

Santa Monica Parcel Tax Survey

Conducted by Goodwin Simon
Strategic Research

October 2025

Presentation of Findings



Methodology

- Goodwin Simon Strategic Research completed 499 interviews with registered voters in Santa Monica between October 8 and 16, 2025. Fielding was conducted online via text invitations (46%) and by cell phones (53%) and landlines (1%).
- The sample was drawn from a list of Santa Monica voters who are likely to participate in a 2026 election based on past vote history.
- The survey was fielded in both English and Spanish.
- The margin of error for the full results is +/- 4.34% at a 95% confidence level. That is, if this survey were to be repeated exactly as it was originally conducted, then 95 out of 100 times the responses from the sample (expressed as proportions) would be within 4.34% of the actual population proportions.
- The margin of error for questions about the flat tax option (N=252) and about the per square foot option (N = 247) is +/- 6.16%.

Overview/Recommendations

- A majority in the mid-50s supports either version of a parcel tax *after* respondents learn how the funds might be used by the City and the SMMUSD – and learn that the funds will not be used by the state or federal governments.
- However, initial support for a tax (i.e. based only on the 75-word ballot title and summary we tested for each version) is only in the mid-40s, a level that does not appear to be sufficient to pass a measure at the two-thirds level required for a city tax measure.
- If the city is interested in placing a measure of this kind on the ballot, we recommend identifying a lower amount to put before voters and a process of community outreach/education and additional voter research.
- If a measure does proceed, we recommend 75-word ballot language that offers examples of how the funds could be used that are focused on voters' highest priorities, specifically firefighters, homelessness, 911 services, and hiring/retaining teachers. Ideally the ballot language would also make clear that the funds can only be used in Santa Monica for essential city services and public education. An example is offered on the next slide.
- Relatively few voters are aware of the Master Facilities Joint Use Agreement (MFJUA) with SMMUSD. Moreover, while most voters recognize that the District has need of funding, the community programs and services resulting from the MFJUA are not among the highest priorities for most voters.
- Still, the poll makes clear that voters are very supportive of the City and the District partnering to improve the services they provide to residents.
- The flat tax earns majority support from homeowners in the poll after they learn more about how the revenue will be used. In contrast the square footage tax still trails by 15 points among homeowners after more information.

City approval ratings steady since 2022

Approval ratings for the City are similar to what we found in 2022 and 2024.

While positive job ratings for the SMMUSD and the City are roughly similar, negative ratings continue to be higher for the city (41%) compared to the District (15%).

SMMUSD	May 2019	Jan 2022	June 2024	October 2025
Positive	55%	48%	58%	58%
Negative	19%	27%	22%	15%
City		May 2022	May 2024	October 2025
Positive		55%	59%	54%
Negative		40%	36%	41%

Limited awareness of the Master Facilities Joint Use Agreement (MFJUA) with SMMUSD

