

SPECIAL



REPORT

*Presented to the
Owensboro City Commission*

***Highway 54 TIF
Ordinance Poll
Results***

***Results of Public Life Foundation Poll
Presented to the Owensboro City Commission***

To complement the research and citizen views that have already been shared, the Public Life Foundation commissioned a poll over the weekend to provide elected officials with a snapshot of public opinion on the Gulfstream Enterprises Gateway Commons proposal off Highway 54.

The results were presented during the August 21, 2007 city commission meeting.

The foundation retained the services of Executive Communications, Inc. of Louisville. The firm completed 615 telephone interviews with people who said they had been following the Gulfstream proposal. (Nearly 2,000 calls were made in order to secure the 615 completed interviews.)

The results are within a margin of error of plus-or-minus four percent.

The Public Life Foundation was identified as the sponsor of the poll.

On the question:

Do you feel citizens of our community have been adequately informed and educated regarding this project, the financing, benefits and risks:

54 percent said “no”

36 percent said “yes”

10 percent “did not know or were undecided”

On the following statement and question:

Gulfstream officials say the publicly financed arena and convention center are essential to the feasibility of their project. Downtown proponents say these facilities are important anchors for a downtown plan. Assuming we can only build these facilities in one location, is it in our community’s best interest for them to be built off Highway 54 or downtown?

57 percent said “downtown”

25 percent said “off Highway 54”

18 percent were “undecided”

This is significant. Despite the fact that the public has heard repeatedly that the Gulfstream proposal will allow the city to build a \$77 million arena and a \$50 million convention center off Highway 54 without any real cost to taxpayers, citizens still support a downtown location by more than a two-to-one margin.

And the final question:

Do you think officials should proceed or hold off until questions are more fully answered?

67 percent said you should “hold off”

20 percent said you should “proceed”

13 percent said they “didn’t know” or were “undecided”

By more than a three-to-one margin, the public wants officials to hold off.

It is also important to note that nearly all these interviews were conducted prior to the publication of a full-page advertisement by the foundation and the In My View column submitted by tax attorney Gregory Barton, both of which ran in the August 20 edition of the Messenger-Inquirer.

Reactions

- The Owensboro City Commission postponed the vote for one week.
- Owensboro city manager Bob Whitmer dismissed the value of the poll, particularly the question about whether citizens prefer a downtown or Highway 54 location for a new arena and convention center. He said the question should have included a cost factor. Citizens often say they support something until they realize what it is going to cost them, he said.
- Former Daviess County commissioner Gary Boswell said the poll should have asked whether or not the public supports a Highway 54 site for an arena and convention center or none at all. Boswell has concluded that there are no other options.

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