

## City of Berkeley

Findings from a Survey of 500 Likely Voters  
in Berkeley on Potential Ballot Measures

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# Methodology

- Survey conducted from April 9-13, 2014.
- Live telephone interviews using professional interviewers.
- Geographically stratified sample of 500 likely November 2014 voters in the City of Berkeley.
- The margin of error for the full sample is +/-4.4 %.
- The data were weighted slightly by gender, region, race, age, education, and party registration to match the sample to the projected turnout of likely voters.

## Key Findings

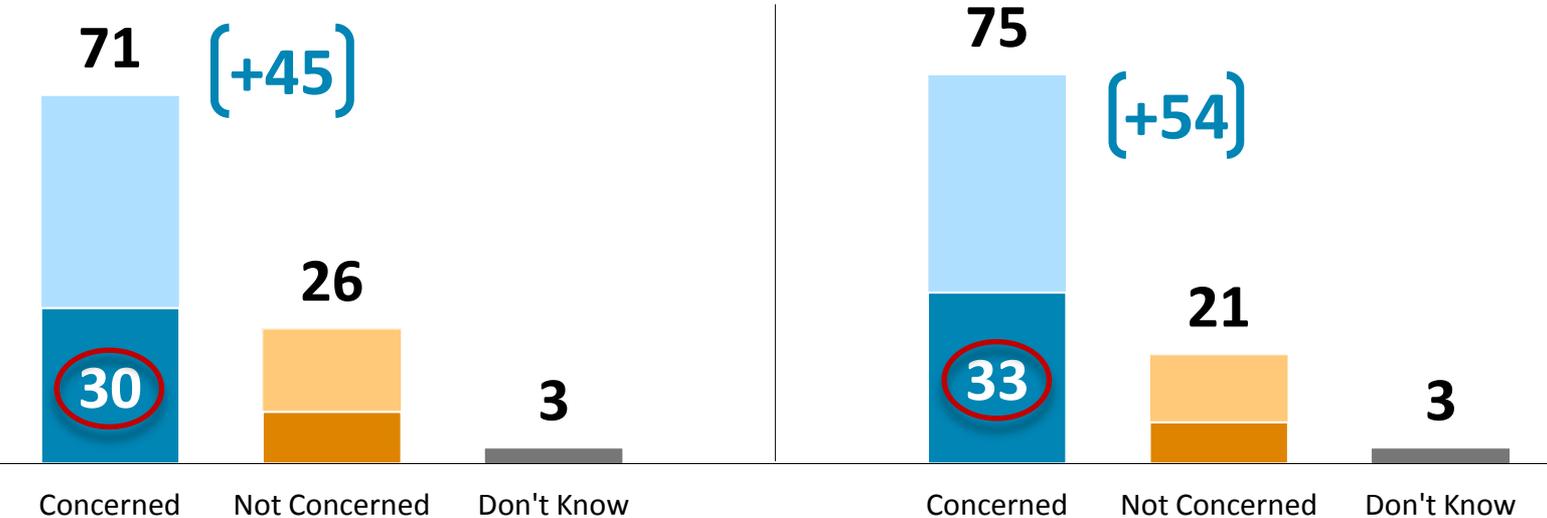
- While most Berkeley voters are concerned about vacant storefronts and the deterioration of city parks, just about one third are “very concerned.”
- The taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages (both general and special) begin in the strongest position, already narrowly attaining the needed vote margins.
- Once voters hear more information, both parks measures and the vacancy tax are able to attain a high enough “potential yes” vote for passage.
  - The parcel tax for parks performs slightly better than the bond.
  - Both the parks bond measure and the vacancy tax measure would require nearly every “potential yes” vote in order to pass.

Over two-thirds of voters are concerned about Berkeley’s vacant storefronts and about the deterioration of city parks and playgrounds, while close to one third are very concerned about each.

## Level of Concern

### About Vacant Storefronts

### About Deterioration of Parks and Playgrounds



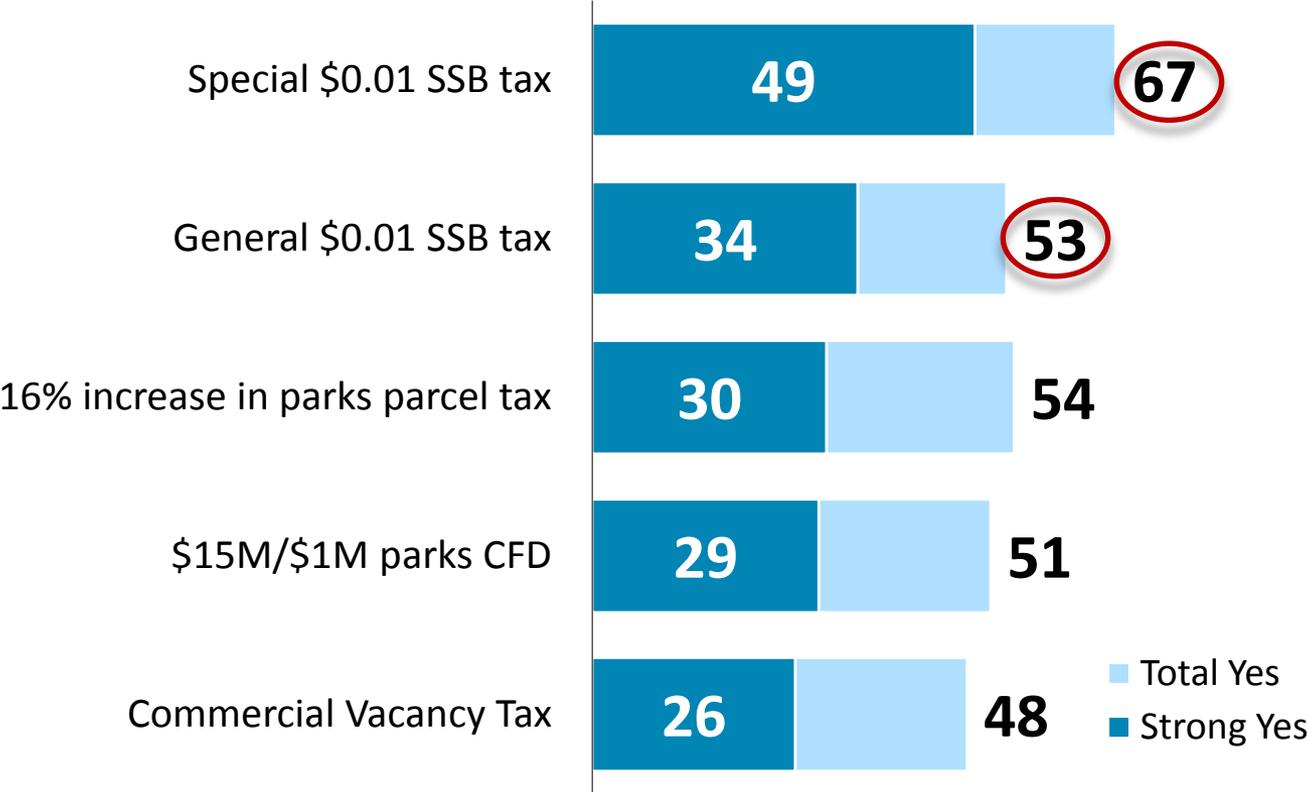
Darker colors indicate intensity.