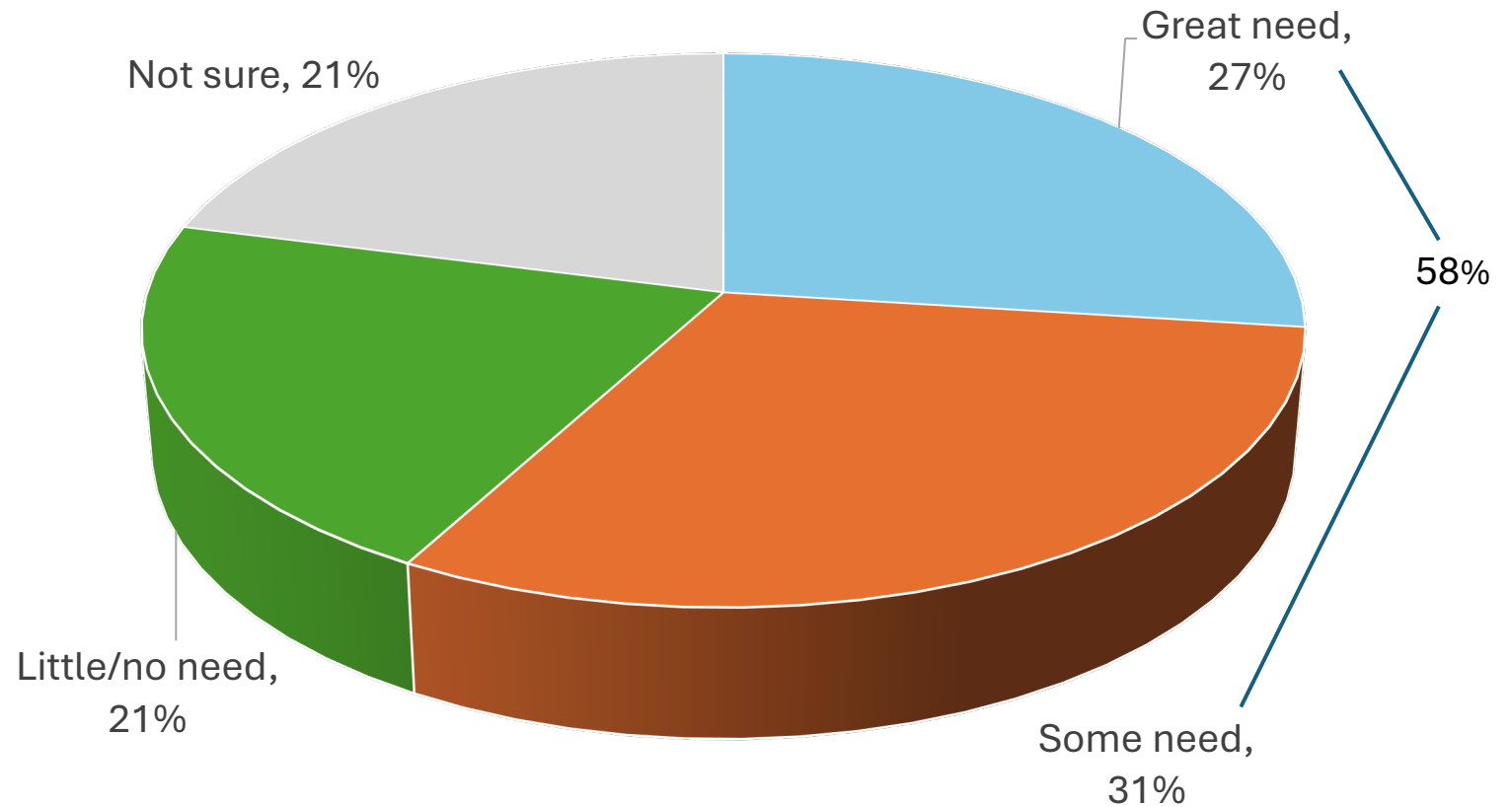
- Only 36% of voters are aware of the agreement, with homeowners and parents much more aware of it than renters and non-parents
- Supporters of a tax tend to be less aware of the agreement than tax opponents

MFJUA Awareness	All	Owners	Renters	Parents	Not Parents	Voting Yes	Voting No
Yes	36%	46%	27%	60%	28%	33%	41%
No	59%	47%	68%	33%	67%	62%	52%

A majority of voters (58%) recognize at least some need for MFJUA funding to help schools

Two in three voters who say they are aware of the agreement believe the public schools need this funding, compared to 53% of those not aware of the funding.

About 71% of Yes voters say there is a need for the funding compared to 49% of the No voters.



Response to proposed uses of the tax revenue

For voters, the most important uses of the funds include three city services (homeless, firefighters, 911), plus “hiring and retaining qualified teachers.”

This is especially the case for “Yes 1x” voters, who are mostly those who switched from No or Not sure initially to Yes after hearing more about the measures, and the initially undecided voters.

Note that the MFJUA funding was the least important use of the revenue for voters of the items we tested.

