



CAIS

TRUSTEE/SCHOOL HEAD

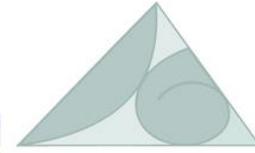
CONFERENCE

JANUARY 31, 2015

DENISE GUTCHES

DKG CONSULTING, INC.

DKGConsulting



Strategic Solutions for Business Enterprise

Neighbor Relations: A Critical Part of Your Master Plan

Neighbor/Community Relations: A Critical Component of Your Master Plan

- What is Neighbor/Community Relations Entail?
- Who's Responsible? Who's Involved?
- Knowing Your Community
- Developing Your Communications Strategy
- Preparing for a Master Plan or Major Building Project
- Land Use & Entitlement Planning
- Current & Emerging Issues

Neighbor/Community Relations: A Critical Component of Your Master Plan

- Cultivating a positive relationship with your neighbors and broader community is a critical component of your long-term constituent relations strategy
- Launching this strategy serves the school best when you can focus on developing a positive relationship with your community **BEFORE** you are in the middle of a master planning process

Community Relations

- Designing a Community Relations program is similar to any outreach and cultivation effort
 - Know your audience
 - Listen carefully
 - Communicate regularly and positively
 - Appropriately engage your community in the life of the school
 - Be genuine and consistent
 - Be gracious and thankful

Taking this a approach over the long-term will assure you that your master planning projects are more likely to be met with support from your community rather than opposition.

Who's Responsible? Who's Involved?

- The Board and Head of School are responsible for recognizing the importance having a successful Community Relations Plan
 - Institutionalize it as a core component of school operations
 - Devote the appropriate resources and staff to support this ongoing effort

Who's Responsible? Who's Involved?



The “Community Relations Liaison”

- Coordinates efforts across many areas of the school, including communications and facilities
- Responsible for keeping in regular contact with the community
- Is up-to-date on current issues, concerns and opinions of neighbors
- Knows community stakeholders as well as school opponents
- Stays abreast with community events, local politics and legislation

The Community Relations Liaison

- The Community Relations Liaison should be the direct school contact to your neighbors so neighbors know whom to call if there is an issue or an emergency
- Timely and proactive responsiveness is essential so neighbors feel like they are welcome to call at any time
- Maintain a log of all calls, especially complaints and how the school responded



The Community Relations Committee

Particularly when you are in the midst of a master plan or planning for a major project, establishing an ad hoc committee to plan, monitor and manage Community Relations should be considered.

Membership of this committee may include:

- **The Head of School**
- **The Community Relations Liaison**
- **Trustees**
- **Parents who live locally**
- **Credible members of the local community and neighbors who support the school**

Role of School Constituents



- Support and participation
- Understanding importance of neighbor relations
- Compliance with operational conditions

Knowing the Local Community



- Develop & maintain a database of the local community
 - Neighbors within a certain radius of the school
 - Key community influencers
 - Local governmental decision makers and influencers
- Use of the database is to
 - Provide regular and proactive communications to the local community
 - Identify neighbors' relationship with the school (“supporter”, “opposition” or “neutral”)
 - Maintain notes that are relevant to understanding and managing these key relationships

Communication Strategy

The Community Relations Communication Strategy should include a variety of means to keep your neighbors and community updated about the school

- Engage the community in the life of school:
 - ✦ **Postcards regarding upcoming events**
 - ✦ **Occasional invitations to attend appropriate events at the school such as lectures, performances, art exhibitions, and major athletic events**
- A semi-annual neighborhood newsletter
- Host at least an annual meeting on campus with your immediate neighbors



- **The Annual Neighbor Meeting**
 - Update on status of the school including upcoming events and major projects and plans
 - Provide a forum to bring issues forward and voice concerns, as well as share ideas and suggestions
 - Attended by HOS, at least one Trustee, the Community Relations Liaison, Facilities Director and other Key Administrators

**Providing open communication with your neighbors by listening and being proactive
BUILDS TRUST**

Stop, Look and Listen



- Regularly take a fresh look at your school through the eyes of your neighbors
 - Take a look at the school from across the street and understand just how the aesthetics of the neighborhood are impacted by the school's facilities
 - Take pause to **stop, look, and listen** during school events to get a better understanding of what kind of noise, traffic, and security issues your neighbors are faced with

