



For Immediate Release

Survey Finds Strong Public Support for proposed Lowe's store Need for local home improvement supplies, jobs and tax revenue driving support

Petaluma, CA (October 10, 2011) – Merlone Geier Partners, the firm developing the proposed Deer Creek Village shopping center, today released a public opinion survey of registered voters showing that a majority of voters support and believe there is a need for a Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse in Petaluma.

The survey found that less than three in ten voters surveyed believe that there are sufficient local choices for home improvement and building supplies. The results fall in line with the project's Draft Economic Impact Report (DEIR) which concluded that the City is losing over \$27.5 million annually in potential home improvement and building supply sales.*

"When so many are shopping out of town for home improvement supplies, building a Lowe's store that creates jobs and keeps tax revenue in our community makes sense," said Onita Pelligrini, CEO of the Petaluma Area Chamber of Commerce.

"Petaluma wants a Lowe's store so that they can purchase home improvement supplies locally and at affordable prices," said Greg Geertsen, partner for Merlone Geier Partners. "The added benefits of the shopping center are that it creates over 800 jobs and new tax revenue that can help fund city services such fixing potholes, and protecting police and fire protection funding."

The survey also found very strong support from the East side of town, where the shopping center is proposed. East side voters support the project for many reasons, including the need for more choices and places to shop (as 44% responded). In response Geertsen said, "After holding a number of community meetings, our future neighbors have come to learn that this is not a traditional shopping center. With public input, the shopping center not only includes a Lowe's store, boutiques, restaurants, but also areas for a farmers market, exercise trails and even a dog park. Should the City Council approve the project, we can start creating jobs and break ground as soon as Spring of 2012."

Key Findings Related to Lowe's and Retail;

- 65% of voters have a favorable view of Lowe's, 24% unfavorable.
 - 40% hold a very favorable view, and only 17% a very unfavorable view

- 63% of voters support a Lowe’s store, even when the project location is identified, 33% opposed.
 - Intensity for the shopping center is great, 44% strongly favor the shopping center which is over 10 points higher than total opposition (both strongly opposed and somewhat opposed).
 - 63% of those surveyed who live East of Hwy 101, where the project is located support the shopping center, and 64% of voters West of Hwy 101.
 - Support among Republicans is 76%, Democrats 60%

- Less than three in ten (25%) of those surveyed believe that Petaluma has sufficient choices for home improvement projects and building supplies, while 63% believe a store “like Lowe’s” is needed in Petaluma. The “need” for a home improvement store is shared by both sides of town.
 - 64% of voters West of Hwy 101 believe a store “like Lowe’s” is needed, and so do 62% of East side voters.
 - A store “like Lowe’s” is supported by 77% Republicans and 62% Democrats.

- 53% of voters are more likely to vote for a city council member that supports Lowe’s, only 31% would vote against them and 11% say this issue makes no difference in their vote for City Council.

- Both Lowe’s (65%) and Target (68%) earn high favorable ratings with voters, suggesting that overall Petaluma voters do not harbor anti-big box sentiments.

- Over two-thirds (67%) of voters disapprove of “anti-big box” activists suing to stop the project, as occurred with the Regency Center/Target shopping center project.
 - 72% of East side residents oppose lawsuit, as do 60% West side residents.

Key Findings on Economy, City Budget and More;

Very few voters are optimistic about the local economy and many believe that attracting new businesses to Petaluma is the best solution to fixing the City’s financial situation that they view as serious.

Commenting on how new sales tax revenue benefits the City, Paul Gilman, president of the Police Officers Association of Petaluma, said, “Building a Lowe’s will help generate more sales tax revenue that can help protect police and fire services from more budget cuts.”

- Compared to 6 months ago, less than one in ten voters (8%) believe the economy is getting better, 28% think it is getting worse and 59% believe it is the same.
- 37% believe that Petaluma is on the right track, 40% wrong track.
- The most important issues to voters are Education (34%), followed by Road Conditions and Potholes (31%), and Jobs and the Economy (25%).
- 55% believe that the city's budget situation is a major problem, while 26% believe it is a minor problem. Just 5% say the city's budget is "not a problem" at all.
- Nearly nine in ten (89%) voters believe that encouraging new businesses to locate in Petaluma and pay taxes is a good way to increase revenues and balance the budget.
 - 64% are opposed to cutting city services.
 - 63% are opposed to raising taxes on residents.
 - 86% are opposed to laying off firefighters and police.
- 42% of voters approve of the job done by the City Council, 43% disapprove.
- 41% of voters have a favorable view of the City Council, while 37% have an unfavorable view.
 - In contrast, the city's planning commission is viewed favorably by only 29% of voters, and 47% have an unfavorable view.

The public opinion survey was conducted by Voter Consumer Research, a nationally recognized polling firm, from September 6-8, 2011, of 301 registered voters living in the city limits of Petaluma, with a margin of error of +/- 5.7%. The survey was paid for by Merlone Geier Partners.

Deer Creek Village, a project of [Merlone Geier Partners](#) since August 2008, conforms with the City's 2025 General Plan and will be one of Petaluma's premiere mixed-use centers. The shopping center will be anchored by Lowe's and will boast a unique combination of shopping, office, dining, recreational trails and a public area for a farmers market and street fairs. The project is expected to create over 800 jobs and millions of dollars in new tax revenue. For more details, visit www.deercreekproject.com. Architectural renderings and survey slides are available for publication.

**EPS, Deer Creek Village Urban Decay Analysis, page 24*

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