



Draft Release:

The Role of Sustainable Communities in Economic Recovery

**A Research Survey Conducted October/
November 2010 DRAFT FOR REVIEW ONLY**

Funding Provided by: The Ford Foundation

Fielded by: Harris Interactive

Design and Analytics by: Collective Strength, Inc.



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Survey Methodology Overview

- Questionnaire was designed by Collective Strength and formally reviewed by Harris Interactive to ensure objectivity of each question.
- 1,200 interviews were conducted using standard market research industry protocol for online polling by Harris Interactive from October 21st to November 1st 2010.
- The results are calibrated to mirror current U.S. Census estimates for age, race, income, gender and region.
- Plus or minus 3% margin of error

For more information on the methodology or to ask questions about the cross-tabulations, contact Collective Strength.



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Findings about Sustainable Communities

- Most Americans believe that their region needs to rethink housing and transportation because “it doesn’t work for most people.”
- Sustainable communities, as defined by their benefits, are broadly supported in every region and every region believes they need more of them.
- Sustainable communities are widely seen as important to rebuilding the economy.
- There is a clear demand for sustainable communities and it is increasing.
- The Livability Principles are also broadly supported.

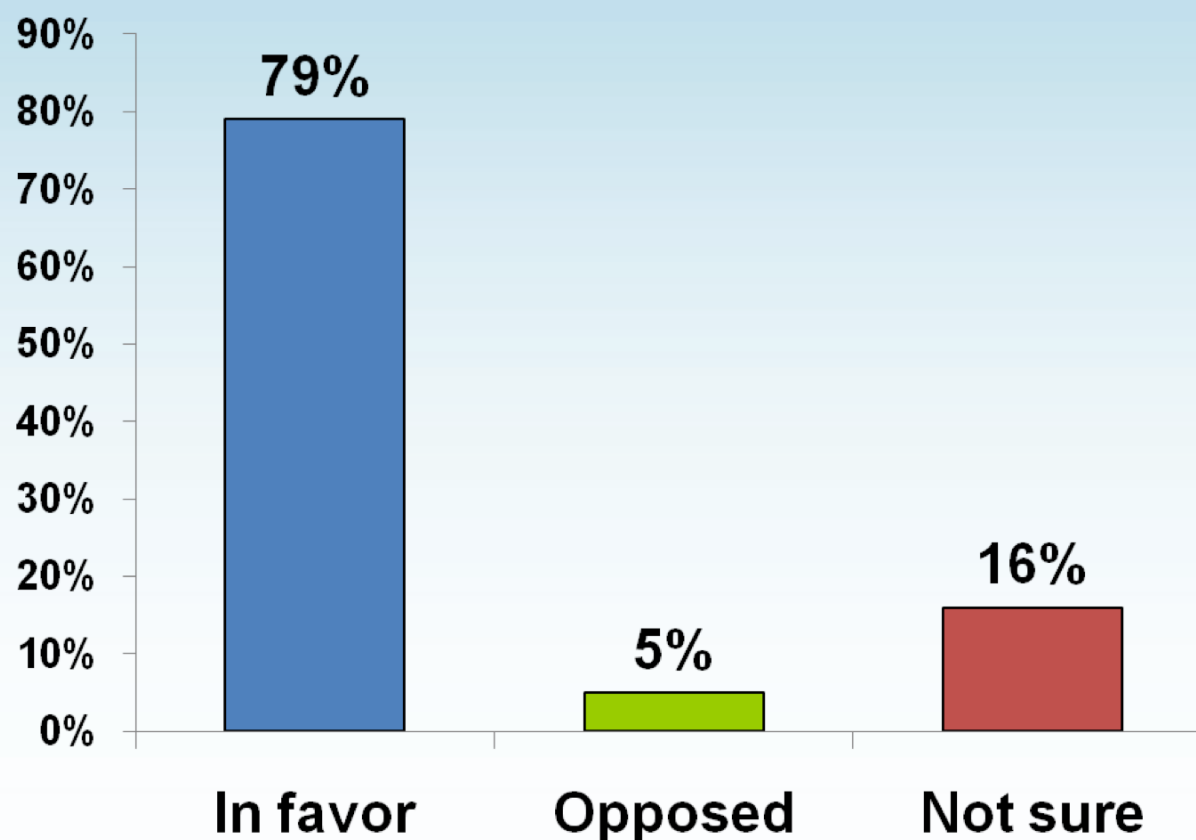
A Sustainable Community is.....



