

City of Lake Oswego City Facilities Survey February 2011



Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall INC. | Opinion Research and Consultation

Prepared By:
DHM Research
Prepared For:
City of Lake Oswego

February 7, 2011

To: City of Lake Oswego
From: Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall, Inc. (DHM Research)
Re: Lake Oswego City Facilities Survey

1. INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall, Inc. (DHM Research) conducted a telephone survey of voters in the city of Lake Oswego to assess their support for two proposals related to city facilities.

Research Methodology: Between January 15 and 19, 2011, DHM Research conducted a telephone survey of 300 voters in the city of Lake Oswego. This is a sufficient sample size to assess voters' opinions generally and to review findings by multiple subgroups, including gender, age, and political party.

Voters were contacted using a list of registered voters. This list included both land line and cell phone numbers. In gathering responses, a variety of quality control measures were employed, including questionnaire pre-testing and validation. Quotas were set by age, gender, zip code, and political party based on the total population of voters living in the city for a representative sample.

Statement of Limitations: Any sampling of opinions or attitudes is subject to a margin of error, which represents the difference between a sample of a given population and the total population (here, voters in the city of Lake Oswego). For a sample size of 300, if voters answered a particular question in the proportion of 90% one way and 10% the other, the margin of error would be +/- 3.4%. If they answered the question 50% each way, the margin of error would be +/- 5.6%.¹

DHM Research: Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall, Inc. has been providing opinion research and consultation throughout Oregon and the rest of the Pacific Northwest for over three decades. The firm is non-partisan and independent and specializes in research projects to support community planning and public policy making. www.dhmresearch.com

¹ The reason for the difference lies in the fact that when response categories are relatively even in size, each is numerically smaller and thus slightly less able-on a statistical basis- to approximate the larger population. These plus-minus error margins represent differences between the sample and total population at a confidence interval, or probability, calculated to be 95%. This means that there is a 95% probability that the sample taken for this study would fall within the stated margins of error if compared with the results achieved from surveying the entire population.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overall, voters feel positively about the direction of the city.

- **58%** of voters said that things in the city are headed in the right direction; however 30% think things are off on the wrong track and 11% are uncertain.
- Democrats and younger voters tend to be most positive about the city's direction.

A majority of voters think something should be done to improve the safety of facilities and to utilize the West End Building.

- **55%** agree that something needs to be done to improve the safety of facilities and to make use of the West End Building, whether it is doing some improvements for police, 911 emergency dispatch, and the West End Building (33%) or passing a bond to relocate the police station, 911 emergency dispatch, and courts to an earthquake-safe facility and renovate and enlarge the West End Building for a Community Center (22%).
- **77%** agree police and 911 emergency dispatchers should be located in a building that is earthquake protected.
- **68%** agree that the city would have strict financial accountability for any facility project, including citizen oversight and independent audits of how the money is spent.
- **55%** agree that the city should pay off debt on the West End Building because it will save taxpayer funds on the interest payments.
- **53%** agree that the proposals tested to improve the police, 911 emergency dispatch, and the West End Building would help the economy and provide construction jobs.

However, at this time, voters are not willing to finance these improvements, with reasons linked to their concern about the broader economic climate and funding other city services.

- **Just under 4 in 10 support** a bond to relocate and rebuild police, 911 emergency dispatch, and the court building and renovate the existing West End Building with \$42 million in general obligation bonds (37%), or to rebuild and locate these public safety services as well as build a new community and recreation center in the West End Building with \$82 million in general obligation bonds (34%).
- **83%** agree that projects like these are often more expensive than expected and could cost taxpayers more money in the long run.
- **72%** agree that these are difficult economic times and it is not the time to ask voters for money.
- **70%** agree that there are more important priorities than renovating and constructing new buildings.
- **55% disagree** that even though the West End Building property could only be sold for much less than what it was purchased for, and to pay off the loan would require a reduction in city services, it's time to cut our losses and sell the property.

Voters want City Hall to remain downtown.