Ext. imp	All	Voting Yes	Voting No	Not sure	Voted yes both times (2x) when asked about a tax	Voted yes once but not twice (1x) when asked about a tax	Voted yes 0 times (0x) when asked about a tax
					Yes 2x	Yes 1x	Yes 0x
Homeless	56%	71%	38%	65%	73%	59%	37%
Firefighters	51%	59%	38%	64%	61%	56%	39%
Teachers	50%	71%	28%	51%	72%	51%	27%
911	48%	52%	40%	58%	53%	49%	42%
Preschool	42%	59%	23%	47%	60%	52%	19%
Arts/music	41%	55%	23%	46%	57%	47%	21%
Parks	40%	49%	28%	46%	50%	40%	29%
Libraries	39%	52%	24%	40%	54%	41%	22%
Streets	39%	42%	34%	44%	43%	43%	33%
MFJUA	34%	43%	22%	41%	45%	39%	21%

Most influential endorers: Firefighters, Teachers, Library advocates

The relative importance of firefighters and teachers as influencers is especially important with undecided and swing (Yes 1x) voters.

	More inclined to support tax if endorsed by:						Voted yes both times (2x) when asked about a tax	Voted yes once but not twice (1x) when asked about a tax	Voted yes 0 times (0x) when asked about a tax
	All	Owners	Renters	Yes voters	No voters	Not sure	Yes 2x	Yes 1x	Yes 0x
Firefighters	53%	47%	58%	68%	34%	60%	71%	66%	28%
Teachers	49%	45%	54%	75%	21%	53%	78%	60%	15%
Friends of SMPL	43%	34%	51%	65%	20%	39%	68%	44%	16%
SMRR	37%	22%	51%	53%	20%	37%	55%	47%	13%
LWV	35%	31%	38%	52%	17%	36%	55%	43%	11%
CEPS	34%	30%	38%	52%	12%	42%	54%	47%	7%
SM FSS	34%	32%	37%	49%	19%	33%	49%	41%	15%
PTA	32%	29%	36%	50%	13%	36%	52%	42%	8%
SM Forward	16%	16%	16%	25%	5%	20%	26%	24%	2%

Comparing the flat and square foot versions of the parcel tax: initial reaction

- Overall, the 45% support for a \$540 flat parcel tax is not significantly different from the 42% support for the \$0.08/square foot tax.
- We find a notable variance in preference among self-identified homeowners, with 43% who support a flat tax and just 29% who would vote yes on a square footage tax.
- As is typically the case, we see renters, Democrats, younger voters, and parents most inclined to vote for either tax option.

	\$540 flat	\$0.08/sq. ft
Yes	45%	42%
No	40%	43%
Net yes	5%	-1%
Not sure	15%	14%

	All	Dems	GOP	Ind	Owners	Renters	18-39	49-64	65+	Parents	Not Parents
Flat yes	45%	52%	15%	41%	43%	47%	53%	39%	46%	58%	41%
Sq. ft. yes	42%	52%	11%	33%	29%	53%	47%	38%	45%	40%	44%
Net flat yes	3%	0%	4%	8%	14%	-6%	6%	1%	1%	18%	-3%
Flat no	40%	31%	72%	52%	43%	38%	27%	46%	42%	33%	42%
Sq. ft. no	43%	32%	77%	55%	57%	32%	34%	49%	43%	41%	43%
Net flat no	-3%	-1%	-5%	-3%	-14%	6%	-7%	-3%	-1%	-8%	-1%