An urban, suburban or rural community that has more housing and transportation choices, is closer to jobs, shops or schools, is more energy independent and helps protect clean air and water.

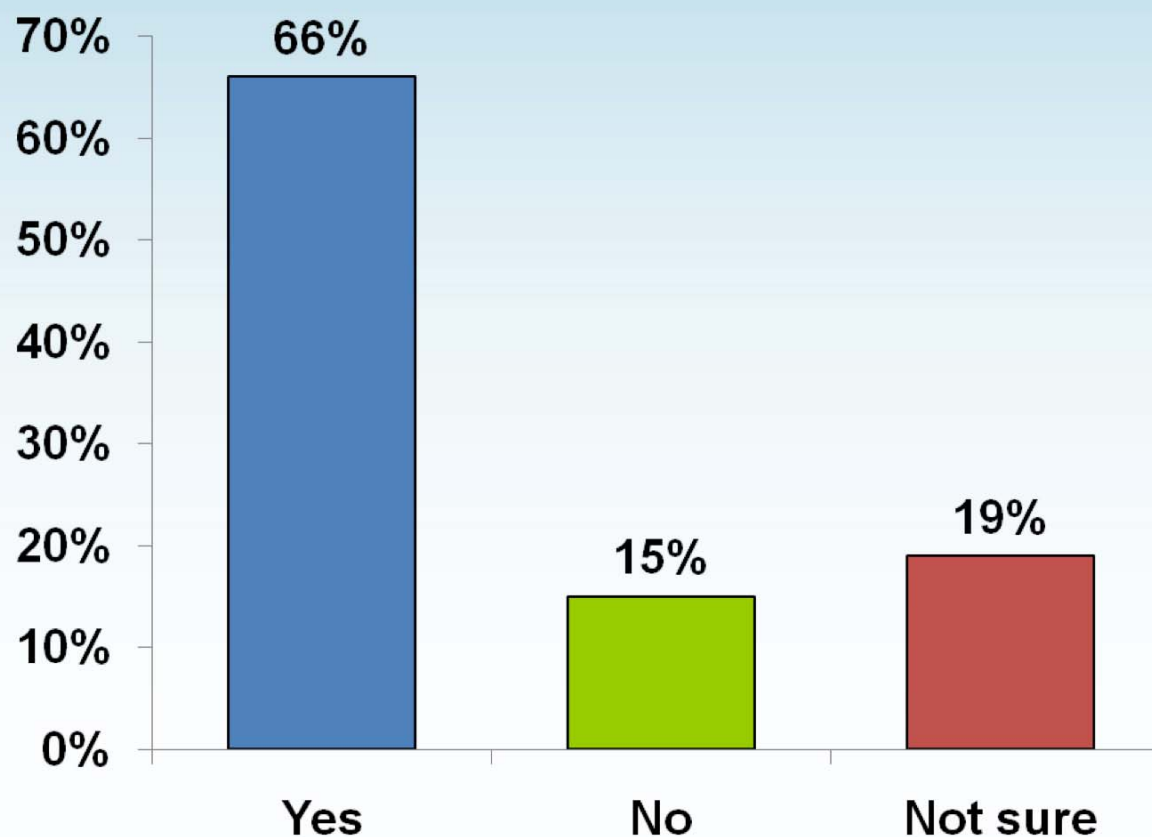


Support for Sustainable Communities (with Definition)



Q: For the remainder of this survey, please use the following definition of sustainable communities: An urban, suburban, or rural community that has more housing and transportation choices, is closer to jobs, shops or schools, is more energy independent, and helps protect clean air and water.

Does your region need more Sustainable Communities?



Q: Do you think that the region of the county in which you live needs more sustainable communities?

Support for Livability Principles

Livability Principle	Agree
Enhance economic competitiveness	88%
Value communities and neighborhoods	87%
Provide more transportation choices	83%
Promote equitable, affordable housing	83%
Support existing communities	80%
Coordinate policies and leverage investment	80%



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Findings About the Economy and the Role of Sustainable Communities in it

- Jobs and the Economy remain the number one national priority across all regions and demographics.
- Americans want the government to “stop spending money it doesn’t have” and “use the money it has more effectively.”
- Increasing infrastructure spending that supports communities such as public transportation, roads, trains, water systems is widely seen as a jobs catalyst and economic boost.

Findings About the Economy and the Role of Sustainable Communities in it

- As a solution for the economic crisis, infrastructure spending ranks higher than both investing in technology/innovation and investments in clean energy and green jobs.
- Dominant economic theme: Growing the economy and balancing the budget by spending what we do have more wisely.
- Sustainable communities can be framed in a very positive way – IF we are proactive about it.

