

Strategic Memorandum

TO: Karen Brust
City of Encinitas

FROM: Adam D. Probolsky
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SUBJECT: Encinitas/Focus Group Qualitative Report

DATE: April 29, 2016

Probolsky Research conducted two, 90-minute focus group discussions on behalf of the City of Encinitas, the first on Tuesday, April 19 and the second on Thursday, April 21, 2016, in a private room at the Best Western Encinitas Inn & Suites at Moonlight Beach, located at 85 Encinitas Boulevard, Encinitas. Adam Probolsky moderated both groups, which consisted of a total of twenty-four voters within the City, including 13 women and 11 men.

The main purpose of the focus groups is to help us craft the pending telephone survey. They were immensely helpful to that process. The consulting team may also find that reviewing this document, the transcripts and watching the videos to be helpful towards gaining a unique understanding of the vernacular and tone of community before beginning the creative content creation process for outreach and education materials.

It is important to note that the results of the focus groups are not statistically significant, but rather they are used to inform our subsequent quantitative research (telephone poll now underway). This memorandum provides a synopsis of key findings and actionable information gleaned from both groups.

The full video of the first focus group can be viewed via this unlisted link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_7dhW-SKA4

The full video of the second focus group can be viewed via this unlisted link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hv6meBBAok8>

We have gone to great lengths to transcribe both focus group sessions. Those transcriptions are being sent as separate documents. It is important to note that while we have largely captured all spoken words of the moderator and participants, transcriptions are not 100% accurate.

SYNOPSIS

While there are certainly specific aspects of the Housing Element that were not well received by participants, there is an understanding that housing availability is an issue within the City and that the Housing Element is a realistic approach. Our subsequent telephone research will quantify the scale of voter appetite for the ballot measure itself.

Does Encinitas currently have enough housing for families, workers, seniors, veterans, and others community members in general?

- There is recognition that more housing is needed, especially housing that is affordable. One participant said we don't need housing, "for millionaires."
 - "I grew up here, I've been here since I was three and seen the change in it, and there's enough housing but we need affordable housing for young families to be able to stay."
- Traffic is a theme that resonated with many participants related to new housing and in general.
 - "I think we've got enough housing, the traffic is horrible, so that's why I think we do not need more."



- Some constructive, thoughtful comments were made and echoed by other participants throughout the groups about balancing quality of life and development in the City.
 - “Basically, we want to see any development balanced with the quality of life that people in Encinitas moved here for, and if we overbuild it, I’m afraid that it will change the quality of life in Encinitas.”
- Other comments were made that are less actionable, but nevertheless important to understand.
 - “I don’t want a bunch of lower class, lower cost housing around my neighborhood to bring down my property value.”

Involvement with Prop. A/Recognition of @Home In Encinitas

- No participants were actively involved in the passage of Prop. A. There was limited recognition of @Home In Encinitas.
 - Six out of 24 total participants expressed some level of recognition with @Home In Encinitas.
 - “It has an @ sign, right—@ sign? Yeah, yeah. That caught my eye. I’m a computer guy, so I noticed.”

STATEMENT: New sites for housing and mixed-use development should be targeted into areas that are already developed to add to their vibrancy while preserving single family residential neighborhoods.

- Our conclusion after both groups is that the above statement was either confusing to participants or did not communicate a message that broadly captured the values of the community.

Why Types of Housing Can We Expect?

- Participants were asked to pick their favorite among six unique multi-family house options.
 - Eight chose the Town House
 - Five chose the Carriage House.
 - Four chose the Duplex.
 - Four chose the Mixed-Use.
 - Two chose the Apartments.
 - One participant made a selection that was not offered – single family home.
- When presented with the realities of the need to plan for 1,093 housing units and that there would be limited numbers of duplexes, carriages house and town homes in that mix when compared to the alternatives, most participants accepted this reality.

Some people have suggested that the name “floating zones” can be confusing or may not be exactly descriptive of what they accomplish. How would you better describe them? If it was your job to come up with a name, what would you call them?

- Here are some suggestions that came from the groups:
 - “Hover zones”
 - “Housing enhancement zone”
- There was also some very harsh criticism of the floating zones, including:
 - “It sounds slick. And something’s coming. The shoe’s gonna fall 20 years from now. So there’s a hidden agenda there. It’s a hidden, deceptive Trojan horse. It seems to me a way to avoid public comment—that is its strength. I don’t think it’s a good idea. I think it’s a terrible idea.”
 - “It will defeat your measure.”

Housing Strategies

- We provided a list of eight housing strategies/ways for/of approaching new housing in the City and asked participants to choose the ones that were most important to them.
 - Maintain Community Character
 - “Well, I think if you’re going to build new communities, you want them to blend in to what we already have here...”
 - “I like the words “integrate” and ‘blend’.”

- Consider Infrastructure Conditions.
 - “...you have to address infrastructure, traffic...”

High-level vs. Detailed approach to the ballot measure

- **Nearly three-quarters** (18 out of 24) of participants agreed with a statement which read:
 - Dr. Jones says: “Proposition A is clear, the voters get to vote on land use changes and height changes, and that’s it. The November ballot measure for the housing element should be limited in scope to keep it simple and uncomplicated and leave the decision-making about design details of future projects up to the city planning commission and professional planning staff.” over another statement which offered a much more rigid option and read: Dr. Miller says: “While Proposition A was clear that the voters only had the right to vote on land use and height changes, the spirit of the proposition was to allow the voters a say in every detail of the planning process. The voters should be able to roll up our sleeves and get into the nitty-gritty of every detail of every development project. The November housing element ballot measure should have every last detail in it for voters to vote up or down.”

Probolsky Research specializes in opinion research on behalf of business, government and special interest clients.