Berkeley has a large number of vacant storefronts and other vacant ground floor commercial properties. How concerned are you about these vacant ground floor commercial properties in Berkeley—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

How concerned are you about the deterioration of Berkeley city parks and playgrounds—very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned?

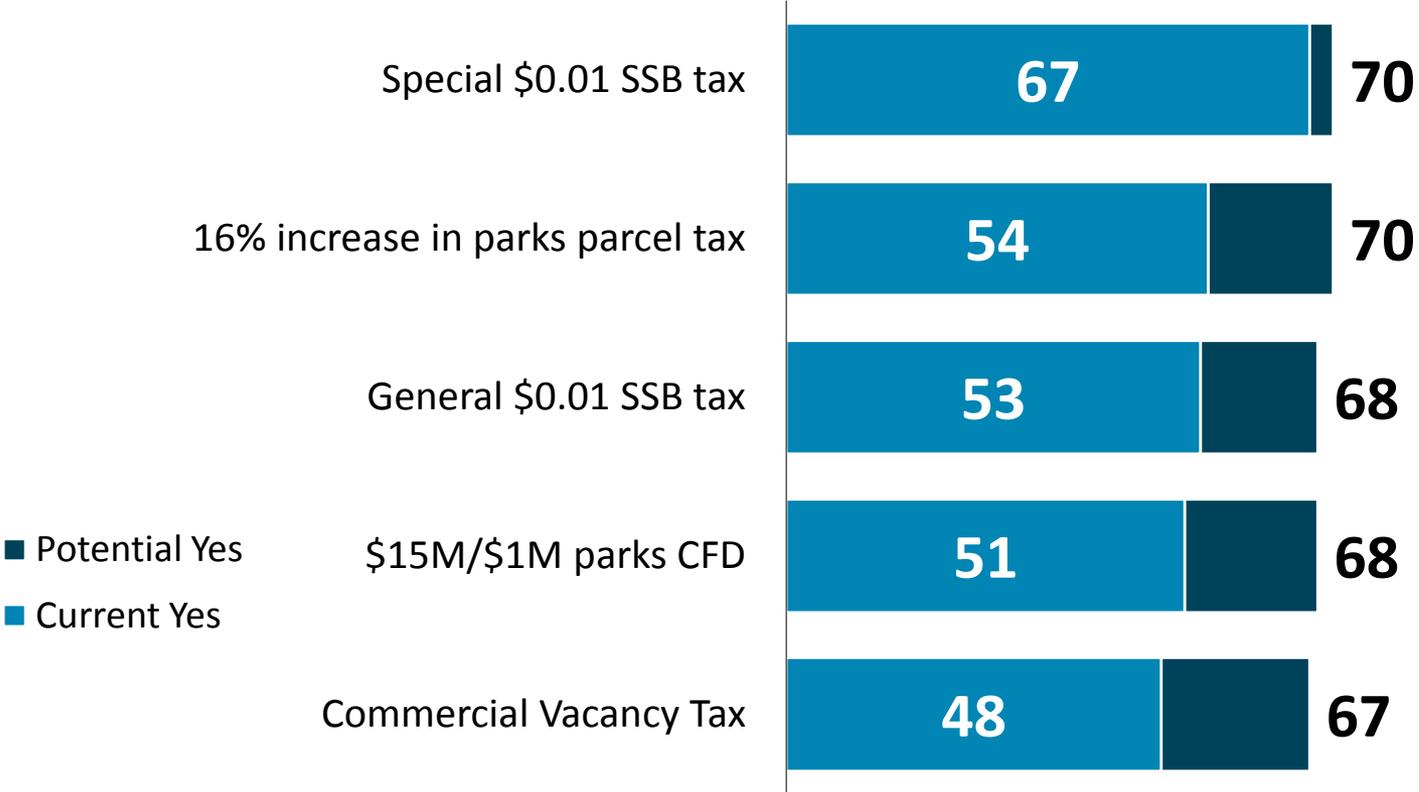
If the election were held today, a sugar-sweetened beverage tax (whether general or special) would pass narrowly. Other potential ballot measures do not currently have the needed support.

### Initial Yes Vote – Ballot Measures



All of the measures tested have the potential to reach two-thirds support, but only after voters are given additional information about the measures. The general tax on sugar-sweetened beverages begins with the majority support it needs to pass.

### Potential Yes Vote\* – Ballot Measures

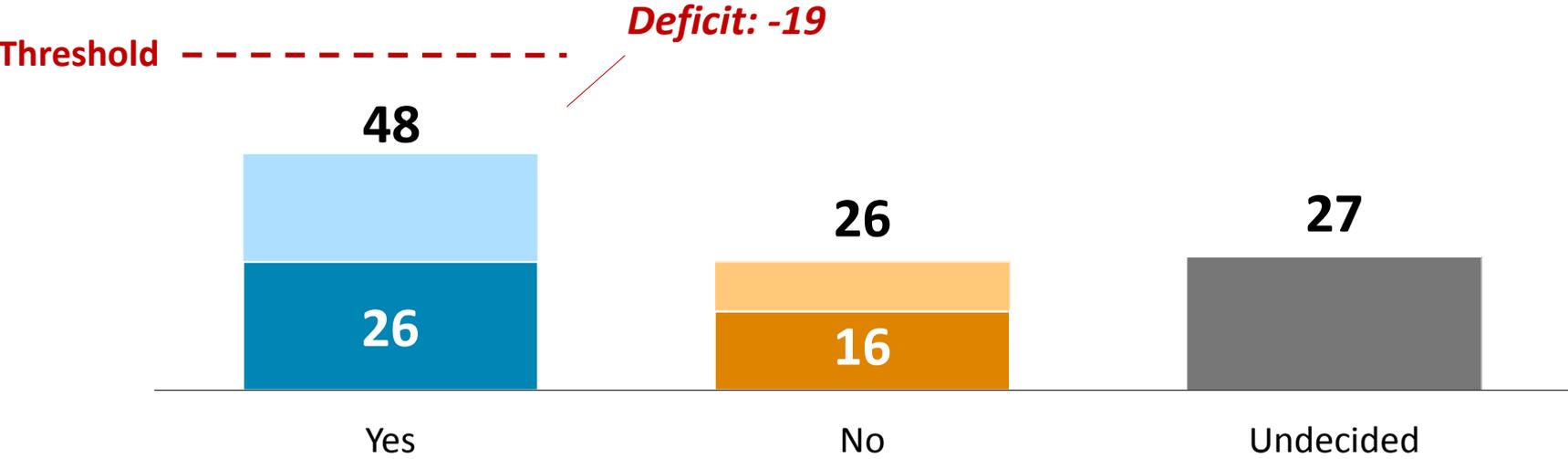


- Potential Yes
- Current Yes

\*“Potential Yes” includes respondents who say they would vote yes when they first hear about the measure, as well as respondents who are initially undecided or would vote no but then say they would be more likely to support the measure after they hear more information.

