

N.O. voters prefer candidates for mayor, council who support reusing Charity Hospital, poll finds.

New Renwick survey shows that hospital controversy will be an election issue, and that position on Charity could determine winners and losers.

August 10, 2009 – New Orleans voters would favor candidates for mayor and City Council who support reusing Charity Hospital as the new Louisiana State University teaching hospital, according to a new poll.

The controversy over the new LSU hospital will be an issue in the Orleans mayor and City Council, according to the public opinion survey of New Orleans voters by political scientist Edward F. Renwick.

Building a modern hospital inside the shell of the old Charity is one alternative to create the new hospital. LSU has proposed a different alternative, constructing a hospital in the Lower Mid-City neighborhood.

Voters who said they would be more likely to vote for candidates who favored building a new hospital inside Charity clearly outnumbered, by a 4-to-1 margin, voters who said they would be less likely to vote for such candidates.

“It’s clear that candidates for mayor and City Council could win or lose according to their positions on the hospital plans,” said Dr. Renwick, the recently retired executive director of Loyola University’s Institute of Politics. “The voters at this point seem to have very clear preference for candidates who are open to putting a new hospital inside the old Charity building.”

These newly released findings of the political impact of the hospital issue follow last week’s release of other information from the poll. Last week’s release included these findings:

- The voters prefer building a new hospital inside Charity by a margin of 2-to-1 over the alternative location in the Lower Mid-City neighborhood. Sixty percent favored the Charity site, while 30 percent favored the Lower Mid-City site preferred by LSU.

- They also believe that building a new modern hospital inside Charity would cause faster recovery and economic development in the Central Business District, also by a 2-to-1 margin.

In the findings being released for the first time today, the voters also said they would favor candidates for City Council who would seek to involve the city and its citizens in planning the hospital project. The current City Council has declined to get involved in the hospital planning process or to hold public hearings, arguing that it has no jurisdiction over a state government project.

Seventy-four percent of the respondents would favor candidates seeking greater involvement by the city and its citizens in hospital plans, while only 13 percent would oppose. Of black voters, 77 percent favored candidates seeking greater involvement, and 69 percent of white voters favored such a position.

The survey – the first publicly released poll measuring voter attitudes on the hospital controversy -- asked voters how the controversy would affect their choices in the 2010 election for mayor and City Council. The primary election date is Feb. 6, and a run-off is scheduled for March 6.

“Would you say you would be more likely or less likely to vote for candidates who supported building a new hospital inside the old Charity, or would it not matter to you?”

By a 4-to-1 margin, voters said they would prefer such candidates. Forty-four percent said they would be more likely to support candidates who favor a new hospital inside Charity, compared to 11 percent who said they would be less likely. (Thirty-nine percent replied that it would not matter to them.)

Of black voters, 50 percent said they would be more likely to support candidates favoring a new hospital inside Charity, while only 8 percent said they would be less likely. Of white voters, 37 percent said they would be more likely to support candidates favoring a new hospital inside Charity, while only 13 percent said they would be less likely.

The voter preferences were consistent across all five City Council districts.

Dr. Renwick’s survey was conducted July 20-27 for Smart Growth for Louisiana, a non-profit New Orleans-based organization that supports citizen participation and transparency in planning. The poll analyzed a sample of 504 registered voters in Orleans Parish contacted over land phone lines. Its results have a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

The poll results released last week also included the following:

- Voters said they would prefer mayoral candidates who considered other alternatives for the hospital than the plan supported by Mayor C. Ray Nagin. Told that the mayor has committed City Hall to support LSU’s Lower Mid-City site, they were asked, “Would you prefer a candidate for mayor who continued Nagin’s approach or a candidate who would consider alternatives, including reusing Charity as a hospital?” While 20 percent said they would continue Mayor Nagin’s approach, more than three times as many – 64 percent – said they would support a candidate who considered alternatives.

- Eighty-three percent called on the New Orleans City Council to conduct public hearings to give citizens a voice in planning the new hospital. Only 14 percent opposed such hearings. The City Council has declined to hold hearings on the hospital plans.
- Voters strongly support a proposal for an objective analysis of the competing hospital plans, to determine which will do more good for New Orleans: 71 percent favored such an analysis, while 20 percent opposed the idea.

This last finding supports a request to Gov. Bobby Jindal by more than 60 neighborhood, professional and healthcare groups. They have asked him to order an independent study of both the LSU plan for Lower Mid-City and the alternative design for a modern hospital inside Charity, by the international architecture firm RMJM Hillier under a commission from the Foundation for Historical Louisiana. The groups argue that such a study would resolve conflicting claims over which hospital plan is less expensive and quicker to build, and which would bring greater benefits to New Orleans.

