



Buncombe County, North Carolina

Conservation Finance and Affordable Housing Feasibility
Report Update – April 19, 2022

Pegeen Hanrahan, P.E.
Southeast Conservation Finance Director



Buncombe County Board of Commissioners

Chairman
Brownie Newman

District 1
Terri Wells
Al Whitesides

District 2
Jasmine Beach-Ferrara
Amanda Edwards

District 3
Robert Pressley
Parker Sloan

November 2, 2021

Mr. Will Abberger
Vice President
Director of Conservation Finance
The Trust for Public Land
306 N. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Mr. Adam Snyder
Conservation Campaigns Manager
The Nature Conservancy
120 19th Street North, Suite 200
Birmingham, AL 35203

Dear Mr. Abberger and Mr. Snyder:

The Buncombe County Commission requests technical advice and assistance from The Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy in connection with our efforts to develop and sustain reliable, ongoing sources of funding for parks, trails, land and water conservation, affordable housing, and related priorities.

As part of your advice and assistance, I understand you will conduct research with affected groups to develop recommendations for the County on strategies for supporting dedicated, ongoing sources of public funds for land conservation.

We are interested not only in the factual information that you can provide, but also your opinions and recommendations on public funding measures available to us and strategies to enact such measures. That would include understanding the public's priorities and attitudes concerning natural and agricultural land preservation, affordable housing, water quality and natural areas—including parks, trails, and fish and wildlife habitat—and how the public would respond to different methods of presenting those issues.

Information provided to the County will be public record as a matter of law. This request does not in any way commit public funds to the efforts of The Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy related to this request, nor does it require public disclosure of any confidential information of either organization.

This request will continue in effect for any advice you offer or presentations you submit for the use of this body related to such matters. In addition, we would like to take this opportunity to request that you continue to be available to provide technical advice and assistance in this area and on related matters in the future.

Thank you.

Sincerely,


Brownie Newman, Chair



200 College Street, Room 316 - Asheville, NC 28801
p. 828.250.250.4001 f. 828.250.6076

buncombecounty.org

The Trust for Public Land's Southern Appalachians work is funded by the Merck Family Fund and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.



Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

Buncombe County Requested TPL's Technical Assistance

Thank YOU!

PS 156 Waverly and LS 392 Brooklyn, NY

We saw these barren asphalt schoolyards and we recognized an amazing opportunity to reinvent them as vibrant city parks.

Photo by: Joe Martinez



We work nationwide in urban and rural settings, red states and blue, and in all of our country's rich tapestry
Connecting everyone to nature cuts across divides



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PUBLIC
LAND™**

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™



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We work to help communities like yours protect the places they love and improve access for people to enjoy them.

