



Community Priorities for Phase II of Fairgrounds Redevelopment

Project Preferences and Community Values Research
Qualitative and Quantitative Results

March 3, 2020





Project Partners





Phase II

rodeo grandstands, greenspace, livestock & equestrian center, and ice rinks



Project Goals

Discover

Discover the overall favorability of Fairgrounds redevelopment

Learn

Learn community values and preferences for specific aspects of phase II

Listen

Listen and refine the scope of phase II based on community values and preferences

Report

Report findings of a feasible path for implementing phase II





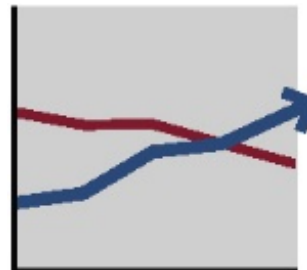
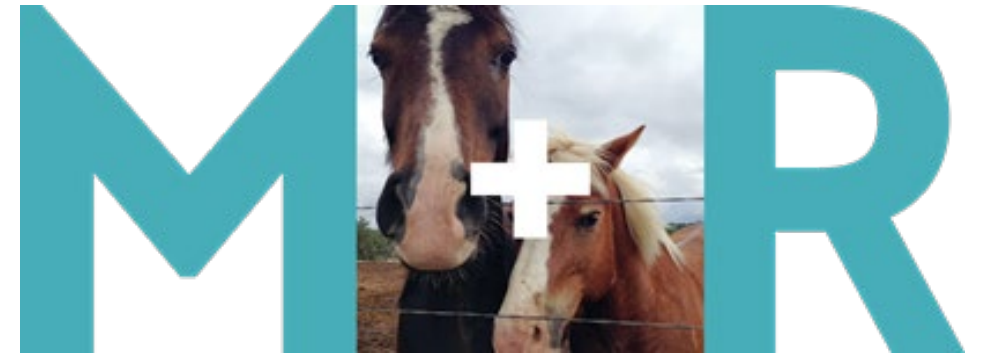
Takeaways

- The Fairgrounds is headed in the right direction.
- Fairgrounds redevelopment preserves our heritage and brings our community together with agricultural education and recreational opportunity for our kids. It is also important to implement safety improvements.
- The community prefers an inclusive approach to redeveloping the Fairgrounds.
- Based on community sensitivity to tax increases, all Fairgrounds user groups made significant sacrifices.
- There is a feasible public-private approach to implement an **inclusive but scaled back** phase II of Fairgrounds redevelopment.

Research Team

Other Missoula Projects

- Missoula Water Litigation
- Missoula County Parks and Trails Bond
- Missoula County Public Schools Facility Bonds
- Mountain Line Mill Levy



**HARSTAD STRATEGIC
RESEARCH, INC.**

C.B. Pearson and Derek Goldman

Methodology

A set of one-on-one interviews with key community leaders and Fairgrounds stakeholders, including ice sports enthusiasts, youth agricultural educators and leaders, neighbors, business leaders, local elected officials and others. (N=36)

Scientifically valid telephone surveys, which were conducted by Harstad Strategic Research. Harstad is a well-respected research firm, with a long history of conducting community surveys in Missoula on important issues of the day. (N=1,450)





Key Findings Between Both Approaches

- The Missoula County Fairgrounds are viewed positively and are an important asset for Missoula County and the community.
- The public has preferences regarding the various components of the Fairgrounds redevelopment plan, but generally prefers for phase II to include all components.
- The research shows some level of tax sensitivity with respect to investing public dollars in the Fairgrounds.
- The most effective messages when communicating about the need to invest in Fairgrounds redevelopment reflect new educational opportunities for our kids, agriculture, more ice, and increased safety.

Community and Stakeholder Interviews

36 leaders and stakeholders conducted summer/early fall 2019.

Multiple informal, in-depth, open-ended conversations with Emily Brock, Fairgrounds Director; Clarence Wildeboer, Glacier Ice Rink and 4-H; Campbell Barrett, County Extension Office, Derek Kellenberg, board member, Glacier Ice Rink; Laura Henning, Glacier Ice Rink Director.

