



## PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Lori Weigel / Partner

RE: Queen Anne's County Residents Oppose Proposed Four Seasons Development;  
Overwhelmingly Want State Officials to Closely Review

DATE: October 15, 2013

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A recent survey of voters throughout Queen Anne's County, Maryland,<sup>1</sup> conducted by Public Opinion Strategies indicates significant opposition to a proposed development on Kent Island. There is not a single geographic, demographic or political sub-group among which there is majority support for the proposed development. In fact, a majority of county residents say they are extremely or very concerned about a host of potential impacts of the project – everything from polluted run-off that could harm the Chesapeake Bay to the potential strain on local roads and emergency services, and the potential for local taxpayers to end up facing costs associated with these impacts. Most of the concerns about the Four Seasons project are even more pronounced among Kent Island voters. Nearly three-quarters of county voters say that the development as currently structured should be modified or outright rejected, and more than four-in-five agree that due to the location of the project, the Governor and state officials should take their time in reviewing the plans closely.

Specifically the survey found that...

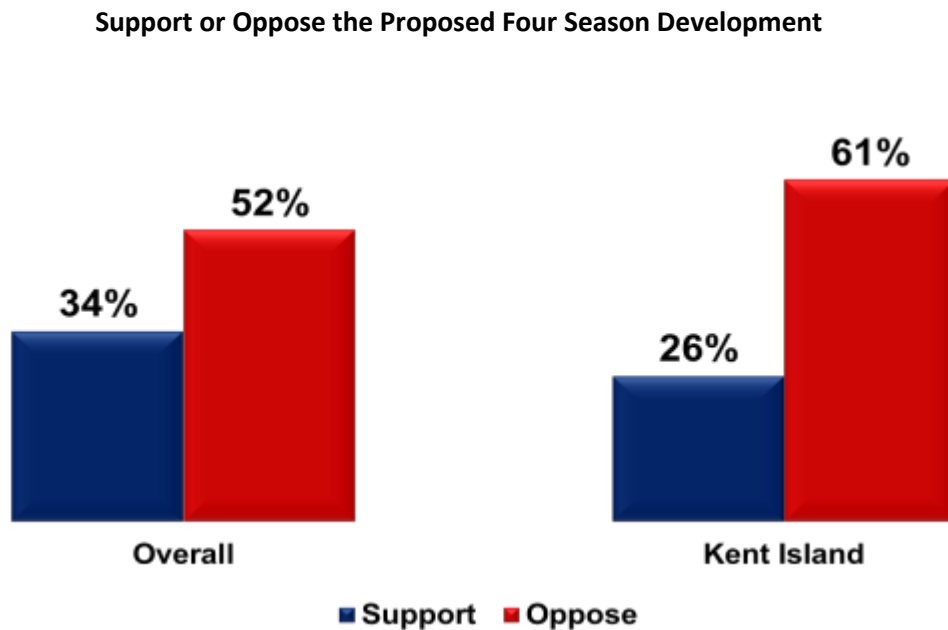
- **Kent Island residents already express concerns about the pace of growth in the county.** While residents in the rest of the county are inclined to say growth is occurring at about the right pace, Kent Island voters believe that the county is growing “too fast” (47 percent) rather than at about the right pace (38 percent) or “too slowly” (13 percent).
- **A majority of Queen Anne's County voters oppose the Four Seasons development as currently structured.** While awareness of the project was fairly significant countywide (54 percent saying they had heard a lot or something about it), a brief factual explanation of the project was provided to all respondents to ensure they all had basic information about the project:

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<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** From October 7-10, 2013, Public Opinion Strategies completed 370 telephone interviews with residents of Queen Anne's county who are registered to vote in the county. Additional interviews were conducted in Kent Island in order to increase the confidence in this portion of the sample, but then statistically weighted to represent its true proportion in the county. Quotas were set for key demographics based on recent Census and voter registration information to ensure the representativeness of the sample. Interviews were conducted on landlines and cell phones. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/-5.1 percent and for Kent Island is 6.9 percent. Margins of sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. Some percentages may sum to more than 100 percent due to rounding.

*“As you may know there is a proposal being considered in Queen Anne's County that would construct a one thousand, seventy-nine unit housing development for people 55 and older called Four Seasons. This development to be built over the next ten to twenty years would be along the Chester River, Cox Creek, and Macum Creeks on Kent Island. The development company would also provide 131 acres of land to the county for a park, although the county would have to pay to create and maintain the park... do you support or oppose this development proposal?”*

As seen in the following graph, a majority of residents of both the County overall and Kent Island specifically oppose this proposal. Just 34 percent of County voters indicate support and a mere 26 percent of Kent Island residents indicate support for the project.



Opposition to the proposed development is consistent across a remarkable array of subgroups of the county's population, including:

- *50 percent of Democrats oppose it, 53 percent of Republicans, and 51 percent of independents;*
  - *47 percent of men and 56 percent of women;*
  - *52 percent of voters ages 18-44, 55 percent of those 45-54, and 50 percent of voters over 55; and*
  - *Over 50 percent of voters in all regions of the county.*
- **Residents want the project carefully reviewed by state officials.** The overwhelming majority of county voters agree that due to its location and the implications for the Chesapeake Bay it should be carefully reviewed by the Governor and state officials. As indicated on the next page, residents are cautious in thinking about the future of the proposed development:

**Because this project is located in an environmentally sensitive area and could harm the Chesapeake Bay, the Governor and state officials should take their time in reviewing this proposed development closely.**

**AGREE 83%**

**DISAGREE 16%**

A majority of every single sub-group and in every part of the county expresses agreement with this “go slow” sentiment.

