

# Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates

Opinion Research &  
Public Policy Analysis

**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FROM:** Dave Metz  
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates  
**RE:** Results of Recent Maryland Voter Survey on Growth Issues  
**DATE:** October 10, 2007

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Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates (FMM&A) recently completed a statewide survey of Maryland voters to assess their views on growth and development in the state and attitudes toward a variety of proposals for managing future growth.<sup>1</sup> The survey results show that **voters are highly concerned about the current rate of growth and development in Maryland.** A majority of voters believe there is too much growth and development in their communities, and large proportions express dissatisfaction with how growth has been managed, both on the state and local level. As a result, **the vast majority of voters support a variety of policy proposals to limit growth or guide it in directions that will minimize its impact.** The balance of this memo details key findings of the survey.

- **Voters see traffic, housing costs, loss of farmland and poorly-planned growth as some of the most serious problems facing Maryland.** The survey offered voters a list of issues and asked them whether they consider each one an “extremely,” “very,” “somewhat” or “not too serious” problem for Maryland. **Figure 1** on the following page shows the issues ranked as most serious by voters. Traffic ranked near the top of voters’ concerns, with two in three voters (66%) calling it an “extremely” or “very serious” problem. More voters rated traffic as a very serious problem than said the same for public education, the cost of health insurance, or taxes. Majorities of voters also rated loss of farmland (56%) and poorly-planned growth and development (56%) as “extremely” or “very serious” problems.

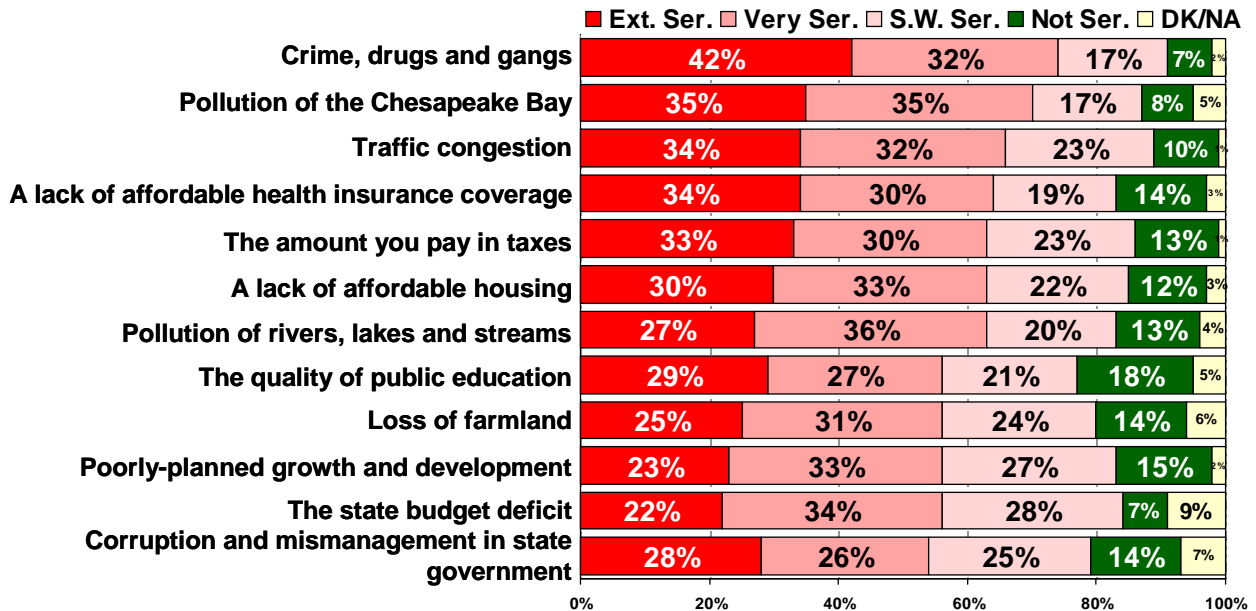
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<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** From June 5 through 11, 2007, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates conducted a telephone survey of 1,000 registered voters throughout the state of Maryland. The margin of error for the sample as a whole is +/- 4.1 percentage points; margins of error for subgroups within the sample will be higher.

