



# CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

## COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**AGENDA DATE:** May 19, 2015  
**TO:** Mayor and Councilmembers  
**FROM:** City Administrator's Office  
**SUBJECT:** Community Polling Results On Unfunded Infrastructure Needs

**RECOMMENDATION:** That Council:

- A. Receive a report on community polling results on the City's unfunded infrastructure needs and possible funding options related to streets, parks and facilities; and
- B. Direct staff to initiate procedural steps to place a sales tax measure on the November 2015 ballot.

### **DISCUSSION:**

#### **BACKGROUND**

Many City facilities, such as the airport, parking structures, and water treatment infrastructure, are primarily funded through user fees and have sufficient reserves for long-term repairs and maintenance. Meanwhile, the City's basic facilities rely on general tax dollars and lack sufficient funding for regular maintenance, future upgrades or replacement. These facilities include streets, sidewalks, the police station, fire stations, parks, recreation facilities, libraries, and community centers. The elimination of the Redevelopment Agency, a decline in federal funding, and less buying power with gas tax revenue created a gap in funding for streets, parks, and aging community facilities. A key challenge for the community is addressing how to maintain safe and functioning streets and historic facilities to prevent them from falling into serious disrepair or closure.

#### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

In Spring 2014, the City Council appointed a Council Infrastructure Committee (Mayor Schneider, Councilmember White, and Councilmember Rowse) to get community input on facility needs, building on the efforts of the Infrastructure Task Force. The Task Force, a private group of community members, reviewed the City's infrastructure needs in 2008 and found that the City faced a significant funding shortfall to maintain and upgrade essential infrastructure, such as streets, parks, and facilities.

The Council Infrastructure Committee conducted public outreach activities to inform the public about the City's aging facilities and learn about the community's interests and priorities to repair and upgrade various facilities. A total of 17 community meetings were held in different locations, including 8 meetings for the general public and 11 meetings for service organizations, neighborhood associations, and business groups. According to an informal survey made available in English and Spanish at the community meetings and on the City's website, 493 survey respondents ranked facilities in order of priority for upgrades, modernization, or replacement. The highest ranked priorities were:

- 1) Streets and pavement maintenance;
- 2) Police station; and
- 3) Sidewalks.

Based on the survey results and numerous suggestions from community meetings, Council approved the following next steps at their meeting on January 27, 2015:

- 1) Expand public/private partnerships to fund improvements for libraries, park and recreation facilities, and community centers;
- 2) Review municipal code and insurance requirements to allow more flexibility for philanthropy; and
- 3) Continue public outreach to gather more information about specific funding options related to top infrastructure priorities, including a possible ballot measure, by conducting a formal polling effort and convening a community meeting.

Two community meetings were held on February 25, 2015, to inform community leaders and the general public about public outreach findings and next steps to conduct a formal polling effort.

#### COMMUNITY POLLING

On March 3, 2015, Council authorized an agreement with Godbe Research to conduct a community poll via phone and Internet related to unfunded infrastructure needs and possible funding options. The scientifically valid survey tool would gauge voter support for a funding measure to improve City facilities, ensuring the broadest participation in terms of voter demographics and geography.

A total of 640 community members responded to the poll that was conducted in late March and early April. The survey asked the following question:

- "To protect services and improve City of Santa Barbara facilities, including:
- Protecting fire prevention and 911 dispatch services;
  - Protecting neighborhood police patrols and crime prevention;
  - Repairing streets, sidewalks and repairing potholes;
  - Replacing the 55-year-old police operations center with an updated, earthquake safe building;
  - Repairing senior facilities;

- Repairing and updating libraries and recreation centers;
- Protecting parks, playfields, children and teen programs; and
- Other general city services;

shall Santa Barbara enact a one-half cent sales tax for 20 years, with citizens' oversight, and all funds staying local?"

64.4% of survey respondents supported the ½ cent general purpose sales tax increase. Respondents indicated the same level of support for a ¼ cent general purpose sales tax increase. Other key findings included the following:

- 69.4% of respondents were pleased with the job the City is doing to provide services to the community.
- 66.1% of respondents were pleased with the job the City is doing to maintain City facilities.
- 51.1% of respondents were pleased with the job the City is doing to manage and spend taxpayer dollars.

#### NEXT STEPS

Based on extensive public outreach and formal poll results that indicate community interest in pursuing a sales tax increase, Council should consider direction to staff to initiate the procedural steps to place a sales tax measure on the November 2015 ballot. If Council directs staff to proceed, staff would return to Council by July 2015 with proposed ballot measure language and a resolution directing the City Clerk and City Attorney to prepare all necessary actions and documents to place a sales tax measure before the voters in the November 2015 election.

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**SUBMITTED BY:** Paul Casey, City Administrator

**APPROVED BY:** City Administrator's Office