- **In fact, the vast majority of county residents say the development project should either not be built or should be modified. On Kent Island, almost half would outright reject the development.**

*Which one comes closer to your point of view -*

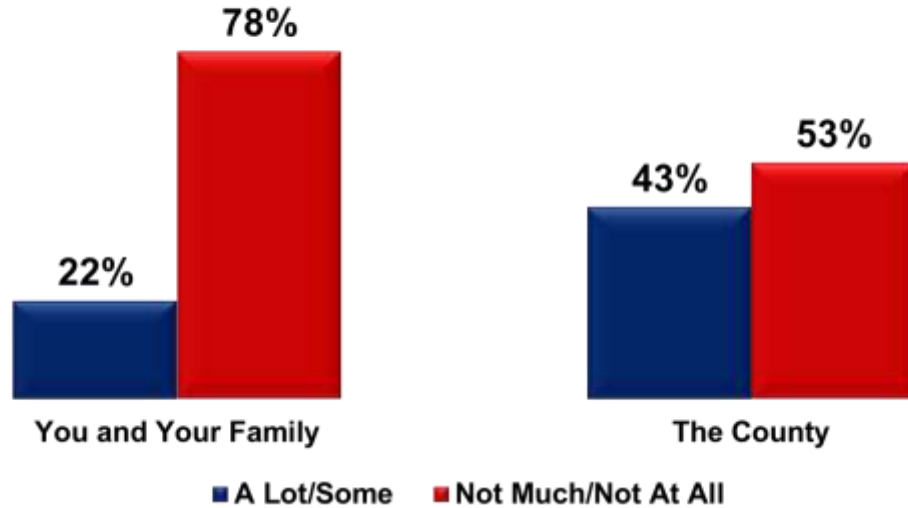
| <u>County</u> | <u>Kent Island</u> |  |
|---------------|--------------------|--|
| 22%           | 16%                | <i>The proposed development should be approved and move ahead as currently designed</i>  |
| 35%           | 31%                | <i>The proposed development should be modified to reduce its size and impact on water, wildlife, and residents of the county</i> |
| 37%           | 49%                | <i>The proposed development should not be built at all</i>   |

- **There is very little sense that there any personal benefit accrues from allowing this development to take place, and in fact, fewer than half even predict any benefit for the county as a whole.** In our experience having polled on behalf of many proposed development projects, the ones that are eventually welcomed into a community are those in which residents perceive that they will derive some benefit. This is not the case currently here.

A mere 22 percent of Queen Anne's county residents say that there is an upside to them personally (14 percent “a lot” of benefit and 8 percent “some”). Kent Island residents are *less* likely to perceive any personal benefit to the proposed development than residents of the county as a whole – just 19 percent perceive any benefit (only 6 percent “a lot” and 13 percent “some”). Only about two-in-five countywide say the county itself will benefit, as demonstrated in the following graph:

**Perceived Benefit Personally and to the County of the Proposed Four Season Development**

"How much do you think \_\_\_\_\_ would benefit if this proposed development is built?"



- **In fact, residents express strong concern regarding multiple aspects of the proposed development.** When asked to register how concerned they are about a number of potential outcomes that some residents have raised about the project, three-in-five county residents indicate being at least “somewhat concerned” about all of them as evidenced here:

**Summary of Potential Development Issues - Ranked By % Extremely/Very Concerned**

| Potential Development Issues   | % Extremely/<br>Very<br>Concerned | % Total<br>Concerned |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>There could be hidden costs for county taxpayers, in upgrading and maintaining roads, emergency services, and the infrastructure needed for this many new homes</i> | <b>59%</b>                        | <b>83%</b>           |
| <i>It could contribute to polluted run-off flowing into rivers, creeks, and the Chesapeake Bay</i>   | <b>58%</b>                        | <b>78%</b>           |
| <i>It could increase traffic congestion in the county</i>  | <b>57%</b>                        | <b>78%</b>           |
| <i>It is being built next to environmentally sensitive wetlands</i>  | <b>55%</b>                        | <b>76%</b>           |
| <i>It is too large a development for this area</i>   | <b>52%</b>                        | <b>70%</b>           |
| <i>It could take away wildlife habitat</i>   | <b>50%</b>                        | <b>75%</b>           |
| <i>It locates new development in areas along rivers and creeks that can be prone to flooding</i>   | <b>50%</b>                        | <b>70%</b>           |

|   |            |            |
|---|------------|------------|
| <i>It could strain local emergency response services</i>                                  | <b>50%</b> | <b>68%</b> |
| <i>It could mean increased difficulty evacuating during an emergency like a hurricane</i> | <b>44%</b> | <b>66%</b> |
| <i>It could change the rural character of our county</i>                                  | <b>40%</b> | <b>64%</b> |
| <i>It could hurt our quality of life</i>  | <b>39%</b> | <b>62%</b> |

- **These concerns are so grave that residents say they trump any potential economic benefits.** Three-in-five county residents (59 percent) and 65 percent of Kent Island residents agree with a statement that *“Even though the proposed development could create thousands of construction and related jobs and help some local businesses, the negative impact to water, traffic, and our way of life is too great for me to support it.”* Majorities of men and women, all age groups, and in every region of the county agree with this view. Fully 59 percent of Republicans, 63 percent of Democrats and 52 percent of independents agree that the negative impacts trump the positives.
- **Overall, it is clear that County residents overall and Kent Island residents specifically have grave concerns about the Four Seasons development project as currently structured and want state officials to carefully review the project .** The data repeatedly demonstrates that these concerns are not simply NIMBY local issues, as residents of every political persuasion, in every area of the county, and representing all key demographic sub-groups are cautious to resistant regarding the project. They are concerned about how it would affect their community, how it would affect the Chesapeake Bay, and how it would affect wildlife. Even considering the potential economic impact of the project, residents say the negative economic impacts override those benefits and they cannot support it.