Amber Sherrill, Missoula City Council
Blake Niccolanzzo, Bonfire Branding
Bonnie Buckingham, Missoula Community Food and Agriculture Coalition
Bryan von Lossberg, Missoula City Council
Dale Clouse, Livestock Committee
Dave Dittloff, Montana Conservation Voters
Dave Westfall, Lewis & Clark Neighborhood
Donna Gaulker, Missoula Parks & Rec.
Doug Standley, MBIA
Dwight Easton, Missoula Organization of Realtors
Eric Gabster, MCFAC/Midtown
Erin Miller, Forward MT
Genevieve Marsh, Garden City Harvest
Gwen Jones, Missoula City Council
Hatton Littman, MCPS
Heather Harp, Missoula City Council
Jean Zozel, Garden City Harvest

Jeri Delys, 4H Council
Jerry Marks, Missoula Weed District
Jill Dunn, MRA, Figure skater
Jim Harmon, historian
John Engen, City of Missoula
Jon Turner, 4H Council
Jon Wilkins, retired City Council
Juanita Vero, Missoula County
Julie Merritt, Missoula City Council
Kim Latrelle, Chamber of Commerce
Lee Banville, Missoula Curlers
Melanie Brock, MRA, Brock Consulting
Michael Burks, former Maulers owner
Mike Nugent, Berkshire Hathaway
Nick Checota, Logjam, Glacier Ice Rink
Shane Clouse, Chamber Ag Committee
Stacey Anderson, Missoula City Council
Susan Kohler, Missoula Aging Services
Tom Andres, Future Farmers of America

Interview Findings

- Redevelopment of the Missoula County Fairgrounds **should be a priority** for the County.
- Favorite components of the plan included “connectivity” and green space, closely followed the livestock and equestrian center, and learning center with Butterfly House and Insectarium.
- Funding options—**blend** public and private funds.
- There is recognition among ice sports participants that demand for ice time exceeds the current capacity of Glacier Ice Rink, but interviewees appear to be cost-sensitive when considering a new facility.



What
motivates you
to support the
Fairgrounds?



