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Key Findings from a Survey of Voters in Bend, Oregon on Natural Gas and Natural Gas Policy Options

From April 4-10, 2023, DHM Research conducted a survey sponsored by Cascade Natural Gas in Deschutes County to assess opinions about natural gas and potential policies to ban natural gas. The survey consisted of 500 registered voters (300 from the City of Bend and 200 from the rest of the county) and took approximately 12 minutes to complete. The margin for error, at 95% probability, is $\pm 4.4\%$ for the total county results, $\pm 5.7\%$ for the City of Bend, and $\pm 6.9\%$ for the rest of the county.

- **Bend voters overwhelmingly oppose natural gas bans.** Some elected leaders and advocates are considering proposals to ban natural gas. The survey tested two ways of describing these proposals: (1) banning natural gas in new homes and buildings and (2) requiring new homes and buildings to use only electricity for heating and cooking, sometimes called electrification. 66% of Bend voters oppose natural gas bans and 70% oppose electrification.
- **Bend voters like natural gas.** 69% of Bend voters have a positive impression of natural gas, roughly similar to the percentage of Bend voters with positive impressions of solar (75%) and hydropower (75%).
- **Bend voters value choice.** 82% agree that families and businesses should have a choice of energy options to meet their needs, and 81% agree that they shouldn't be forced to use only electric appliances.
- **82% of Bend voters would support the city council encouraging the use of renewable natural gas.** Only 10% would oppose such efforts.
- **Bend voters expect convincing evidence before restricting natural gas.** 89% of Bend voters agree that the city council should be required to determine the likely impacts of carbon emissions and costs to families and businesses before banning natural gas.
- **86% of Bend voters believe the city council should refer any proposal to ban natural gas to the ballot for a public vote.** Only 10% think the council should act on its own.
- **Bend voters think the most important issues in the city are homelessness and housing affordability.** Asked open-ended to name the top problem in the city, 32% named homelessness and 25% mentioned housing affordability. Together, most voters think the top issues to focus on are ensuring people have housing and can afford to stay in their homes.

DHM Research has been providing opinion research and consultation throughout the Pacific Northwest and other regions of the United States for more than 40 years. The firm is nonpartisan and independent and specializes in research projects to support public policy making. Its clients include media, governmental agencies, environmental organizations, business associations and corporations.