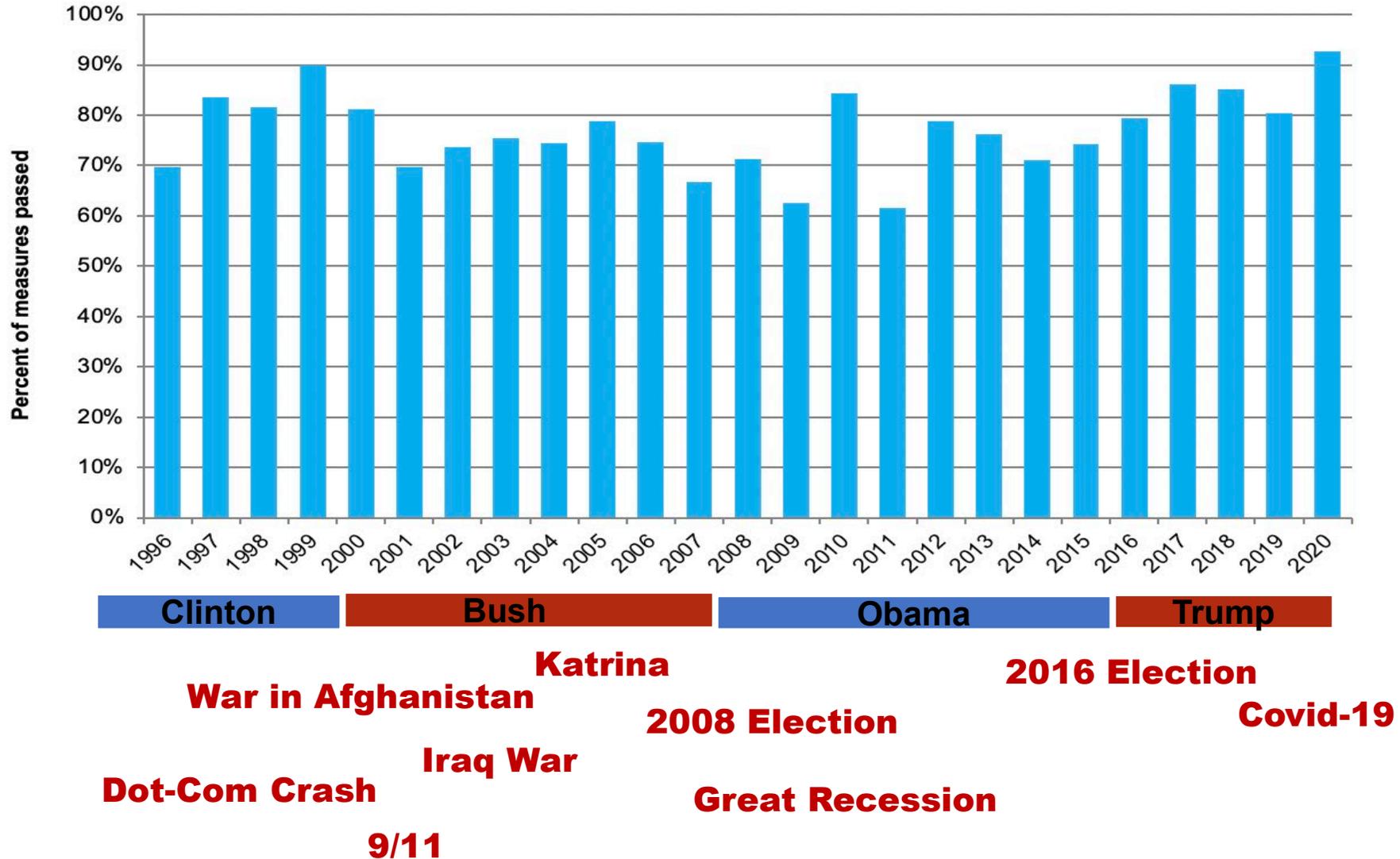
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**The Trust for Public Land
has helped pass over
610 ballot measures for
parks, land, trails and
schoolyards since 1996.**

