Westchestergov.com

Robert P. Astorino
County Executive

Kevin J. Plunkett
Deputy County Executive

SENT BY ELECTRONIC MAIL

August 16, 2012

James E. Johnson, Esq.
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United States ex rel Anti-Discrimination Center of Metro New York, Inc. v. Westchester County, New York (No. 06 Civ. 2860 (DLC))

Dear Jim:

In my letter to you dated August 8, 2012, I mentioned that WRO was holding focus groups to test the *See You Living in Westchester* proposal for a mass transit and commuter advertising campaign that we had previously shown you.

Yesterday, we met with WRO and received the Focus Group Results and Comments, which are enclosed.

The comments speak for themselves and are sufficiently negative to preclude proceeding in this direction. However, a number of the comments were instructive, and are being studied as we consider a new approach.

To that end, after you and your team have had an opportunity to review the comments from the focus groups, we would welcome your input and guidance before the new approach is finalized. We suggest a meeting to discuss the next steps after your review of the WRO results and comments.

Very truly yours,

Kevin

Kevin J. Plunkett
Deputy County Executive

Enclosure

Cc: Hon. Robert P. Astorino, County Executive
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REDUCE REUSE RECYCLE

WESTCHESTER RESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES, Inc.

Focus Group Results and Comments

Focus Group 1: August 8, 2012, 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm
Focus Group 2: August 8, 2012, 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

MEMORANDUM

To: Norma Drummond
From: Westchester Residential Opportunities, Inc.
Date: August 13, 2012
Re: Focus Groups

Per your request, Westchester Residential Opportunities, Inc. ("WRO") recruited participants and conducted focus groups to determine the reaction to advertisements proposed by Westchester County. A copy of the proposed advertisements is attached. Although this is not a statistically accurate survey, the composition of the panels reflects WRO's efforts to select participants from diverse demographic backgrounds, including race, national origin, age and county of residence.

The focus groups were conducted in WRO's office as two separate panels on August 8, 2012. WRO's observations are included in italicized font.

Conclusions: The feeling among all participants of both focus groups was negative. The predominant themes were the ads had no connection to housing, and were condescending, regardless of the racial or ethnic background of the participants, or their place of residence.

Focus Group 1* (8/8/12 at 3 p.m., 13 participants)

Demographics** -
This group consists of 13 people; 10 females and 3 males. The participants range in age from 24 to 62. Five of the participants are white and 5 are Black. The remainder of the group are Native American (1), Hispanic (1) and Asian (1). Six of the participants disclose their national origin as American, 1 as Indian, 1 as Greek and 2 as Jamaican. Two of the participants reside in the Bronx, 1 in Queens and 10 in Westchester (5 in White Plains, 1 in Chappaqua, 1 in Peekskill, 1 in Mamaroneck, 1 in Mt Vernon.).

General Themes – Focus Group 1

- No one liked the sports images, thought they were confusing and not relevant
- Everyone liked the idea of ads that focus on people, but think they should contain a diverse group of people, not one individual
- Obvious that someone inside Westchester created this, it's a very "Westchester-centric" campaign and very arrogant
- Most people didn't really like any of them
- Think the focus should be about enticing people to move here, "sell them on the county", don't assume they WANT to live here
- Should be more welcoming "Westchester wants you…"
- Would like to see images of houses/communities
- GET RID OF "See you living in Westchester" – makes no sense and confuses the issue
- Of the images of people, 2 preferred to have a series of ads, each with different faces, and 8 preferred a collage of diverse people on every ad.

Focus Group 1 – Participants Reactions to Slides:

Slide 1:

#11 said it didn't catch the eye,
Participant #4 said the curly font is juvenile and she did not take it seriously, also the A in affordable is lowercase and there was no spacing between the words.

