

Sparking change in Irondequoit

A presentation to the Pioneer Library System
on the Irondequoit Library Proposal

Oct. 17, 2014

by Mike Kennerknecht



@Kennerknecht

Get Exposed

TIPPING POINT COMMUNICATIONS

Agenda

- Youth Fiction – About me
- Reference – Background on Irondequoit Library Proposal
- Adult Fiction – What we were up against
- Periodicals – P.O.S.S.E. integrated approach
- Nonfiction – Lessons from the campaign

The challenge

- Residents would vote in a public referendum to bond for \$13M to build a new central library
- In 2009, voters **rejected** a previous library proposal
- After a first successful vote, legal challenges forced a second vote

<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/article/20121222/NEWS01/312220045/irondequoit-development-positive-negative>

Irondequoit may be at a tipping point

Written by Justin Murphy, Staff Writer
Jan. 20

democratandchronicle.com



David Heims, general manager of McMillan Marmain Irondequoit, stands in the company's large addition currently under construction. / ANNETTE LEVIN/Staff photographer

First library hearing scheduled

The first public hearing on the proposed new library will be held at 7 p.m. Jan. 17 at Bishop Kearney High School, 125 S. Kings Highway. For more information on the proposal, go to irondequoitlibrary.com

IRONDEQUOIT — This much is certain: a

decade from now, the town will be a much different place.

The Medley Centre will be a bustling mixed-use attraction with rows of stores, brand-new apartments and hotel rooms and a theater. Or it will be a further deteriorated shell of a failed shopping mall, rusting ignominiously between the town's main thoroughfares.

I-Square will be Irondequoit's answer to Schoen Place in Pittsford, a new nexus of activity for a section of town that badly needs it. Or it will stay spitefully vacant, a monument to stubborn refusal and failed negotiation.

The new library will be a shiny community center that draws the town's two sides together and stands as proof of public-minded municipal leadership. Or it will fall victim to the same bitter resistance to change that makes town officials and developers blanch at angry public hearings.

The seeds of both visions of the future have their roots in Irondequoit today, and there's no easy

way to predict which way it will go.

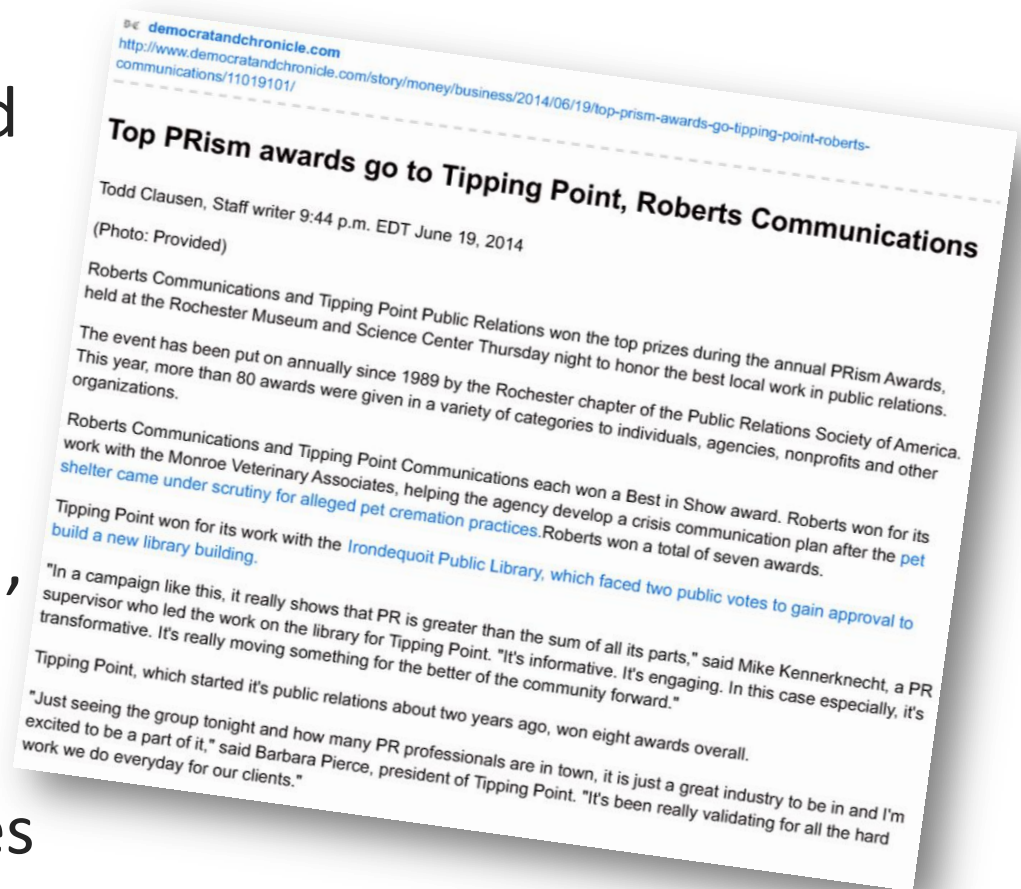
First, the positive. The town believes it has reversed a formerly obstinate approach to development and points to several projects, large and small, as proof local business