National Priorities

High Priorities (60%+)

- Jobs 82%
- The economy 85%
- Health care costs 70%
- Federal deficit 68%
- Cost of living 61%
- Taxes 63%
- Education 63%



Q: Now we would like to ask you some questions about the issues our nation is facing today. How much of a priority do you think each of the following issues should be to our elected officials?

National Priorities, cont.

Medium Priorities (49%+)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| • Ending the war(s) | 57% |
| • Public safety | 51% |
| • Reducing our dependence on oil | 51% |
| • Addressing poverty | 49% |
| • Clean air and water | 49% |

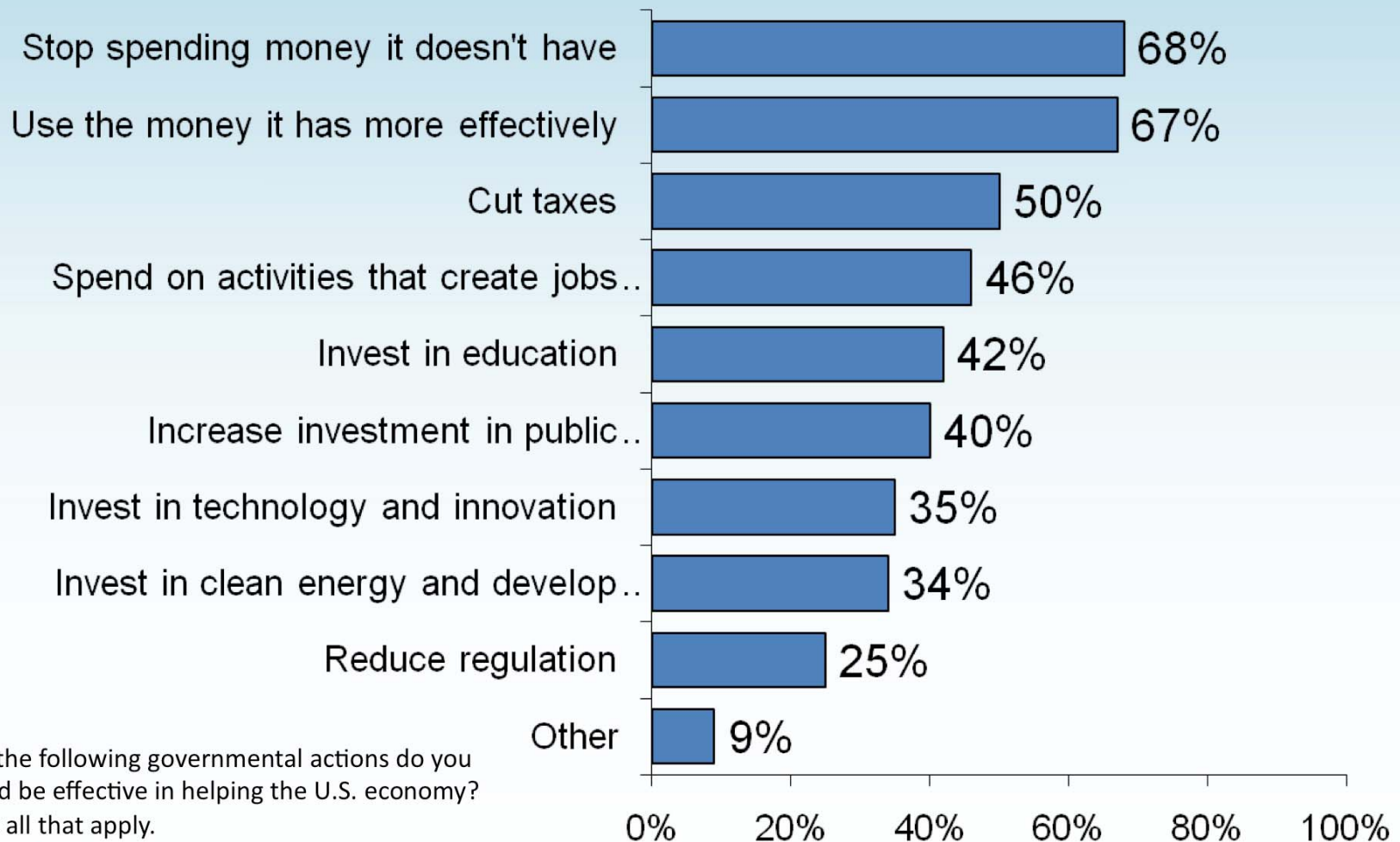
“Just Not Priorities”

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| • Wall Street and banking reform | 39% |
| • Housing market downturn | 38% |
| • Climate change and global warming | 30% |
| • Transportation | 21% |
| • Land development patterns | 16% |



Q: Now we would like to ask you some questions about the issues our nation is facing today. How much of a priority do you think each of the following issues should be to our elected officials?