LSU's proposed \$1.2 billion medical center, along with a similarly large medical complex planned by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, would demolish homes and businesses and close public streets on 25 blocks, covering about 70 acres, of the Lower Mid-City neighborhood. They constitute the largest post-Katrina recovery project in the city, other than levee protection. Opponents of the plan say that the two hospitals can be built more quickly and less expensively by reusing the Charity building, which they say would avoid unnecessary destruction to Lower Mid-City and weakening of the CBD.

The survey did not include questions about the VA hospital.

Public Opinion Survey of Opinions and Attitudes Regarding Selected Issues and Personalities

Survey Director: Dr. Ed Renwick

Survey dates: July 20 – 27, 2009

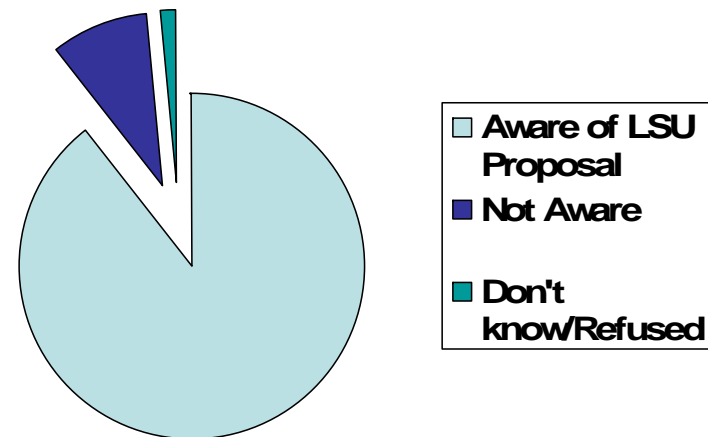
N=500 New Orleans Registered Voters

Margin of error= +/- 4.5%

Awareness of LSU Proposal

- LSU and the state propose to build an entirely new medical center to replace Charity Hospital at a cost of \$1 Billion or more. The state says that new construction is needed to meet modern hospital standards, and LSU will not reuse the old Charity building. Please tell me if you have heard a lot, a little, or nothing at all about this plan.

Aware of LSU Proposal	89.4%*
Not Aware	9.1%
Don't know/Refused	1.4%

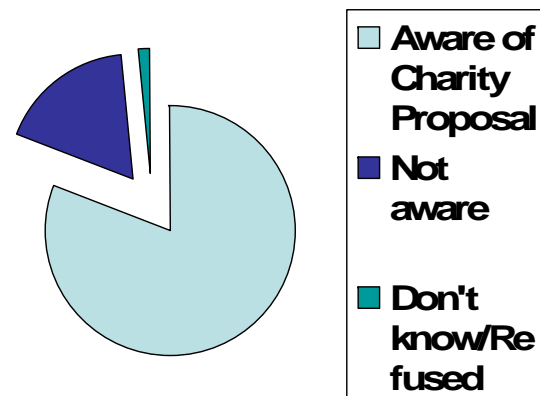


* "Aware" = 56.9% Heard a lot + 32.5% Heard a little

Awareness of proposal to Renew and Reopen Charity Hospital

- There is a proposal by some doctors, healthcare architects, and neighborhood leaders who advocate building a new, modern hospital inside the shell of the old Charity Hospital. They say this will be faster, cheaper, and less destructive of the area than LSU's proposal while meeting modern hospital standards. Please tell me if you have heard a lot, a little, or nothing at all about this plan.

Aware of Charity Proposal	80.7%*
Not aware	17.9%
Don't know/Refused	1.4%



*"Aware" = 44.9% heard a lot + 35.8% heard a little

WHICH HOSPITAL PROPOSAL DO YOU FAVOR?