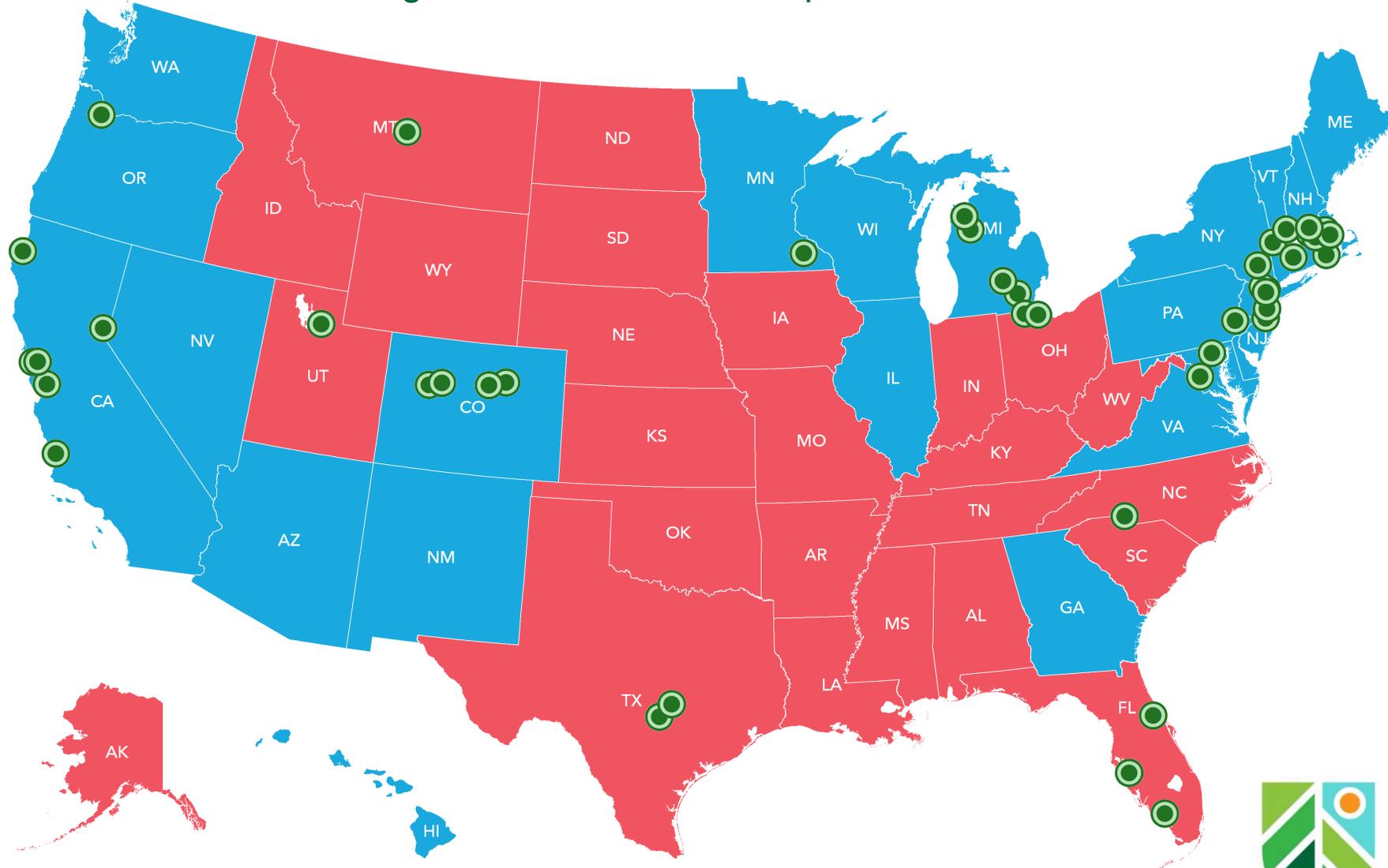
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Proof of Concept: 77% long-term approval rate, good times and bad



November 3, 2020

50 measures – 49 passed – generated over \$3.6B in funding for land conservation, parks and climate



We follow a well-tested road map to help you assess these options to see if there is one that your community will embrace.

