



GODBE RESEARCH
Gain Insight



Dixon Public Library District Bond Measure Feasibility Survey

November 2010

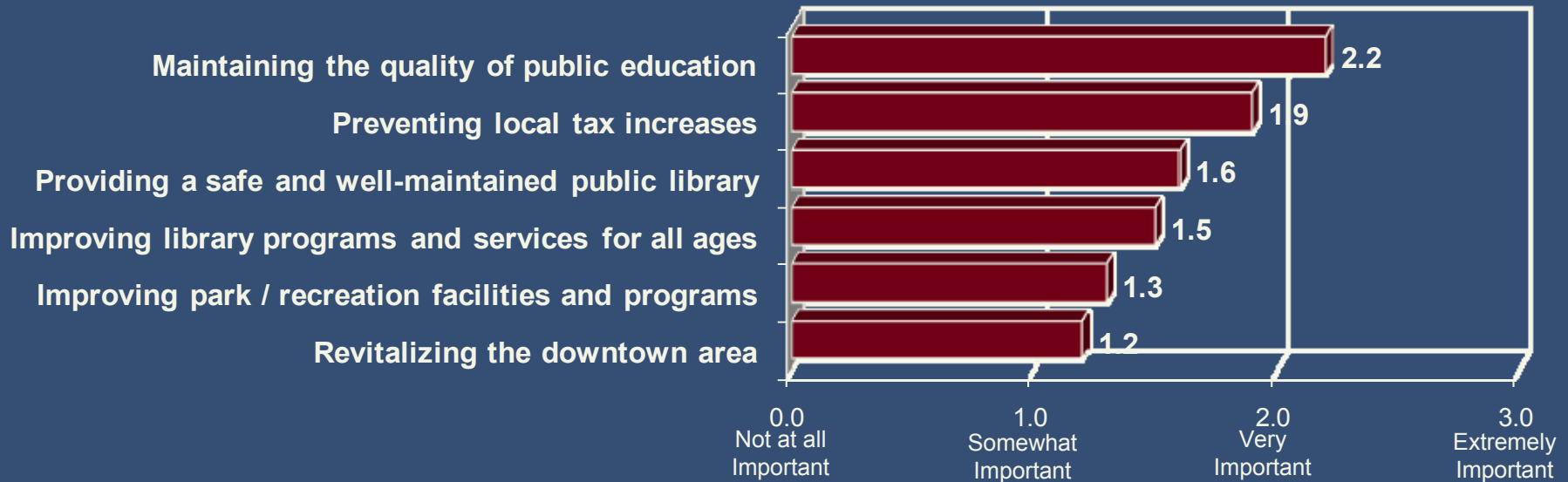
Dixon Public Library District commissioned Godbe Research to conduct a survey of voters with the following research objectives:

- Assess potential support for a bond measure to construct facilities at the Public Library;
- Survey the tax rate at which voters will support a measure;
- Prioritize the projects to be funded based on voter reception;
- Test the influence of supporting and opposing arguments on potential voter support; and
- Identify any differences in voter support due to demographic and/or voter behavioral characteristics.

- Data Collection Telephone Interviewing
- Universe Approximately 3,395 registered voters in the Dixon Public Library District who are likely to vote in a mail ballot 2011 election
- Fielding Dates August 25 through September 5, 2010
- Interview Languages English and Spanish
- Interview Length 18 minutes
- Sample Size 300 voters
- Margin of Error $\pm 5.4\%$

