

FTS INSIGHTS

MEMORANDUM

TO: Charleston County Council
FROM: Luke Byars & Matt Moore - First Tuesday Strategies
DATE: July 20, 2020
RE: Charleston County Polling for Lowcountry Housing Fund Ballot Initiative

FTS Insights, a division of First Tuesday Strategies, recently conducted a live poll and online survey to measure public opinion on the state of housing in Charleston County and the proposed Lowcountry Housing Fund that would help fund the creation of affordable housing. The poll was conducted in partnership with the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, Charleston Area Justice Ministry, the South Carolina Community Loan Fund, Lowcountry Area for Model Communities, and Metanoia. The survey was conducted from July 4th - July 12th among a random representative sample of 300 Charleston County residents who are likely to vote. The survey has a margin of error of +/- 5.6 percentage points.

Poll Summary and Insights:

- 79% of respondents describe the availability and affordability of housing in Charleston County as either a serious crisis or a significant problem.
- 74% of respondents either strongly agree or agree that Charleston County has a responsibility to invest in the creation of affordable housing for more families who live and work in our community.
- Greenville, SC has been successful in creating approximately 700 units of affordable housing since 2018 by investing public funding into a housing trust fund called the Greenville Housing Fund. 67% of respondents think Charleston County would benefit from doing the same. Only 18% of respondents did not think Charleston County would benefit from establishing a local housing trust fund and 15% of respondents were not sure.
- **64% of respondents would vote “yes” to establish the Lowcountry Housing Fund in Charleston County. Only 17% of respondents would vote “no” and 19% of respondents were not sure how they would vote.**
- 57% of respondents would vote “yes” and be in favor of a 2-millage increase in property taxes in Charleston County over a 10-year period to fund the Lowcountry Housing Fund to allow more affordable housing to be built. Only 30% of respondents said they would vote “no” and 13% of respondents were not sure how they would vote.

Other notable findings:

Over 75% of respondents believe that increased access to safe, stable housing plays a key role in keeping people healthy in the COVID-19 crisis.

Over 76% of respondents believe if more families could afford to live closer to where they work, we would have significantly less traffic and congestion.

Highlights:

Question 3: Housing Crisis

How would you describe the affordability and availability of housing in Charleston County?

- A serious crisis - 33%
- A significant problem, but not a crisis - 46%
- A minor problem - 15%
- Not really a problem at all - 6%

Question 9: Covid-19 and Housing

In the COVID-19 public health crisis, increased access to stable, safe housing for more people plays a role in keeping us all healthy.

- Strongly agree - 48%
- Agree - 27%
- Not sure - 18%
- Disagree - 3%
- Strongly disagree - 4%

Question 11: Distance from Home to Work

If more families in Charleston could afford to live closer to where they work, we would have a lot less traffic and congestion

- Strongly agree - 43%
- Agree - 33%
- Not sure - 17%
- Disagree - 5%
- Strongly disagree - 2%

Question 12: Responsibility of Charleston County to Invest in Affordable Housing

Right now, no local municipality in the Charleston area has a dedicated funding source from local tax dollars that adequately addresses the affordable housing crisis. Do you think Charleston County has a responsibility to invest in the creation of affordable housing for more families who live and work in our community?

Question 12: continued:

Strongly agree - 45%

Agree - 29%

Not sure - 14%

Disagree - 8%

Strongly disagree - 4%

Question 13: Housing Trust Funds - A Solution for Affordable Housing

More than 700 city and local governments across the United States have created and invested in local housing trust funds to direct public resources to address the communities most urgent housing needs. Charleston County is considering establishing a housing trust fund called the Lowcountry Housing Fund, stewarded by the South Carolina Community Loan Fund, an established and well-regarded organization in South Carolina. With the housing fund, the South Carolina Community Loan Fund will help fund important affordable housing projects including first-time homebuyer projects, affordable rental projects, mixed-income projects and rental assistance.

Would you vote “Yes” to establish the Lowcountry Housing Fund in Charleston County?

Yes - 64%

No - 17%

Not Sure / Don’t Know - 19%

Question 14: Greenville Housing Fund - An Opportunity for Charleston

Greenville, SC has been successful in creating approximately 700 units of affordable housing since 2018 by investing public funding into a housing trust fund called the Greenville Housing Fund. Do you think Charleston County would benefit from doing the same?

Agree - 67%

Disagree - 18%

Not Sure / Don’t Know - 15%

Question 15:

To fund the Lowcountry Housing Fund, a 2 millage increase in property taxes would generate approximately 8 million dollars in funding for housing in our region, while costing homeowners \$8 in property tax for every \$100,000 of assessed home value. For example, a home with a \$300,000 tax assessment would pay \$24 per year in additional property tax for the Lowcountry Housing Fund.

Would you vote in favor of a 2 millage increase in property taxes over a 10 year period to create a fund that would allow more affordable housing to be built in Charleston County?

Yes - 57%

No - 30%

Not Sure / Don’t Know - 13%