The US Should...



Q: Which of the following governmental actions do you believe would be effective in helping the U.S. economy?
Please select all that apply.

Economic Messages

% Agree

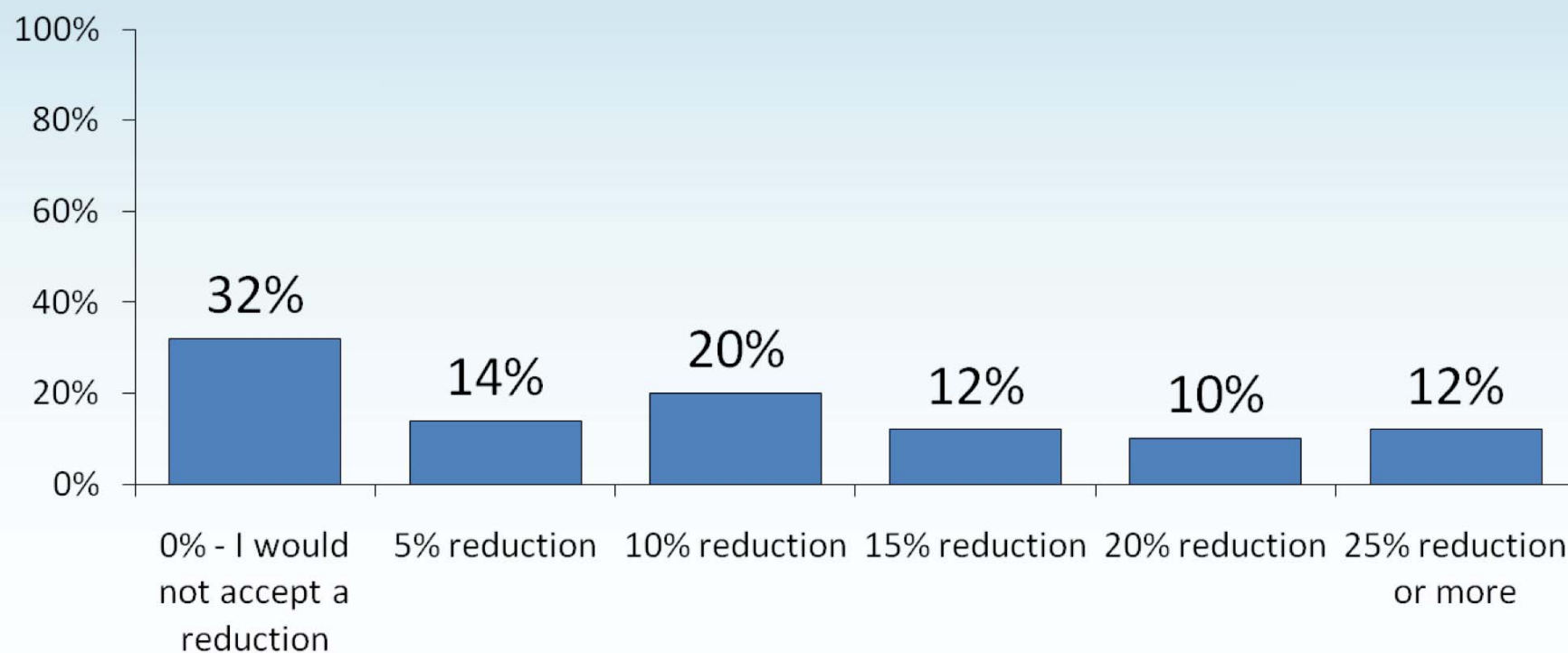
- 84%** Our country is too dependent on oil. We need to change that.
- 82%** Most Americans spend more than 50% of their household expenses on housing and transportation costs. That is too much.
- 82%** Rebuilding our economy and creating new jobs is the most important issue of our generation.
- 75%** Infrastructure spending on roads, trains, and buses create jobs and help the economy get stronger.
- 66%** We need to rethink the way we develop housing and transportation in this region. The way we have been doing it isn't working for most people.
- 58%** I believe that economic growth and environmental quality are interconnected goals. We can't have one without the other.
- 58%** Housing and transportation are in the infrastructure category that makes up 35% of the US economic base. We can't fix our economy unless we fix our housing and transportation problems first.

