



OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY



TO Interested Parties

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RE: Washington Voter Views on Key Housing Policy Issues

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A bipartisan research team consisting of New Bridge Strategy (R) and FM3 Research (D) recently completed a survey of 613 Washington voters to assess their views of key housing policy issues facing the state.¹ The results show that **majorities of voters favor a wide range of policy changes to make it easier to build the multi-family housing for working people that the state badly needs.** More specifically, 71% support legislation to eliminate single-family zoning in order to allow more homes like duplexes and small apartment buildings, and most would support the policy even if it meant allowing new duplexes or triplexes to be built near them.

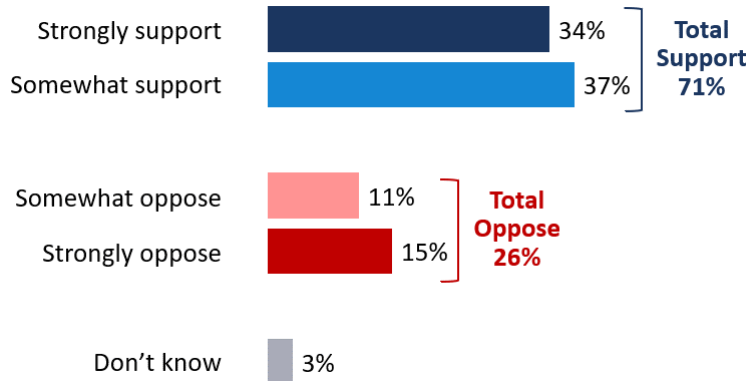
Detailed findings are as follows:

- **More than seven in ten voters back changes to the state's zoning laws to allow the development of more housing affordable for working people.** Respondents were given a proposal to eliminate single-family zoning in cities and towns with populations over 6,000 to facilitate the development of multi-family housing. As shown in Figure 1 on the following page, 71% said they would support this proposal with over one-third (34%) "strongly" in favor. This support cuts across numerous demographic lines, the most notable of which include:
 - 82% of Democrats, 62% of independents, and 62% of Republicans;
 - 80% of white voters and 82% of voters of color; and
 - 79% of voters in cities, 75% of suburban voters, 64% of small-town voters, and 59% of rural voters

Support for this proposal is also durable in the face of messaging; 72% of voters said they would support the proposal even after hearing an exchange of pro and con messages.

Figure 1: Support for Zoning Reform Proposal

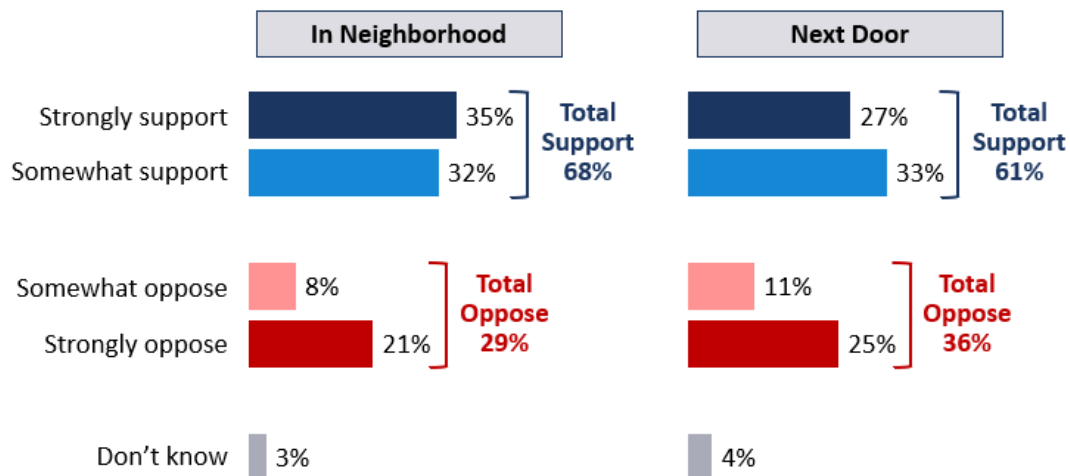
I would like to ask you about a new proposed law related to zoning in Washington. This proposal would change state law and zoning requirements to eliminate local zoning laws that allow only single-family houses in cities and towns with populations over 6,000. It would allow more homes like duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and townhouses, including housing more affordable for lower- and middle-income families, near public transit lines, and in areas with a lot of jobs.