Missoula County Voter Survey on Fairgrounds Bond Issues

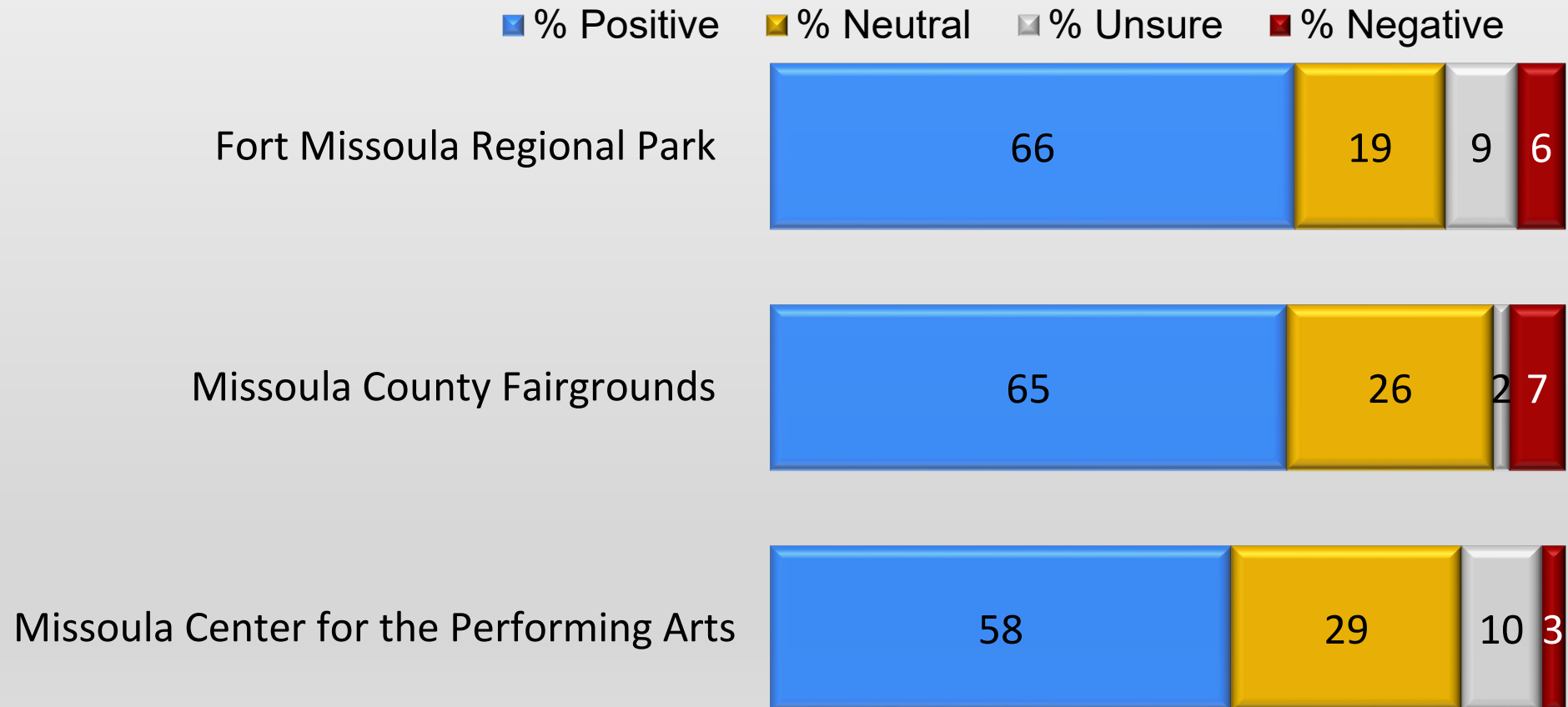
454 Likely November 2020 Voters
January 12-14, 2020

502 Likely November 2020 Voters
July 10 - 14, 2019

502 Likely November 2020 Voters
July 29 - August 4, 2019

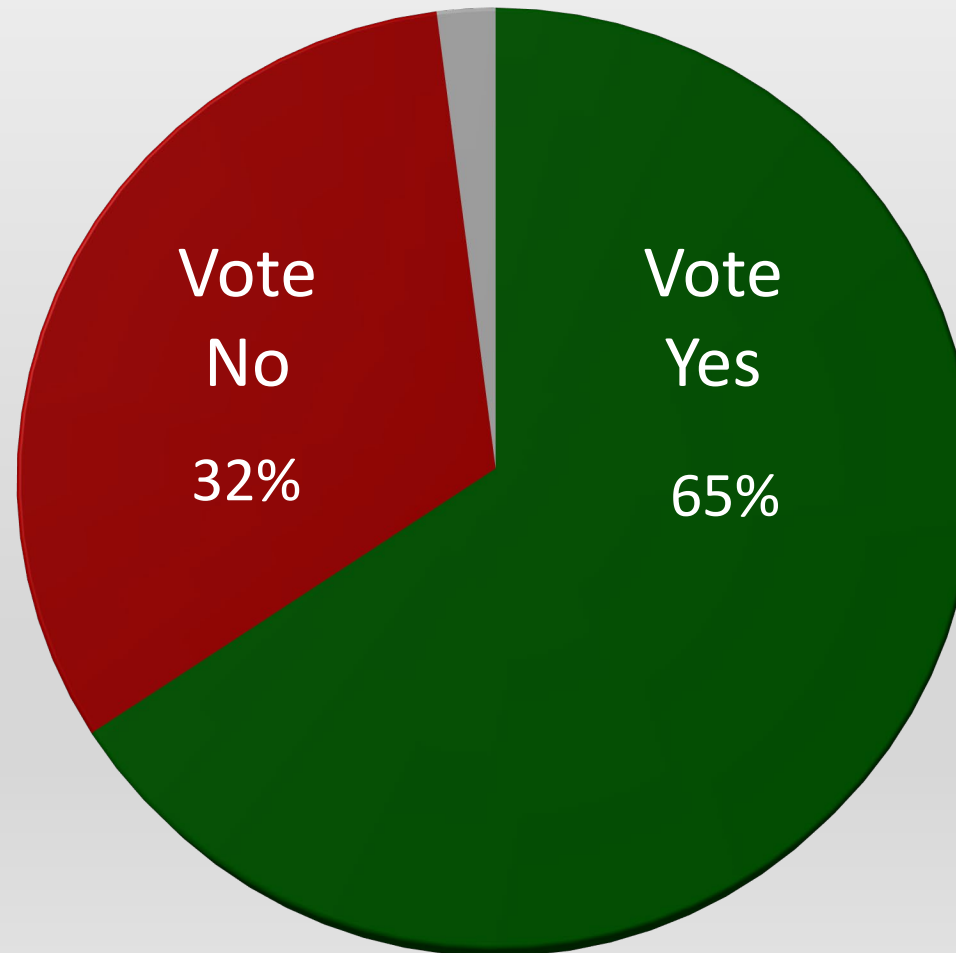
Voters are overwhelmingly positive toward the tested entities in Missoula County

