

SCOTTSDALE VOTER SURVEY ON ATTITUDES AND PREFERENCES
CONCERNING THE MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Prepared for
The City of Scottsdale
and
Nelson, Robb, DuVal, and DeMenna

Prepared by
Henry C. Kenski and Margaret C. Kenski
Arizona Opinion and Political Research
Tucson, Arizona

July 27, 1994

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This summary contains the overall responses to a survey of City of Scottsdale likely and new voters on the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. Data were collected on June 27-29, 1994 by DataCall, Inc. of Phoenix and then analyzed by Arizona Opinion and Political Research of Tucson. Figures depicting these findings are found at the end of this summary.

Major Community Issue or Problem

The first question asked the respondents what they believed are the major issues or problems facing the community. The interviewees spontaneously cited thirty-six specific concerns, which are grouped into four general areas. These areas were mentioned by likely voters at the following incidence:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| ► Social Concerns | 82.3% |
| ► Transportation | 59.0% |
| ► Economic Concerns | 6.5% |
| ► Political/Personal Items | 3.3% |
| ► No Problems | 5.0% |

The five specific problems mentioned most frequently included:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| ► Crime/Guns/Drugs | 41.8% |
| ► Traffic | 21.8% |
| ► Growth | 14.3% |
| ► Pima Freeway Completion | 12.3% |
| ► More Roads, Freeways | 8.0% |

Scottsdale City voters demonstrate a focus on local problems that has not changed significantly in the past 9 months, although the percentage incidence of specific items has varied. There is a complex of issues of interest to Scottsdale voters that are connected by the overriding process of growth and the concerns it engenders---crime, traffic, etc.

Another early set of questions in the interview asked likely voters about the importance of preserving the mountains and deserts in Scottsdale, their knowledge of the McDowell Mountains location, the importance of preserving those mountains, and their view on the likelihood of development of the McDowells if a preserve is not created.

There is a high level of consensus on the goal of preserving mountains and desert in Scottsdale. The likely voters responded with the following incidence on general questions about the importance of preservation:

Importance of Preserving Scottsdale's Mountains and Deserts

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| ► Very Important | 67% |
| ► Somewhat Important | 26% |
| ► Not Very Important | 8% |

Knowledge of Location of the McDowell Mountains

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| ► Yes, Know Location | 97% |
| ► No, Don't Know | 3% |
| ► Not Sure | 1% |

Importance of Preserving the McDowell Mountains

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| ► Very Important | 67% |
| ► Somewhat Important | 24% |
| ► Not Very Important | 6% |
| ► Don't Know | 3% |

Likelihood of McDowell Development without a Preserve

- | | |
|-------------------|-----|
| ► Very Likely | 89% |
| ► Somewhat Likely | 7% |
| ► Not Very Likely | 3% |
| ► Don't Know | 1% |

The very fast pace of growth in Scottsdale has raised the salience of growth issues, including such concerns as preserving natural areas before they are all developed.

Trial Ballot

A preliminary trial ballot on the single issue of creating a McDowell Mountain Preserve drew a landslide response in favor of such a proposition. The following trial ballot results were obtained:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| ► In favor of a McDowell preserve | 76% |
| ► Against a preserve | 7% |
| ► Undecided | 16% |

A followup open-ended question asked why the voters were for or against the preserve. The interviewers elicited from those in favor only two salient responses:

- A need to preserve the mountains and deserts for the future 43%
- A need to stop the developers before everything is built up 28%.

No salient responses were given by those who opposed the creation of the preserve.

Another question relative to the McDowell Mountain area, asked voters to assume that a preserve had been created and then to state whether public access should be limited to maximize preservation of natural areas or should be significantly more open to enhance public enjoyment of the area. The overall responses were:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| ▶ Limited access to a preserve chosen by | 39% |
| ▶ Significant public access preferred by | 51% |
| ▶ Other alternatives were mentioned by | 5% |
| ▶ Undecided were | 6%. |

Importance of Preserve Features

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of seven different types of amenities that might be included in a McDowell Mountains preserve. A clear hierarchy of value is assessed by the voters as follows:

<u>Amenities Suggested for the Preserve</u>	<u>% Saying Very Important</u>
▶ Wildlife and native plant conservation areas	77
▶ Archaeological and historical sites	61
▶ Hiking, mountain biking, and nature trails	47
▶ Areas and activities for the disabled	39
▶ Ramadas and picnic areas	32
▶ Desert museums and education centers	30
▶ Equestrian trails	27.