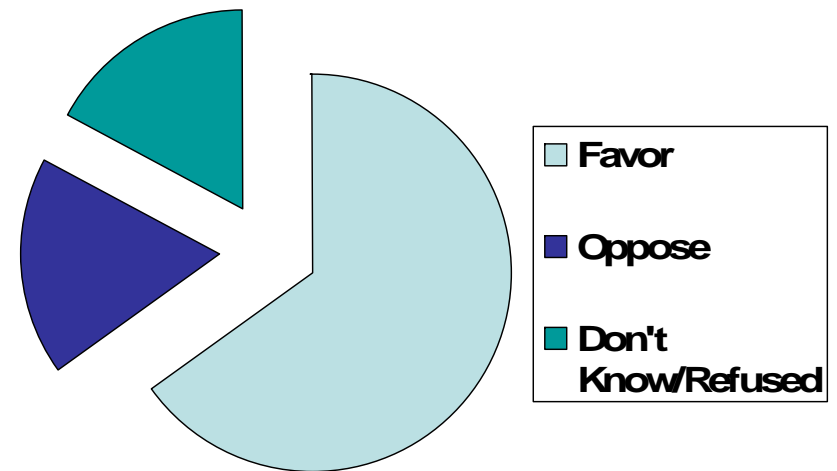
- Now, having heard about the two proposals, which one do you favor? The proposal for a new medical center in Lower Mid-city or the proposal to build a new hospital inside the Charity building?

LSU's proposed academic medical center in Lower Mid-City	29.6 %
A new hospital inside of the Charity building	59.7 %
Neither	3.6%
Don't Know/Refuse	7.6%

Objective Analysis of Hospital Proposals

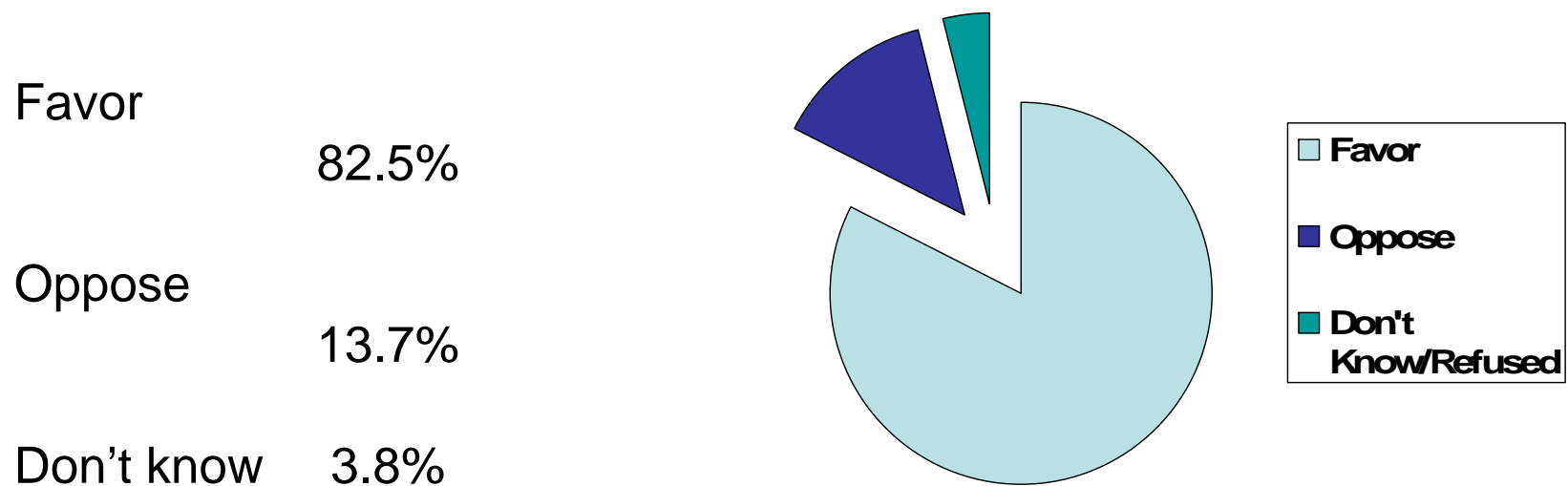
- More than sixty civic, neighborhood and professional organizations have called for an objective analysis of these two hospital proposals to determine which will do more good for New Orleans. Would you favor or oppose having this analysis?