Feasibility Research

Public Opinion Survey

Program Recommendations

Ballot Language

Campaign



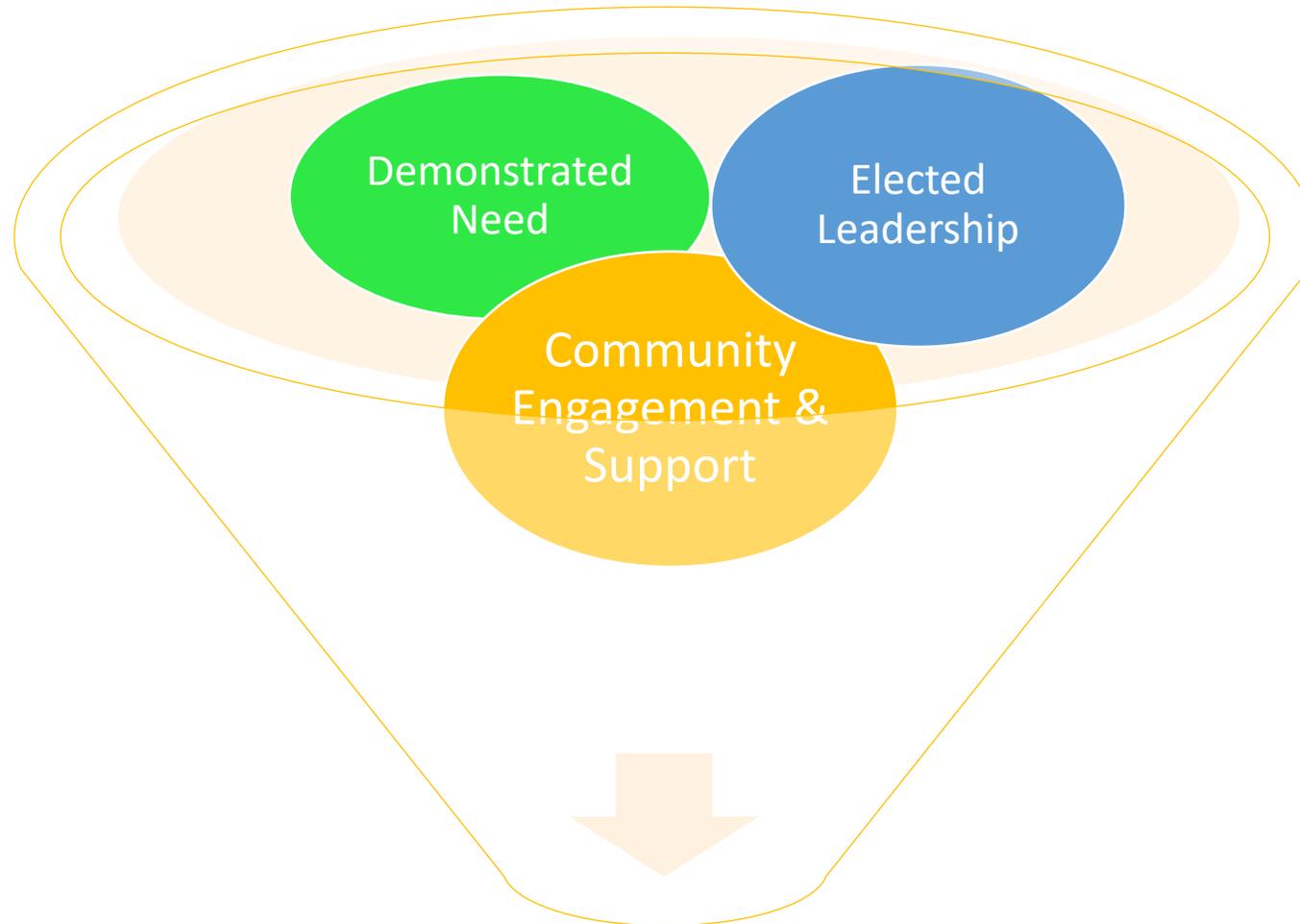
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KEY Ingredients to a Voter Approved Program

Projects can be selected either before or after a referendum.

If selected before, it is best to have keystone parcels (critical to the project) under contingent contract.

If selected afterwards, it's ideal to have a transparent, accountable process for making choices.



Ideally we want all parts of the community (different communities, urban/rural, different constituencies) to be able to see value in the projects. “Put the voters in the picture.”

Community support, and support from advocacy groups, is important.

Clear, Legal, Descriptive Ballot Language
Approved by Voters for those Demonstrated Needs



BUNCOMBE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

Feasibility Research

Completed

- Demographics
- Current Parks and Conservation Budget
- Fiscal Capacity and Finance Options
- Political Profile
- Election History
- Election Requirements
- Ballot Language Requirements
- Pathways to the Ballot
- Best Practices



Funding Options: Bonds, Property Taxes

Bonds are most common in North Carolina, and most successful in passing, 88% so far.

A \$30 million bond for capital projects would cost typical household max of \$14 per year for 20 years, \$18 for \$40 million.

North Carolina Local Conservation Finance Measures, 2000-2021

Finance Mechanism	Number of Measures	Number Passed	% Passed	Total Funds Approved	Conservation Funds Approved
Bond	43	38	88%	\$1,296,165,000	\$594,348,735
Sales tax	2	1	50%	\$32,000,000	\$10,000,000
Other*	1	0	0%		
Property tax	1	0	0%		
Total	47	39	83%	\$1,328,165,000	\$604,348,735

Source: The Trust for Public Land's LandVote Database, www.landvote.org.