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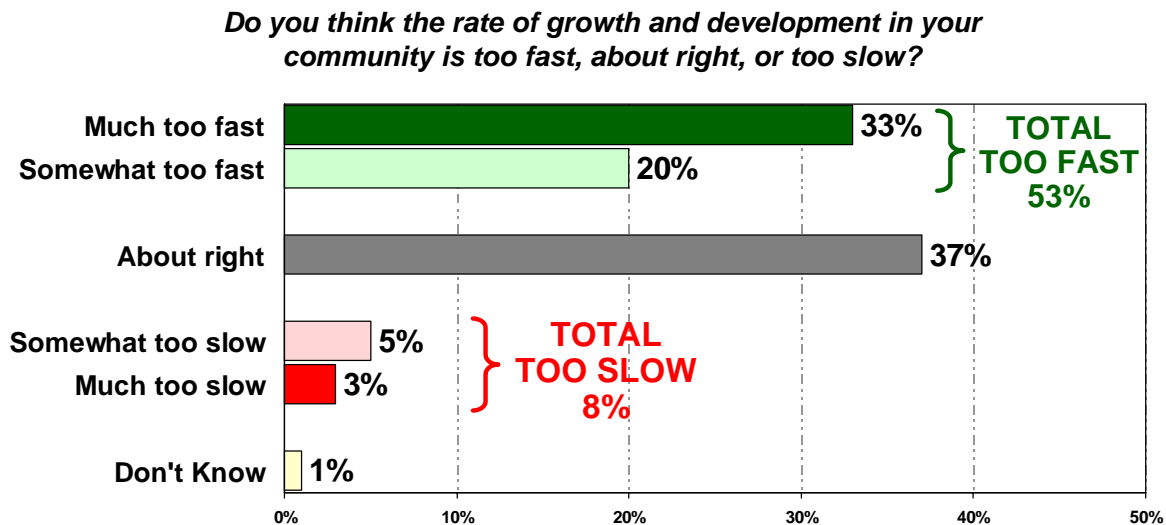
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Figure 1: Seriousness of Problems Facing Maryland



➤ **Voters believe that growth and development is happening too fast.** When asked whether the rate of growth and development in their communities is too fast, about right, or too slow, a 53-percent majority of voters say growth is occurring too fast, including 33 percent of voters who say development is taking place “much too fast.” Another 37 percent say the rate of growth is about right, and fewer than 1 in 10 voters (8%) say that growth is too slow. **Figure 2** below shows the results.

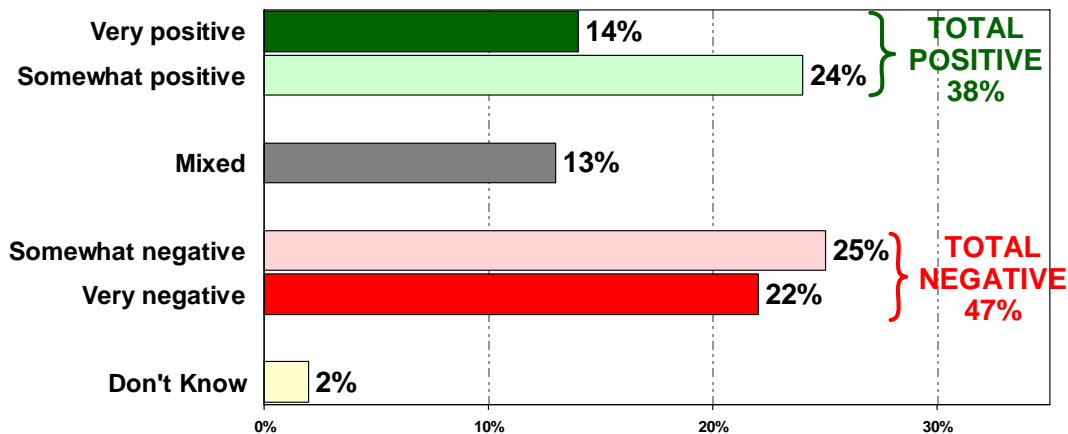
Figure 2: Evaluating the Rate of Growth



- **A plurality of voters think that the current rate of growth and development is having a negative impact on their community.** As illustrated in **Figure 3** below, when asked to evaluate the consequences of the current rate of growth and development for their community, only 38 percent of Maryland voters say they have been positive. Another 13 percent call the consequences mixed, while 47 percent say the consequences are negative, including 22 percent who call the consequences “very negative.”