I'm going to read you the names of a few entities in Missoula County. I'd like you to rate your feelings toward each one as either very positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative, or very negative. If you don't know the entity, just say so.



A Fairgrounds bond issue with average home costs in the low \$ double-digits initially elicits support from 2/3rds of the electorate – given three basic deliverables

“Shall the Board be authorized to issue bonds up to \$15 Million for redeveloping the Missoula County Fairgrounds including a new livestock and horse center for youth ad education such as 4-H, 10 acres of green park space including playgrounds.. and new ice rinks for year-round indoor hockey and ice sports. This bond issue would increase property taxes on a \$250,000 home by about \$18 a year.”

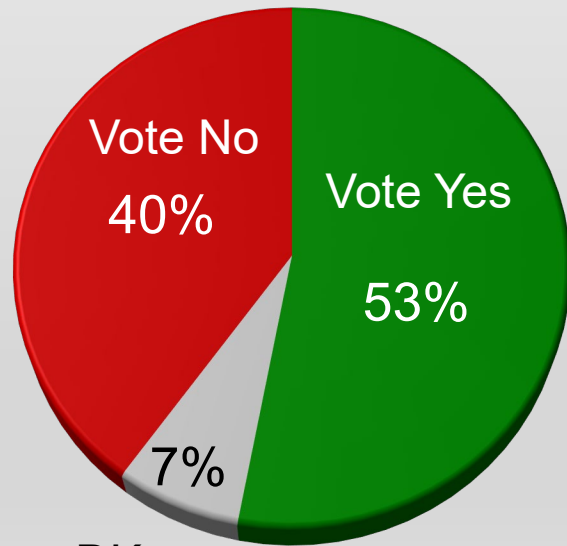


Voters are price sensitive yet value a comprehensive Fairgrounds bond issue

Let me read you a local referendum for a bond issue that may be on the election ballot this November. Please tell me how you would vote on it. If the election were today, how would you vote – definitely vote yes, probably vote yes, probably vote no, or definitely vote no?

July 2019: \$35M

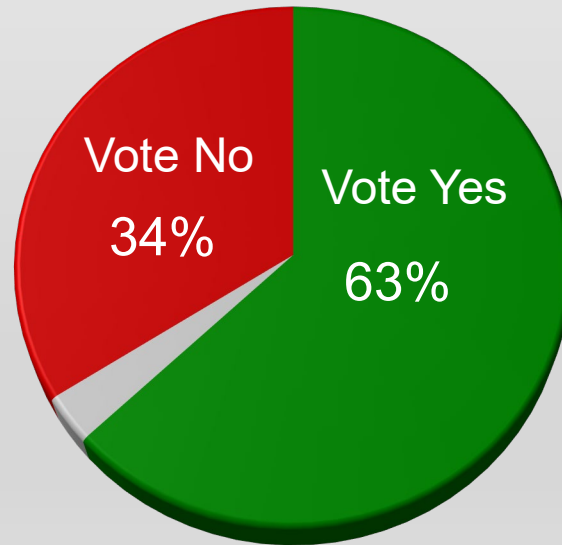
New livestock center,
rodeo arena, green
space & ice rinks