is turning a corner.

The national gym chain LA Fitness opened a 45,000-square-foot facility on East Ridge Road in November. Titus Tavern is opening across from the I-Square site. Two relatively new and proudly local shops, Simply

Our approach

- Tipping Point executed an award-winning comprehensive public affairs campaign, including media relations, social media, public forums, videos and more to deliver overwhelming victories in both elections



Who we were up against

- Individuals regularly critical of Irondequoit government
 - Citizens were concerned about increases in taxes and spending
- Irondequoit Citizens for a Better Government
 - Nonprofit organization led by a well-funded opponent
 - Spent thousands of dollars on a lawsuit challenging the first vote and ads attacking the library proposal in both referendums
 - Wrote multiple letters to the editor in the *Irondequoit Post* and authored guest essays in the *Democrat & Chronicle*
 - Attended public information meetings and planted questions
 - Printed flyers and distributed them door-to-door
 - Complained to businesses displaying lawn signs
 - Denied paying for or coordinating thousands of robocalls opposing the library proposal

Attack ads from the opposition

Library Tax Increase Vote

Tuesday April 23 9 AM - 9 PM

Proposal to Close Two Library Branches
Massive Building Proposed
 at Town Hall site. New building would be **3 Times the size of Town Hall**. Up to 2 1/2 fir size of the total of 2 current branches. Unr extra space also proposed.

Longer Trips - 3,000 more
 Two current library branches are closer y than one library branch would be. An est car trips per day would converge to T only one lane in each direction and is

13 Million Dollar Bond Iss + \$9 Million Interest = \$
for a 30 year
Biggest Tax Increa

Tax increase is proposed just the "County Services to the in January. Check y Costs to Operate a 60,0 2 or 3 times the cost

Impact Study or
 Environmental imp noise etc. have: High School Stu of two curr high scho forced t

More de Paid f organi go

Bond - Tax Increase Vote

April 23 - 9 AM - 9 PM - Mark Your Calendar

Proposal to Close Two Library Branches
Justified by the Facts
increase for 30 Years
 up to 13 Million Dollar

Library Bond Vote - Tax Increase

Vote Next Tuesday April 23, 9 AM-9PM: East Iron - Vote at Ridge Culver Fire District Hall, 2960 Culver Rd. West Iron - Vote at St. Paul Fire District Hall - Cooper Rd., Near St. Paul Blvd.

Up to 22 Million Dollar Tax Increase
Proposed 13 Million Dollar Bond Debt Vote Plus
9 Million Dollars for interest on the debt

Massive Proposed Library *next to town hall*
Building Not Needed & 3 times larger

- Two current conveniently located library branches are structurally sound and closer to most residents
- Both branches can be enlarged for about half the \$13 million cost of the proposed building
- Information from an architect, an engineer and a structural engineer support enlarging the branches

High School Students Lose - The closeness and convenience of two current libraries near Eastridge & Irondequoit high schools would be eliminated. Students would be forced to walk up to 2 miles extra on two very busy roads regardless of weather/hazards.

Environmental Review Law - Not Done
 Procedures of the law were not complied with as required before the town board voted to place the Library bond/tax increase on the ballot. Also a traffic report/study was not done by a professional traffic engineer even though thousands of more cars will be congested at town hall and Titus Ave.

Traffic Congestion/Hazard
 Reduced to one branch, estimated current Library traffic of 450,000 patrons/yr to increase to an estimated 540,000 resulting in an estimated 3,000 more car trips per day on Titus Ave which only has one lane in each direction and which is already congested.

Do We Really Need To Raise Taxes Even Higher for an unneeded Massive building when Irondequoit Town & School Property Taxes are the highest in Monroe County?

