

Mixed Use Development/Annexation

Business Challenge/Environment

A top tier national developer proposed a 30-acre shopping center with “big box” anchors and 120 units of age-restricted housing. This critical strategic investment would require the annexation of 130 acres of unincorporated county land into a neighboring town. The developer filed formal annexation plans with the town but quickly withdrew them due to a hostile political climate. A negative vote would have remained in effect for a year, tying up tremendous resources while delaying any further development. We were engaged to develop and execute a plan to win approval of this vital annexation.

Outcome

We changed public attitudes on the annexation and generated a grassroots surge that changed the political landscape, resulting in the election of a pro-annexation mayor, new supportive board members, and a 4-1 victory.

Our Approach

We conducted a comprehensive political analysis including survey research and message testing and:

- Quickly identified numerous interest groups and activists inclined to support the project and began to organize them into a cohesive political force.
- From this new, energized and motivated group, support grew for a mayoral candidate who supported the project as well as a slate of pro-annexation candidates.
- Worked with the citizens group to help them build a sophisticated database and targeting program to identify supporters and educate residents.
- Helped supporters organize a variety of coalitions including local business leaders, senior citizens, youth and parent groups, and many others to actively support the project through letters to the editor, speaking at public hearings and contacting officials.
- Produced presentation and marketing materials and orchestrated highly successful public open forums for the development team.
- Conducted media training and created a sense of responsiveness on behalf of the development team.

CASE STUDY