- More than three in five support the change to zoning policy even if it meant a new duplex or triplex could be built next door.** Fully 68% say they would support the policy even if it meant multi-unit housing developments in their neighborhoods, and 61% would support the policy even if the developments happened next door.

Figure 2: Support for the Proposal if New Housing Were Built Next Door

Suppose this proposed law meant that a new duplex or triplex could be build (HALF SAMPLE: in your neighborhood) (HALF SAMPLE: next door to you). In that case, would you support or oppose this proposed law?



- **Voters broadly understand a restricted supply of housing to be driving up costs.** As shown in Figure 3, 72% say a shortage of housing is a "major" cause of housing unaffordability. A majority (66%) also believes zoning rules such as parking, design, and environmental requirements contribute to high costs.

Figure 3: Perceived Causes of High Housing Costs in Washington

Here are some factors that different people say have contributed to making housing unaffordable in communities around Washington state. Please tell me whether you think it is a major cause, a minor cause, or not a cause of making housing unaffordable here.

Factor	Major Cause	Total Major/Minor
A shortage of housing makes people compete for what's available, pushing up costs	72%	92%
Landlords are raising rents to maximize profits	60%	83%
The wealthiest households are pricing out existing residents	51%	80%
Wages are too low	46%	73%
Too many people are moving here	45%	83%
Modest, older housing that was affordable is being replaced by big, expensive housing	44%	77%
Too few housing choices of different sizes and kinds	38%	73%
Too few homes are being built, making people compete and pushing up costs	34%	69%
Excessive parking, design, and environmental requirements make it too costly to build reasonably priced housing	30%	66%

- **A sizable majority of Washington voters believes property owners should have broad latitude to build housing on their own land.** As shown in Figure 4, when given the choice between two statements about strict building rules, 57% favor property owners' right to build housing without strict restrictions over city governments' right to strictly limit types, size, and location of housing (35%).

Figure 4: Property Owner Control vs. City Government Control

When it comes to rules about what types of housing are allowed in Washington cities, on privately-owned residential lots within existing city boundaries, which of these statements fits more closely with your point of view?

Statement	%
Property owners should have the right to build housing on residential lots in cities without strict limits on location, type, and size.	57%
City governments should have the right to put strict limits on the types, size, and location of housing that property owners can build.	35%
Both/Neither/Don't know	7%

- **By a 40-point margin, Washington voters prioritize allowing a range of housing types over maintaining strict local control.** As detailed in Figure 5, 68% believe having a range of home types to promote affordability is a higher priority than allowing neighborhoods to control housing types.

Figure 5: Community Affordability vs. Local Neighborhood Control

Which do you think should be the higher priority when it comes to housing in Washington?

Statement	%
Ensuring that existing city neighborhoods allow a range of home types that more people in the community can afford	68%
Ensuring that people in existing city neighborhoods are able to control the type of housing that is allowed near them	28%
Both/Neither/Don't know	3%

- **Underlying these views is a strongly shared belief that cities should allow housing of all kinds near public transit and jobs.** Fully 88% of Washington voters agreed with the assertion that "to keep Washington communities affordable, cities should allow housing of all kinds near public transit and jobs." This view is shared extremely broadly across demographic and geographic groups. Notably, nearly half (49%) strongly agreed with the statement.

In conclusion, the survey shows **strong support among Washington voters for changes to housing policy that would promote more development of multi-family housing.** Voters broadly agree that a shortage of housing supply is contributing to a rise in housing costs. They support the right of property owners to build housing without strict limits on location, type, and size over city governments' ability to create such restrictions. To that end, voters across partisan and demographic lines support a proposal to eliminate single-family zoning in cities and towns with populations over 6,000. This support is steady in the face of pro and con messaging, and even when voters are confronted with the idea that it could result in multi-family housing being constructed near them.

ⁱ **Methodology:** From January 11-17, 2023, FM3 and New Bridge Strategy completed 613 online and telephone (landline and wireless) interviews with likely 2024 Washington voters. The poll was commissioned by Sightline Institute. The margin of sampling error for the study is +/-4.0% at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher. The margin of error for the half sample is +/-5.7% at the 95% confidence level. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.