Likely Frequency of Family Visits to Preserve

Another question tested whether or not voters endorsed creation of a preserve from a conceptual perspective or as something they would actually use. Respondents were asked how often their family would go to the preserve if it were created. The expected frequency of use is:

- | | |
|------------------|------|
| ▶ Very Often | 14% |
| ▶ Sometimes | 52% |
| ▶ Not Very Often | 34%. |

Revenue Options

A crucial issue in any proposed public project is willingness of voters to support it with financing

as well as conceptual approval. Six potential revenue-raising options were placed before the voters with support for the options ranging from 19% to 60%; they are rank-ordered below from high to low in percentage level of support:

<u>Financing Option</u>	<u>% Favoring</u>
► Ban on private development.	60
► A permanent 1/10¢ increase in the City sales tax.	53
► A ½¢ increase in the City sales tax for 10 years.	51
► A ¼¢ increase in the City sales tax for 20 years.	48
► Permitting higher density for developers who donate land.	27
► A \$142 annual increase in property tax on average home for 20 years.	19

Other than the ban on development, no option can be said to have safe voter support at the present time.

We crosstabulated the voter response to the first trial ballot with the financing options and found that even among supporters of the preserve, there is highly variable support for the options. Specifically,

Among Those Who Favor the Preserve

- 23% favor the property tax increase,
- 59% favor the ½¢ sales tax,
- 56% favor the ¼¢ sales tax,
- 60% favor the 1/10¢ sales tax,
- 22% favor higher density in exchange for donated land, and
- 66% favor the ban on development in the area.

Statements in Support and Opposition to the Preserve

Voters were asked to register their agreement or disagreement with a series of statements that alternately support or oppose public creation of the McDowell Mountain preserve. The thrust of public perceptions is toward agreement with the statements that support the preserve, and disagreement with those that oppose the preserve.

The responses to the statements are summarized below, having divided the statements into supportive and opposing arguments and rank-ordering the responses within each set.

<u>Supportive Statements</u>	<u>% Agreement</u>	<u>% Disagreement</u>
We owe it to our children and future generations to protect the McDowells.	87	10
We have a moral obligation to protect the environment.	83	12

<u>Supportive Statements</u>	<u>% Agreement</u>	<u>% Disagreement</u>
Without the Preserve, developers will destroy the mountains.	81	15
We need the Preserve to retain an important part of Scottsdale's identity.	78	20
The Preserve would provide a great recreational benefit to Scottsdale residents.	67	25
Preserving the McDowells will help the tourism industry.	52	38
Preserve will help protect property values.	51	35

Opposing Statements

The Preserve would be used by all Valley residents. It's unfair for only Scottsdale residents to pay for it.	54	39
Developers have ripped off Scottsdale enough. They should pay for the Preserve.	48	38
We have more important priorities than the Preserve.	42	48
Taxpayers already pay too much. We can't afford the Preserve.	32	61
The McDowell Preserve would be a playground for the rich.	15	83

The strongest arguments in favor of the McDowell Preserve are noneconomic in nature. The strongest arguments against it tap fairness and antideveloper sentiment, not cost or class resentment.

Push Statements

Four push questions were next asked to assess whether certain facts made the likely voters more likely or less likely to support higher taxes for the preserve. The statements generally incline the voters toward support of Preserve creation, with one exception, but at variable rates which are summarized below.

<u>Push Statement</u>	<u>% More Likely</u>	<u>% Less Likely</u>
Developers will donate land and help pay.	63	17
Unless tax proposal is passed, mountains will be developed.	57	20
47% of sales tax is paid by tourists.	50	16
Preserve will reduce money available for other programs.	27	47

A point to be made in assessing the strength of the Preserve's support is the question reminding voters that a vote for the Preserve tax proposal would make less money available for other programs specified

traffic and law enforcement. As crime and traffic problems were mentioned by very high numbers on the initial open-ended question, it is significant that this statement moved only 47% away from support.

Final Trial Ballots

The final three substantive questions in the survey concerned three ballot propositions. The first two tested support for two separate City sales tax increases on the same ballot, one for the McDowell Mountain Preserve and the second for completion of the Pima Freeway. The third ballot proposition tested support for a single tax increase with revenues evenly divided between the Preserve and Freeway projects.