The commercial vacancy tax currently falls significantly short of the two-thirds threshold.

### Commercial Vacancy Tax



Darker colors indicate intensity.

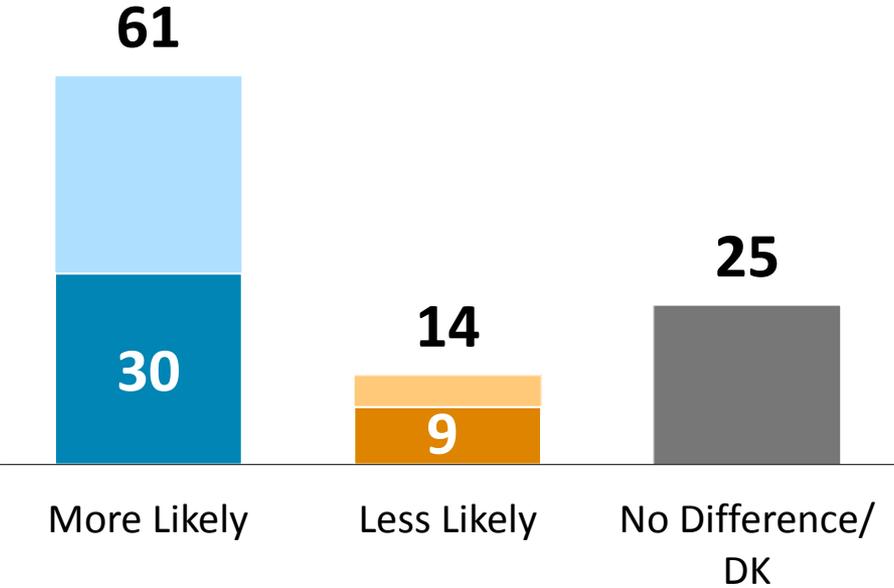
Shall the City of Berkeley enact a **Commercial** Vacancy Tax of one dollar per square foot that would be assessed on the ground floor of **commercial** properties that have been vacant for two years, with escalating assessment amounts for subsequent years of vacancy, and with hardship exceptions and the opportunity for appeal, with the revenue going toward the City's general fund?

Although the commercial vacancy tax initially falls short of the two-thirds needed to pass, additional information makes more than three-fifths of voters more likely to support the tax, bringing the potential yes vote to 67%. This tax would need nearly every potential yes vote to win.

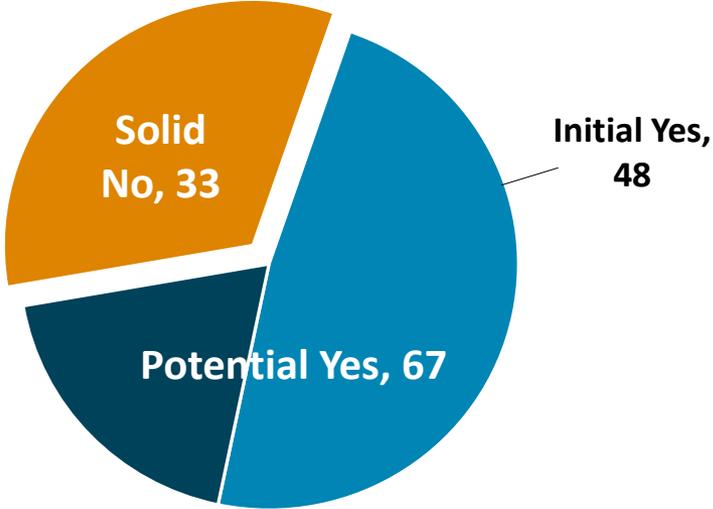
## Commercial Vacancy Tax: with Additional Information

Does hearing this information make you more or less likely to support the measure?

### Potential Support



Darker colors indicate intensity.



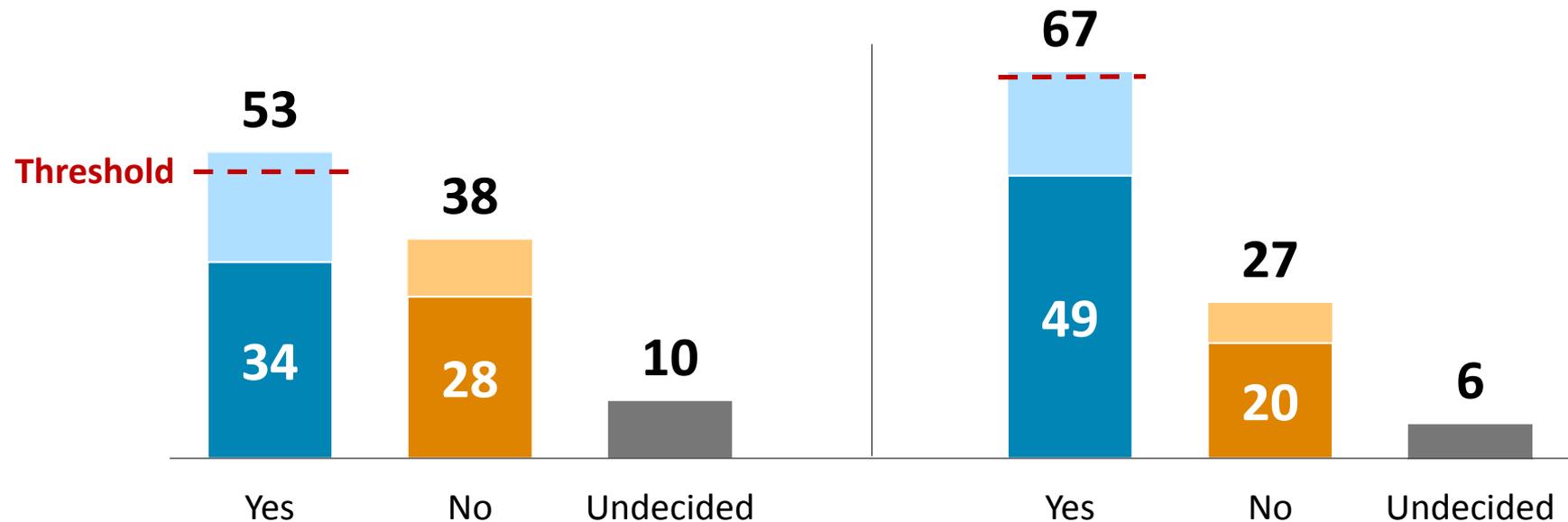
Regarding the measure I just read to you, let me give you some more information. Ground floor commercial vacancies affect the economic vitality of Berkeley and hurt local communities by making commercial districts look like they are in decline or unsafe. A commercial vacancy tax would provide property owners with an economic incentive to fill these vacant storefronts, reducing urban blight, creating jobs, and building the local economy.