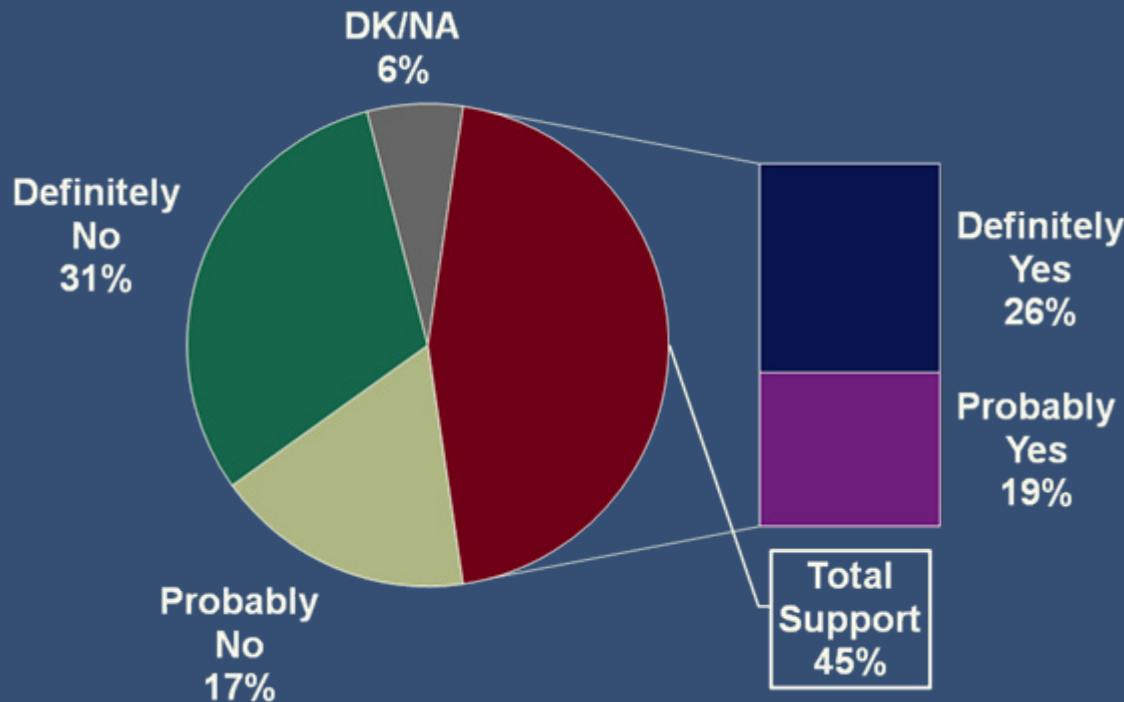
Voter Priorities

To understand relative priorities in voters' minds, respondents in the survey were asked to rate the importance of six local issues. The survey revealed that local voters were most concerned with public education, whereas library facilities and programs placed in a second tier of priorities. More specifically, about half of the respondents indicated "extremely" or "very important" ratings to "providing a safe and well maintained public library that can meet the needs of the community" and "improving library programs and services for all ages, including children, teens and seniors." More notably, both of these issues were considered significantly less important than "preventing local tax increases," which was rated as at least "very important" by 64 percent of the voters. Overall, voter priorities indicate that a 2011 election would be a highly challenging climate for a library revenue measure.



Initial Ballot Test

In a simulated test of uninformed support, voters were read only a ballot question that summarized the main features of a \$19 million bond measure to construct facilities at the Dixon Public Library, and asked whether they would vote yes or no. As shown in the chart below, support was well below the two-thirds requirement. In response, 45 percent of the voters indicated support for the measure, with 26 percent “definitely yes” and 19 percent “probably yes” votes. In comparison, total opposition was at 48 percent, and the remaining 6 percent of the voters were undecided (DK/NA).



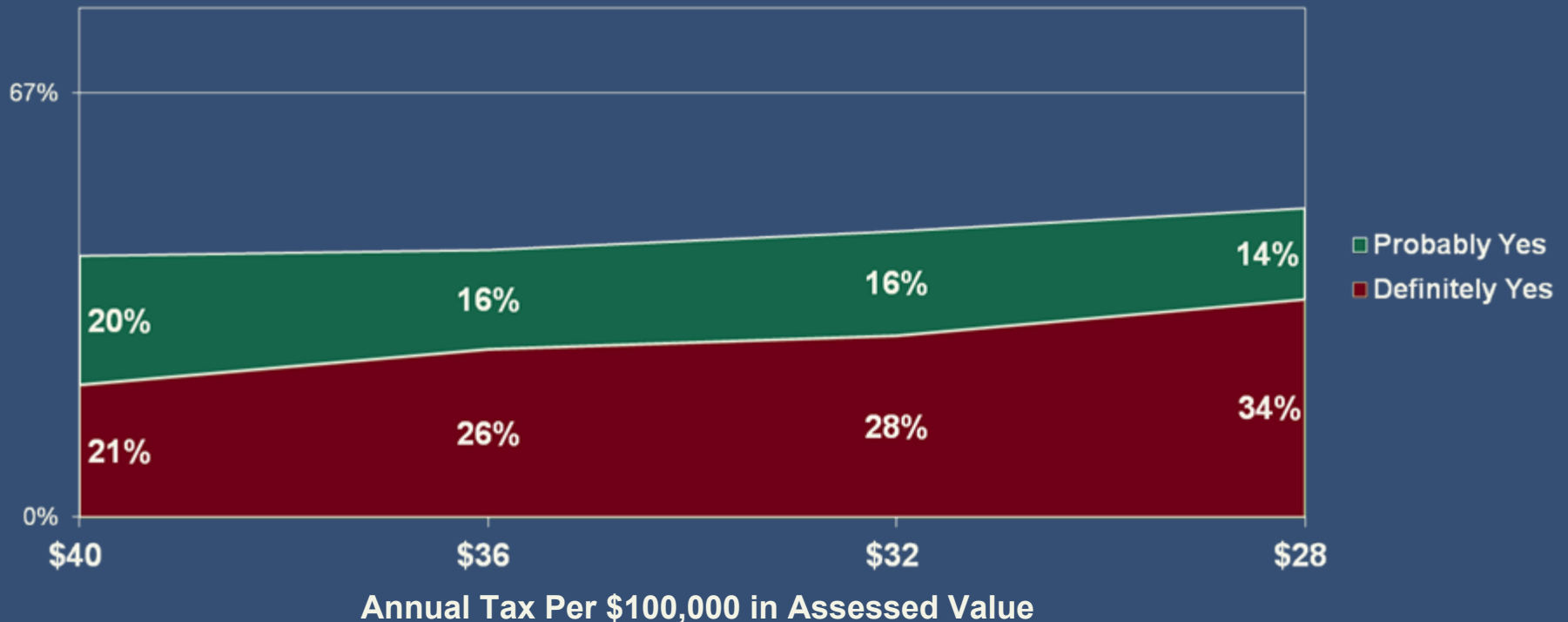
To meet the educational/recreational needs of the community by constructing facilities at the Dixon Public Library to provide:

- A safe, energy-efficient library that meets earthquake, fire, and safety codes;
- Access for seniors/disabled residents;
- Larger space for children/teens, reading/homework programs, and family activities;
- Doubling collections of books, materials, and career-development resources;
- Upgraded computers, technology and online access;

Shall the Dixon Public Library District issue \$19 million in bonds, with citizens' oversight and all funds staying local?

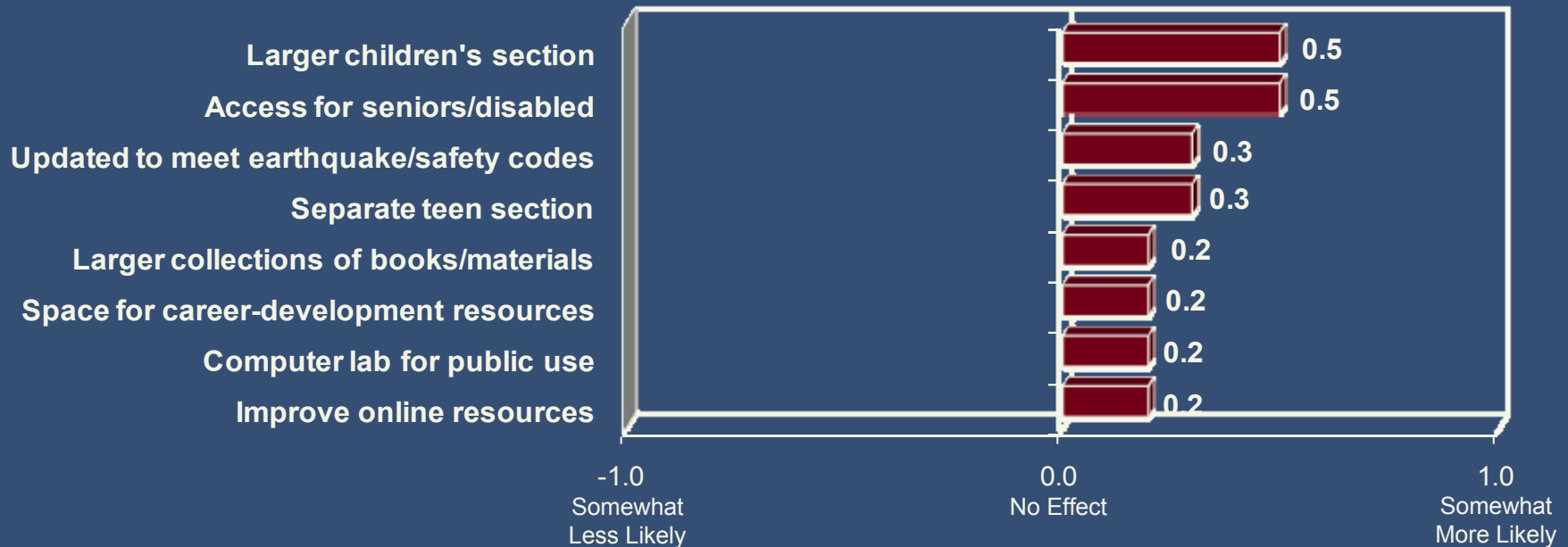
Support for Different Tax Rates

To further investigate potential support, the voters were read a list of annual tax rates per \$100,000 in assessed value, and asked if they would vote yes or no on the measure at each rate. As expected, voter support for the measure increased as the tested tax rate dropped. At the highest tested annual tax rate of \$40, support for the measure was at 41 percent (21% “definitely yes” and 20% “probably yes”). Total support peaked at 48 percent at the lowest tested annual tax rate of \$28, which is still below the two-thirds majority required in an election. These results show inadequate support for a library bond measure in a 2011 election.