The responses on the sales tax proposals can be summarized as follows:

Vote on the McDowell Preserve Tax with Freeway Tax on the Ballot

- ▶ For 65%
- ▶ Against 26%
- ▶ Undecided 10%

Vote on the Pima Freeway Tax with Preserve Tax on the Ballot

- ▶ For 56%
- ▶ Against 33%
- ▶ Undecided 11%

Vote on Single Tax Increase with Revenue for Preserve and Freeway

- ▶ For 56%
- ▶ Against 33%
- ▶ Undecided 12%

The Pima Freeway proposal at this point in time is less popular than the McDowell Preserve proposal although both garner majority support.

This second trial ballot on the McDowell Preserve followed an extended presentation to the voters of arguments and push statements for and against the project. We crosstabulated the initial trial ballot results (Question 6) against the three ballot propositions above and found that there was considerable fluidity in support although a majority maintained their pro-Preserve stance as indicated below.

Among Those Who Favored the Preserve on the 1st Trial Ballot

- ▶ 74% favor the preserve sales tax when the Freeway tax is on the ballot (57% of all voters),
- ▶ 58% favor the Freeway sales tax when the Preserve tax is on the ballot (44% of all voters),

- ▶ 62% favor the single sales tax with revenue divided between the Preserve and Freeway (48% of all voters).

When the final three propositions are crosstabulated, one against the other, the following pattern is produced:

- ▶ 61% of those favoring the Preserve sales tax also favor the Freeway sales tax (40% of all voters),
- ▶ 71% of those favoring the Preserve sales tax also favor the combined sales tax (46% of all voters),
- ▶ 71% of those favoring the Freeway sales tax also favor the Preserve sales tax (40% of all voters),
- ▶ 76% of those favoring the Freeway tax also favor the combined sales tax (43% of all voters).

The Preserve sales tax has more pulling power than the Freeway tax.

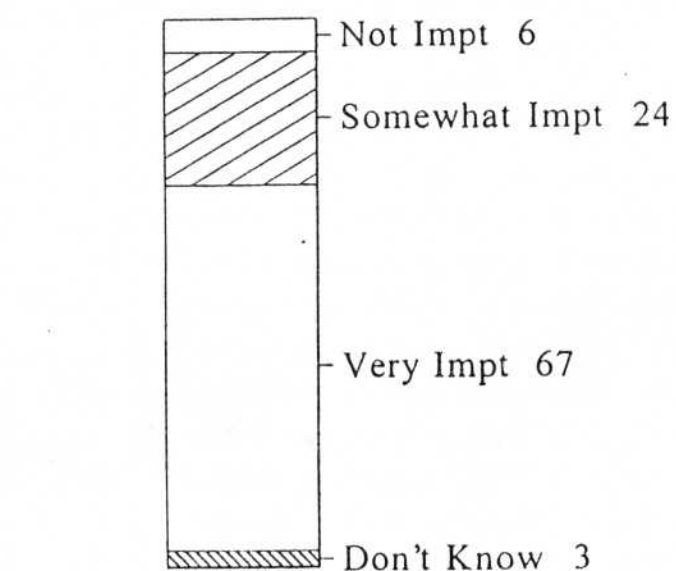
CONCLUSIONS

From the foregoing response data from 400 City of Scottsdale voters, we draw the conclusions which are listed below.