Participants #9 & #10 – blends together, nothing that would make them look at it
Participant #2 – no idea what issue its trying to address

Slide 2:

Participant #4 – I don't even understand what the phrase means
Participants #9, 6, 8 – thought it had something to do with water or living near a beach because of the long grass
Participant #8 –it seems a little uppity, like a resort town
Looks like a greeting card

Slide 3:

Too much white space
Does not get across the point of moving to Westchester County.
Felt the message of "Goal = Home" is that owning a home is the goal.
General consensus, too many fonts, too disconnected, too busy
Gives a very "soccer mom" vibe– at first glance looks like an ad for a recreation soccer league
Not "Westchester specific"

Slide 4:

Your eye goes to all the logos
Logos are too small
The "Act Now" information is hidden, didn't even notice it on slide 3 and barely noticed it on this one
Not as busy but there's no way they would be able to read it on a bus (even if they were inside the bus)
Too many logos, not cohesive

Slide 5:

Sports theme dominates homes
Basketball is already available in NYC
"Home = Score" makes no sense
Again looks like its promoting a rec basketball league
It's just a different sport, doesn't change the problems with the soccer ad
Sport message overshadows "home" message

Slide 6:

SLAM DUNK is too "in your face". When you dunk you are very "in your face", it is not a positive action.
It doesn't make sense.
"Slam dunk = home" was very negatively received.

Slide 7:

Friendlier
Bottom is "distracting"
Racist
Elitist attitude is assumed
"You Can" is not readily visible
Assumes discrimination
"Westchester County" – who is this?
"You Can" doesn't answer the question
"More affordable than you think" would be better
Says to call a number to make your move but you don't know what that number connects to or who you will be speaking to – not enough info
Background doesn't pop but better than blue
Elitist
It's friendlier and more on point than the sports ads
Participant #10 = more pleasant but white strip on the bottom still ugly
The "you can" doesn't seem to answer the question asked
Participant #12 saw it as coming across racist
Participant # 8 – likes it better than the sports but still thinks it should be rephrased.
Group thought all the slogans/catch phrases were negative. If the County wants to try to brand this campaign try something more positive like "Westchester County: more affordable than you think"

Slide 8:

Targeting to African Americans and young people
Man" looks friendly"
"(You Can)" is not visible
Without the green strip it looks more connected
Message comes across worse than in slide 7
Blends together – too much going on
Still doesn't answer the question asked
Image is friendly (good neighbor)
Looks like it targets AA/young demographic

"You can" had to be pointed out, nobody saw it

Slide 9:

The open space is "too big" and "out of proportion"
The italicized writing: "too small" and "make darker"
The man "looks goofy"
"Wow factor" of the open green space
"Assumes everyone wants to live here"
Assumes everyone wants to live in Westchester but doesn't give a reason – very snobby and elitist
"Learn more…" part at the bottom is the most important part so it should be darker and NOT in cursive or italic font
Background color is overpowering
Image looks goofy here
Cannot read or see info at the bottom
Seems out of proportion - Too much unused open space then a jumbled mess at the bottom

Slide 10:

Image looks like "someone who can actually afford here"
General consensus would be one ad with several different people of varying backgrounds, ages, marital/familial statuses

Slide 11:

Negative
"The glasses are bad"
"The attitude is negative"
"Written by an older person"
"Envision" – NO
Envision" with image of person in sunglasses is contradictory and stupid
The catch phrase "and, uh, why can't you live here" is snobby, arrogant, VERY negative and just bad all around
Looks like a hipster – like it was written by someone older and slightly out of touch who was "trying to imagine what a young cool trendy person living in the city would want to see"
Has the opposite effect, does NOT make them want to live here
Mother with kids would be very turned off by this ad
As soon as the group saw it they laughed, it was universally disliked

Slide 12:

"She looks bored"
"Afford to what?"
"Show a house"
When asked if they could determine the race and/or ethnicity of the person, participants replied: "Asian", "Hispanic", Bi-racial"
A single person in the ad does not get the "diversity feeling" across
"Who said you can't afford to" – afford to what???
Nothing to do with housing, message is totally lost
Whole group would like to see the ads more focused on housing
Reaction to the image was neutral
Again, too much empty space
She looks bored
If participants HAD to pick this was the best so far (breakdown – 2 liked black male the best, 4 liked this the best, 4 liked mother/daughter the best)

Slide 13:

"One person shows nothing"
"priced out"…message is more clear, but still not clearly about housing
Better but still not good
When asked to compare this version with the other 2 in the series with the same female image, participants judged this slide to be the best of the 3 (12, 13, 14)

Slide 14:

Attitude
"…who said you can't what?"
"Now exactly who said you can't" – accusatory, dripping with attitude, almost like scolding,
Awkward
"Can't do what??"
Sounds combative
Would be slightly better if they took out the "now exactly" and it simply said "who said you can't", however still not a positive, welcoming slogan
None of the participants liked this

Slide 15:

Feels like it is targeting retirement age people for senior housing
No one preferred this image
When asked what this image reminds them of, participant replied "retirement" – many agreed

Slide 16:

Gives the feeling that you leave the city and come to Westchester when you have kids
Still would target the AA community, not a diverse image
Conveys feeling of good schools, family oriented
When asked what this image reminds them of, participants replied "family oriented", "makes you think of schools"

Slide 17:

Needs a younger single person
"There are no complete families here"
No complete families (assumes they wouldn't need affordable housing)
Would like to see a group of people standing together not just a collage of blocked distinct pictures

Slide 18:

"Too negative"
Font size is "too challenging" but the font style is "good"
The photo of the woman looks "outdated"
"And you can't live here because" is like a challenge, combative but the font size and style is better overall
Still hate this image, very outdated and early 90s

Slide 19:

Looks like an ad for "school for the blind", "sunglasses"
Looks like she's "giving you the finger"
Envision is still contradictory to the image with sunglasses on, envision what???
Could be an ad for an optometrist or sunglass store…no message conveyed here
None of the participants seemed to know what is going on here

Slide 20:

"'Fair and affordable' sounds like a State/government run program"

"Looks like a dead body chalk outline" at a crime scene
Looks like one of the targets used at a shooting range
Inside the head: "too much wording", "focuses on commuting", "there are good schools in the city too", should be a thought bubble instead", "not grabbing"
The outline of the head is "targeting a male"
"More affordable than you think" would be better
Focus on education/space is good
Not Westchester specific – doesn't highlight things that are unique to the county
Commute comment is actually probably not true
Too much wording in a font that is IMPOSSIBLE TO READ
Participant #8 – first impression wouldn't pull him in, nothing to "grab onto and make you take a second look"
Like the dotted line image because it doesn't target any one particular demographic
Not positive, should focus more on being welcoming and that "Westchester County wants you" not "You want Westchester county"
Please note typo in the word "live"

Slide 21:

Please see slide 20 comments

Slide 22:

"Too wordy"
No connection with housing
The phrase "Recreation is super" sounds "stupid"
No connection housing
Like that the words are outside of the head rather than in the head (inside the head gives a very jumbled, frantic feeling) but still too much wording in a bad font

Slide 23:

"Too much logo stuff"
"We want you" would be better – it's "more positive and says why"
No pictures of houses or communities
"Get rid of the sea grass"
Needs a connection with housing
Don't use "super"
Again no connection to housing, but much more positive.

This slide got the best reaction of any of the slides

*Participants in Focus Group 1 were asked to wear name tags with numbers corresponding to their signature on the Sign-in-Sheet. To the extent possible, WRO has attributed comments to the individual speaker. We did not use this procedure in Focus Group 2.