Both the general and special sugar-sweetened beverage taxes currently have enough support to pass.

## \$0.01 Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Tax

General

Special



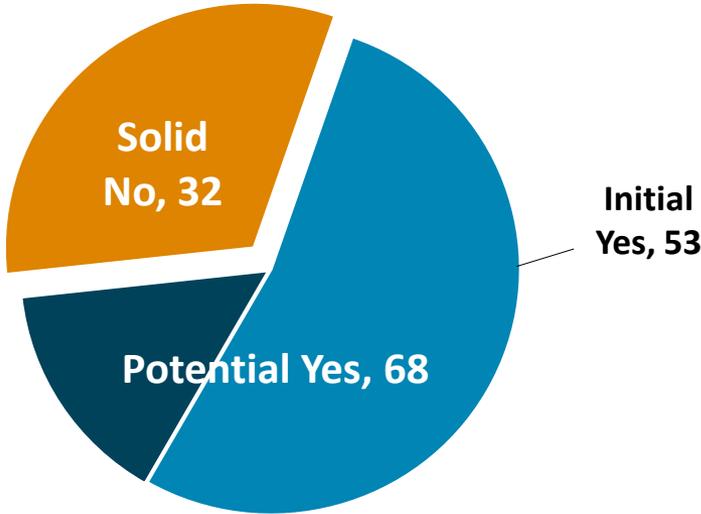
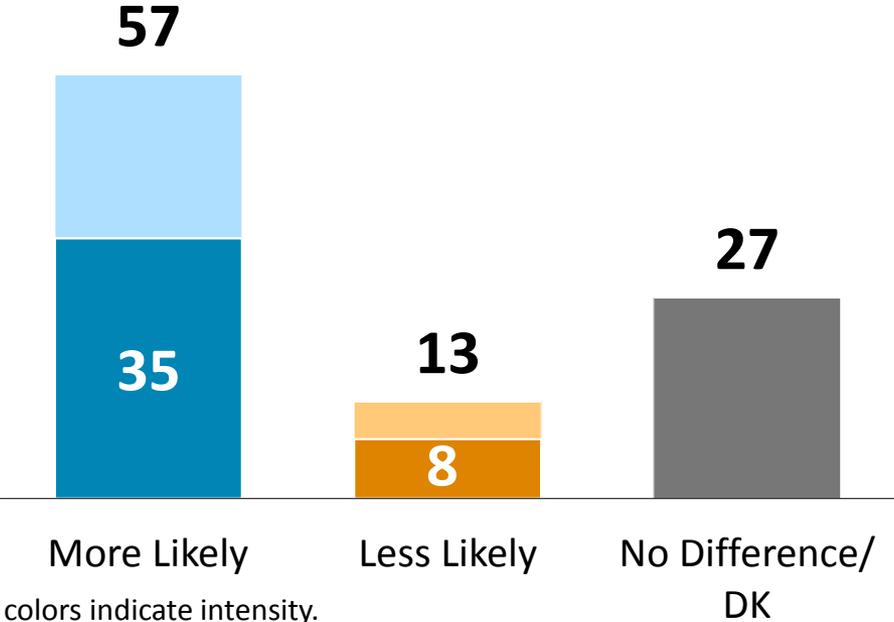
Shall the City of Berkeley enact a [general/special] tax on distributors of sugar-sweetened beverages of one cent per ounce, [with revenues going to the City's general fund/with revenues dedicated to funding obesity prevention, diabetes prevention, early childhood nutrition, physical activity, nutritional education programs in schools, and/or other health education programs]?

Although the general sugar-sweetened beverage tax begins with enough support to pass, additional information about support from community leaders, the mechanism of the tax, and an oversight committee brings the potential yes vote up to 68%—well above the majority support this tax would need to pass.

## General SSB Tax: with Additional Information

Does hearing this information make you more or less likely to support the measure?\*

### Potential Support



Darker colors indicate intensity.  
\* Split-sampled

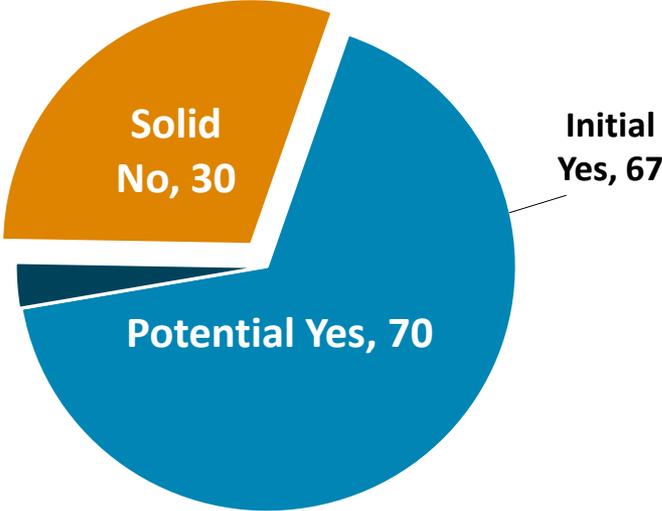
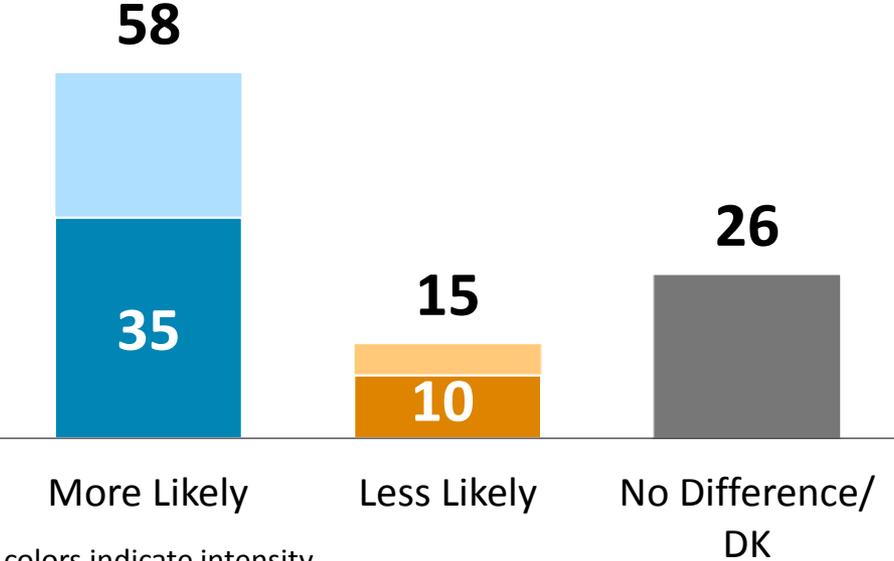
Regarding the measure I just read to you, let me give you some more information. This tax on sugar-sweetened beverages has widespread community support, including from local African-American and Latino leaders. The tax would be placed on distributors—the companies that distribute sugar-sweetened beverages to local stores—and the implementation of this measure would be monitored by an independent oversight committee.

