

BABCOCK RANCH

“Greenspace”

THE CHALLENGE

When a West Palm Beach developer decided to purchase the 94,000-acre Babcock Ranch in Southwest Florida, they faced a potential public relations crisis. Preservation of the ranch, which is the size of Orlando, was a top priority for environmentalists. The state worked for years to purchase the property from the Babcock Family Corporation. Negotiations broke off in 2005. Kitson & Partners approached the family with an ambitious plan to buy the corporation, build a city of 50,000, and sell 80 percent of the land to the state for preservation. But to make it work, K&P needed public support at many levels.

OUR APPROACH

By starting with research, including discreet inquiries with key contacts, we learned the proposed sale was an opportunity rather than a threat once the media and stakeholders focused on the preservation plan. Allies were drawn in. CEO Syd Kitson hosted meetings at the ranch. Key stakeholders and detractors alike were invited to ask questions and share their ideas. The public even helped plan the new



community, contributing more than 2,280 hours in a series of 22 planning workshops.

THE RESULTS

In just over a year, Kitson & Partners had state and local development approvals in place, and closed on what became the largest preservation land purchase in Florida history. Headlines touted K&P's plan as "90 percent Green" as commissioners prepared for final approval of K&P's development plan. A new, environmentally friendly community is now in the works that will serve as a model for responsible growth.