Not Enough Parking for Proposed Library

Parking at Town Hall is already taken up by the town court, town hall departments, Police Dept. and Public works Dept. We counted only 50 spaces available but the Library's own report, "Thomas Land Parking Needs Summary" states a **minimum of 150** parking spaces needed for the proposed building. Architects' drawings lack the required 150 parking spaces for the branches now have a total of 187 spaces. How can you build a building twice the size of current branches and yet have fewer parking spaces than current branches? Even town code requires 150-200 parking spaces. For 45,000-60,000 size building. Will they demolish the public works building and to build a new public works building somewhere to make room for parking of the proposed Library building?

What a "Yes" Vote Does

- * Raises Taxes by \$22 Million, \$13 million Plus \$9 million interest
- * Increases taxes by \$61,000/mo every month for 30 Years!
- * Closes 2 library branches which are close to the 2 high schools
- * Creates parking problems & traffic problems at Town Hall and on Titus Ave

Irondequoit Property Taxes-Highest in Monroe County!

- Town Government Property Tax Rate is now the **highest** of 20 towns in Monroe County.
- East Irondequoit School Property tax rate is now the **highest** of 28 school districts in Monroe county
- West Irondequoit School Property tax rate is now the **2nd highest** of 28 Monroe county school districts.

High property taxes depress home values per realtors

What a "No" Vote Does

- * Keeps 2 convenient Libraries
- * Avoids \$22 Million Tax Increase
- * Keeps libraries within walking distance of the two high schools
- * Sends a "Message" to the politicians to expand and improve our two convenient libraries on bus routes at Half the cost.

\$61,000 payment per month for 30 years!
 Plus **More** costs to operate a massive building **two times the size** of the two current Library branches!

Double The Tax Cap
 Proposed tax increase is double the tax cap set by N.Y. State

Irondequoit Post | Thursday, April 11, 2013

The first I-Square building will house the I-Square office, I-House (which is moving from its present location just west, Edward... a new private coffee and a shop, Nolan... the first be have space and meet lan said, ing will roof ga open t patro es be is a' wa gr to

Tax Increase - Bond Vote

Tuesday April 23, 9 AM - 9 PM Mark Your Calendar!
Proposal to Close Two Conveniently Located Library Branches
Up to 22 Million Dollar Bond Debt Vote Plus
9 Million Dollars for Interest on the debt
for 30 years!

Library Bond Issue Vote

Proposal to Close Two Library Branches
Massive 60,000 sq ft Building Proposed
 at Town Hall Lawn. New building would be **2 1/2 times** the size of Town Hall. Would be **2 1/2 times** the size of the total of 2 current branches.

Traffic Congestion/Hazard
 due to only one branch. Estimated current Library traffic of 450,000 patrons/yr to increase to an estimated 540,000 resulting in an estimated 3,000 more car trips per day on Titus Ave which only has one lane in each direction and which already is well travelled.

13 Million Dollar Bond Issue + \$9 Million Interest
 Up to 13 Million Dollars plus an estimated \$9 million in interest would be a tax increase for a **30 year tax burden**

The estimated annual bond payments of \$733,000 paid on a monthly basis would be \$61,000... per month increase for town residents. They claim it may be less than that but previous amounts were as high as 16 and 17 million dollars

Impact on the Environment
 Environmental impact reports of traffic, drainage, etc. have not been performed as required by law.

Irondequoit Citizens for Better Government inc. a non-profit organization registered with N.Y. State
 102 informing the public on government issues and
 ons of elected & appointed public officials.
 Richard J. Barone, Chairman, 342-1748

Irondequoit
 on registers.
 on registers.
 ment issues an
 and J Barone Chair, 342

Irondequoit Citizens for Better Government inc. a non-profit organization registered with N.Y. State and since 2002 informing the public on government issues and actions of elected and appointed public officials. Richard J. Barone, Chairman 342-1748

