



Brownstein Group and Saint-Gobain Redefine Ribbon-Cutting - Greening Greene Street

Brownstein Group and Saint-Gobain Corporation, Jan 1,2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner — Events and Observances (Seven or Fewer Days) — Business to Business

Saint-Gobain, the world's largest building materials company, began a three-year \$550,000 partnership with YouthBuild USA, a non-profit that helps low-income disadvantaged youth earn their GEDs or high school diplomas while learning green construction skills. Through the partnership, the YouthBuild Philadelphia Chapter completed construction on 4620 Greene Street, achieving the highest level of sustainability recognition. To celebrate the first home completion and to demonstrate to local government officials and community groups that Saint-Gobain can assist cities in achieving sustainability goals, Brownstein Group created a non-traditional ribbon-cutting event to elevate the importance of energy-efficiency and sustainability through education and hands-on participation.

Events and observances (seven or fewer days) includes programs or events scheduled for one to seven consecutive days (not including planning and preparation). Events may include commemorations, observances, openings, celebrations or other special activities, and must occur within a time span of one week.

Full Text: SITUATION ANALYSIS

In December 2010, Saint-Gobain, the world's largest building materials company, began a three-year national partnership with YouthBuild USA, a non-profit that helps low-income disadvantaged youth earn their GEDs or high school diplomas while learning green construction skills. The partnership supports YouthBuild's "Green Initiative," which provides out-of-work, out-of-school youth with the opportunity to build green, energy-efficient and healthy homes in their neighborhoods. In addition to \$550,000 in funding from the Saint-Gobain Corporation Foundation, the partnership includes a commitment to provide energy-efficient products, building science and technical expertise and employee volunteer support. Under the program moniker of "Building Our Future Together," Saint-Gobain has supported renovation projects in four communities where it has business concentrations: Akron, Ohio; Worcester, Mass.; Schenectady, N.Y.; and Philadelphia, Pa. After 18 months of hard work, the YouthBuild Philadelphia Chapter completed construction on 4620 Greene Street in July 2012, and Saint-Gobain engaged its North American agency of record Brownstein Group to plan and execute a one-day event to celebrate the *first* home completion under the partnership.

OPPORTUNITY

In addition to being the first home to be completed under the three-year national partnership, the project also represented other "firsts." The home was the first in its neighborhood to achieve the most prestigious level of sustainable building certification – the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED® Platinum designation. This was also the first time YouthBuild Philly attained this esteemed designation, and it's also important to note that the partnership with the Saint-Gobain Corporation Foundation was the first of its kind for YouthBuild USA. The non-profit had never had a corporate partner that shared the same level of passion for green

building and that could donate building materials and lend its building experts to work with students. This event was especially significant because the company's North American headquarters is located nearby in a Philadelphia suburb.

RESEARCH

Primary research was conducted to determine if a traditional ribbon-cutting ceremony would produce meaningful media coverage in the Philadelphia DMA. Primary research included a media analysis of previous corporate ribbon-cutting ceremonies news coverage and a media analysis of YouthBuild news coverage in the market and depth interviews with several project stakeholders to determine the significance of the home renovation. Secondary research included Internet research, fact-finding to identify all regional, local and hyper-local media outlets, specific contacts and Lexis/Nexis Literature Review to identify relevant news stories to confirm relevancy in the market. Research also defined target audiences (noted below).

PLANNING

Research affirmed that a traditional format ribbon-cutting ceremony would not garner the quality and depth of coverage and audience engagement that was sought. Rather, Saint-Gobain needed to increase engagement, entertainment value and visual appeal of the event. Research also confirmed the assumption that distinguished speakers would significantly increase general attendance and media interest. Recognized community and government leaders were identified as speakers and special guests. Research informed the event aptly named "Welcome to Greene Street" that featured a neighborhood block party, street fair and student-led home tours and a green ribbon-cutting ceremony that proved anything but traditional. The event plan encompassed tactics, branding opportunities, speakers and event flow, social media, media relations, vendors and expense summary.

OBJECTIVE

By end of the event (August 2, 2012), for Saint-Gobain to have demonstrated to local government officials and community groups that it can assist cities/homeowners in achieving sustainability goals; event participation from a minimum of 15 government and community officials, 30 employees and 30 neighbors.