**Figure 3: Consequences of Growth and Development**

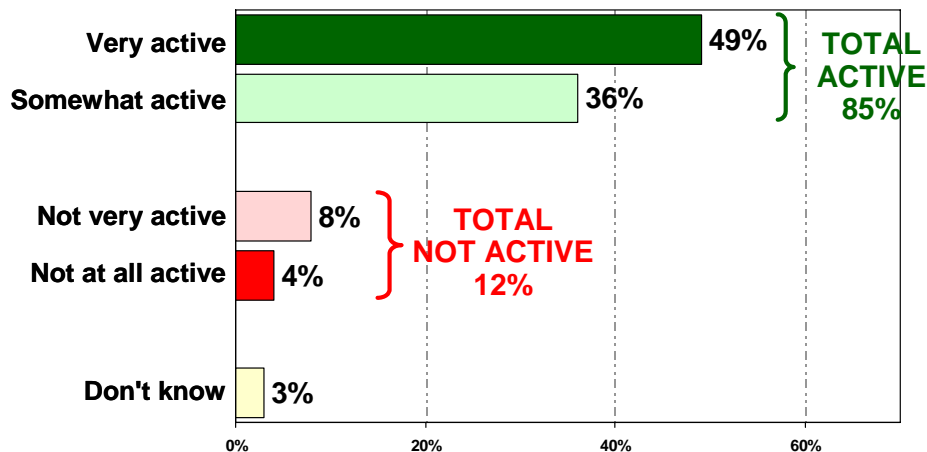
*Overall, do you think the consequences of the current rate of growth and development have been more positive or more negative for your community?*



- **A great majority of voters believe that State government should take an active role in managing growth in Maryland.** As highlighted in **Figure 4** below, Maryland voters firmly believe that State government should play a key role in dealing with growth and development. Eighty-five percent (85%) of voters believe State government should be active in coordinating and managing growth, including 49 percent who say the State should be “very active.” Fewer than 1 in 10 voters (8%) say the state should be “not very active,” and only four percent say the state should not be active in growth issues at all.

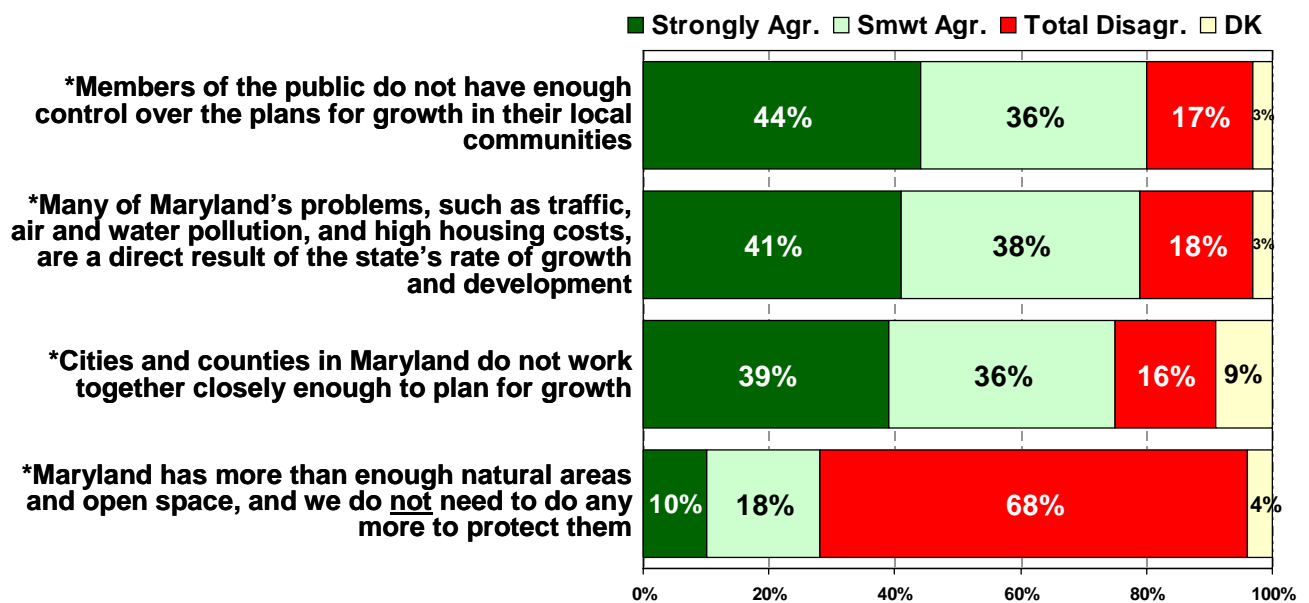
**Figure 4: Role of State Government in Managing Growth**

*How active do you think state government should be in coordinating and managing growth across the state?*