**Some participants declined to disclose their age, address, race and/or national origin

Focus Group 2 (8/8/12 at 6 p.m., 10 participants)

Demographics -**

This group consisted of 10 people; 6 females and 4 males. The participants range in age from 18 to 67. Seven of the participants are White and 3 are Black. One of the participants disclosed his national origin as Nigerian and 8 listed American as their national origin. One participant resides in the Bronx, 1 in Orange County and 8 in Westchester (4 in White Plains, 1 in Tarrytown, 1 in Harrison, 1 in Larchmont, 1 in Pelham.)

General themes – Focus Group 2:

- "Affordable" has a negative connotation
- "Fair" means "equal"
- When asked if they would prefer to see many people in the form of a collage or a series of ads, each with one individual, participants preferred the concept of a collage
- All the ads have a pre-conceived notion of Westchester
- They need a connection with housing
- Ads should be more positive and explain why people should move to Westchester
- Of the 3 themes, 2 people liked the sports theme, 8 people liked images of people, and no one like the dotted heads.
  Very strong feelings expressed that the ads were amateur quality and did not get the message across effectively.
- Too many tag lines - pick one!
- Some of the white people felt the ads were accusing Westchester of being bland.
- Some of the black people were very offended by the ads, using such language to describe the ads as uppity and racist, others described the ads as snobbish, elitist, patronizing, condescending, stereotyping.
- Felt like the ads gave the impression that every minority was poor and oppressed and excluded, and now we were giving them permission to move in.
- Some felt the ads were too "Westchester - centric" in that they assumed that everyone wants to live in Westchester but couldn't because of cost or discrimination. Not true.

- About half the people preferred the Hispanic mother and child better than the black man because it put the focus on family.
- The group was asked whether they would prefer to have one ad with many different faces, or many ads, each with a different face or group of faces. Half preferred the first and half the second.
- Those who liked one ad with a collage of faces thought it was better to show diversity since nor everyone would see all the different ads.
- Others thought that making sure all races and ethnicities were included in one ad would feel forced.
- The theme should be more positive, instead of negative. Examples: Would you like to live in Westchester? You can.
- Would you like to live in Westchester? The choice is yours.
- Do you want to live in Westchester? Then we want you.
- Westchester County. Consider it home.
- Westchester County. More affordable than you think.
- Westchester County. There is a home for you.
- Westchester County. Welcoming, fair and affordable housing for all.
- Westchester. Welcoming. Affordable. Fair.
- Other suggestions - have landscapes, people engaged in doing activities, not posed pictures, real people living their lives in Westchester and most important - include some kind of visual representation of housing - whether an open door, a house, a set of keys. The ads were never tied in to housing themes.

Focus Group 2 – Participants' Reactions to Slides:

Slide 1:

Needs some visual of housing – eg. Open door, key, doors
There's no connection between this image and housing
Soft and inviting
The little house logo indicates "low-income" housing.
The font for "fair and affordable" is positive.
The font for "fair and affordable" is too girly, too dainty, don't like the fussy script.
It seems to emphasize that this is a HUD project, rather than a Westchester County project.
Nothing on this page says housing. There should be a housing image on this page.
The "a" in affordable is not capitalized, like "Fair" and "Housing" and

the ampersand sign is too fussy. It looks more like a musical clef.
It is confusing to have the word "Housing" on the second line after Westchester County NY. Not pleasing to the eye and confusing to read.

Slide 2:

Beachy
Looks like a Board of Tourism ad
Dunes
Recreation
What does it mean?
Why marsh grasses
It looks too beachy - this is not Westchester.
No one understands the tag line. What is it saying?
It sounds too touristy.
Why show marsh grass - it is not appropriate.