DK

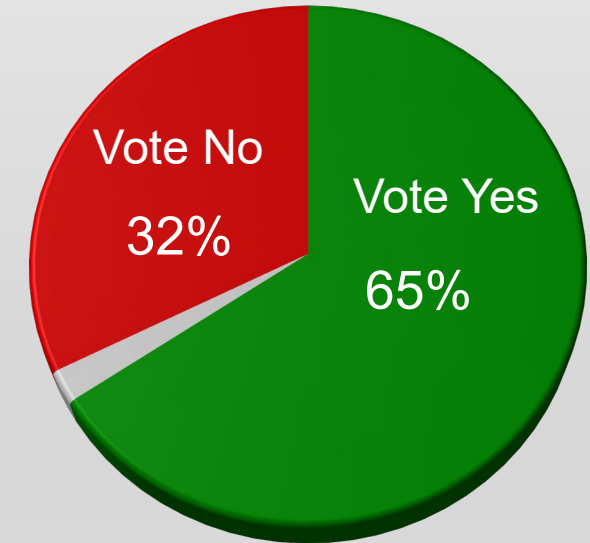
August 2019: \$9M

New livestock center
& 10 acres green space



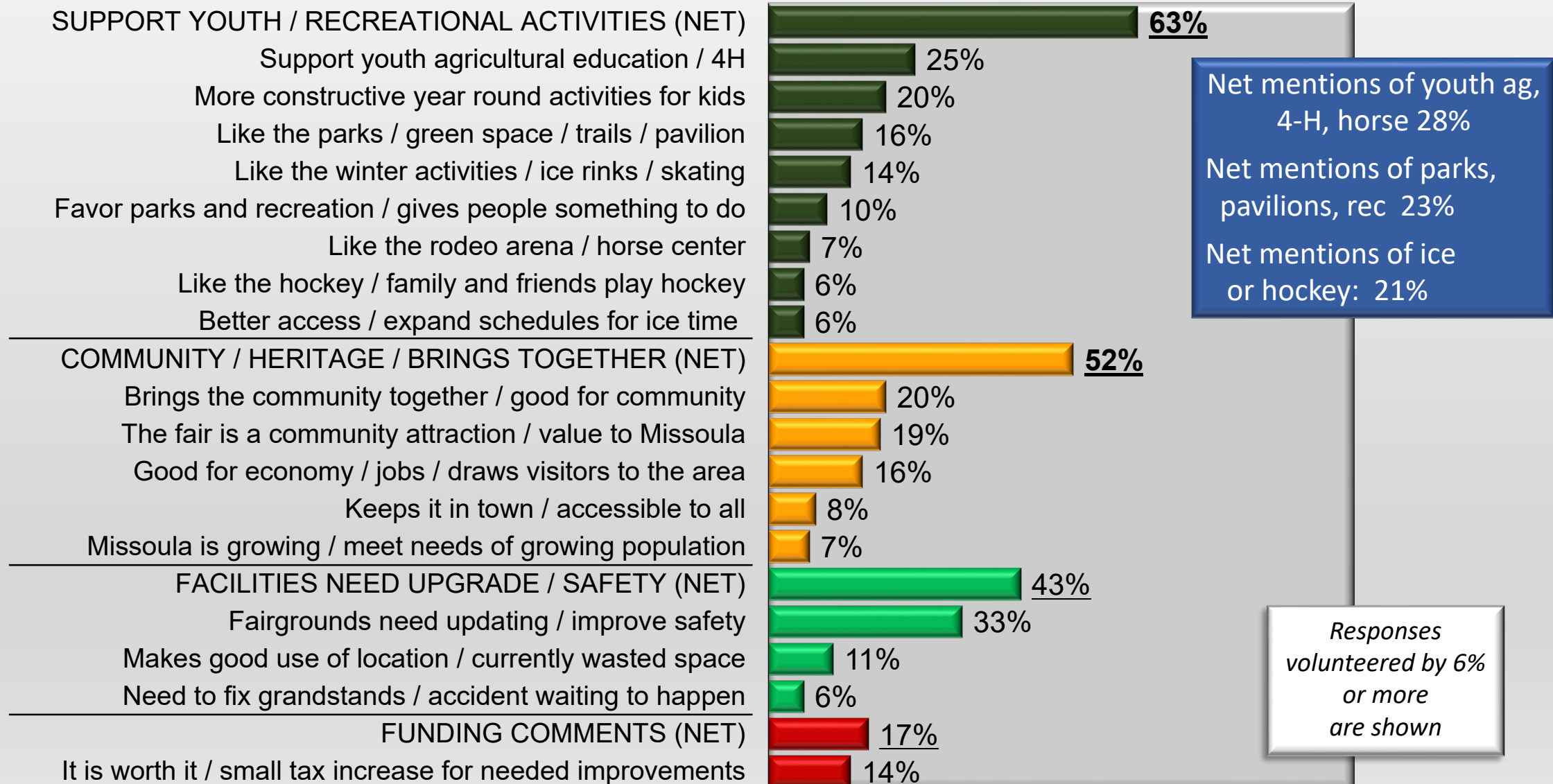
January 2020: \$15M

New livestock center,
green space & ice rinks