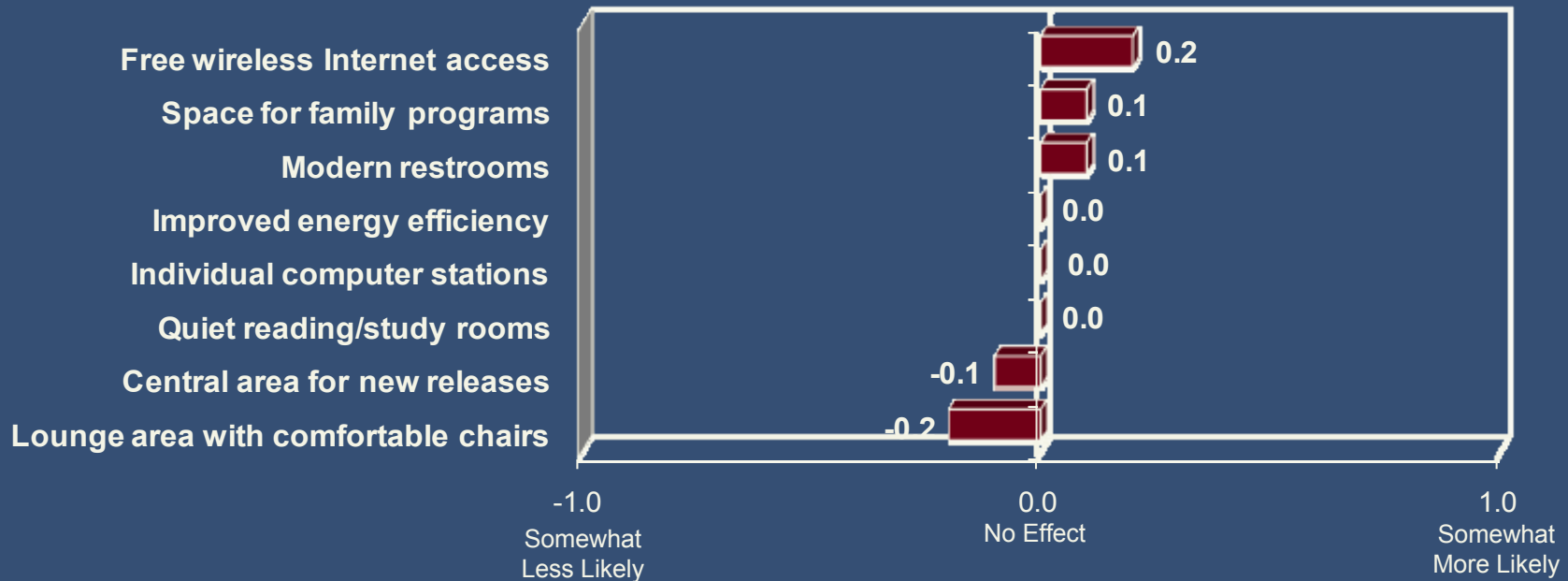
Features of the Measure I

Voters were then presented with 16 potential projects to be funded, and asked whether they would be more or less likely to vote for the measure upon hearing each. Overall, the features of a measure were not sufficient to overcome voters' attitudes toward tax rates in the previous question. More specifically, none of the projects made the average voter even "somewhat more likely" to support, as indicated by scores lower than 1.0. The relatively most influential projects included: provide a larger, separate children's section with more space for books, reading programs, and events; improve access for seniors and residents with disabilities; provide an updated library building that meets current earthquake, fire, and safety codes; and provide a separate teen section with space for books, reading programs, study groups, and homework help. Between 61 percent and 56 percent of voters were more likely to support a measure that would fund these projects.



