



## Pardee Homes: Creating Compelling Messages and Plan To Pass a Complex Ballot Issue to Finish State 56

### *Situation*

Tom Gable, who had led complex programs for Pardee on previous land use issues, was retained to assist in the passage of a controversial development in San Diego called Pacific Highlands Ranch. City voters had to approve the neighborhood plan, called Proposition M on the ballot, for the project to move forward. But the plan was difficult to explain succinctly to the media and the public. More important for the entire north county, approval would free land for the completion of a major east-west state highway, which had been delayed at mid-point by anti-growth coalitions on environmental grounds. Proposition M also faced a fierce misinformation campaign from small but wealthy groups of nearby residents opposed to Pacific Highlands Ranch.

### *The Plan*

Tom and a team from his previous firm, The Gable Group, and the Yes on M committee analyzed polling research on attitudes in different parts of the county toward growth, development and various institutions and politicians. The research enabled the agency to break down the campaign intelligently into a series of simple messages that would be conveyed to key target audiences. It focused on specific elements of the development plan, including the proposition's uncommon base of support (the Sierra Club, planning groups, Endangered Habitats League, developers, the Chamber of Commerce). Passage would lead to traffic improvements, wildlife protection and the preservation of Carmel Mountain, a revered local landmark. The agency developed speeches and materials for public presentations and on-air debates, news releases and editorial board pitches for the media, plus placed selective advertising and direct mail pieces with graphic elements to demonstrate the positive environmental story.

### *The Results*

In the days leading up to the election, the campaign succeeded in winning the support of virtually all of San Diego's major media, including the San Diego Union-Tribune's editorial board. On Nov. 3, Proposition M passed with 53 percent of the vote. Government agencies moved forward immediately thereafter to speed completion of State 56 and Pardee started specific planning for its project.

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