Findings about Interest in Sustainable Communities

Findings About Interest for Walkable Communities

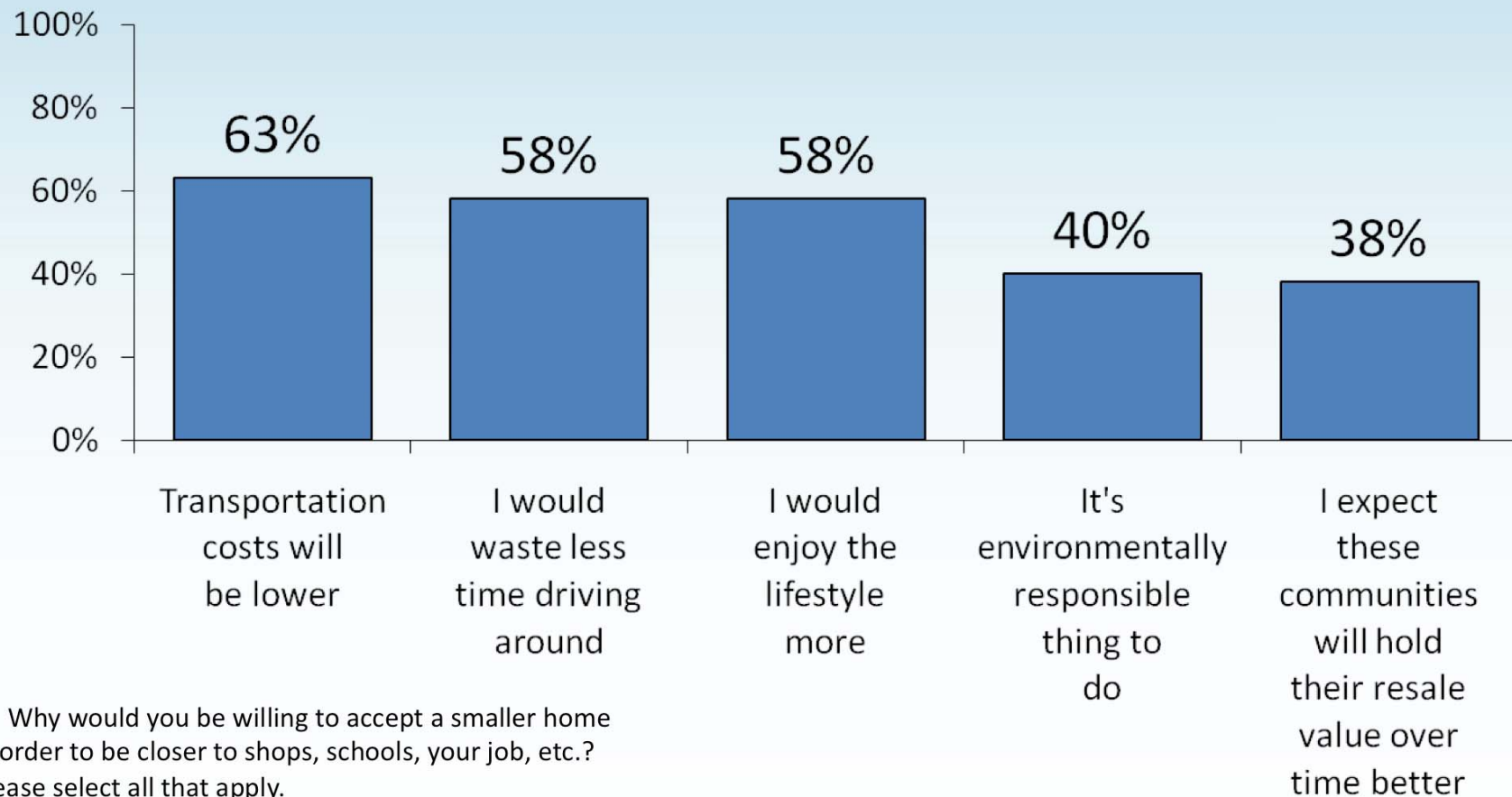
- Interest in walkability has dramatically increased as a home buying factor since the last time most Americans bought a house. 58% now say it factors in, compared to 20% who said it did in a significant way when they bought their current house.
- 68% of Americans say they would accept a reduction of at least 5% in square footage if it mean their new house was more walkable to shops and meals.
- The most important reasons given for accepting this trade off is that it would save transportation costs, decrease their time driving around and be more enjoyable.

