

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates

Opinion Research &
Public Policy Analysis

TO: Interested Parties

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RE: Summary of Recent Statewide Voter Survey on Program Open Space

DATE: March 1, 2006

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates (FMM&A) recently completed a statewide survey of Maryland voters to assess their attitudes on a variety of conservation issues, including Program Open Space.¹ The survey results show that Maryland voters are growing increasingly concerned about growth and development and its impact on their quality of life. As a response to these concerns, voters offer overwhelming support for Program Open Space, with nine out of ten Maryland voters saying that they back the program. In addition, voters support taking action to repay money that has been diverted from Program Open Space: fully 57% say that the Governor and State Legislature should be required to repay all of the money that has been diverted from Program Open Space over the last year.

The following are some of the key specific findings from the survey:

- ✓ **Maryland voters are increasingly concerned about the rate of growth and development in their community.** As shown in **Figure 1** on the following page, a 58-percent majority of Maryland voters say that the rate of growth and development in their community is “too fast,” while less than one in ten (seven percent) regard it as

¹ **Research Methodology:** From February 9-14, 2006, FMM&A completed telephone interviews with 803 registered voters across the state of Maryland who have voted in at least one of the last four major statewide elections. The full sample has a margin of sampling error of +/3.5%; margins of error for subgroups within the sample will be higher.

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“too slow.” Voters’ feelings on this issue tend to be quite strongly held – as the table makes clear, nearly two in five voters (38 percent) say that growth and development in their community is moving “*much* too fast.”

**FIGURE 1:
Attitudes Toward the Local Rate of Growth and Development**

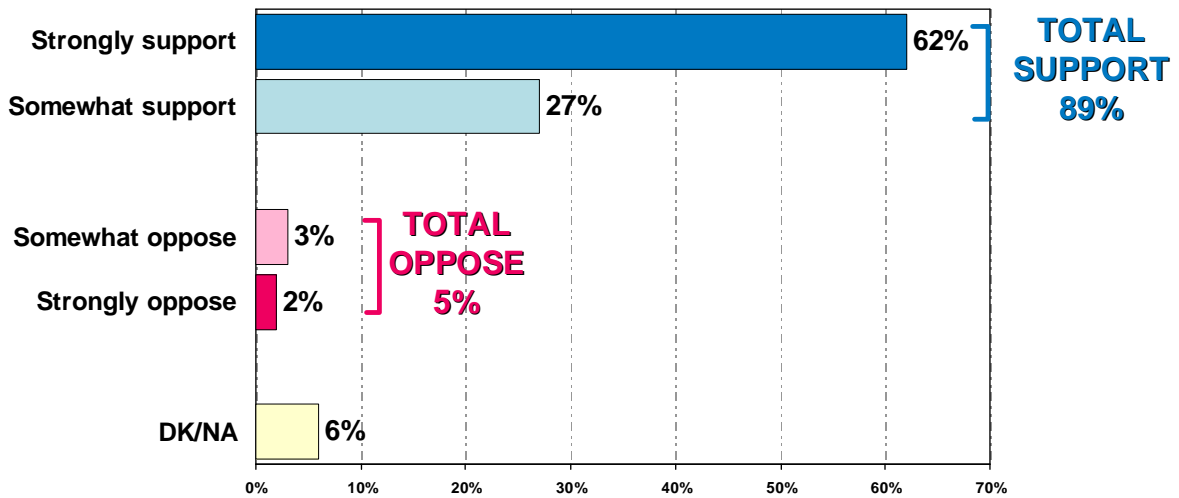
Position	2005	2006	Change
Much too fast	32%	38%	+6%
Somewhat too fast	16%	20%	+4%
TOTAL TOO FAST	48%	58%	+10%
Much too slow	5%	4%	-1%
Somewhat too slow	4%	3%	-1%
TOTAL TOO SLOW	9%	7%	-2%
ABOUT RIGHT/DK	43%	35%	-8%

It is also noteworthy that voters’ concern about growth has increased significantly since a similar survey conducted in January 2005. At that time, 48 percent of voters said that growth and development in their community was moving “too fast.” Concern about the issue has increased by ten points over the past year.

The survey also shows that voters are concerned about a variety of negative consequences that stem from the state’s current rate of growth and development. Nearly four out of five voters (79 percent) agree with the statement that “many of Maryland’s problems, such as traffic, air and water pollution and high housing costs are a direct result of the state’s rate of growth and development.”