*Advisory measure to determine if town funds including property tax should be used for parkland acquisition

Buncombe County Bond Financing Estimates

Bond Issue	Interest Rate	Maturity (years)	Annual Debt Service	Total Taxable Value*	Tax Required (per \$100)	Median Home Value**	Annual Cost for Median Home
\$30,000,000	4%	20	\$2,207,453	\$48,026,332,725	\$0.0046	\$294,500	\$14
\$40,000,000	4%	20	\$2,943,270	\$48,026,332,725	\$0.0061	\$294,500	\$18
\$50,000,000	4%	20	\$3,679,088	\$48,026,332,725	\$0.0077	\$294,500	\$23
\$60,000,000	4%	20	\$4,414,905	\$48,026,332,725	\$0.0092	\$294,500	\$27
\$70,000,000	4%	20	\$5,150,723	\$48,026,332,725	\$0.0107	\$294,500	\$32

*Buncombe County Annual Budget Report FY2022

**Buncombe County Finance Department

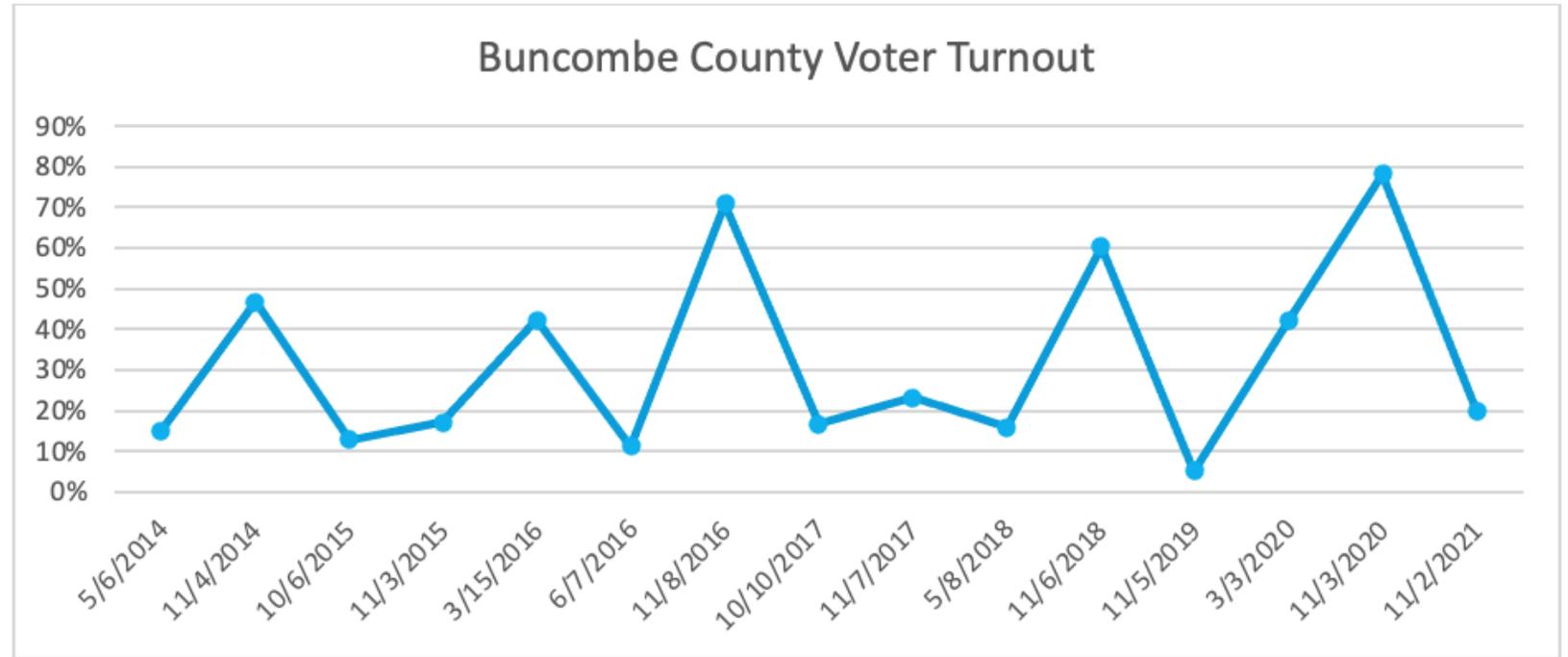
Program Recommendations

- Funding source: Bonds,
- \$30 Million for Conservation,
\$40 Million for Affordable
Housing
- 20 Years
- November 2022
- Citizen oversight, independent
audit