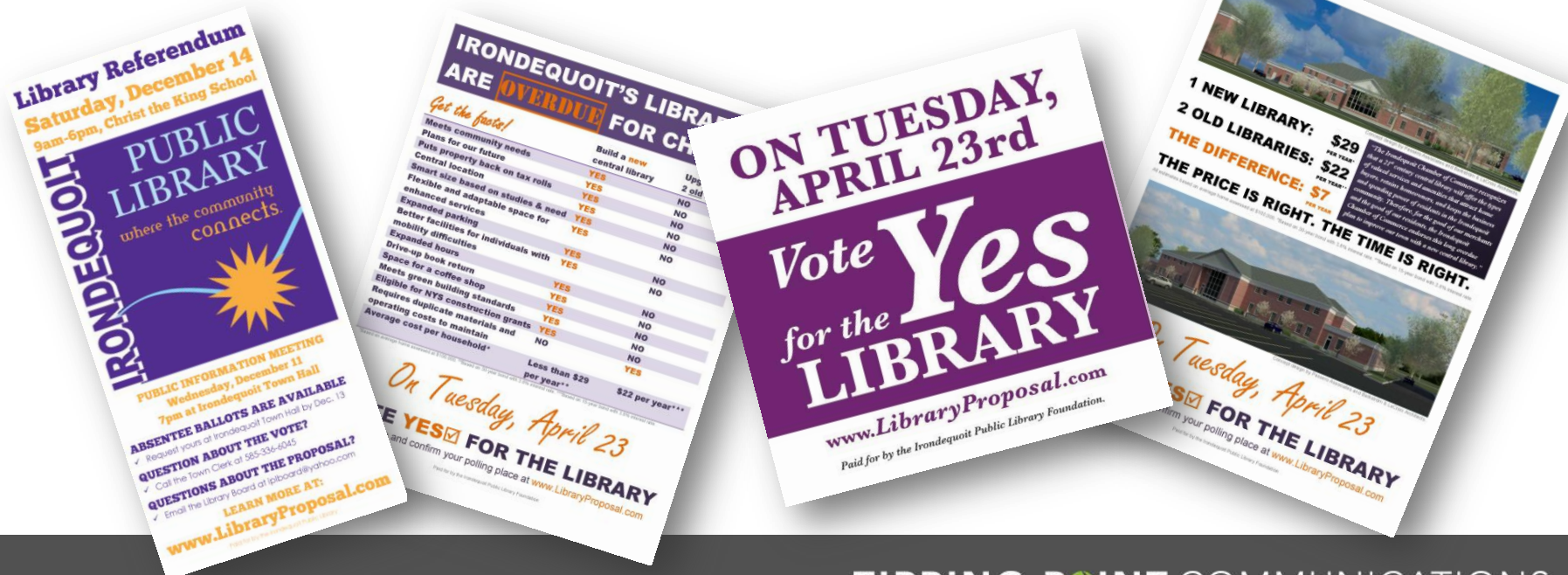
POSSE: An integrated public affairs solution

- Paid media
- Owned media
- Shared media
- Search (SEO/SEM)
- Earned media



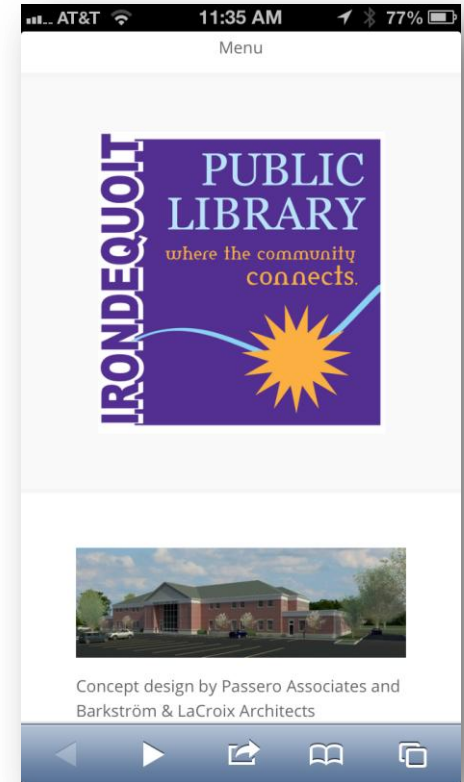
Paid media

- Promoted posts and sidebar ads on Facebook
- Full- and half-page ads and sticky notes in the *Irondequoit Post*
- Inserts and sticky notes in the *Democrat & Chronicle*
- Robocalls to over 10,000 households



Owned media

- Branded collateral
 - Palm (key) cards for door-to-door canvassing
 - Lawn signs, bumper stickers and buttons
 - Handouts for public information meetings
 - PowerPoint presentations
- Website (LibraryProposal.com)
 - Registered multiple domain names to be safe
 - Responsive design created and managed with SquareSpace
 - Provided background info, documents, news, event info, FAQ
 - 16,000+ unique page views