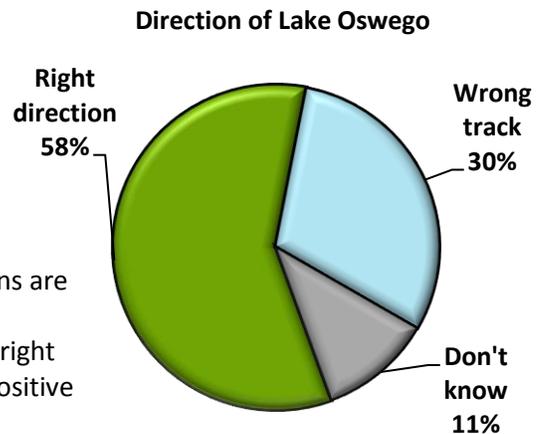
- **62%** want City Hall to remain downtown instead of being relocated to the West End Building site.

3. KEY FINDINGS

3.1 General Attitudes Towards Lake Oswego

Voters are moderately positive about the general direction of the Lake Oswego community, with 58% answering that things are on the right track compared to 30% who believe things are headed in the wrong direction. Eleven percent (11%) of voters said they didn't know.

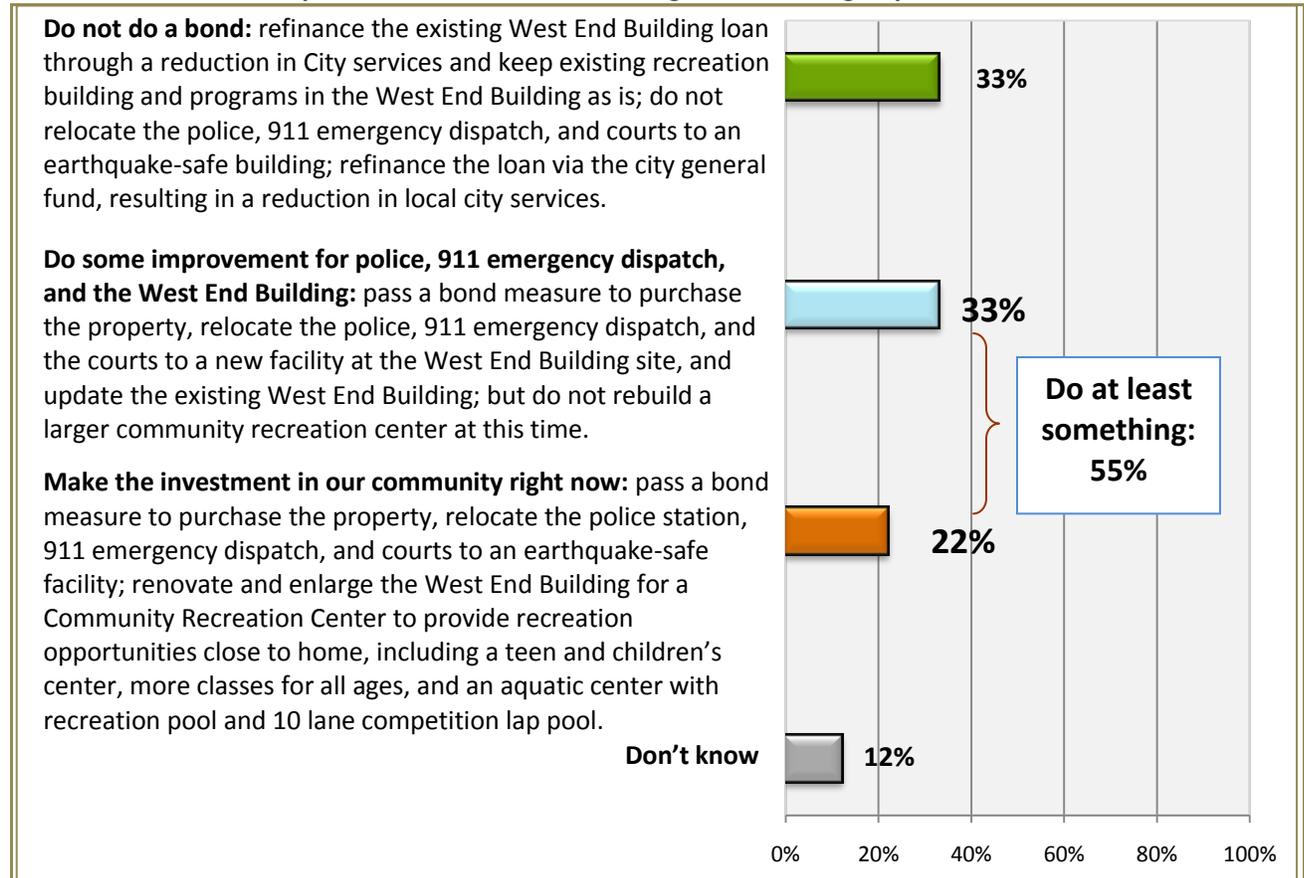
Demographic Differences: The starkest differences in opinions are between political parties, with fewer Republicans (50%) and Independents (42%) indicating that the community is on the right track than Democrats (74%). Younger voters are also more positive about the community's direction.