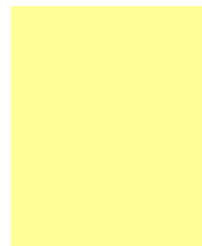
- **Voters believe that growth is the cause of many of the state’s problems, and the public is being left out of decisions on growth.** The survey gave respondents a series of statements about growth and development, and asked them whether they agreed or disagreed with each one. As illustrated in **Figure 5** below, the results reflect a high level of concern over the impacts of growth and widespread dissatisfaction over the way growth is being managed. Eight in ten voters (80%) agree that the public does not have enough control over local plans for growth, and 79 percent agree that many of the state’s problems are a direct result of growth and development. Three-quarters (75%) agree that cities and counties are failing to work together to plan for growth, and more than two-thirds (68%) disagree with the idea that Maryland has enough open space and further protections are not needed.

**Figure 5: Agreement With Statements Relating to Growth**  
(Split Sampled)



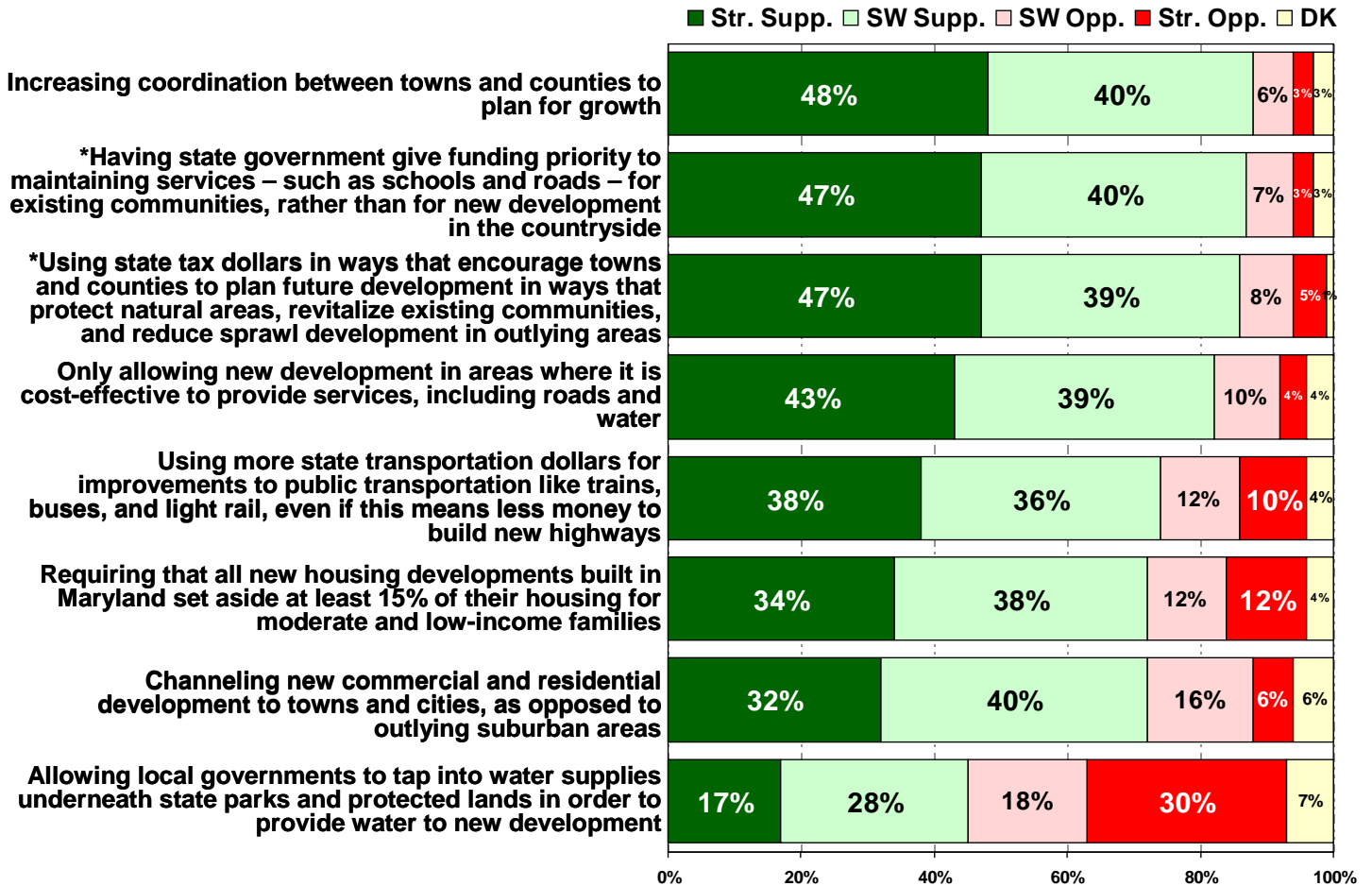
- **Voters support a number of policies aimed at managing growth and development.** Given the widely-held attitudes that the pace of growth is too fast, that growth is having a negative impact on local communities, and that current efforts to plan for growth are not satisfactory, it is not surprising that voters are supportive of a wide array of policy changes aimed at better managing growth.