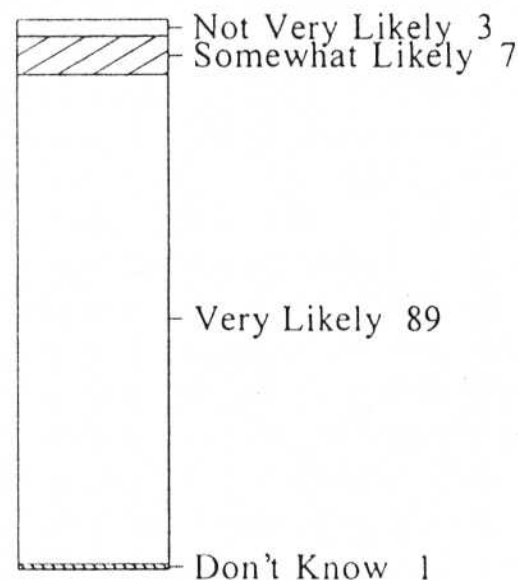
1. Scottsdale in the 1990s is experiencing the costs as well as the benefits of economic and population growth. This is reflected in the open-ended question data on major issues facing the community. Some 82.3% mentioned a social concern and 59% a transportation concern. Ballot propositions which appear to endanger the City's ability to address these needs may be more vulnerable to attack from opponents.
2. At the level of symbolism and principle, Scottsdale voters are environmentally oriented and concerned about quality of life. They clearly support the concept of a McDowell Preserve, particularly females and voters under 60.
3. The attitudinal data is also congruent with the data on visiting the Preserve, with projected utilization relatively higher for females and younger voters and lower for older voters and retirees.
4. The data in this survey underscore that considerable slippage from the support for the Preserve concept occurs when the discussion moves to financing options. The 76% support for the Preserve on the first trial ballot drops to 53% for the permanent 1/10th¢ City sales tax, to 51% for the 1/2¢ sales tax for 10 years, and 48% for the 1/4¢ sales tax for 20 years. Successful ballot campaigns normally start with at least 60% support and no proposal currently achieves that level.

5. Voter opposition is particularly strong to the \$142 annual increase in the property tax on an average home for 20 years.
6. Voters clearly believe that developers should make a fair contribution to the community as 60% favor a ban on development of private property in the Preserve area, and only 27% are willing to compensate developers for donations to the Preserve with higher density allowances on property they can develop.
7. There is a definitive hierarchy of amenities preferred by voters with only two, wildlife and plant conservation areas and archaeological preserves, endorsed by majorities.
8. The most persuasive arguments for the Preserve include concerns for future generations, obligations to save the environment, loss of an important element in Scottsdale's identity, and recreational benefits. Economic arguments in favor of the Preserve appear to have less impact.
9. The most persuasive arguments against the Preserve include the equity argument over City financing of a Preserve that will be enjoyed by all Valley residents, the argument that there are more important priorities, and the argument that developers should pay for it as they have contributed to the problem.
10. The final trial ballots demonstrate that the Preserve could be funded under a variety of scenarios. With the Pima Freeway on the same ballot, but separately funded, the Preserve draws 65% and the Freeway 56%. If there is a single tax for both projects, they secure 56% of the vote.
11. Overall there is minimal group differentiation on the final trial ballots despite gender, income, and age differences on select aspects of creating the Preserve. Factors that have very limited impact on the entire Preserve issue are party affiliation, length of residence, and location of residence north or south of Indian Bend Road.

Figure 1. General Perceptions about the McDowell Preserve Area



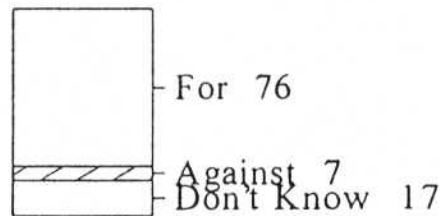
Importance of Creating
McDowell Preserve



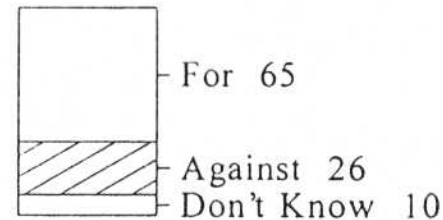
Likelihood of
McDowell Development

Figures are percentages of Scottsdale likely voters.