Additional information gives the special tax less of a boost. Still, potential support rises to 70% after voters hear more information, increasing the potential margin over the 66.7% threshold.

## Special SSB Tax: with Additional Information

Does hearing this information make you more or less likely to support the measure?\*

**Potential Support**



Darker colors indicate intensity.  
\* Split-sampled

Regarding the measure I just read to you, let me give you some more information. This tax on sugar-sweetened beverages has widespread community support, including from local African-American and Latino leaders. The tax would be placed on distributors—the companies that distribute sugar-sweetened beverages to local stores—and the implementation of this measure would be monitored by an independent oversight committee. **Funds from the tax would be placed in the Healthy Children Trust Fund and dedicated to improving the health of local kids.**

## Text of Unbalanced Messages

**Supporters of this measure say** that consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages dramatically increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and obesity in children. This proposal will benefit those most at risk for these diseases and generate millions of dollars in needed revenue that can be used to fight the obesity epidemic and improve our children's health.

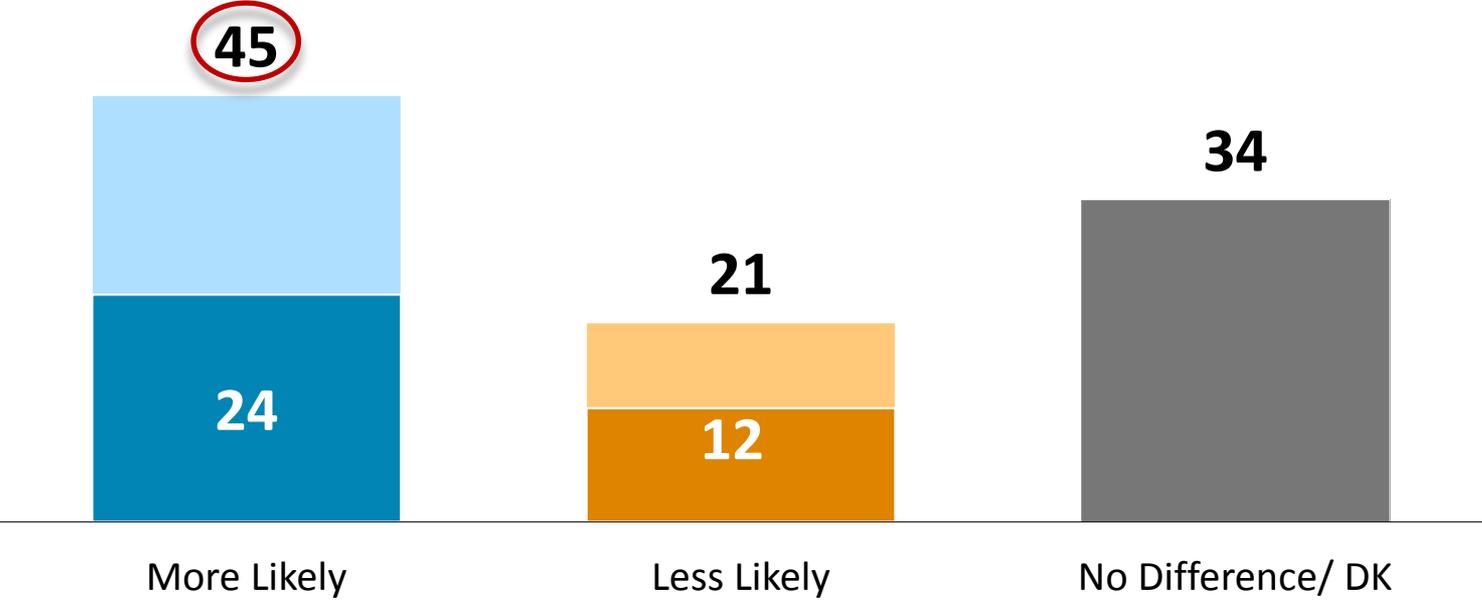
**Opponents of this measure say** that it is a misguided regressive tax that will hurt low-income residents the most while doing nothing to improve their health. This is just an example of the government dictating what residents should eat and drink, instead of respecting our right to make our own choices as consumers. The real impact of this tax will be that distributors will pass on the taxes to locally-owned small businesses and restaurants, which will only make it tougher for them to operate on already-tight margins, and could cause many of them to close down. There are much better ways to fund health education and address children's health than a regressive tax that will unfairly impact low-income residents and hurt local small businesses.

Next, I'm going to read you two additional statements that people have made about the measure I just told you about. [...] Does hearing this information make you more or less likely to support the measure?

Unbalanced messaging against the tax does not reduce support for a sugar-sweetened beverage tax. In fact, a plurality of voters are *more likely* to support these taxes despite unbalanced messaging against it.

## Effect of Unbalanced Messages

Does hearing this information make you more or less likely to support the measure?



Darker colors indicate intensity.