We Recommend a November Election Date

Nationwide, November Elections Have Highest Turnout and Success Rates for Parks/Land Ballot Measures



5/6/2014	11/4/2014	10/6/2015	11/3/2015	3/15/2016	6/7/2016	11/8/2016	10/10/2017	11/7/2017	5/8/2018	11/6/2018	11/5/2019	3/3/2020	11/3/2020	11/2/2021
15.01%	46.69%	12.82%	17.00%	42.22%	11.18%	70.95%	16.58%	23.25%	15.82%	60.41%	5.09%	42.11%	78.26%	19.84%

Buncombe County Registered Voters

Party	Voters	% of Total
Democratic	75,330	37%
Republican	45,806	23%
Other/Unaffiliated	82,118	40%
Total	203,254	100%

Trust for Public Land: Buncombe County, NC Ballot Measures Assessment

Findings and Recommendations from a Poll of Likely
November 2022 General Election Voters



IMPACT
RESEARCH

Methodology



Impact Research conducted a multi-modal poll of likely 2022 general election voters in Buncombe County, North Carolina.



The sample includes a total of N=400 responses collected utilizing landline, cellphone, and text-to-web interviews.



Interviews were conducted between April 7 - 12, 2022.



The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 4.9 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher.

Primary Question on Open Space Bonds

I'd like to get your opinion on some ballot questions that may be decided by voters in Buncombe County this November. Here is the first one...

Open Space Bonds Proposal:

SHALL the order authorizing thirty-million dollars of bonds plus interest to pay the capital costs of acquisition and improvement of land or interests therein for conservation and protection of natural resources and preservation of farmland, including, but not limited to, the development of greenways and trails for recreation purposes, and providing that additional taxes may be levied in an amount sufficient to pay the principal of and interest on the bonds be approved?

Q3. If the election were held today, would you vote YES in favor of this proposal, or NO to oppose it?	Yes, strongly	51%
	Yes, not so strongly	14%
	Undecided, lean yes	6%
	Total Yes	71%
	Undecided, lean no	2%
	No, not so strongly	8%
	No, strongly	14%
	Total No	24%
	[VOL] Undecided	5%

Primary Question on Housing Bonds

Housing Bonds Proposal:

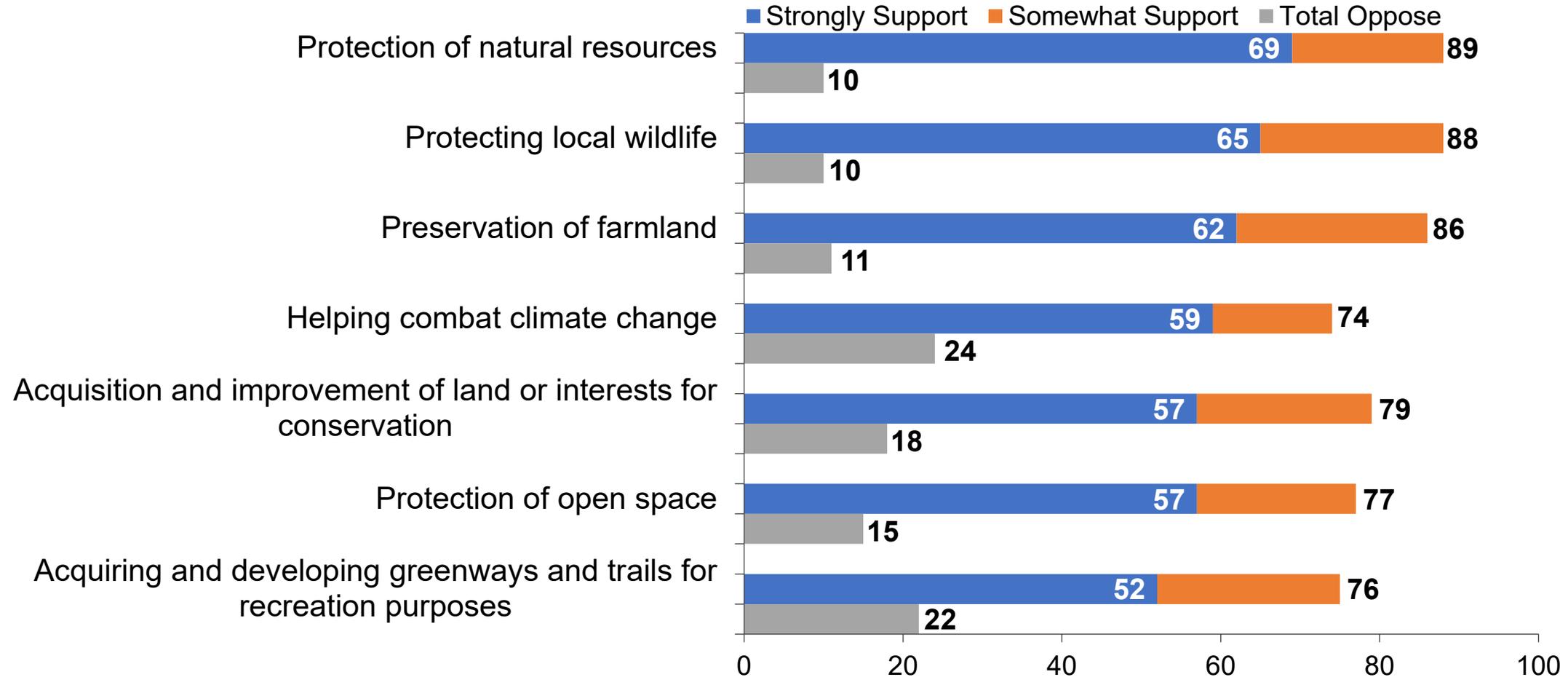
SHALL the order authorizing forty-million dollars of bonds plus interest to pay the capital costs of housing for the benefit of persons of low or moderate income, including construction of related infrastructure improvements and the acquisition of related land and rights-of-way, and providing that additional taxes may be levied in an amount sufficient to pay the principal of and interest on the bonds be approved?

Q4. If the election were held today, would you vote YES in favor of this proposal, or NO to oppose it?	Yes, strongly	39%
	Yes, not so strongly	15%
	Undecided, lean yes	9%
	Total Yes	63%
	Undecided, lean no	5%
	No, not so strongly	8%
	No, strongly	19%
	Total No	32%
	[VOL] Undecided	5%

Huge majorities support virtually every aspect of Open Space Bonds, demonstrating the depth of support for the measure.

Protecting natural resources, wildlife, and farmland generate virtually zero controversy.