Shared media



- Facebook (700+ likes) & Twitter (100+ followers)
 - Share news, images and events with supporters & reporters
 - Monitor and respond to conversations (positive and negative)
- MailChimp (600+ subscribers, 46% open rate)
 - Weekly email newsletter to supporters (mobile-friendly)
 - Clear calls to action for lawn sign locations, volunteers, etc.
- SlideShare (2,000+ views online)
 - Hosted PowerPoint presentation to embed on website
- Vimeo and ICAT (Irondequoit Cable Access TV)
 - Meetings recorded, hosted online, broadcast on TWC Ch. 12
 - Produced FAQ videos for broadcast and online viewing
 - Watch the videos at <http://vimeo.com/channels/publiclibrary>



Search (SEO/SEM)

- Search engine optimization (SEO) with website and PR tactics:
 - PR activities generated links to the website in media coverage, helping to increase search rankings and organic web traffic
 - Google Analytics confirms news coverage drove traffic to the website, with spikes after media events and news stories
- Search engine Marketing (SEM) with Google AdWords
 - Ads are geo-targeted to computers and mobile devices



[New Irondequoit Library](#)
www.libraryproposal.com
Learn about the library proposal.
Vote in the referendum on April 23.

Earned media

■ Media relations

- Draft and distribute press releases
- Guest essays in the *Democrat & Chronicle*
- Coordinate interviews, press conferences and photo ops
- Ghostwrote letters to the editor for supporters to submit

■ On-the-ground activities

- Target voters in priority election districts for canvassing
- 20+ presentations to the public and community organizations
 - Utilized a special format to maintain order
 - Revised presentations
 - Prepared closing remarks
 - Combined materials into a 1-page handouts



The results

- The referendum passed by nearly a 2-to-1 margin, **twice!**
- Voter turnout exceeded the previous failed referendum
- The Irondequoit Library has a clear mandate to move forward with the support of the community



How we worked

- Tipping Point Communications developed a comprehensive communications plan with timeline to define a strategic roadmap and guide all activities
- We managed all approved tactics in the plan
- We worked with the clients to continually identify new and relevant PR opportunities
- We reported regularly on completed actions and results
- Our team was accountable for all planned activities



Lesson 1: Filling the room isn't enough

- Public events must serve multiple purposes
 - Distribute branded collateral
 - Collect contact information from supporters
 - Display compelling visuals
- Control the message and format
 - Don't allow meetings to be hijacked
 - Ensure there is engagement
- Leverage media coverage
 - Drive traffic to website and social media
 - Communicate key messages
 - Promote upcoming events

Lesson 2: Know your voters

“All politics is local.”

-Tip O’Neill, fmr. Speaker
of the U.S. House of
Representatives

“All politics is personal.”

-Mike Kennerknecht, fmr.
speaker at Pioneer
Library System



Lesson 3: Call out your opposition

- Define your opponent, don't let them define you
 - Their name isn't on the ballot, so name recognition doesn't matter
 - Since they tell the public what they're against, tell the public what they're for and really about
- Respond quickly to attacks to combat misinformation
 - Turn negatives into positives
 - Don't delay or deceive
- Publicly state the opponent's strategy
 - It's easier to fight what you can see
 - Build sympathy from the public

“When life gives you lemons, make grape juice, sit back and watch the world wonder how you did it.” -Anonymous

Lesson 4: Don't try to do it alone

- Seek support from businesses, organizations and leaders
 - Pursue and publicize endorsements
 - Surrogates help build support and respond to attacks
- Empower supporters to show their support
 - Solicit letters to the editor
 - Cultivate an online community on social media
- Remember to acknowledge and thank supporters!
 - Thank-you notes, link/logos on website, special events, etc.

Lesson 5: Advocacy is never out of season

- There's no better time to start than right now
 - Don't let planning and perfection impede progress
 - Be flexible – plans seldom survive contact with the enemy
- Relationships and campaigns take time
 - Advocacy is marathon, not a sprint
 - Politics is getting people to know, like and trust you
- Don't stop after the vote
 - Review what worked and didn't work, make adjustments
 - Continue to build and maintain support and engagement

Let's keep in touch

Mike Kennerknecht, PR Supervisor

Tipping Point Communications

1349 University Ave

Rochester, NY 14607

585-340-1119, ext. 124

mike@tippingpointcomm.com

www.tippingpointcomm.com

[@Kennerknecht](https://twitter.com/Kennerknecht) 