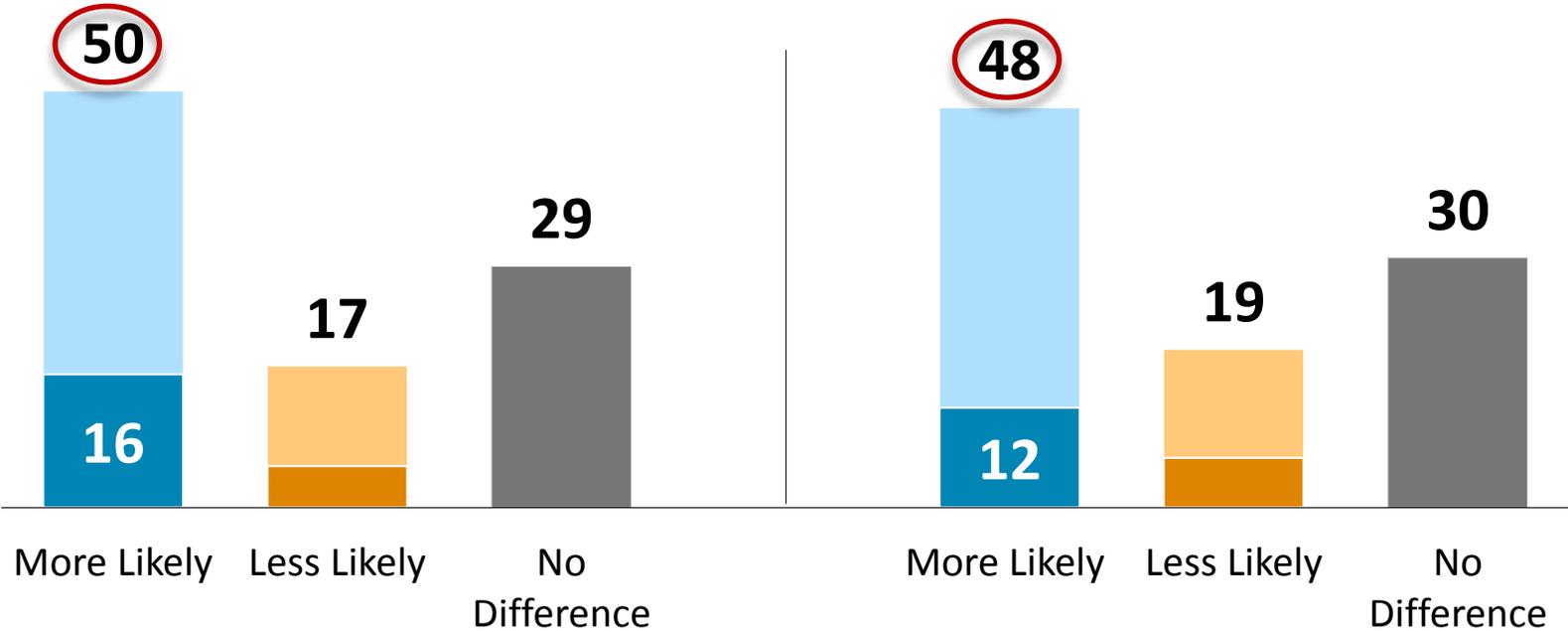
Next, I'm going to read you two additional statements that people have made about the measure I just told you about. [...] Does hearing this information make you more or less likely to support the measure?

Unbalanced messaging also does not reduce support for a sugar-sweetened beverage tax among swing voters. They, too, become *more likely* to support these taxes despite unbalanced messaging against it.

## Effect of Unbalanced Messages: Among Swing Voters

General Tax - Swing

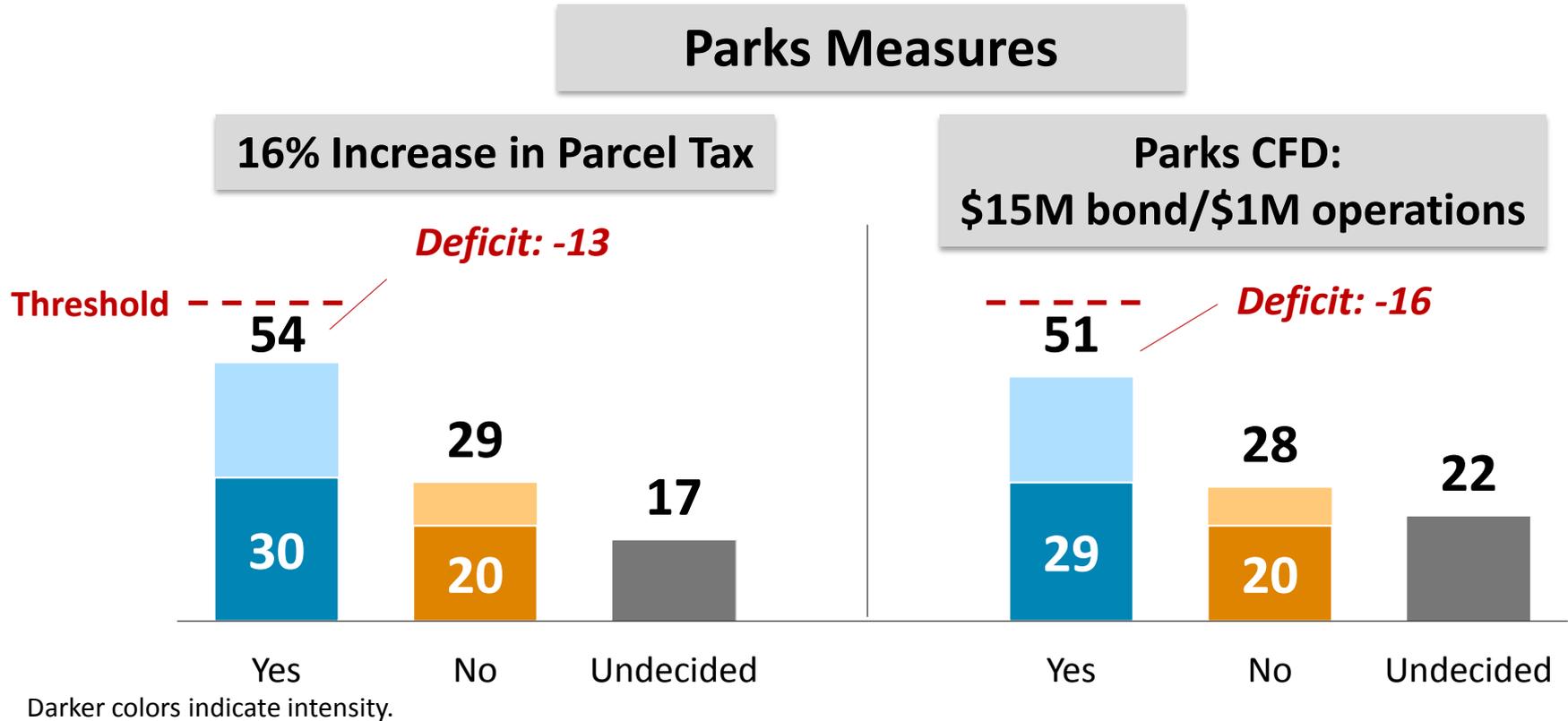
Special Tax - Swing



Darker colors indicate intensity.

Next, I'm going to read you two additional statements that people have made about the measure I just told you about. [...] Does hearing this information make you more or less likely to support the measure?

