTAL DISAGREE	22%
Not Sure/Don't Know	14%



STATEMENT TESTING – AGREE/DISAGREE

Bond projects will actually strengthen our local economy. In addition to providing opportunities to local vendors, they will also attract global businesses, provide much-needed improvements and help create new jobs.

Response	Percentage
Strongly AGREE	34%
Somewhat AGREE	26%
TOTAL AGREE	60%
Somewhat DISAGREE	9%
Strongly DISAGREE	15%
TOTAL DISAGREE	24%
Not Sure/Don't Know	15%



STATEMENT TESTING – AGREE/DISAGREE

I will vote against the bond projects on the ballot this year, because I don't trust the money will go where it's been promised or supposed to go.

Response	Percentage
Strongly AGREE	23%
Somewhat AGREE	15%
TOTAL AGREE	38%
Somewhat DISAGREE	17%
Strongly DISAGREE	28%
TOTAL DISAGREE	45%
Not Sure/Don't Know	17%



STATEMENT TESTING – AGREE/DISAGREE

I will vote for the bond projects because I support the long-term vision these projects represent, because it's not just about resurfacing our roads, providing more affordable housing and making upgrades to our parks and recreation facilities – it's about building a better community.

Response	Percentage
Strongly AGREE	44%
Somewhat AGREE	17%
TOTAL AGREE	61%
Somewhat DISAGREE	9%
Strongly DISAGREE	12%
TOTAL DISAGREE	21%
Not Sure/Don't Know	19%



POST-TEST SUPPORT OF ALL BOND ITEMS

After thinking more about the three bond measures on the ballot this year, would you vote YES or NO on all three bond referenda?

Response	Percentage
Strongly YES	30%
Somewhat YES	23%
TOTAL YES	53%
Somewhat NO	7%
Strongly NO	19%
TOTAL NO	26%
Not Sure/Don't Know	20%

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

How long have you lived in the City of Asheville?

Response	Percent	Response	Percent
More than 20 years	34%	Less than 5 years	15%
10 to 20 years	30%	Refused	6%
5 to 10 years	15%		

What was your total household income this past year?

Response	Percent	Response	Percent
Less than \$50,000	28%	\$100,000 to \$150,000	8%
\$50,000 to \$75,000	19%	\$150,000 or more	6%
\$75,000 to \$100,000	18%	Refused	20%

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Age

Response	Percent	Response	Percent
Under 35	21%	51 to 64 years old	24%
35 to 50 years old	28%	Age 65 & over	27%

Gender

Response	Percent
Male	43%
Female	57%

Race

Response	Percent
White	81%
African American	13%
Other	6%

Party Registration

Response	Percent	Response	Percent
Democrat	52%	Unaffiliated	32%
Republican	16%	Libertarian	<1%

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Zip Code

Response	Percent
28704	3%
28715	2%
28801	17%
28803	24%
28804	15%
28805	14%
28806	25%

Congressional District

Response	Percent
District 10	65%
District 11	35%

Commission District

Response	Percent
Comm. Dist. 1	79%
Comm. Dist. 2	7%
Comm. Dist. 3	14%



ANALYSIS

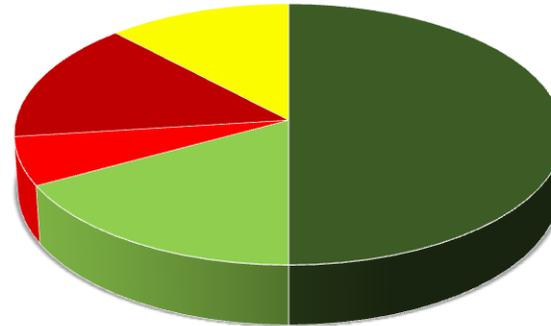
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ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Top Issues



- Strongly YES, 50%
- Somewhat YES, 17%
- Somewhat NO, 6%
- Strongly NO, 15%
- Undecided, 12%

ANALYSIS: TRANSPORTATION NETWORK BOND

Overall support for the items that make up this bond measure is very strong at 67%.

Support is highest among voters over age 50 (77%), registered Democrats (75%), in Commission District #3 (80%) and in Zip Codes 28704 (100%), 28715 (75%), 28801 (74%) and 28806 (72%).

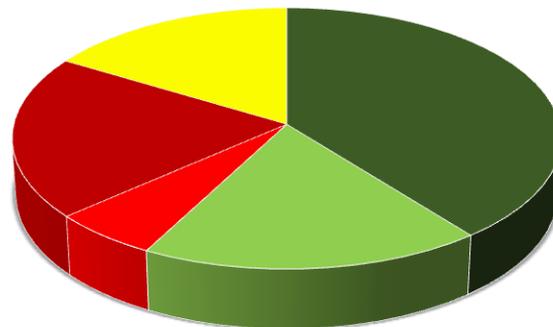
Opposition is higher among voters ages 35-50 (25%), registered Republicans (37%), in Commission District 2 (28%), and in Zip Codes 28804 (31%) and 28805 (32%).

The Undecided rate was highest among voters under age 50 (20%).



ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Top Issues



- Strongly YES, 41%
- Somewhat YES, 19%
- Somewhat NO, 6%
- Strongly NO, 21%
- Undecided, 17%

ANALYSIS: PARKS & RECREATION CENTERS BOND

Although not as high as the previous measure for roads, sidewalks, greenway, traffic calming and pedestrian safety, support for bond targeted to parks and recreation centers is still strong at 60%.

Support is highest among voters over age 50 (67%), African Americans (80%), registered Democrats (68%), and in Zip Codes 28801(71%) and 28806 (66%).

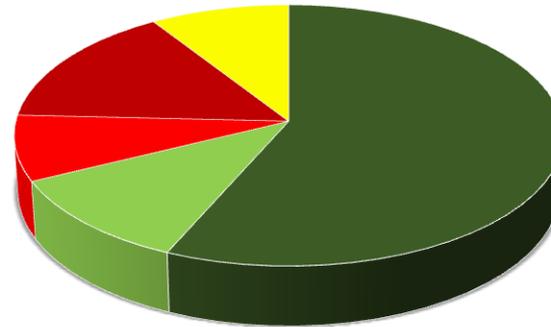
Opposition is highest among registered Republicans (48%) and Zip Codes 28804 (40%) and 28805 (36%).

Undecided responses were higher among voters under age 35 (24%).



ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Top Issues



- Strongly YES, 56%
- Somewhat YES, 11%
- Somewhat NO, 8%
- Strongly NO, 15%
- Undecided, 9%

ANALYSIS: AFFORDABLE HOUSING BOND

Overall support for a \$25 million bond aimed to address affordable housing in Asheville, NC was strong at 67%.

Support was higher among voters age 50-64 (84%), African Americans (75%), registered Democrats (80%), and in Zip Codes 28704 (100%), 28715 (75%) and 28806 (78%).

Opposition is higher among Republicans (40%), Independents (30%), and in Zip Code 28805 (29%).

The undecided rate is highest among voters age 50 (17%), Republicans (16%), and in Zip Code 28804 (16%).



QUESTIONS

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