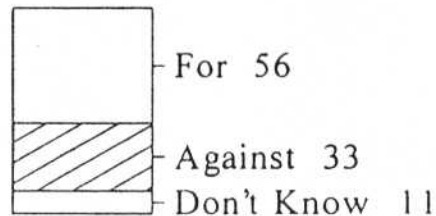
Figure 2. Trial Ballots



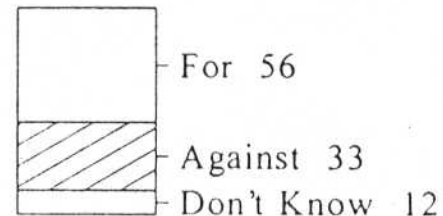
1st Trial Ballot
on Preserve



2nd Trial Ballot on Preserve
with Pima FWY on Ballot



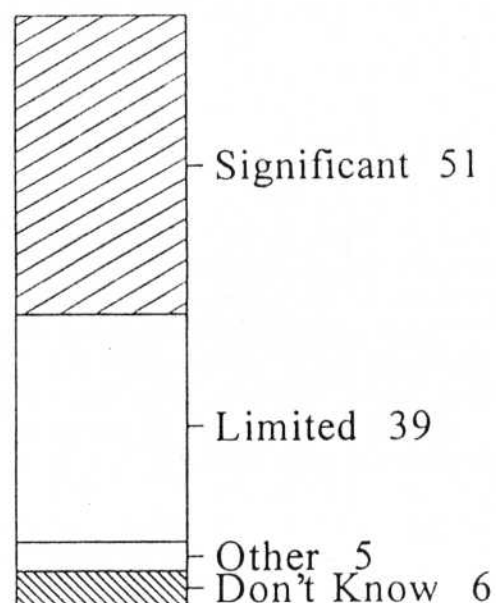
Trial Ballot on Pima FWY
with Preserve on Ballot



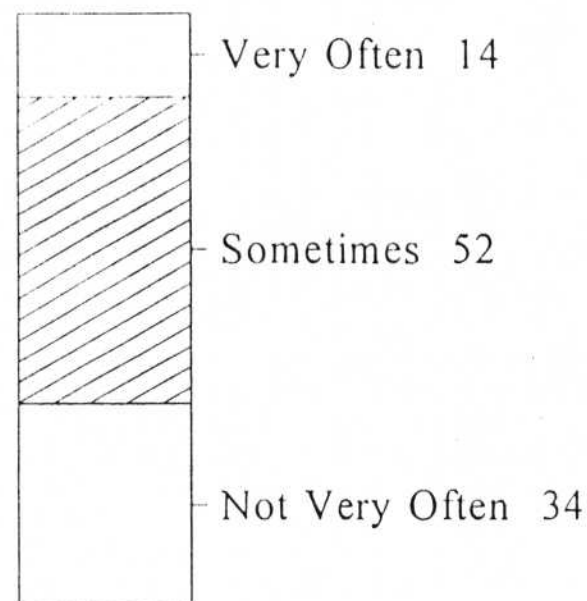
Trial Ballot on Sales Tax
for Preserve and Pima FWY

Figures are percentages of Scottsdale likely voters.