Both parks measures currently fall well short of the two-thirds support needed to pass.



Shall the City of Berkeley increase the existing Parks parcel tax by 16%, or 43 dollars per year, for an average 1900 square foot house, indexed for inflation, in order to protect the safety and usability of city parks and playgrounds, including repairing deteriorating sports fields, courts, and tot lots citywide, addressing trip hazards and improving pedestrian paths, and ensuring the structural integrity of deteriorating recreation centers used for indoor sports and after-school youth programs?

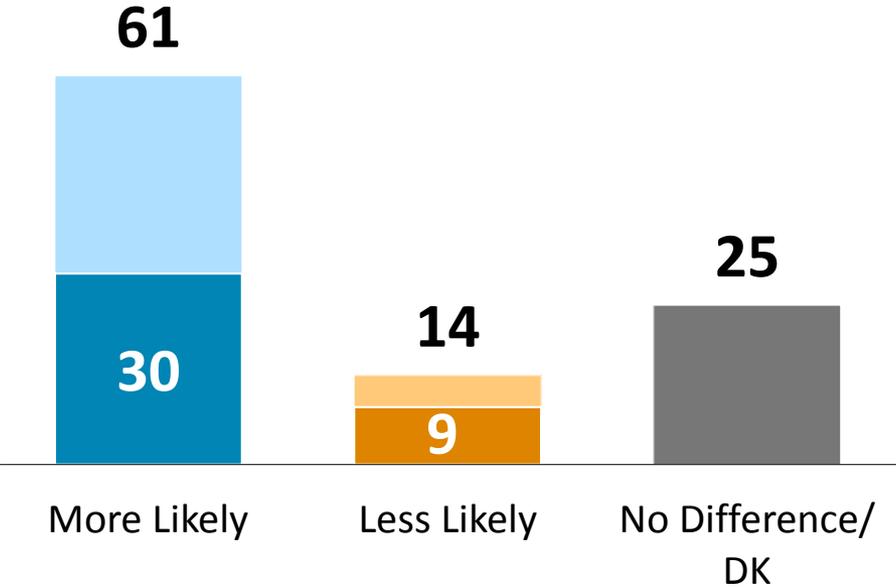
Shall the City of Berkeley issue bonds not exceeding 15 million dollars to renovate facilities in parks Citywide, including fields, courts, tot lots, recreation centers, dog use areas, and pathways AND ALSO levy a special tax of 1 million dollars to support park and playground operations? After the bonds are issued, the tax for an average house would be 26 dollars for the bond and 24 dollars for the operations per year over 30 years.

Information about the need for further investment in city parks to prevent the risk of closure makes the majority of voters more likely to support a revenue measure funding parks. Potential support for an increase in the parks parcel tax rises to 70%, above the threshold for passage in November.

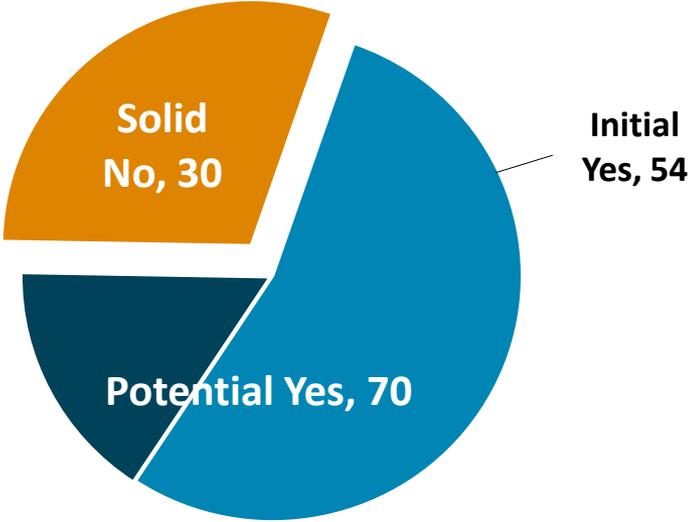
## Parks Parcel Tax: with Additional Information

Does hearing this information make you more or less likely to support the measure?

### Potential Support



Darker colors indicate intensity.



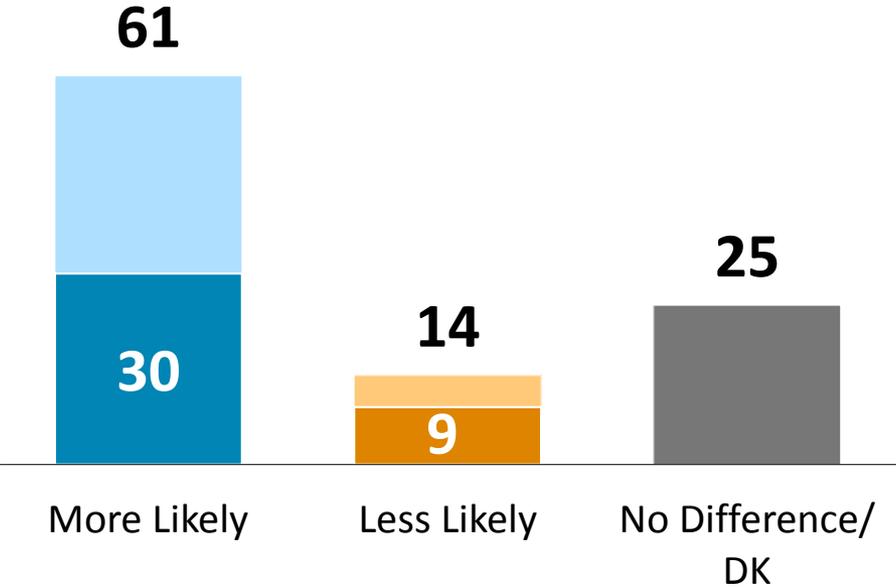
Regarding the measure I just read to you, let me give you some more information. Berkeley's fifty-two parks and playgrounds are deteriorating at a rapid rate, jeopardizing their safety and usability. A community investment in restoring and protecting our parks and playgrounds is necessary in order to bring our parks to a safe standard, so that they can be enjoyed by all. Without this investment, some parks and playgrounds will have to be closed.

The potential yes vote for the parks CFD (\$15M bond, \$1M operations) also increases significantly after messaging, but the potential yes vote for the CFD remains slightly lower than the potential yes vote for the parks parcel tax (70% vs. 68%). The parcel tax has a slightly higher chance of passage.

