

Date: June 28, 2021

To: Interested Parties

From: Sasha Maliniak and Joe Goode, American Strategies

Re: **Santa Fe Voter Poll: Increased Concerns About Housing Affordability and Homelessness**

Santa Fe voters report increasing concern with the cost of housing and the related issue of homelessness. They also place a high priority on protecting the local environment and natural resources and preserving Santa Fe's cultural heritage. As a result, voters have mixed feelings about residential growth and development in the city. In the upcoming municipal elections, they are looking for candidates who will, amongst other things, better manage growth and work to build more housing that is affordable.

These findings are from a new poll of active voters in Santa Fe conducted by the research firm American Strategies. The poll of 400 voters was conducted from May 20 to May 23. The margin of error associated with the poll results is plus or minus 4.9 percentage points.

Housing affordability and homelessness were the top two issues cited by voters when asked to identify, in their own words, the most pressing priority for the mayor and city council. Just over one-quarter (26 percent) mentioned something about housing costs (up 18-points from an American Strategies poll conducted in 2017) while 13 percent talked about homelessness (up 11-points from 2017).

In a separate exercise, when asked to rate a list of individual priorities for city government and elected officials on a 10-point scale, where 10 is the highest priority, protecting the local environment and natural resources (8.5 mean score, up from 7.9 in 2017) and providing more housing that is affordable (8.1 mean score, up from 7.5 in 2017) were the top two issues. Preserving Santa Fe's cultural heritage through inclusion, diversity and equity tied for third with reducing crime and improving public safety (7.8 mean score for both).

Despite their concern with the cost of housing in Santa Fe, voters express conflicted feelings over residential development. While a plurality (39 percent) feel that the pace of residential growth and development in Santa Fe is about right, 35 percent say residential growth is happening too fast, and 23 percent believe it is happening too slow.

In the upcoming November elections for municipal office, candidates will face an electorate that has some underlying concerns about their quality of life and the performance of local government. While voters are generally pleased with their quality of life – 71 percent rate it as either excellent or good – those who say the local quality of life has gotten worse over the past three years outnumber those who say it has gotten better by 2-to-1 (35 percent to 17 percent).

More troubling for local elected officials is voters' evaluation of the city's direction. While 49 percent think that things in Santa Fe are going in the right direction, 42 percent feel that things have gotten off on the wrong track. Similarly, Mayor Alan Webber attracts lukewarm job performance ratings: 39 percent think he is doing an excellent or good job, 29 percent rate his performance as just fair and 29 percent say he is doing a poor job. Voters also give the city council lackluster reviews, as six-in-ten say the council is doing an only fair (46 percent) or poor job (17 percent). One-third rate the council's performance as excellent or good.

Looking ahead to the November election, candidates for city council and mayor who support job creation, growth management, public safety, and expanded access to affordable housing have the greatest appeal to voters. Voters are much more likely to support city council and mayoral candidates who support small business and job creation (61 percent much more likely), who will manage growth by using limited resources, like water, energy, and land as efficiently as possible (59 percent), who will work to make Santa Fe safe from crime (58 percent), and who will work to build more housing that is affordable (58 percent). While voters want to see more from their city government, they do not support a candidate who will raise taxes to improve city services (28 percent much less likely, 52 percent total less likely).

American Strategies designed and administered this telephone survey conducted by professional interviewers. The survey reached 400 adults, age 18 or older, who indicated they were registered to vote in Santa Fe, New Mexico and voted or were too young to vote, in the November 2020 General election. The survey was conducted from May 20-23, 2021. Seventy-two percent of respondents were reached on wireless phones, four percent on VOIP phones, and twenty-five percent on landlines. Quotas were assigned to reflect the demographic distribution of registered voters in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the data were weighted to ensure an accurate reflection of the population. The sample was drawn from a third-party vendor voter file and based on vote history. The overall margin of error is +/- 4.9%. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies. Percentage totals may not add up precisely due to rounding.