Poll: 93% of Sacramento-area voters say housing costs are a problem

BY TIM MURPHY
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Housing affordability is on just about everyone's mind these days, and a recent poll of Sacramento-area residents shows that's the case here as well.

In fact, the survey found residents overwhelmingly agree that housing costs are a major problem and that government fees and regulations contribute to the shortage of housing that is affordable.

The poll of 810 registered voters in Sacramento, Placer, Yolo and El Dorado counties found that 93% consider the cost of housing and rent a very big or somewhat of a problem, including 68% who consider it a very big problem.

Three-quarters of respondents said excessive government regulations and fees have contributed a lot or somewhat to the shortage of housing people can afford. And 83% said local government leaders should work to reduce fees, which average more than $100,000 for each new home.

The poll was commissioned by my organization, the North State Building Industry Association, along with the Sacramento Association of Realtors, the Placer Business Alliance, and the Sacramento Metro, Folsom and Roseville chambers of commerce. The survey was conducted Aug. 4-7 among 810 registered voters and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.44 percentage points.

The only way to seriously improve affordability is for local governments to reduce the red tape that makes building such a lengthy and expensive process and to reduce the fees that drive up costs.

How bad is it? Nearly three out of four respondents don't believe their children or grandchildren will be able to afford to buy a home in our area. The poll found that taking steps to make housing more affordable should be local officials' top priority, ahead of reducing homelessness, cutting taxes or preventing

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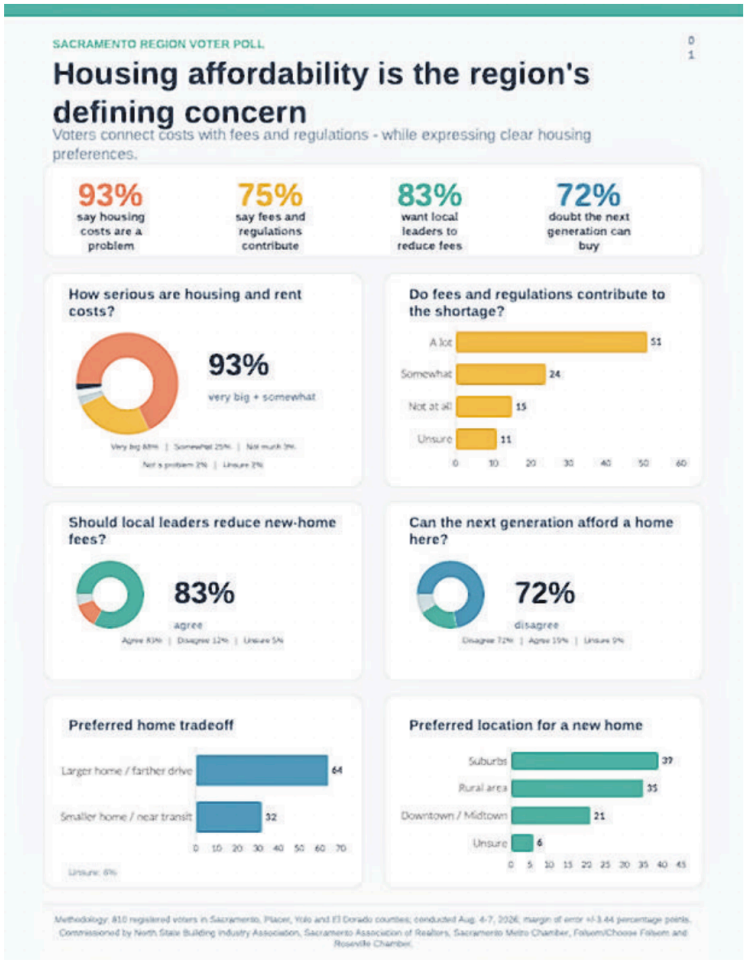

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crime. It's time local governments begin promoting housing affordability instead of making homes more and more expensive to build.

The poll also found that most prospective buyers want to live in the suburbs or rural areas, not be forced into high-density developments along the light rail lines. As Jessica Coates, CEO of the Sacramento Association of Realtors, put it, we need to support development of all types of housing.

"Homeownership is at the heart of the American Dream, and our agents hear every day that buyers want options," Coates said. "Solving California's housing crisis means building all types of housing. Nearly two-thirds of those surveyed agree, and that desire for choice holds up across the region and across age groups. Single-family homes are a critical piece of the solution, and they need to go hand-in-hand with the full range of housing types, including infill, missing middle and multi-family housing, that reflect what Californians actually want and can afford."

The poll also found strong support for local businesses.

"California's high cost of doing business and increasingly complex regulatory environment continue to create real challenges for employers, entrepreneurs, and small businesses. The public recognizes that challenge, with 82% in our region agreeing that it should be easier for everyday people to open and run a small business," said Robert Heidt, President & CEO of the Sacramento Metro Chamber.

"At the Metro Chamber, we believe we should be removing unnecessary barriers to entrepreneurship, investment, and job creation — and we'll continue advocating for policies that make the Capital Region a place where businesses can start, grow and succeed."

Joe Gagliardi, CEO of Choose Folsom, said local chambers play a key role in promoting a healthy business climate.

"These results reinforce that people want communities where businesses can start, grow and thrive – and they expect local leaders and business organizations to help create that environment," Gagliardi said. "They also remind organizations like ours that we have an ongoing responsibility to clearly demonstrate the value of that work. Strong local businesses contribute to strong local economies, quality jobs and vibrant communities, and we need to continue connecting those dots for the people we serve."

Finally, Ananda Rochita, President & CEO of the Roseville Area Chamber, pointed out that poll results found that Placer County residents were more likely to think their area was on the right track than the rest of the region, which she attributed to the longstanding cooperation between business leaders and government to promote a strong economy.

"Thanks to the strong partnership between the business community and local government in Placer County, our area is the only part of the region where more people think the county is going in the right direction," Rochita said. "The chamber will continue advocating for business-friendly and streamlined policy that cuts through red tape."

Tim Murphy is President & CEO of the North State Building Industry Association, which represents builders, developers, subcontractors, suppliers and related professionals dedicated to providing new housing opportunities in the Greater Sacramento region.