Favor	71.4%
Oppose	19.6%
Don't know	18.9%



Public Hearings on Hospital Proposals

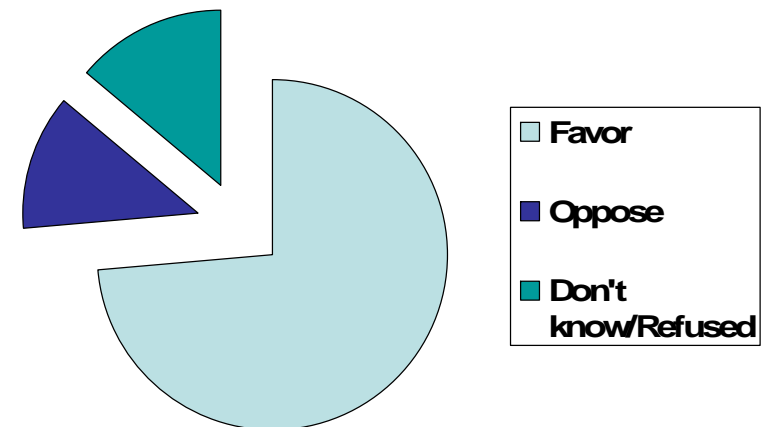
- These same civic, neighborhood, and professional organizations have also called on the New Orleans city council to hold public hearings on the hospital proposals to give our citizens a voice. would you favor or oppose the New Orleans City council holding such public hearings?



Favor or Oppose Council Candidates Who Involve Citizens in Planning Hospital Project

- Would you favor or oppose candidates for the City Council in next year's election who would seek to involve the city and its citizens in planning the hospital project?

•Favor Council Candidates	73.6%
•Oppose Council Candidates	12.5%
•Don't know/Refused	13.9%



More or Less Likely to Support Candidates Who Support Building A New Hospital Inside Old Charity

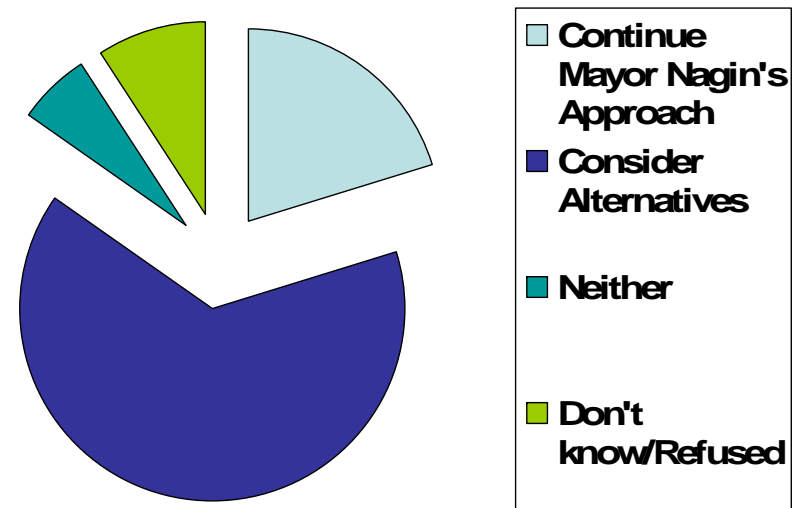
- In the upcoming election for Mayor and City Council, would you say you would be MORE Likely or LESS Likely to vote for candidates who supported building a new hospital inside the old Charity, or would it not matter to you?

•More likely	43.9%
•Less likely	10.5%
•Doesn't Matter/	38.6%
•Don't know/Refused	7.0%

Continue Mayor Nagin's Approach?

Mayor Ray Nagin has committed City Hall to support the LSU Hospital in Lower Mid-City. Would you prefer a candidate for mayor who continued Nagin's approach or a candidate who could consider alternatives, including reusing Charity as a hospital?

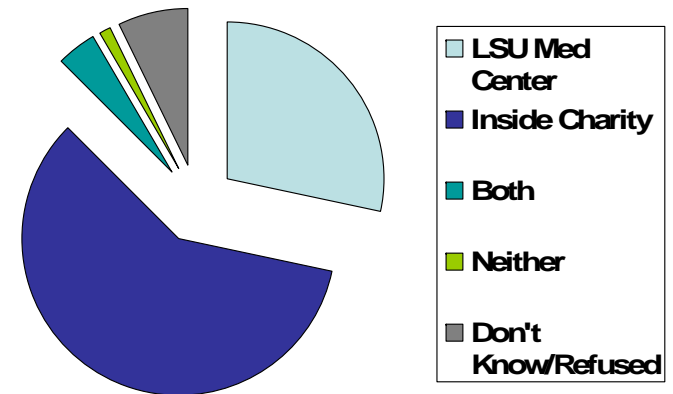
Nagin's approach	20.3%
Alternatives	64.4%
Neither	6.2%
Don't know/Refused	9.1%



Economic Development

- Which one of the following two proposals do you think would cause faster recovery and economic development in the Central Business District? LSU's proposed new medical center in Lower Mid-City, or a new modern hospital inside the Charity building?