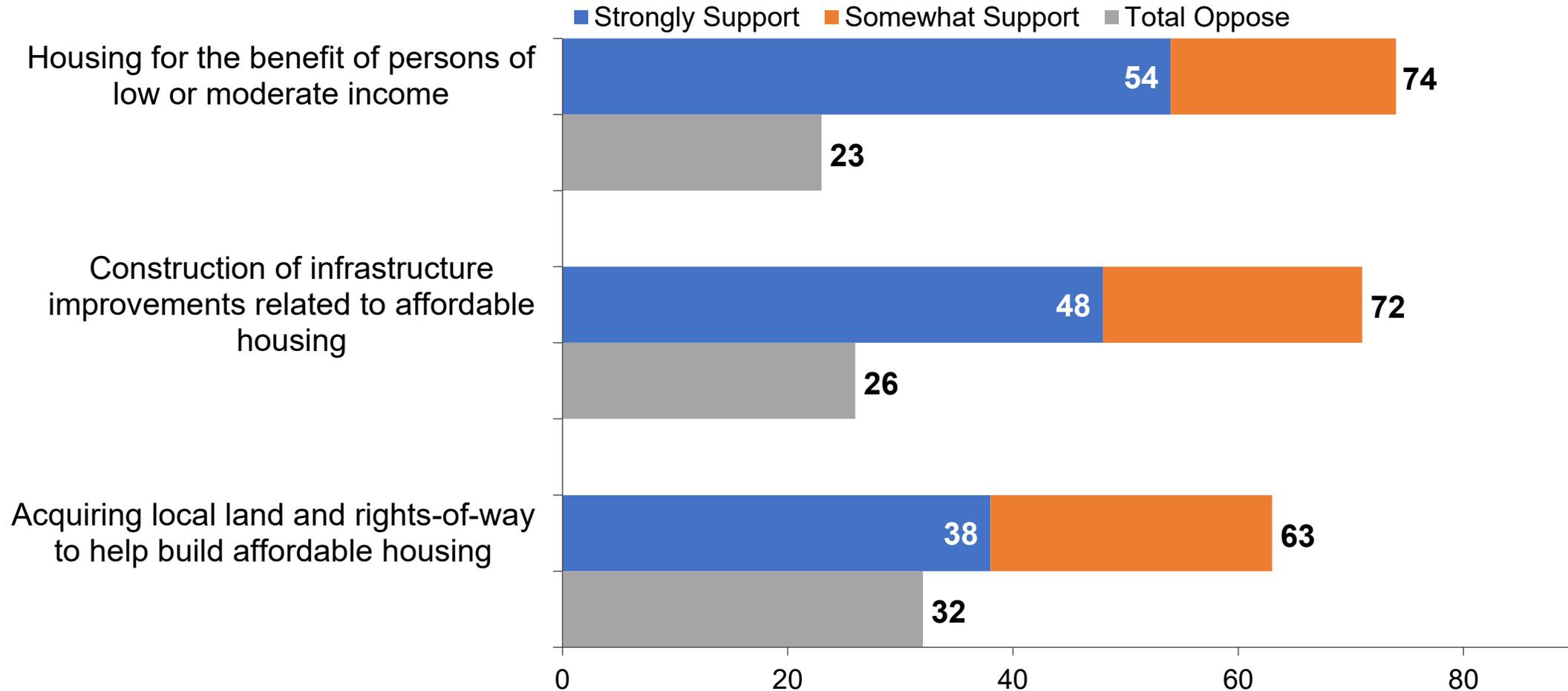
OPEN SPACE BONDS PURPOSES



Housing Bonds enjoy large majority support as well.

Affordable housing itself is not an obstacle; support for acquisition and development of the land is softer.

HOUSING BONDS PURPOSES



Thank You

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IMPACT
RESEARCH

We Can Help Local Citizens Campaign

Advocacy needs private, local funding

Coalition building

Strategy/campaign plan

Campaign committee

Campaign finance registration and reporting

Fund raising

Endorsements

Communications (media)

Earned media

Paid media: direct mail, digital

Radio, TV (rare)

Phones

Grassroots/Field (GOTV)



Beaufort County has experienced a very high rate of growth during the last decade.*

Beaufort County Council recognizes the need to preserve land that has scenic, natural, recreational, rural, and open space character which is deemed essential to the County's quality of life.*

If Approved by the Voters, the Bonds for Land Preservation will:	Accountability Measures:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect water quality• Protect local waterways, local creeks and rivers such as the Okatie, May, Broad Rivers, and Port Royal Sound• Protect coastal areas, beaches, wetlands, wildlife areas, and natural lands• Purchase military buffers for the Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort*	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The bond referendum language specifies what the funds can be used for and the funds can only be used for those purposes.• There will be an annual independent audit of how the funds are spent.

*Beaufort County Ordinance 2018/16

BONDS FOR LAND PRESERVATION TO PROTECT NATURAL LAND, FARMLAND, AND WATER QUALITY

Beaufort County Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program
Local Question - General Obligation Bonds • On Your Ballot Tuesday, November 6

Approved at 67%



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IN OUR FUTURE**
Parks & Libraries
www.VoteYesDorchester.com
PAID FOR BY FRIENDS OF DORCHESTER PARKS & LIBRARIES



Thank you! Questions?



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For Further Information



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