3.2 Summary Bond Preference Choice

Voters were read three options for the use of West End Building property and financing the improvements, and asked which came closer to their point of view.

Best Option for the West End Building and Financing Improvements



When no dollar amount is attached to the proposals, 55% of voters agree that at least something needs to be done to improve the safety of facilities and make use of the West End Building, whether it is doing some improvements for police, 911 emergency dispatch, and the West End Building (33%) or passing a bond to relocate the police station, 911 emergency dispatch, and courts to an earthquake-safe facility and renovate and enlarge the West End Building for a Community Center (22%). However, one-third said that there should be no bond and the West End Building loan should be refinanced through a reduction in city services.

Demographic Differences: Approximately six in ten voters living in 97035, ages 18 to 34 and 35 to 54, and Democrats conceptually agree that some improvements need to be made to the building. On the other hand, there are subgroups who staunchly believe there should be no bond including Republicans (47%) and Independents (44%) (in comparison to 15% of Democrats.)

3.3 Favorability Towards Facility Improvement Bond Proposals: First Test & Retest

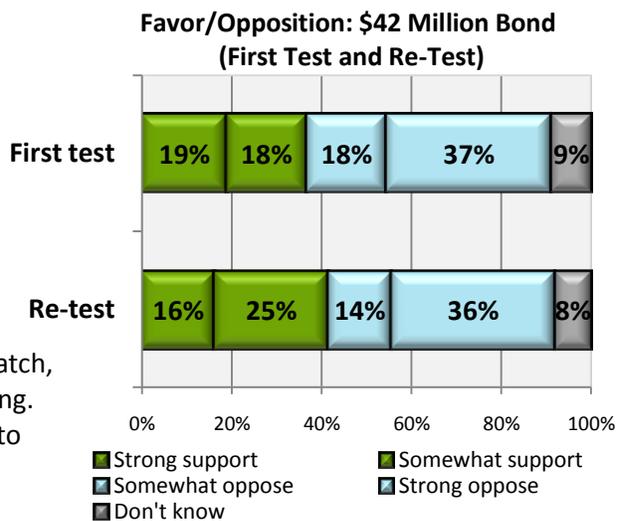
Voters assessed two bond proposals. The first proposal involved the issuing of **\$42 million in general obligation bonds to fund the relocation and rebuilding of a building for the police, 911 emergency dispatch, and court; and renovating the existing West End Building.**

The second proposal involved issuing **\$82 million in general obligation bonds to relocate and rebuild the police, 911 emergency dispatch, and court building; and rebuild the existing West End building to house a full community and recreation center.**

After each proposal, an additional question probed for support after detailing the annual cost to average homeowners. Respondents were also asked to re-assess their support for both proposals again at the end of the survey.

Proposal 1: Relocating and rebuilding police, 911 emergency dispatch, and court building; and renovating the existing West End Building with \$42 million in general obligation bonds.

Voters generally oppose the \$42 million bond proposal to relocate the police, 911 emergency dispatch, and court services and renovate the West End building. There is a slight increase in total support (from 37% to 41%) when retested at the end of the survey.