AUDIENCES

Mayor, city sustainability officials, environmental community groups and employees in Philadelphia.

STRATEGY

Create a non-traditional, entertaining ribbon-cutting event to elevate the importance of energy-efficiency and sustainability through education and hands-on participation. Leverage the event to recognize the students' dedication to rebuilding the once-vacant home *and* their lives and invite the audiences to tour the completed project to show an example of how sustainability can be affordable.

EXECUTION

Tactic 1: Greene Street Fair

Pop-up Parks: Two mini "parks" on the sidewalk were created with faux grass, benches and potted plants to add instant green space to the urban area – guests enjoyed the space throughout the event's duration.

DIY Workshop: At a pop-up park, a building scientist from Saint-Gobain's largest construction brand, CertainTeed, led a green home workshop on simple DIY energy-efficiency improvements.

Philly Foods: A make-your-own healthy trail mix station, popcorn, Philly soft pretzels, Rita's Water Ice and water stations lined the street. Saint-Gobain-branded re-useable water bottles avoided waste.

Live Music: A DJ played popular dance music and announced home energy-efficiency tips to the crowd.

Sustainable Sidewalk: Energy-efficiency tips were written on the sidewalk with chalk. Sample messages included: “Walk this way to reduce your footprint” and “Think Green, Save Green.”

Branded Giveaways: T-shirts with “Building Our Future Together” moniker and energy tip sheets given.

Signage: Displayed on the front lawn and park benches; a “Welcome to Greene Street” banner stretched the street’s width. Before-and-after photos were enlarged and displayed throughout event space.

Tactic 2: Open House

Tours: Students who worked on the project gave tours of the home and explained the sustainable products and techniques used to make the home efficient. TVs played a video of the construction process.

Education: Posters displayed on easels informed guests about the behind-the-scenes technology that helped make the home efficient – like mold-fighting sheetrock and sustainable insulation.

Pledge: After touring, guests signed a pledge to take “one small step towards reducing their carbon footprint.” The pledge poster now hangs proudly at YouthBuild as a reminder of what they’ve inspired.

Tactic 3: Green Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

VIP Speakers: Distinguished speakers included the Mayor of Philadelphia, the executive director of YouthBuild Philadelphia, the CEO and founder of YouthBuild USA, the director of Philadelphia Neighborhood Housing Services, the executive director of Delaware Valley Green Building Council, the president and CEO of Saint-Gobain and CertainTeed, as well as several councilpersons.

Tactic 4: Media Relations

Student Story: An electronic press kit was developed and media outreach commenced four days before the event. Interviews were offered with Saint-Gobain and YouthBuild spokespersons, including a student who shared her inspiring story of how the program impacted her life.

EVALUATION: Results outlined below demonstrate achievement of this objective and clearly reflect the original strategy and plan.

METHOD: Media analysis, content analysis, guest list analysis, live event observation to measure participation.

RESULTS – Media: Two broadcast stations attended the event; other media coverage included *The Philadelphia Inquirer’s* GreenSpace blog and a front-page story in *The Philadelphia Tribune*, among others. In total, there were 10 unique media stories published within a three-day window with 95% key message delivery. Specifically, 73% included a key message directed to helping cities achieve sustainability goals.

RESULTS – Community: “Welcome to Greene Street” was a family-oriented event that promoted interest in sustainable living in a fun, welcoming manner. Ninety percent of neighbors who attended toured the LEED Platinum home with Saint-Gobain’s building experts, and all who toured signed the pledge. Nearly 50 neighbors attended, exceeding the attendance goal of 30. An additional 40 students and their families also attended.

RESULTS – Government: City officials from the Mayor’s Offices of Education, Housing and Community Development, Pennsylvania Senator Pat Toomey’s Office and the Department of Labor were in attendance; in total 17 government officials participated in the event, exceeding the goal of 15. The event was also featured on two federal government channels – Americorps.gov and the Department of Labor’s e-newsletter – both reaching beyond the local mayoral staff and government.

RESULTS – Employees: Thirty-five employees from Saint-Gobain and CertainTeed’s headquarters attended the event, exceeding the goal of 30 employees. After committing over 500 volunteer hours on the project, employees were excited to see the completed renovation

and reunite with the students.

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