Figure 3. Preserve Access and Likely Utilization



Preferred Amount of
Public Access to Preserve

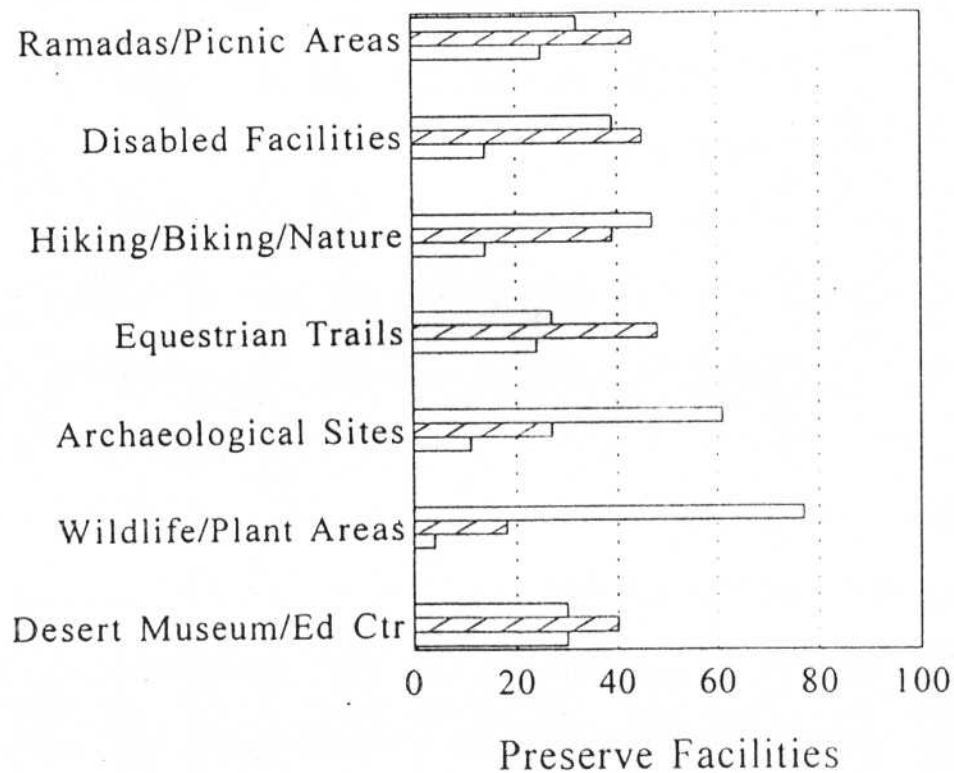


Projected Frequency of
Family Usage of Preserve

Figures are percentages of Scottsdale likely voters.

Figure 4. Importance of Select Features for the McDowell Preserve

Level of Importance



Levels of Importance

Very Impt

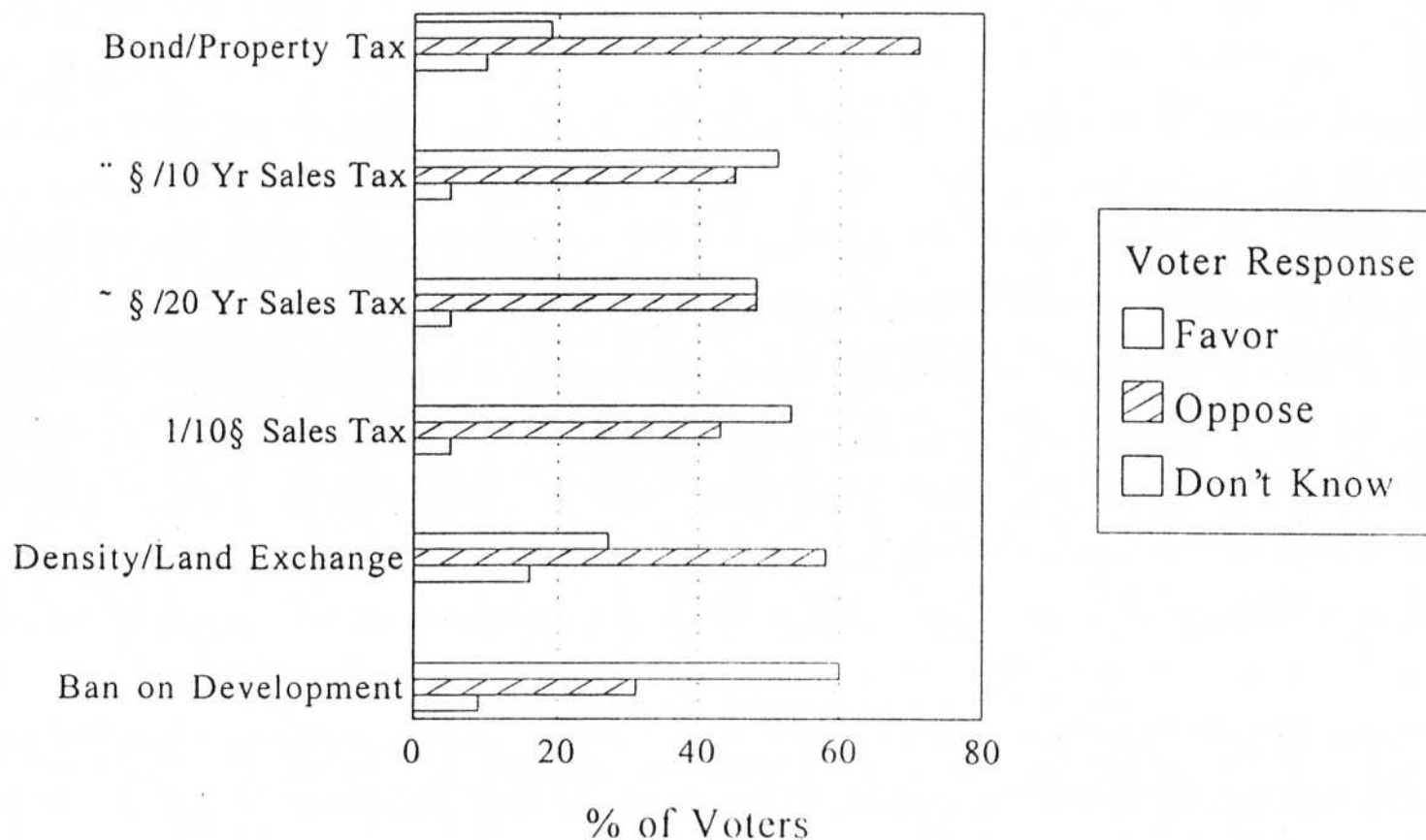
Somewhat Impt

Not Very Impt

Figures are percentages of Scottsdale likely voters.