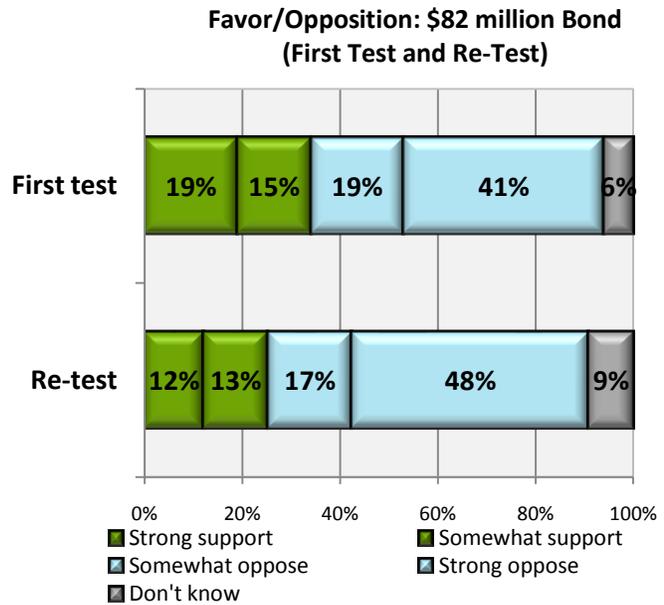


Demographic Differences: Total levels of support (“strong” and “somewhat” combined) are higher among women, Democrats, and voters in the 97035 zip code. There is also a trend for younger voters to have slightly higher levels of support.

Of note is that one-half of registered Democrat voters support this proposal (52%). “Strong” support is highest among, Democrats (30%), voters ages 18-34 (31%), voters in 97035 zip code (26%). “Strong” opposition is highest among Republicans (48%), Independents (48%), and men (45%).

Proposal 2: Relocating and rebuilding police, 911 emergency dispatch, and court building; and rebuilding the existing West End Building for a full community and recreation center, by issuing \$82 million in general obligation bonds.

Voters show less support for the \$82 million bond proposal, and opposition is slightly higher upon re-testing at the end of the survey (from 60% to 65%).



Demographic Differences: The levels of “strong” support are nearly identical to that seen for the \$42 million bond among Democrats (30%), 18-34 year-olds (33%), and voters in 97035 zip code (26%). This result suggests a stable core of support within these groups.

As was the case previously, close to one-half of Republicans (56%), Independents (49%), and voters in 97034 zip code (47%) have strong opposition to this bond proposal.

3.3 Open-Ended Reasons for Favorability/Opposition Towards the Bond Proposals

Voters were asked open-ended why they support or oppose each bond measure.

Reasons for Support of the Bond Proposals

| Reasons for support | \$42 million N=123 | \$82 million N=69 |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Good idea/improves the quality of life--general | 31% | 47% |
| Reasonable amount | 28% | 5% |
| Improvement to police/emergency services | 20% | 7% |
| Items are needed/positive investment—general | 17% | 20% |
| Offers a safer location for these services/facilities | 12% | 4% |
| Economic conditions do not permit for the expense | 8% | 12% |
| Support recreational investments | 6% | 24% |
| Benefits the needs of children | 4% | 11% |
| Utilizes pre-existing locations | 4% | 5% |
| Need more information | 4% | 6% |
| None/Nothing | 7% | 4% |
| Don't know | 1% | 0% |

Open-Ended Reasons to Support

Voters who support the **\$42 million** bond measure cited how it can **improve the quality of life in the city** or the **improvements it would make to city services**, including police and emergency services (20%) and offers safer location for services (12%). It should be noted that 28% said the amount is reasonable, however 8% also said the economic conditions do not permit the expense.

Supporters of the **\$82 million** bond measure were much more likely to cite how it would improve the quality of life in the city than supporters of the \$42 million (47% vs. 31%), and that it would support recreational investments (24% vs. 6%) and benefit children (11% vs. 4%).

Reasons for Opposition of the Bond Proposals

| Reasons for opposition | \$42 million N=155 | \$82 million N=211 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Too expensive/poor economic conditions | 45% | 57% |
| Wasteful government spending/budgeting/planning | 26% | 22% |
| Opposition to the holding of the West End property | 18% | 13% |
| Taxes are already too high | 17% | 11% |
| Items are not needed/unnecessary expenditures | 15% | 28% |
| Need to prioritize essential services/groups | 8% | 12% |
| Bad idea/opposed to the measure—general | 7% | 5% |
| Need more information | 5% | 3% |
| None/Nothing | 5% | 7% |
| Don't know | 0% | 0% |

