

Senior Living Community

Business Challenge/Environment

Our client needed City Commission approvals to develop a high-end, 169-unit, 229-bed senior living complex to include independent living, assisted living and memory care facilities on 15 undeveloped acres at the shore of a picturesque lake surrounded by expensive single-family homes. The client had been told approvals were safely assured but engaged our assistance after a dozen residents, represented by an attorney, spoke in strong opposition at a Planning Commission hearing, resulting in a narrow, 4-3, vote of recommendation and extremely sympathetic coverage in local media. The opponents included leaders of a citizens group that had just successfully pressured county commissioners to reverse prior approval of a major master-planned development (including assisted living) proposed very near our client's site.

Our Approach

With little time until the City Commission hearing, we needed to recruit and demonstrate significant local support so commissioners would feel safe voting approval in the face of potential opposition. At the same time, we worked with our client to satisfy residents who objected because of view impacts from their homes across the lake.

- We created a Facebook page extolling the project and used a targeted Facebook advertising campaign to attract and educate city residents about its benefits. 273 residents 'liked' the page.
- An online tool prompted residents to send email letters of support directly to city commissioners. Each commissioner received 37 individual emails. We submitted hard copies of the letters prior to the hearing.
- With the client, we met with immediate neighbors and made reasonable adjustments to gain acceptance by most of them. We documented these efforts in a formal letter to document the client's sincere efforts to accommodate legitimate concerns.
- We visited nearby businesses to explain project benefits and collect signatures on letters of support to the commission.
- A neighborhood-focused petition drive collected signatures of support from more than 70 registered voters in neighborhoods where most commissioners lived.
- We helped the client obtain letters attesting to exemplary community involvement and fulfillment of all promises to officials in communities where it had existing facilities.
- We recruited a half-dozen local residents and business people who attended the public hearing and were prepared in advance with talking points.

Outcome

The City Commission approved our client's project by a 7-0 vote immediately upon conclusion of the public hearing.

CASE STUDY