Figure 5. Support-Opposition: Preserve Financing Options

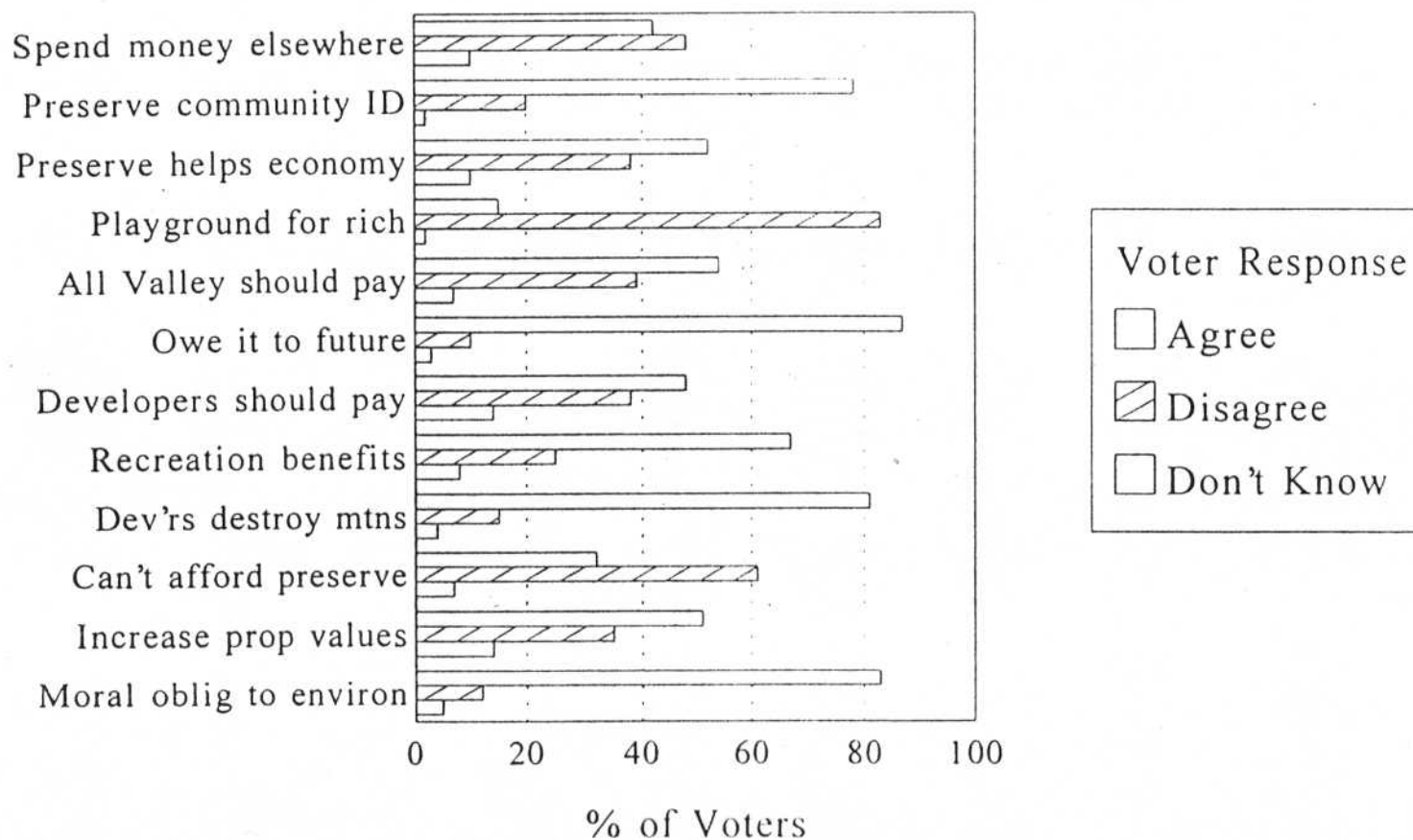
Financing Options



Figures are percentages of Scottsdale likely voters.