Open-Ended Reasons to Oppose

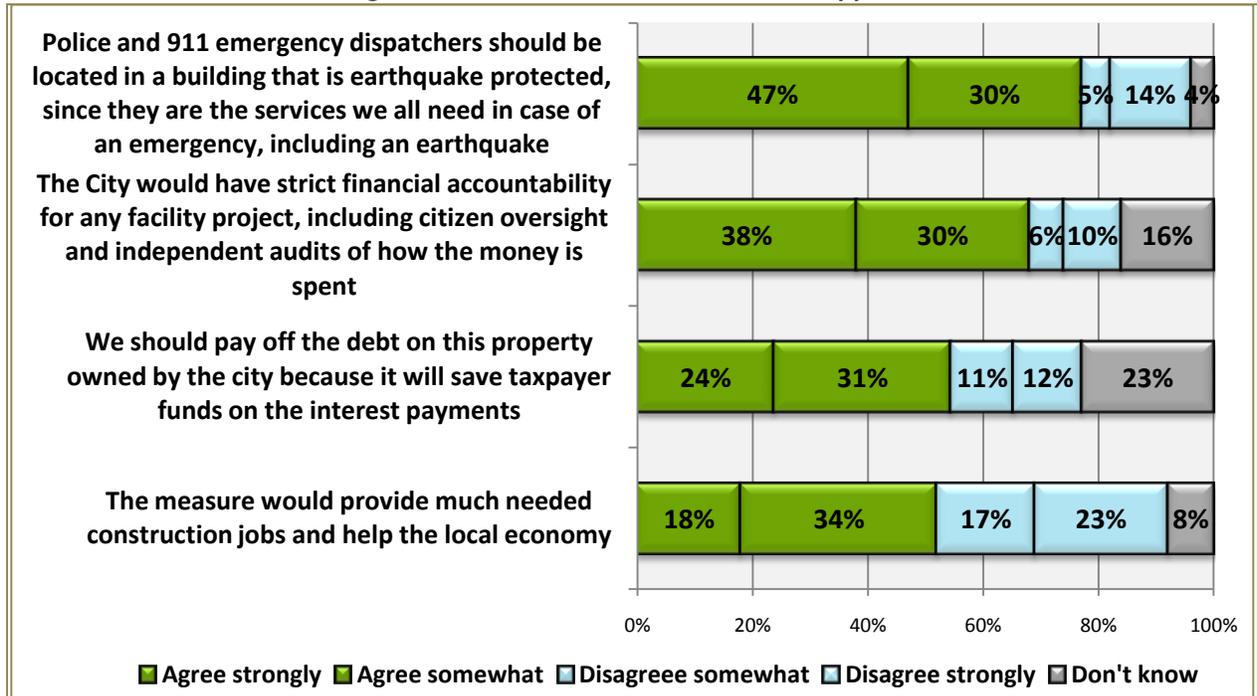
Rational for opposition to both bond measures is similar, and centers on **economic concerns**. Voters feel that they are too expensive for the broader economic conditions, with those opposing the \$82 million bond more likely to say this than those opposing the \$42 million bond (57% vs. 45%). They are also concerned about taxes, believe that other services take priority, and think that this is wasteful government spending.

3.5 Statements About Bond Proposals

Voters were asked to indicate their level of agreement with different statements about the bond proposals. While voters agree with many statements about the need to update facilities and to refinance the West End Building, they also clearly show concern about the broader economic climate and how to fund these projects within budget.

Reasons to Support the Bond Proposals

Agreement Levels with Statements in Support



Strong majorities of voters agree with two statements about facility placement and renovation. At the top, 77% agree that **police and 911 emergency dispatchers should be located in a building that is earthquake protected.**

Demographic Differences: Democrats (87%), Independents (81%), and voters aged 35 to 54 (86%) are especially likely to agree that emergency services should be located in an earthquake protected building.

Just under seven in ten (68%) agree that the city would have **strict financial accountability for any facility project, including citizen oversight and independent audits of how the money is spent**, with findings similar by subgroups.