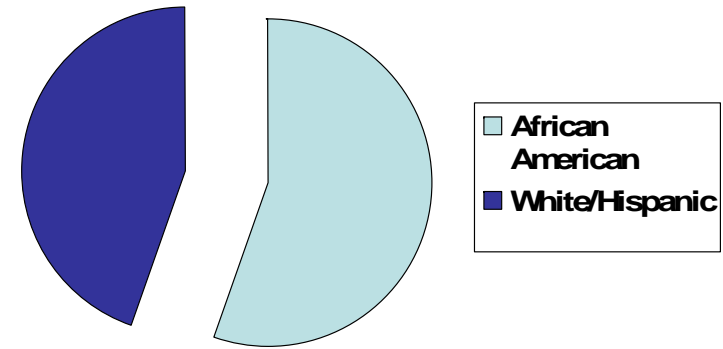
LSU Medical Center	28.3%
New Hospital Inside Charity	59.2%
Both	4.2%
Neither	1.2%
Don't know/Refused	7.2%



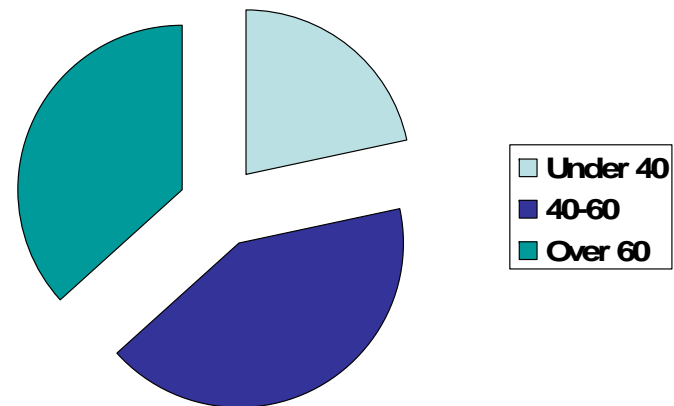
Sample Demographics

N=500 Orleans Parish Registered Voters

- African American 55.2%
- White/Hispanic 44.8%



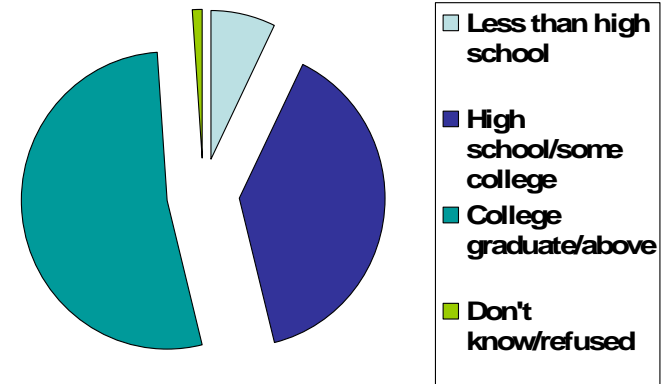
- Under 40 years old 21.6%
- 40-60 years old 41.3%
- Over 60 years old 36.5%



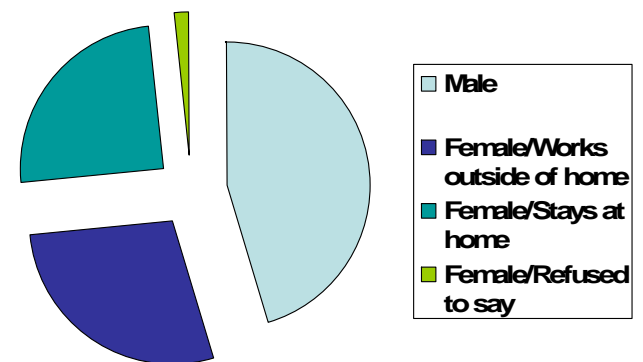
Sample Demographics (continued)

N=500 Orleans Parish Registered Voters

- Less than high school 7.2%
- High School/Some College 39.0%
- College graduate/Above 52.9%
- Don't know/Refused 1.0%



- Male 45.3%
- Female/Works outside home 28.0%
- Female/Stays at home 24.9%
- Female/Refused to say 1.8%



Sample Demographics (continued)

N=500 Orleans Parish Registered Voters

Council District A

– Uptown, Carrollton, University, Lakeview 23.4%

Council District B

– CBD, Mid City, Central City, Uptown 20.8%

Council District C

– Algiers, French Quarter, Marigny, Bywater , Esplanade Ridge 22.6%

Council District D

– 7th, 8th Wards, Gentilly, Near N.O. East 16.5%

Council District E

– Upper and Lower 9th Ward, N.O. East 16.7%