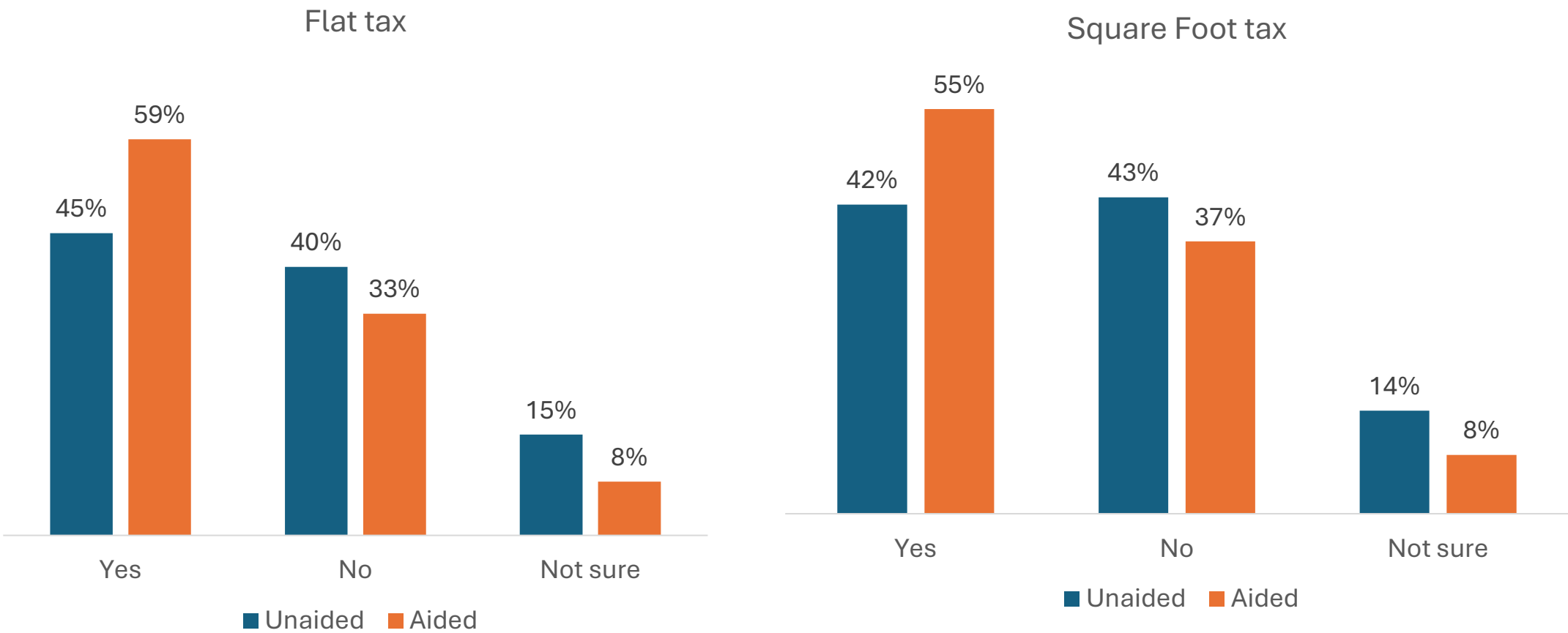
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The most frequent use case

- To help public schools, mentioned by 33% of yes voters
- To help fund city services, mentioned by 29% of yes voters



Support rises to 55%-59% after voters learn more



The flat tax option seems to generate more support and less opposition from homeowners compared to the square footage option

After homeowners learn more about the flat tax, their support for it rises to 54% with 42% opposed, compared to just 39% in favor and 54% opposed for the square footage option. Renter support for the flat tax version rises to 66% with 23% opposed.

		All	Owners	Renters
Flat	Unaided: Yes	45%	43%	47%
	Unaided: No	40%	43%	38%
	Unaided: Net yes	5%	0%	9%
	Aided: Yes	59%	54%	66%
	Aided: No	33%	42%	23%
	Aided: Net yes	27%	12%	43%
Sq. Ft.	Unaided: Yes	42%	29%	53%
	Unaided: No	43%	57%	32%
	Unaided: Net yes	-1%	-28%	21%
	Aided: Yes	55%	39%	69%
	Aided: No	38%	54%	23%
	Aided: Net yes	17%	-16%	46%

Movement

- Roughly 65% of initially undecided voters shifted to yes, and about 15% of no voters shifted to yes.
- The biggest movement of opinion was seen among:
 - Renters
 - Parents
 - Voters under 39 (and especially renters under 40)

What information is most important to voters who move to a yes vote?

There were two statements that are most important for voters who move from being initially undecided about or opposed to a tax measure to supporting it:

“The funds generated by the measure will be spent entirely in Santa Monica and none of it can be taken by the state or federal government” and

“The funds generated by this measure will protect local public schools if the state or federal government cuts funding for California schools.”

Proposed Ballot Language (Flat tax version)

PRESERVING SANTA MONICA SERVICES AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

To maintain funding for homelessness, firefighters, 911 emergency services, and libraries, while preserving city funding for Santa Monica's public schools to retain quality teachers and improve education quality, shall the measure approving a tax of \$540 per parcel, generating approximately \$12,000,000 annually until repealed by voters, exempting seniors, be adopted, with funds that cannot be taken by the state or federal governments and can only be used in Santa Monica, be adopted?