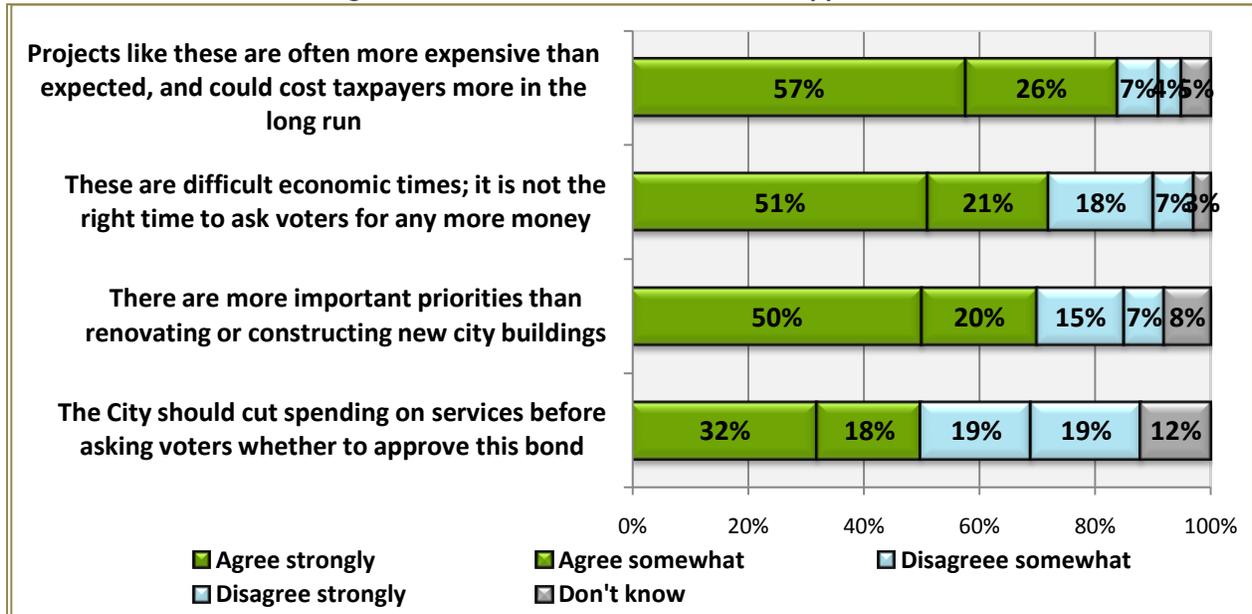
Next, approximately one-half (55%) of voters agree that the **city should pay off debt on this property because it will save taxpayer funds on the interest payments**, however 23% answered “don’t know.” Findings are similar by demographic groups.

One-half (53%) of voters also agree that the **measures will help the economy and provide construction jobs.**

Demographic Differences: Democrats (68%) are more likely than Republicans (36%) or Independents (45%) to agree that the measures will help the economy and provide constructions jobs. Similarly, voters in 97035 zip code are more likely than voters in 97034 to agree about possible economic benefits of the bond (60% vs. 45%).

Reasons to Oppose the Bond Proposals at This Time

Agreement Levels with Statements in Opposition



As seen in open-ended reasons to oppose the measures, voters are clearly concerned about the economy and amount of money involved in these projects. Eight in ten (83%) of voters agree that **projects like these are often more expensive than expected and could cost taxpayers more money in the long run.**

Demographic Differences: Eight in ten in each demographic groups agree that projects like there are often more expensive than expected, with strong agreement being highest among Independents (91%) and Republicans (84%).

Over seven in ten (72%) think **that these are difficult economic times; it is not a good time ask voters for money.**

Demographic Differences: More than two-thirds of all subgroups agree that it is not a good time to ask voters for money, with Republicans (87%), those living in the 97034 zip code (79%), Independents (76%), and voters 55 and older (74%) most likely to feel this way.

Seven in ten (70%) agree that there are **more important priorities than renovating or constructing new city buildings.**