Supporters' **volunteered** reasons focus primarily on the benefits of the deliverables and for the community and public safety

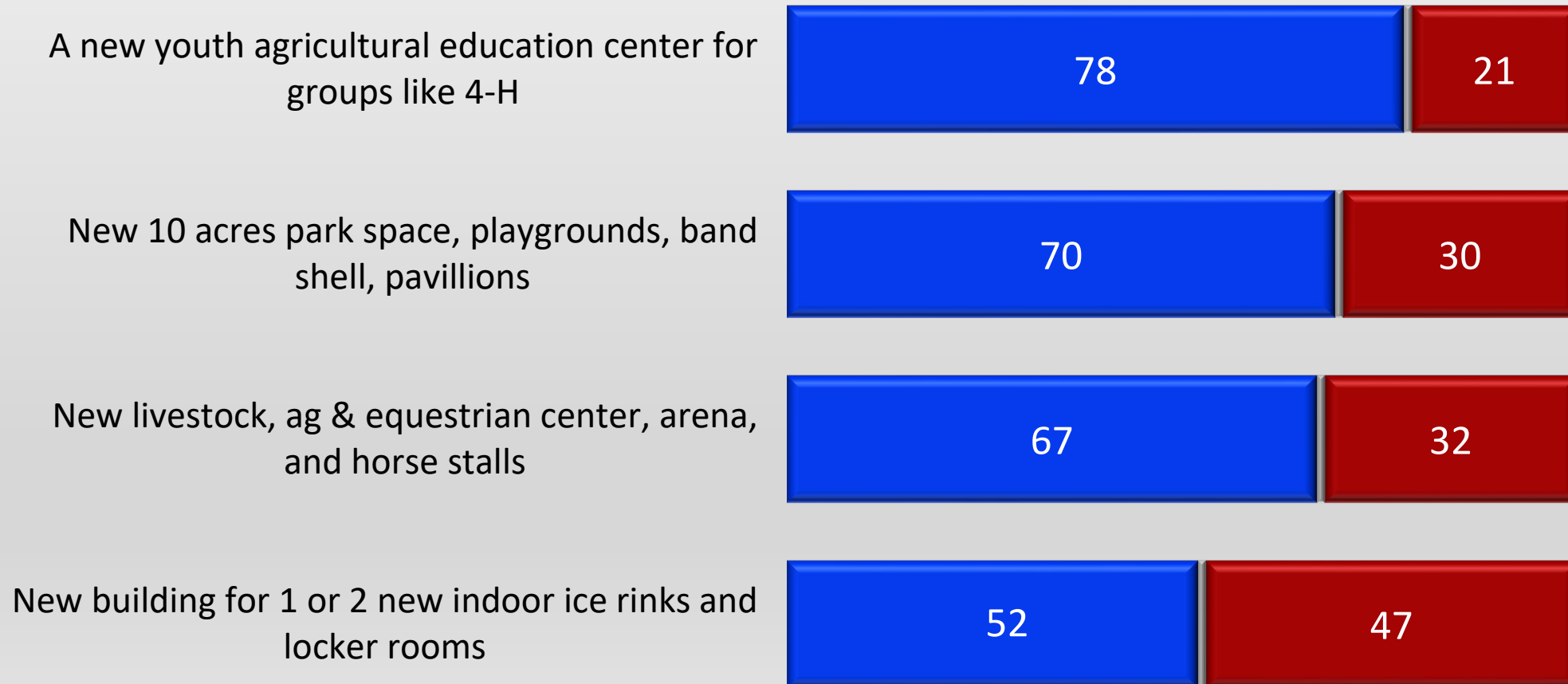
What are some of the reasons you might vote FOR this referendum? [Asked of supporters]