The Master Plan

- If you are embarking on a master planning process or a major capital project, assembling your team of consultants and advisors is the critical first step



- The scope and complexity of your plan and circumstances will determine who you will engage and when

Assembling the Team of Experts



For complex and/or controversial projects involving entitlements such as a CUP, and particularly if you have a potentially contentious project with your community:

- **Architect**
- **Land Use Attorney or Consultant**
- **Environmental & Traffic Consultant**
- **Public Relations Firm**

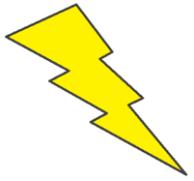


Managing Budget Expectations



- Costs associated with bringing in professionals
- Costs associated with NOT bringing in professionals
- Costs associated with not building relationships early and maintaining them
- Costs of possible concessions





Community Impacts

- Assess impacts of your proposed plan on the local community
- Be prepared to respond with mitigations, where possible
- Impacts can and will be the source for creating the opposition
 - **Increases in enrollment**
 - **New/More Traffic**
 - **Expanding the campus footprint**
 - **New use**
 - **New buildings**
 - **Campus expansion**
 - **Oppose “The Entitled”**
 - **NIMY bandwagon**

Entitlements



- Zoning varies by area and many independent schools exist within zones that require schools to obtain a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to operate in that location
- Obtaining or revising a CUP is a complex process and requires careful planning, strategy development and coordination
- CUP will define the scope and parameters by which a school can build and operate
- Know what to expect with a new/revised CUP
 - Review other area schools' recently issued CUPs
 - Review the political climate for support of independent schools

Entitlements and The Opposition

- With any major project you are bound to face some opposition from neighbors and/or the community
- Know what to expect and how to appropriately address their issues while maintaining a positive relationship with the community
- Expect petitions, signs and banners, defamation and planted misinformation, as well as protests and picket lines.
- On a larger scale, you might want to anticipate expect blocked financial arrangements, lawsuits, and people pulling “strings” at city hall

Establishing a sound Public Relations campaign is important

- Engage a PR firm with experience and relationships in your community
- Build a CASE for SUPPORT
- Always listen
- Build solid relationships with reporters and journalists
- Never underestimate the competition



Engaging the Community in Your Project

- Inform your neighbors of your intent early on to garner feedback and adequately prepare for issues
- Provide opportunities for neighbors to review renderings and plans
- Provide a chance for questions and to offer input during the planning process
- Make plans that leave room for compromise from the beginning
- Avoid spending extra money and/or resources to allow for compromise that you were unprepared for

Consensus Building & Compromise



- Works best with an established relationship
- Give time and opportunity for input
- Plans should give room for compromise
- Be prepared to compromise on some key areas
- Don't "give away the ranch" at the outset, pace your concessions
- Save something for the next application



Understand impacts on your neighbors

- **Increased noise levels**
- **Increased dust pollution**
- **Increase in construction traffic**
- **Security issues**

Advance planning These can be dealt with through direct contact with the school and the General Contractor during construction.



Be a Good Neighbor

- Listen
- Be proactive and responsive
- Be genuine
- Communicate regularly
- Get involved with the community
- Invite your neighbors to visit and engage them in the school

If you consistently approach your relationship with your community in this manner you will become a valued institution in your community and will maintain two priceless commodities: Goodwill and Reputation

Current & Emerging Issues

- PILOTS, FILOTS and SILOTS
- Time limitations to make your campus improvements
- Measurable traffic reductions
- Neighborhood protection funds
- Limitations on campus use
- Required communication (meetings/dissemination of calendars)
- Construction mitigation measures

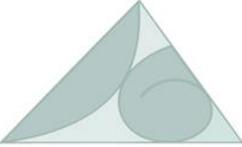
Lessons Learned

- Think long term
- Start early
- Appoint a Community Liaison
- Earn the neighbors trust, do what you say
- Hire best team (you are as good as your weakest link)
- Be prepared to give concessions
- Outreach new neighbors
- Have a real estate acquisition strategy
- Remember that your City Council office is most important political relationship
- Attract Neighbors as students
- Implement a Good Neighbor Policy for your constituents
- Once you get entitlement, start preparing for the next one

CONTACT



DENISE GUTCHES
DKG CONSULTING, INC.
DENISE@DKGCONSULT.COM
(818)566-6610

DKGConsulting 
Strategic Solutions for Business Enterprise