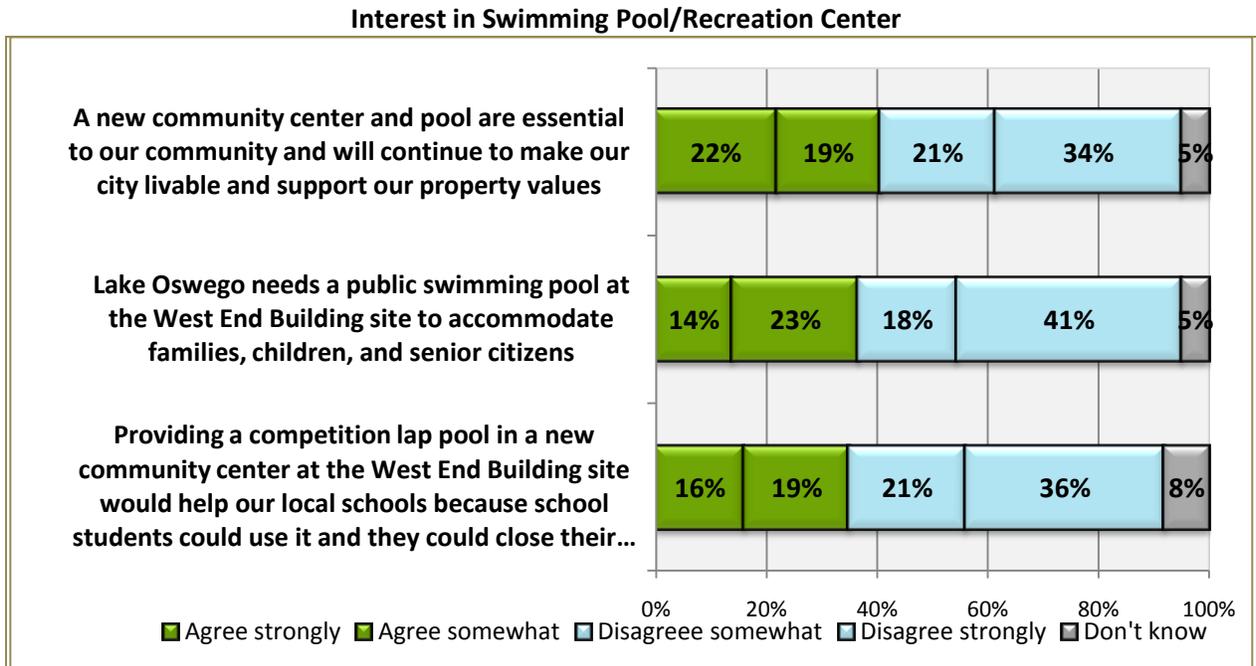
Demographic Differences: Majorities across subgroups also agree that the city has more important priorities than constructing or renovating city buildings, especially Republicans (77%) and Independents (85%). Almost six in ten (57%) of Democrats agree with this statement as well.

A majority (50%) agrees Lake Oswego should **cut spending before asking voters to approve this bond.**

Demographic Differences: Republicans (65%) are most likely to agree that Lake Oswego should cut spending before asking voters to approve this bond, especially when compared to Democrats (41%) and Independents (47%).

3.6 Interest in Swimming Pool/Recreation Center

Between 35% and 40% agree with each statement about the benefits of having a community swimming pool in the West End Building, however the same numbers disagree strongly with these same statements.



Four in ten (40%) agree that **a new community center and pool are essential to our community and will continue to make our city livable and support our property values.**

Demographic Differences: Democrats (55%), voters 35 to 54 (51%) and with children under the age of 18 in the household (52%), and those living in 97035 (48%) are most likely to agree with this statement.

Just over one-third (36%) agree that **Lake Oswego needs a public swimming pool at the West End Building site to accommodate families, children and, senior citizens.**

Demographic Differences: Again, Democrats (52%), those ages 35 to 54 (48%), and those with children under age 18 in the household (47%) are most likely to agree.

Almost the same number (35%) agree that **providing a competition lap pool in a new community center at the West End Building site would help our local schools because students could use it and they could close their school pool and save funds.**

Demographic Differences: Democrats (53%), those ages 18 to 34 (56%) and 35 to 54 (43%), and voters in 97035 (43%) are most likely to agree.

3.7 Relocation of Lake Oswego City Hall

Finally, voters were asked whether relocation of Lake Oswego City Hall should be included in moving the police, 911 emergency dispatch, and courts to a relocated facility on the West End Building site.

| Inclusion of Lake Oswego City Hall in Relocation | |
|--|-------|
| Response Category | N=300 |
| Relocated facility on West End Building site | 24% |
| Remain in downtown | 62% |
| Don't know | 14% |

A clear majority (62%) think **City Hall should remain downtown**. This preference was stronger among voters aged 18 to 34 (85%), Republicans (69%), and voters opposed to either bond (77% - 82%). One-quarter (24%) think it should be relocated to the West End Building site.