Slides 3 and 4:

No connection with housing
Show the whole person
The logos "Fair and affordable Housing" and the HUD logo are not needed
There's a disconnect with "See you living in Westchester"
Westchestergov.com is not needed
Too busy
Too many fonts
Too many colors
Goal means success – not home
Too much white space
Sea grass is "annoying"
Less engaging
Logos are fighting with GOAL= HOME
No connection between soccer and housing
GOAL = HOME makes no sense. There is no relation to housing.
No connection between sports and housing.
Too busy - too many fonts, colors, words.
Why sports? There is a disconnect. Not everyone has a child in school who plays sports. It excludes people who don't have children or don't play sports.
The slide says that Westchester is good for families. Most families

here have kids who play in AYSO soccer.
It gives the impression of open land - implies that you have reached the goal of having more open space.
Too many logos competing with each other.
Very poor layout.
Most people hated the concept of goal = sports and didn't get the connection between sports and housing. Only one person liked it because it connoted a good place to raise families.
Layout is not eye-catching.
Beach grass is annoying and distracting. It fights with the sport theme.
When polled on the tag line "see you living in Westchester" - half the people liked it, half thought it was awful.
One person felt that using the word fair was patronizing and it had negative connotations. Others did not see it that way.
People liked the first goal slide better than the second one, which was harder to read.

Slide 5:

Blue looks purple – is it sky?
Basketball is more familiar to urban dwellers than soccer
HOME=SCORE is incongruous – sounds like a credit score
Basketball is a more urban sport - would appeal more to some people but not others
Blue sky is better than buildings in background. It gives a feeling of space.
But you could get the same feeling with green background, which feels like a field of grass.
Don't understand the theme of home equals score
(4 out of 10 people prefer the blue background.)

Slide 6:

Bad
Cheesy
Patronizing
Demeaning (trying too hard to appeal to minority urban dwellers)
Sports theme makes no sense
Only one person liked "slam dunk" better than the previous slide.

Slide 7:

Not unified
Not striking
No integration of logos
Add QR code
Provocative
Looks like a public health ad for AIDS testing
Not cohesive
Not polished
Where is "here"?
The man in photo looks "friendly", "young", "neutral"
Boring
Took a while to notice "You can".
The answer to question posed could be race or economics
It has nothing to do with housing.
The white bar at the bottom is annoying.
The phrase "you can" is too close to Obama's "yes you can."
You can does not answer the question - it is non responsive.
One person thought it was provocative - since it is not clear what it is talking about, it tempts you to read the small print.
Seems dated.
There should be a bar code so that viewers can link directly to the county website with their phones.
Not striking, not unified, too busy.
Looks like clip art thrown together.
It has nothing to do with housing or Westchester.
Nothing is integrated.
Bad sentence structure
What does "here" mean in the sentence "you can't live here because?"
These ads are not mesmerizing and don't create a feeling. When you look at the ads for Mt. Sinai Hospital, for example, the message is in the picture. The picture creates a feeling that makes you feel trust in the hospital, that they will save your life. They use very few words to evoke a feeling.
Only 2 people liked the green background.
One person expressed anger that every single slide was so bad and that the results were so amateurish.

Slide 8:

Too choppy
Colors aren't good

Make it more positive
When asked whether they preferred this slide or the previous slide, majority of participants chose this slide
It is hard to notice the "you can"
That phrase is not even necessary, the question is rhetorical.
Too cluttered
The colors - white, yellow and brown – are not appealing.
A suggestion was made to get rid of the question posed and instead ask the simple question "Why not Westchester County?" a number of people liked that better because it was more positive, shorter and more to the point.
Some thought it was too negative a question, others thought it was good because it issued a challenge and was provocative.

Slide 9:

This layout minimizes the logos
Color is "acid green", "battery acid"
Italicized font is tough to read
Delete sea grass – looks like Cape Cod
Looks like he's wearing a UPS shirt
Too much open space
Get rid of the grass!
It's less busy and more comfortable for the eyes.
Suggestion: "Why not Westchester?"
One person liked the color, another thought it looked like a huge sea of acid green.
People generally liked this layout better than the previous ads and found it more eye-catching and less cluttered.
Still found the bottom too busy and thought there were too many logos and tag lines.