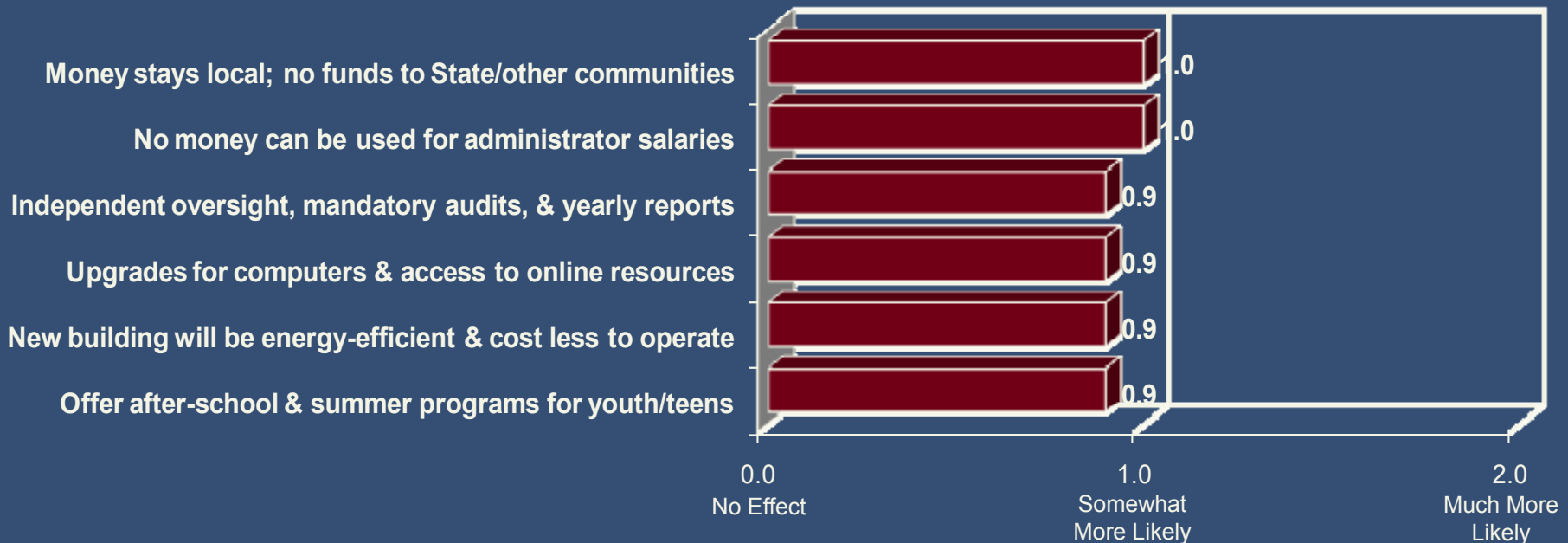
Features of the Measure II

Shown in the chart below are the projects that were relatively less influential in building support for a measure. In fact, voters tended to be slightly less likely to support the measure after hearing that funds would create a central area for new releases and best sellers and create a lounge area with comfortable chairs for readers. In response to these two projects, a higher percentage of voters reported that they would be less likely to support the measure, as indicated by negative scores. Overall, the projects on the previous page resonated more strongly with voters and should be emphasized in community outreach efforts.