In the July survey, voters clearly prioritized youth ag education, park space, and a new livestock center over other facilities

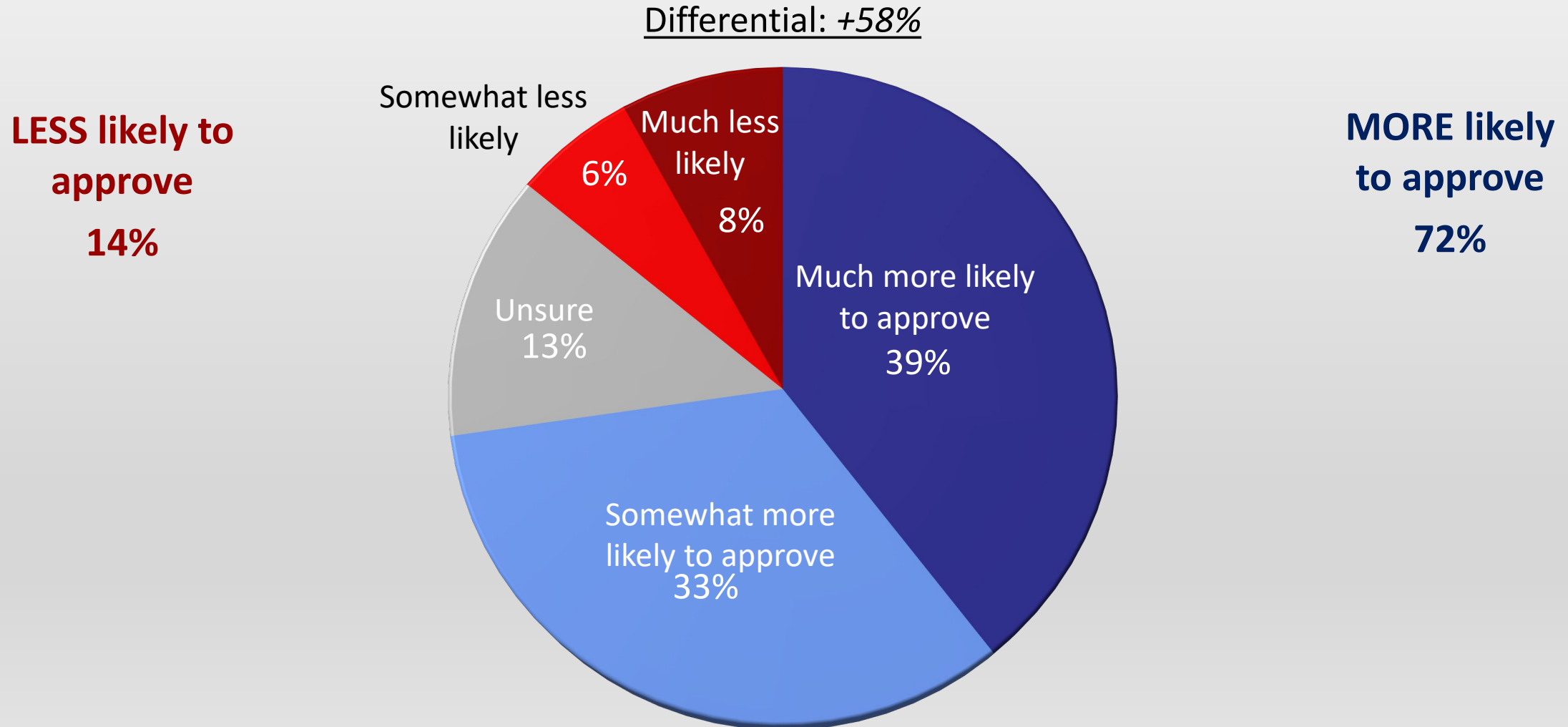
Let me read you some new facilities that could be part of the broader bond issue for the Missoula County Fairgrounds project. For each one, please tell me how important you consider it to be included in this proposed construction project at the fairgrounds – very important, fairly important, just somewhat important, or not that important.