Reduction in square footage accepted if future house has places within walking distance



Q: Still assuming you were going to move in the near future, how much of a reduction in the square footage of the residence would you be willing to accept if the home had places within walking distance where you could eat a meal or buy basic goods?

Reasons to Accept a Smaller Home



Q: Why would you be willing to accept a smaller home in order to be closer to shops, schools, your job, etc.? Please select all that apply.

Transportation Messages

%

Agree

- 75%** Infrastructure spending on roads, trains, and buses create jobs and help the economy get stronger.
- 68%** The federal government should stop focusing only on car-oriented systems, and start balancing the funding more toward public transportation.
- 66%** We need to rethink the way we develop housing and transportation in this region. The way we have been doing it isn't working for most people.
- 64%** Bikeways, sidewalks, and trails are as important as any other kinds of transportation routes.
- 45%** I would prefer to live in a lively town center or downtown area if it was safer and more affordable than it is now.
- 34%** Having a car is too expensive and too much trouble. I want to live where I don't need one as much.

Environmental Messages

% Agree

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 78% | I want my home to be as energy efficient and as “green” as possible. |
| 58% | I believe that economic growth and environmental quality are interconnected goals. We can’t have one without the other. |
| 57% | Climate change and global warming are getting worse and worse. We need to do something to reverse it. |

Messages That Do Best Across All Political Preferences

% Agree

- 84% I want the federal government to coordinate activities and funding between agencies more effectively.
- 82% Most Americans spend more than 50% of their household expenses on housing and transportation costs. That is too much.
- 82% Rebuilding our economy and creating new jobs is the most important issue of our generation.

Messages that had Fractured Opinion Across Political Preferences

% Agree

70% The federal government needs to stay out of the real estate market.

68% The federal government should stop focusing only on car-oriented systems, and start balancing the funding more toward public transportation.

65% Distressed areas of our country should receive more resources than areas that have not been hurt as badly by crises and longstanding poverty.

58% I believe that economic growth and environmental quality are interconnected goals. We can't have one without the other.

57% Climate change and global warming are getting worse and worse. We need to do something to reverse it.

Communicating about Sustainable Communities



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When communicating about sustainable communities...

- ✓ ALWAYS define sustainable communities, smart growth or livable communities.
- ✓ Never use the terms *smart growth*, *livable* or *sustainable* without a clear definition of the benefits.
- ✓ Frame Sustainable Communities in economic and job creation terms. This will vastly increase their relevance over the next decade.

Recommended Talking Points for Discussing Sustainable Communities

- Rebuilding the economy is the most important issue for our generation.
- Making our communities more sustainable means generating more jobs, lowering housing and transportation costs and using our limited public funds more wisely.

A sustainable community is:

- An urban, suburban or rural community that has more housing and transportation choices, is closer to jobs, shops or schools, is more energy independent and helps protect clean air and water.
- There is no one size fits all “generic example” or photo because each community has its own unique economic base, culture and natural resources to work with.
- Regions all over the country have their own ideas for sustainable communities and are clamoring to jump start their economy by attracting private sector investment through effective planning.

Recommended Talking Points for Discussing Sustainable Communities, cont.

- Do not frame sustainable communities solely in environmental, green or quality of life terms and never use climate change the primary frame.
- Climate change is a significant outcome of sustainable communities strategy but not the best communication vehicle .
- Do not over emphasize the role of the federal government. Talk about the private sector role and “jumpstarting” private investment or job creation.
- Government officials should not be the sole messengers and instead should be focusing on teaming with private sector players who can credibly carry an economic and job creation framing.
- Our tone needs to be positive, collaborative and goal oriented.
- We need to call on and inspire regional business leaders, innovators and entrepreneurs to work with us to create sustainable economic momentum.

What the Opposition Will Say – and How We Counter it

Rational Opposition

Costs too much

Controlling our Lifestyle

Intruding on our decisions

Will focus on transportation

What We Say

We are making the economy stronger than ever

Providing more choices

Meeting demand

Focus on the economy

Tea Party Opposition

United Nations Agenda 21

Communism

Hobbit homes in crowded cities

What We Say

Demand is increasing/ Regions asking for SCs

There's more than one American Dream now

Demographics driving demand for more choices

Learn More...

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