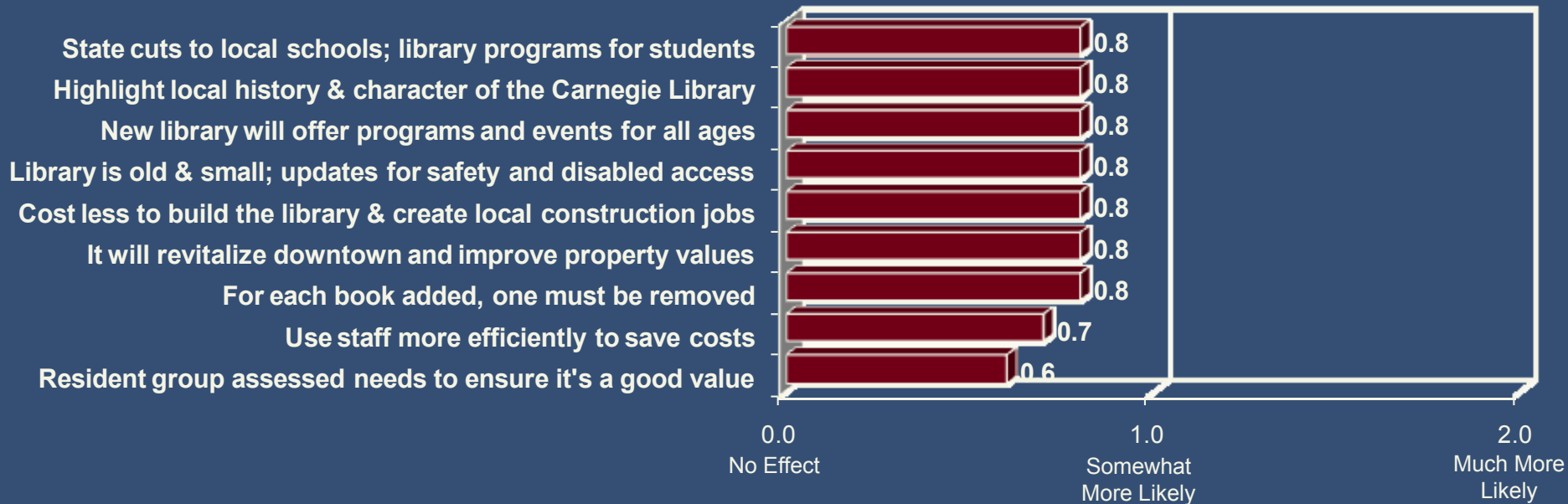
Influence of Supporting Arguments I

Responses to the supporting arguments were coded and averaged such that a higher score indicates the information made voters more likely to vote “Yes.” On average, six arguments in favor made voters close to “somewhat more likely” to support the measure (mean scores nearing 1.0). Three of these arguments described regulatory features, including such details as the funds must stay local, no money can be used for administrator salaries, and the requirement of citizens’ oversight and yearly reports to the community. Additionally, several features of the new facilities resonated with voters, including upgrades to electrical systems for computers and access to expanding online resources; energy-efficient facilities to reduce operating costs; and space to offer after-school and summer programs for youth and teens. After hearing these six arguments, more than half of the voters were at least “somewhat more likely” to support the measure.



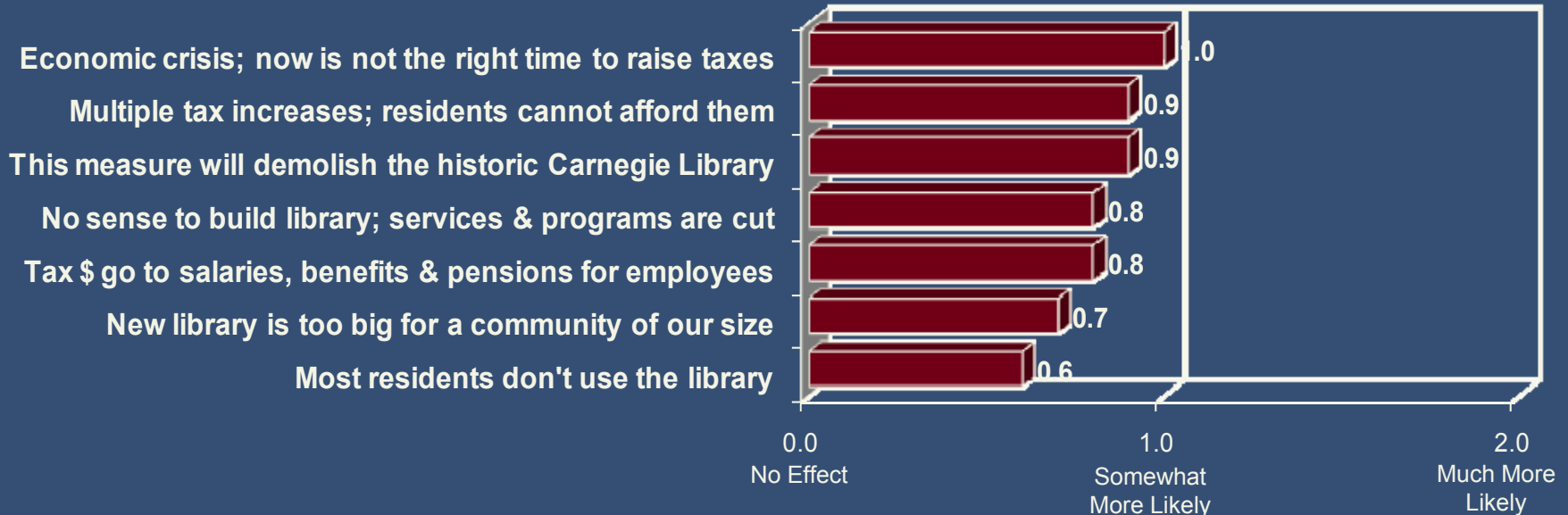
Influence of Supporting Arguments II

Presented below are the arguments in favor of the bond measure that were relatively less influential on voter support. For example, only 43 percent of voters were more likely to support the measure after hearing that a group of residents has met for more than a year to assess the library needs to be funded by this measure and ensure it is a good value and appropriate for the community. In comparison, 57 percent of voters reported that this information had “no effect” on their opinion. The resulting mean score of 0.6 indicates that the statement had only a marginal influence on the average voter’s likelihood of supporting the measure.