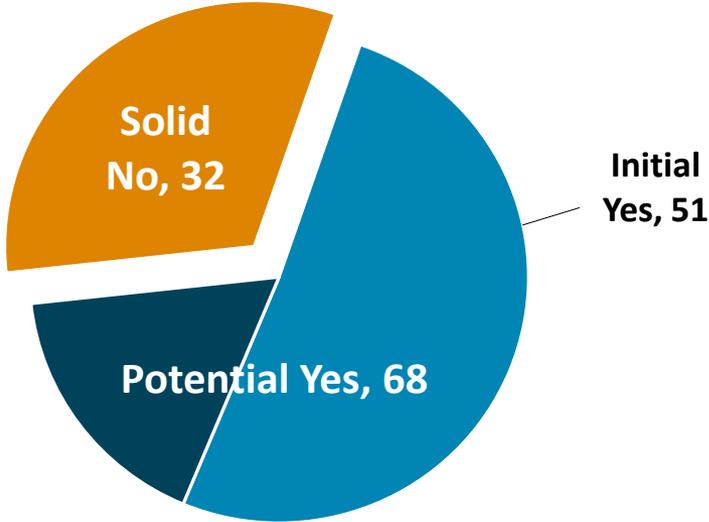
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Does hearing this information make you more or less likely to support the measure?

### Potential Support

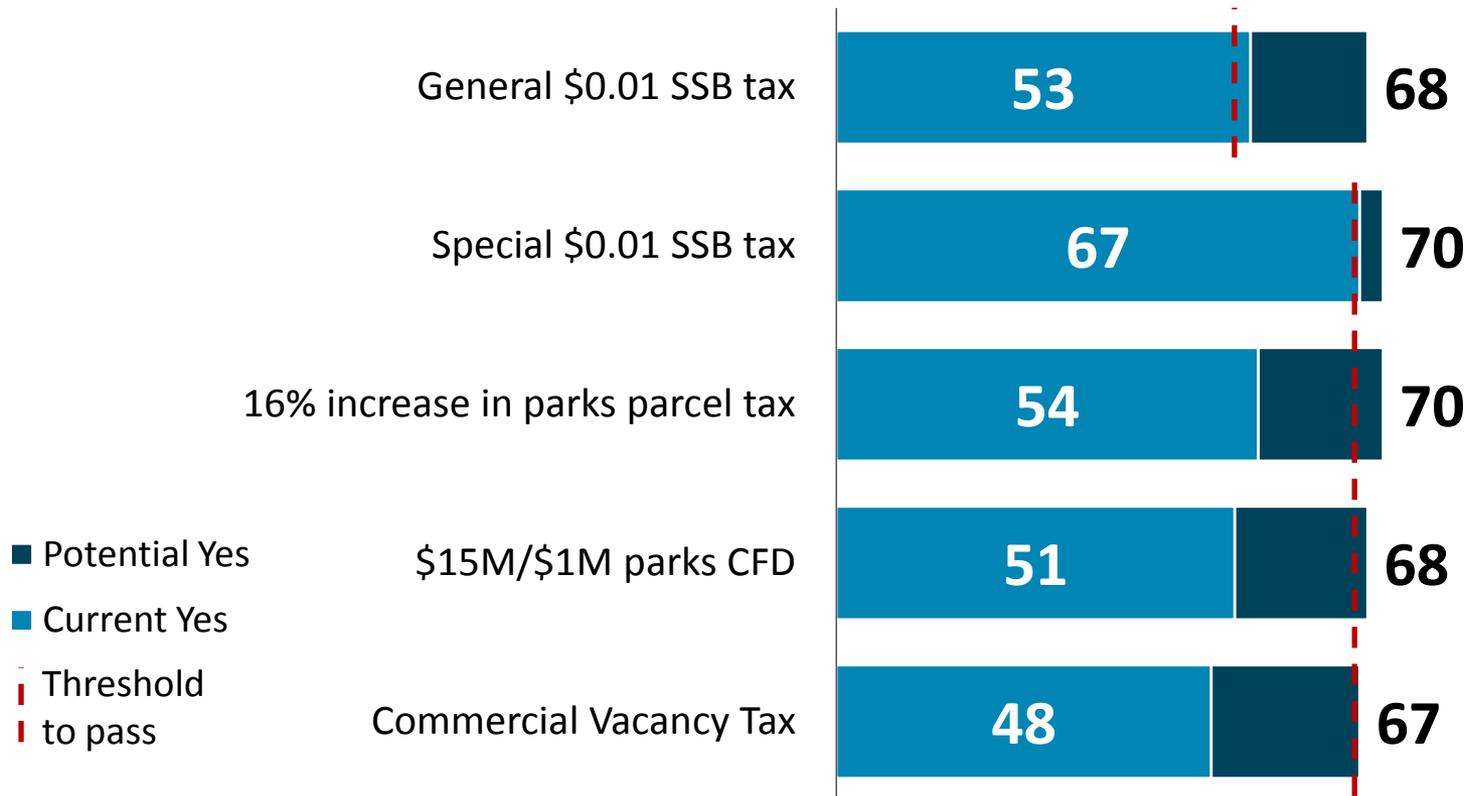


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## Potential Yes Vote\* – Ballot Measures



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# Next Steps for November Ballot

- Direction on Ballot Measures to include on November ballot:
  - Commercial Vacancy Tax?
  - Sugar Sweetened Beverage Tax?
    - General or Special?
    - If Special, what programs to support?
  - Parks Tax?
    - Increase in existing tax or new Mello Roos CFD?
    - If existing, what % rate increase?
    - If CFD, what amount of bond/operations tax?
    - If CFD, what projects to include in bond?

# Commercial Vacancy Tax

- Tax of \$1/square foot on ground floor of commercial properties vacant for two years with escalating assessments for subsequent years; with hardship exceptions
  - Revenues go to General Fund but requires 2/3 voter approval
- Include on November ballot?

# Sugar-sweetened Beverage Tax

- Tax on distributors of sugar-sweetened beverages at 1 cent per ounce
  - General Tax or Special Tax?
- If Special Tax, what programs to support?
  - Language tested: “...with revenues dedicated to funding obesity prevention, diabetes prevention, early childhood nutrition, physical activity, nutritional education programs in schools, and/or other health education programs.”

# Parks Tax Increase or Mello Roos CFD?

- Either:
  - Increase the existing Parks Parcel Tax (16% increase = \$43 annually for the average size home); OR
  - Create a Mello Roos CFD: \$15M bond (\$26 annually for average home) and \$1M operations (\$24 annually).
- If a Mello Roos CFD, what projects to support with the bond funds?
  - Draft list of projects, Attachment 7 to Council report

## Mello Roos CFD Next Steps:

May 20, 2014:

- Council consideration of Resolution of Intention to Form a Community Facilities District (CFD) and Establish the Rate & Method of Apportionment of the Tax
- Description of Facilities & Services approved along with Resolution of Intention to Form the CFD

June 24, 2014:

- Council consideration of Resolution of Formation of CFD and other required actions to place the measure on the November ballot