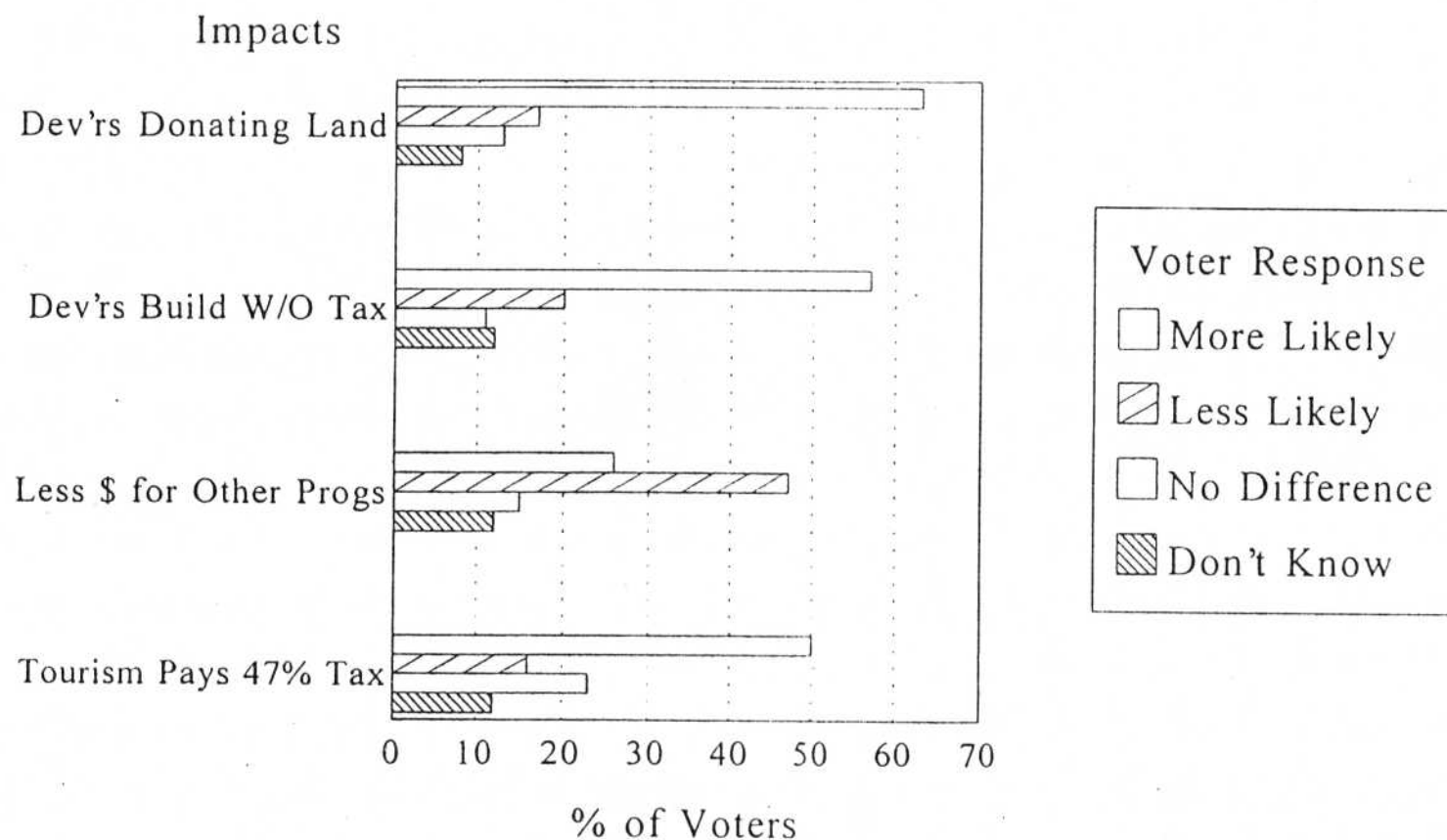
Figure 6. Agreement-Disagreement: Statements about the Preserve

Statements on Preserve



Figures are percentages of Scottsdale likely voters.

Figure 7. Impact of Statements about the Preserve on Support for Taxes to Pay for It



Figures are percentages of Scottsdale likely voters.