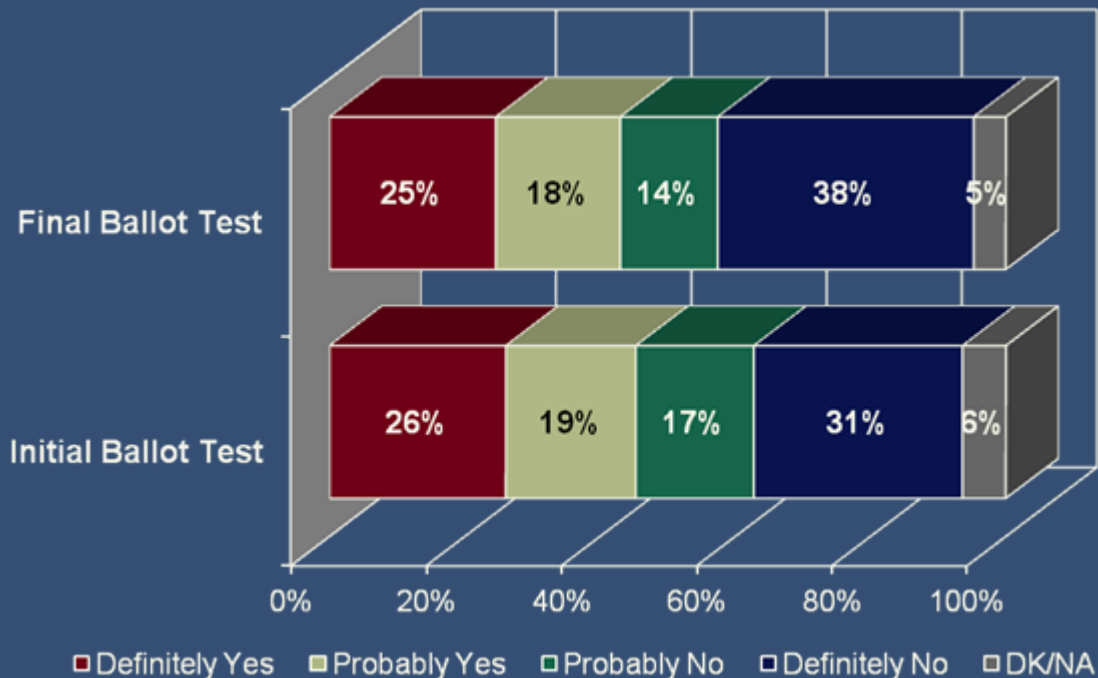
Potential Opposition Arguments

Responses to the potential opposition arguments were coded and averaged such that a higher score indicates an argument made voters more likely to vote “No.” All seven arguments tested in the survey could be detrimental to the success of a measure, as each made at least 38 percent of voters more likely to oppose. Further, more than half of the voters were influenced by arguments on the timing of a measure given the current economy; affordability in light of other recent tax increases; and misinformation that the measure would demolish the historic Carnegie Library. The strength of these arguments highlights the need for a well-organized voter education campaign to communicate the funding needs of the Dixon Public Library and benefits of new facilities.



Final Ballot Test

After simulated public information, total support for a library bond measure was at 43 percent (25% “definitely yes” and 18% “probably yes”), which is statistically unchanged from support observed in the initial ballot test (45%). In contrast, total opposition increased from 48 percent to 52 percent, with a 7 percent increase in “definitely no” votes. Although this increase in opposition was not statistically significant, it suggests that details on projects to be funded, regulatory features, and benefits of new facilities were not able to counteract voters’ negative responses to the cost of the measure and potential opposition messages.



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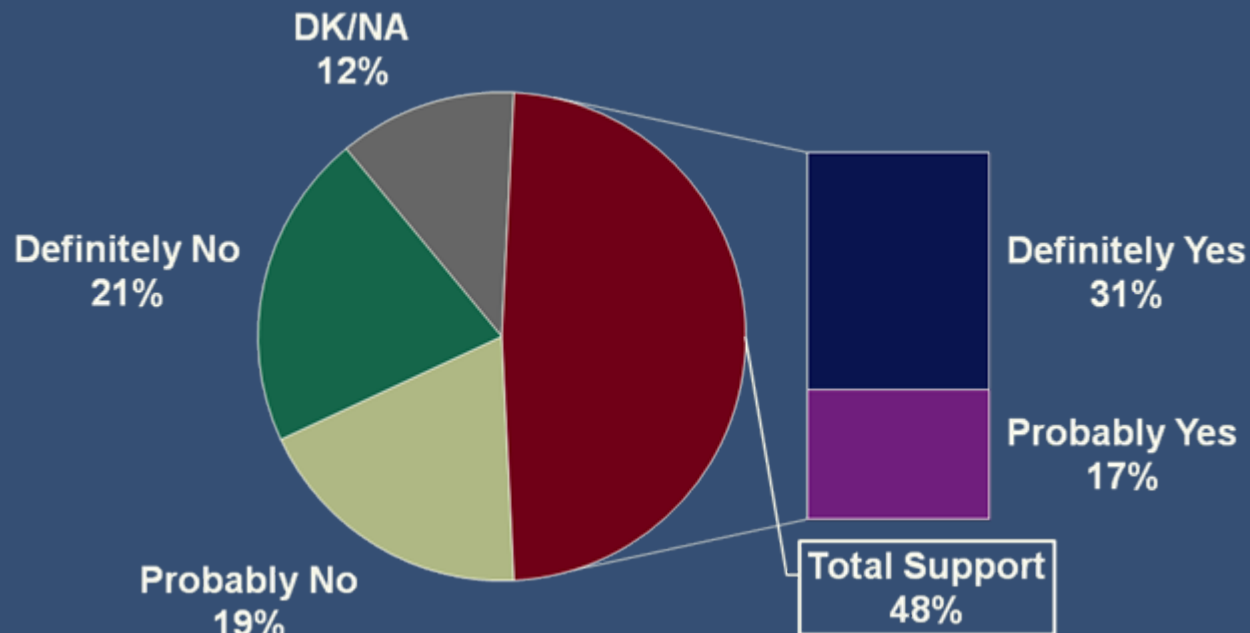
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Support for Full Preservation