■ % Total Very/Fairly/Somewhat Important ■ % Not Important



Learning explicitly about supplemental private fundraising for the new ice rinks elicits receptivity from a lopsided majority of voters

Suppose the building of the new ice rinks from this bond issue were supplemented with a commitment to raise several million dollars in private fundraising to help cover the full cost of building the ice rinks. Would this additional private fundraising make you MORE likely or LESS likely to vote to approve this bond issue for the new fairgrounds, park space, and ice rinks?



Con Arguments Against the Fairgrounds Bond Issue

Next, I'm going to read you several reasons some people have given to vote AGAINST the proposed bond issue for new livestock and ice rink facilities at the county fairgrounds.

For each one, please tell me how convincing a reason you find it to vote AGAINST this county bond issue – extremely convincing, very convincing, fairly convincing, just somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing.

This is not the right time to raise property taxes. Most families and seniors are hard-pressed to make ends meet as it is. We already pay enough property taxes, and we cannot afford to pay more. **62% ***

The county took away horseracing, which was the heart and soul of the fairgrounds. Without horseracing, the fairgrounds is simply not worth the investment of more tax money. **35% ***

The fairgrounds have been neglected by the county for decades -- in spite of many broken past promises to restore it. At this point, instead the fairgrounds should just be moved out of town – or just torn down altogether. **21% ***

** Extremely / Very / Fairly convincing*

Pro Arguments for the Fairgrounds Bond Issue

Now, let me read you several reasons some people may give to vote FOR this proposed bond issue for new livestock and ice rink facilities at the county fairgrounds. For each one, please tell me how convincing a reason you find it to vote in favor of this county bond issue – extremely convincing, very convincing, fairly convincing, just somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing.

Year-round youth ag & stem type education – This investment will provide for the first time a livestock and horse center to offer year-round youth agricultural education programs like 4-H. **66%***

Ice rinks need adequate locker rooms- The current indoor ice rink & livestock building has inadequate locker rooms. The girls' changing rooms are located outdoors in a temporary trailer, and some of the boys' locker rooms are made of plywood with only space heaters. It doesn't meet building safety guidelines for sports facilities. **60%***

Ensure food & ag sustainability – Investing in a new livestock center for youth agricultural programming ensures that the next generation learns the skills necessary to sustain our local food and agricultural economy into the future. **59%***

Preserve county history and heritage – The fairgrounds have been a vital part of Missoula County for over 100 years and contain many historic buildings. We should invest in preserving our fairgrounds and our connection to our agricultural heritage and traditions. **56%***

Major draw for families – This new livestock center and parkland would be a major fresh draw for our residents. It would include 10 acres of green space including park space, playgrounds, a band shell, picnic pavilions. It would become a much-used attraction for pedestrians, bicyclists, and families in an underserved neighborhood with heavy traffic. **57%***

** Extremely / Very / Fairly convincing*

The values underpinning the Fairgrounds modernization investment

Discussion Triangle for Fairgrounds Redevelopment

