



# CASE STUDY

## Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal

### OPPORTUNITY:

In 2009, Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal, returned to the voters of Hamilton County for a property tax levy renewal (and reduction) to support operational costs and maintenance of Union Terminal, a building occupied by the Cincinnati Museum Center and owned by the city of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. The proposed levy would generate \$16.2 million over 5 years.

The 2009 campaign was a critical opportunity to increase public support for one of Cincinnati's most iconic buildings.

### SOLUTION:

Vehr Communications provided strategic communications counsel to the Board and staff leadership at the Museum Center throughout the campaign process.

Vehr Communications was also responsible for day-to-day management of the ballot issue campaign, including all strategic communications (i.e., television, radio, print and online), field operations and budget management of the campaign.

### RESULT:

At the direction of Vehr Communications, the campaign delivered more than 4,000 yard signs, 60,000 pieces of literature and 120,000 mail items.

Union Terminal received the endorsement of every major media outlet in Hamilton County (i.e., Cincinnati Enquirer, Cincinnati Business Courier, CityBeat) and broad support among Cincinnati's business and civic organizations.

In November 2009, the voters of Hamilton County approved the Union Terminal's ballot issue with 67 percent of the vote, with majorities of votes received in 99 percent of all precincts in Hamilton County, Ohio.



#### Museum tax will shrink no matter what

Byline: Jessica Brown  
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The property tax levy that supports the Cincinnati Museum Center is already the smallest Hamilton County levy and will decrease even more in November, no matter which way voters vote.

That's because the \$16.2 million levy proposed for the November ballot is smaller than the current one - if it passes, it will cost the owner of a \$100,000 home less than \$5 a year. Also, a separate museum tax issue will disappear completely from residents' tax bills.

That is good news for taxpayers, who will see a record four county-wide levies on the November ballot.

But it's bad news for the Museum Center, which had hoped to seek a larger levy to pay for a critical construction project at Union Terminal, the historic art-deco train station in Queensgate, in which the museum complex is housed.

The 75-year-old structure needs \$120 million to \$140 million in repairs to fix decades worth of water damage that has eaten away at the building's steel and mortar skeleton. But its larger levy request was shot down by the Hamilton County commissioners, who feared if the proposed levies didn't decrease voters' tax burden, some of the levies would fail.

Museum officials were disappointed - but they still urge you to vote for the levy.

"Without the renewal of the levy, Union Terminal will be further damaged by water and time," said museum president and CEO Douglas W. McDonald. There is no organized opposition to the levy.