Finally, voters were told that the full preservation of the entire Carnegie Library would add more than \$3 million to the cost of a new public library building (see text below). Less than half of the voters indicated support for preserving the Carnegie Library at this cost (31% “definitely yes” and 17% “probably yes”). In contrast, 40 percent of voters were opposed at this cost, and 12 percent did not render an opinion (DK/NA).

Part of the current library building was constructed in 1912 with a Carnegie Library grant. This nearly 100 year old Carnegie Library building was preserved when the library was expanded in the past, and it remains the south-side of the library building facing East B Street. Some residents in our community feel this building is an historic landmark and should be preserved where it currently sits.

The full preservation of the entire Carnegie Library would add more than \$3 million to the cost of a new public library building. At this cost, do you think the Carnegie Library should be preserved?



- Dixon Public Library facilities and services are important to local voters; however, the survey results also indicate considerable tax sensitivity among the community.
- Overall, the survey found insufficient voter support in a 2011 election for a bond measure to construct facilities at the Dixon Public Library.
 - After hearing a summary that replicated the language that would be placed on the ballot, 45 percent of voters indicated support for a bond measure.
 - Support remained statistically unchanged at 43 percent after voters had heard additional information on the measure. In contrast, 52 percent of the voters were opposed and the remaining 5 percent were undecided.
 - Further, support did not reach the two-thirds majority required at any point in the survey. In a test of the influence of tax rates on voters' opinions, support ranged from 41 percent for a rate of \$40 per \$100,000 AV to 48 percent for a rate of \$28 per \$100,000 AV.
- The results also revealed insufficient voter support for full preservation of the entire Carnegie Library given the associated costs; however, many voters were influenced by efforts to maintain the character of the current building.
 - Less than half of voters supported full preservation of the entire Carnegie Library after hearing that it would add \$3 million to the cost of a new public library building.
 - Although support for full preservation fell well below the two-thirds level required for a revenue measure, more than half of voters reported that they would be more likely to support a measure that maintained the character of the Carnegie Library.

Summary and Recommendations II

- Godbe Research recommends that the Dixon Public Library District consider a bond measure for an election in 2012. However, it will be critical to use the intervening time to communicate the need for a measure to the community. Without these communications, we would not expect support to reach the two-thirds majority required, regardless of how much time passes.
- Communications should emphasize projects that are the highest priority to local voters:
 - Provide a larger, separate children's section with more space for books, reading programs, and events;
 - Improve access for seniors and residents with disabilities;
 - Provide an updated library building that meets current earthquake, fire, and safety codes; and
 - Provide a separate teen section with space for books, reading programs, study groups, and homework help.
- If the Dixon Public Library District decides to place a bond measure on the ballot in the future, there are the following critical considerations:
 - The Library District should address any misinformation that a measure would demolish the Carnegie Library, and educate the community on how the funded facilities would highlight local history and maintain the character of the 1912 building.
 - Additionally, be prepared to address potential voter concerns regarding the timing of a measure with the economic downturn and other recent tax increases.

- Communications also should emphasize the key supporting messages that speak to the benefits of constructing library facilities, as well as the regulatory features of a measure:
 - Electrical systems and wiring in the current library are outdated and cannot accommodate modern technology. Upgrades are needed for computers and access to expanding online resources.
 - The new library building will be energy-efficient and cost less to operate. Thousands of dollars a year in savings will go toward funding programs for children, teens, and seniors.
 - The new library will offer after-school and summer programs for youth and teens to keep them off the streets, out of trouble, and away from drugs and gangs.
 - Every penny from this measure will stay local. No funds will go to the State or other communities.
 - By law, no money from this measure can be used for administrator salaries.
 - This measure requires independent citizens' oversight, mandatory financial audits, and yearly reports to the community to ensure the funds are spent as promised.