Slide 10:

When asked what this made them think of participants said: "family", "multi-ethnic"

Slide 11:

Making fun of the younger generation
Demeaning
Dated
Who talks like that?! ("And, uh, why can't you live here?")

She's young to be buying a home
Tries too hard to be hip and comes across as demeaning to young people.
It is not clear what the ethnicity or gender is. Is it supposed to encourage all sexual orientations?
One person liked that it didn't seem as posed
The word "envision" seems strange and forced. No young person would say that.
One person liked the ad. The rest didn't. However, 6 out of ten preferred the hipster to the previous mother and child.
When asked to characterize the person's racial/ethnic background, participants said "Latina", "mixed", "white"
When asked to characterize the person's gender and sexual orientation, participants said "male", "female", "androgynous", "unclear"

Slide 12:

Amateurish
I could do this
Looks like a go back to college ad.
It is not clear what is being asked - can't afford to do what? - work here, live here, go to school here? It should say "Who said you can't afford to live here?" make the thought more complete so the theme is clear.
Five out of ten people liked this photo the best. Thought the image was less threatening, very placid, nice smile.
Many liked this question better, but shouldn't end a sentence with "to"

Slide 13:

Negative
Puts people down
Show Westchester – a landscape or a diverse group of kids playing
People generally liked this slogan better, although it was still not great at letting you know immediately what it was all about.
People felt that none of the ads accomplished the goal of making Westchester seem more appealing. The ads did not sell Westchester as a place to live.
Someone suggested that the ads show more of the county through landscapes, houses, grass, parks, rather than a posed person. Or, if you are going to use a sport theme, show an action shot of a group of diverse kids playing soccer together.

One person expressed that the ads came across as demeaning to minorities - like we were now giving permission for other people to come and live here. It is also insulting to Westchester.
One person said this ad would encourage her to move to the county, the others had no opinion on this.

Slide 14:

Sell the county!
Looks like clip art
Five people preferred this saying to the one in the last slide. The rest had no opinion.
One person expressed again that all the ads looked cheap and amateurish and that even though she preferred some ads over others, given the choices, she didn't really like any of them.

Slide 15:

Most had a positive reaction to the photo of the senior black couple, but would not choose it to stand alone. It should be included in a collage of faces.
One person thought it looked like an ad for a retirement home.

Slide 16:

People generally reacted favorably to this photo of father and son.

Slide 17:

When asked whether there were other images people would want to see, people suggested a group of kids, an intact family with 2 parents, an Asian person, a person with a disability, action photos of people doing different activities.

Slide 18:

Looks like an eyeglass ad
Better font; cleaner
You can't live where??
"Envision" – for a vision shop?

Slide 19:

Means nothing

Looks like an ad for sunglasses.
Still don't know what ad is for. The question is still ambiguous.

Slides 20 and 21:

Needs color
Too much wording
Could be for AIDS
This didn't engage anyone - all thought it looked like a public health ad or a chalk outline of a dead body at a crime scene.
One person likes the fact that the ad put her in the ad by saying "me" but still doesn't like the font and lack of color
Please note typo in the word "live"

Slide 22:

Doesn't make sense that they'd save time commuting
The logos are better here
"Wow" – might as well say "golly"
"Super" is dated
What are they hiding with the chalk outline?
Looks like the person is wasting away
Someone felt that the image made the person seem to be disappearing, wasting away, now that the writing was outside the body.
Everyone preferred the writing to be inside the head.
However, people liked the shorter text in this ad compared to Slide 21 which they felt was too wordy.
Participants didn't like the words wow, super and stellar- too enthusiastic, rang false.

Slide 23:

The layout of logos is less busy
The blue is good
It's positive and tells what it's about
People preferred the "Me" inside the head
Most expressed a preference for this ad over the others in the series - they liked the blue background because they could read it more easily.
But still didn't like that the writing was outside the body, and still preferred to have images of real people to a chalked body.

**Some participants declined to disclose their age, address, race and/or national origin