- ✓ **Voters overwhelmingly support Program Open Space as a way of addressing these concerns about the loss of natural areas.** Survey respondents were given a basic description of the primary features of Program Open Space: that it has been in effect since 1969; that it sets aside money to build parks, protect land around sources of water, and preserve forests, farmland and fish and wildlife habitat; that it is funded by a one-half of one percent tax on the sale of property; and that it has protected thousands of acres of land and created thousands of state and local parks and recreation areas. As shown in **Figure 2** on the following page, after hearing this description nine out of ten Maryland voters (89 percent) indicated that they support Program Open Space, while only one voter in twenty (five percent) oppose it. This level of support is statistically identical to that observed in our 2005 survey, when 88 percent said that they support the program.

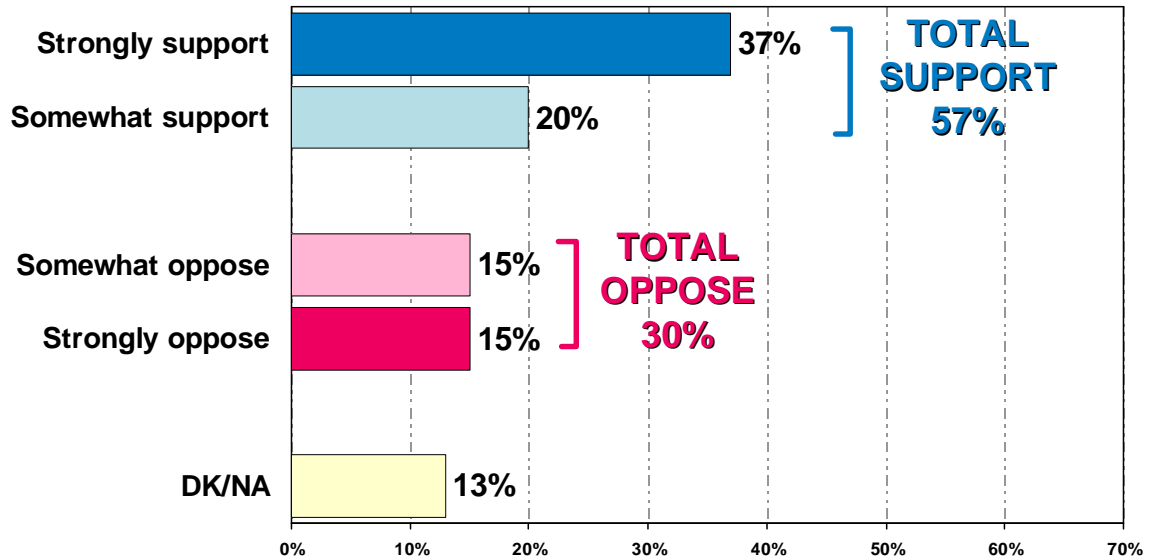
FIGURE 2:
Support for Program Open Space



This broad support for Program Open Space cuts across every major demographic and geographic subgroup of the electorate. More specifically, Program Open Space is backed by:

- 90 percent of women and 90 percent of men;
 - 92 percent of college-educated voters and 88 percent of those without a college education;
 - 91 percent of voters under age 50 and 90 percent of voters age 50 and over;
 - 90 percent of white voters and 90 percent of African-Americans; and
 - At least 80 percent of voters in each region of the state.
- ✓ **By a two-to-one margin, voters support requiring the Governor and State Legislature to repay money diverted from Program Open Space over the past year.** Survey respondents were informed that over the past year, \$70 million had been diverted from Program Open Space to fund unrelated state programs – part of a total of \$269 million that had been diverted over the past four years. Respondents were asked whether they would support or oppose requiring the Governor and State Legislature to repay the money diverted over the past year – and as shown in **Figure 3** on the following page, a sizable 57-percent majority said that they supported the idea. Only about half as many voters (just 30 percent) opposed such a repayment. Those who strongly support repayment (37 percent) outnumber those who strongly oppose it (15 percent) by more than two to one.

**FIGURE 3:
Support for Requiring the Governor and State Legislature to
Repay Money Diverted From Program Open Space**



Taken together, the survey results show that Maryland voters are increasingly concerned about the impact of growth and development, and strongly support Program Open Space as a means of addressing that concern. Accordingly, voters would like to see the program receive all of the funding to which it is entitled, and by a two-to-one margin they favor requiring state officials to repay the \$70 million that has been diverted from the program over the past year.