The survey offered voters a list of policy approaches and asked whether they supported or opposed each one. Results are illustrated in **Figure 6** on the following page. A number of policy options receive support from more than 8 in 10 voters: increasing coordination between towns and counties to plan for growth (88% support), prioritizing services to existing communities over new development in the state budget (87%), using state funding to encourage more sustainable development patterns (86%), and only allowing development in areas where it is cost-effective to provide local services (82%). Nearly three-quarters (74%)



support using more state transportation money for public transportation, even if it means less money for roads. In addition, more than 7 in 10 voters support requiring 15% affordable housing in new developments (72%) and steering new development to towns and cities rather than outlying suburbs (72%). Many fewer voters support allowing local governments to use water supplies under state parks to support new development – 45 percent support the idea and 48 percent oppose it.

Figure 6: Support for Policy Approaches to Growth



- **More than two-thirds of voters support a law that would make local six-year growth plans binding.** Survey respondents were given a brief description of proposed legislation that would require local governments to follow their six-year growth plans – which can currently be overruled by a majority vote of the local legislative body. As highlighted in **Figure 7** on the following page, a strong 67 percent majority of Maryland voters support such a law, including 31 percent who “strongly” support it. Only 28 percent of voters oppose the idea, and only 14 percent say they “strongly” oppose it.

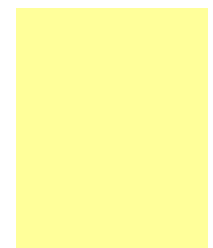
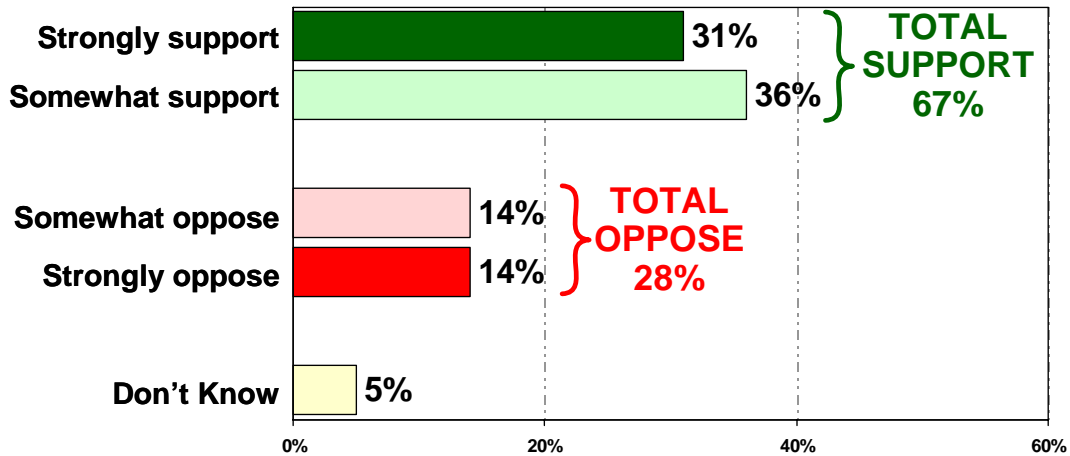


Figure 7: Support for Legislation on Local Growth Plans

*Currently, communities in Maryland are required to develop six-year plans to guide future growth in their area, based on public input and detailed analysis by local planners. But by a simple majority vote local government bodies can over-rule these growth plans, permitting development projects that would not otherwise be allowed to proceed. Some people have proposed a law that would require local governments to follow their six-year growth plans once they have been approved. Does this sound like something you would support or oppose?*



Overall, results of the survey of Maryland voters show that growth-related issues are among the most pressing concerns on voters' minds. Most voters think that development is happening too fast in their community and that its consequences are mixed at best. There is widespread dissatisfaction with the way growth is currently being managed at the local and statewide level. Accordingly, voters are anxious for state government to play a more active role in coordinating and managing growth in Maryland and are willing to support a number of different policy approaches aimed at better handling growth.