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Author
Katherine Rose O’Hara

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The Influence of Grassroots Organizing
on Public School Facility Siting Decisions

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Urban Planning

by

Katherine Rose O’Hara

2004
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The thesis of Katherine Rose O’Hara is approved

_________________________
Evelyn Blumenberg

_________________________
Vinit Mukhija

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Lois Takahashi, Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Influence of Grassroots Organizing
on Public School Facility Siting Decisions

by

Katherine Rose O’Hara

Master of Arts in Urban Planning
University of California, Los Angeles, 2004

Professor Lois Takahashi, Chair

Growth across the region has created a public school facilities crisis throughout Southern California’s cities. School districts struggle to house a rapidly growing school population in areas with little vacant land. However, developing new schools, especially in central cities, often disrupts neighborhoods and displaces residents. School districts often fast-track siting approval and bidding processes for new schools and do not meaningfully engage communities in decision-making, causing community distrust of the districts.

Within this dynamic political context, grassroots neighborhood organizations are beginning to influence and even impede new school development. Through community organizing and political relationships, these organizations are learning the
complicated public school development process and becoming empowered to influence it. The thesis examines the factors that affect a grassroots neighborhood group’s influence on school siting decisions. It explores this issue through two case studies in which a group of residents from a low-income, marginalized neighborhood organized to successfully oppose one school site and advocate for another.

This research finds that mobilization is not always the most important factor in site selections. Political opportunities, such as unstable relationships and relationships among elites, and site viability, determined by a lack of community opposition influenced site selection more. Mobilization, however, can increase social capital and credibility for a neighborhood group, thus increasing power. From this, community organizers can learn to use these opportunities to access power and school facility staff can learn that participatory planning requires an established process and dedicated personnel.
Chapter 1
Introduction

In October 2003, I attended a national meeting of government officials, community groups, and advocates working on understanding the link between education reform and neighborhood revitalization. Convened by a national organization, Building Educational Success Together, BEST, the purpose of the meeting was for groups from Washington DC, Cleveland, Trenton, New Jersey, Los Angeles, and Chicago to share their thoughts and strategies on improving public schools and how to use public school capital funds to revitalize neighborhoods. The participants included grassroots community development organizations, regional and statewide advocacy coalitions, and municipal agency staff. The 21st Century School Fund, the major funder of BEST, hoped to create an advisory board from the meeting’s participants that would help set policy priorities for its work and disseminate its policy papers throughout the country. The meeting highlighted the disconnect between school district policy making, which has had little experience with continuous community participation, and urban planning and local government agencies, which have had ongoing and sometimes tumultuous interactions with community members.

Perhaps because of this disconnect, meeting participants defined the nature of the problem from different angles and with different goals, including protesting the closing of an underutilized school, advocating for increased after-school and weekend use of local school facilities, and lobbying for increased community control over site
and program decisions. However, three common threads ran through all these perspectives and revealed the rising status of the community schools movement for urban planning and redevelopment. These commonalities justify the relevance and urgency of studying community participation in school facility development.

- School districts have more money than ever before for building and improving facilities.
- Residents and parents do not trust school districts due to past controversies around school facility development.
- School districts are not connected to planning and other municipal agencies.

These existing circumstances combined with the broad-based interest in education policies and the institutional practices of school districts have contributed to a context where anxious communities are searching for ways to participate in school decisions. With limited space for participation in the decision-making processes of school districts, these communities are scrambling to identify ways to get involved and effectively influence school decisions, particularly in regards to siting new schools.

To provide background for the remainder of the thesis, this introduction proceeds in the following manner. First, the chapter provides an overview of the upward trend in school capital budgets with an emphasis on the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), one of the largest school districts in the nation. Second, the chapter identifies a major challenge in school facility siting: lack of community trust in public educational institutions, the decision-making process, and the outcomes of
institutional decision-making. Third, the chapter briefly analyzes the disconnect between public schools decision makers and urban planning, particularly in terms of the distinct approaches both fields have had concerning community input. Finally, the chapter concludes by outlining the purpose of this research and providing an overview of the remainder of the thesis.

**Increase in School Capital Budgets**

Many major cities, including Washington DC and Los Angeles have not built a public school in more than 20 years (21st Century School Fund 2003). Despite budget cutbacks in many other publicly-provided services, funding for building new school facilities is greater than at any point in history. In 2001, $26.8 billion was spent on school capital projects nationwide, a 24 percent increase from the previous year (Agron 2002). Expenditure increases were motivated by the declining condition of schools due to ageing, poor maintenance and a rapidly increasing student population (21st Century School Fund 2003). To address overcrowding, some districts currently use mandatory bussing schemes that involuntarily bus children to other schools and multi-track attendance calendars that stagger student breaks, both of which are harmful to learning.\(^1\) To relieve this severe overcrowding and improve American public education, state and local legislators have allocated historic amounts of funds for school construction.

\(^1\) Some school districts use a 4-track systems in which students rotate attendance with varying schedules and breaks, i.e.: attend for two months, take one month off. Often this schedule reduces the number of actual days in school and disrupts continuous learning by breaking up the days the students are in school.
In California, school facility funding has increased through a series of voter approved state bonds that often require matching local funds and in 1998 approved Proposition 1A, a state bond for $9.2 billion. Currently the State Allocation Board, the agency that distributes the funds from state approved bonds, is allocating $13 billion from Proposition 47 passed in November 2002 plus an additional $12 billion in new bond funds passed by voters in fall the of 2004. With all these bonds requiring matching local dollars, school districts have been furiously proposing and passing bonds between the fall of 2003 and fall of 2004 (Knight 2003, Gonzales 2003, Merl and Marois 2003). Currently, the state has more than $50 billion flowing throughout the state for school facilities. Specifically in Los Angeles, voters passed Proposition BB, a local school bond for $2.4 billion in 1997; Measure K, a $3.35 billion bond passed in November 2002; and Measure R, a $3.87 billion bond in March 2004 (LAUSD 2004, School Construction Bond Oversight Committee 2004). Even with all these recent bonds, district will not have sufficient funds to end overcrowding.

With so much money available, some districts, including the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), have had to fight for adequate funding levels to address ongoing capacity issues. In Los Angeles, one of the most severely overcrowded and geographically expansive school districts, 16,000 children are bussed out of their neighborhoods, some over an hour each way to less-crowded schools (LA County Alliance for Student Achievement 2001). Seeing the increase of state facility funds, LAUSD established a Facilities Master Plan, which laid out a path to creating the classroom seats needed to end overcrowding, involuntary bussing and
multi-track schedules. However because of a state process that favors suburban school districts, LAUSD did not receive the funds necessary that would adequately address current needs for new and improved facilities, and received far less than the amount needed to implement their master plan.\(^2\) In 2000 a group of civil rights activists filed a discrimination lawsuit claiming the state process essentially created a lower quality of education for Los Angeles students who are largely from low-income communities of color. In 2002 a Superior Court judge ruled that the state could not distribute remaining Proposition 1A funds to other districts with less pressing needs that had applied for these funds before LAUSD (Smith 2002).

This decision resulted in LAUSD receiving $468 million from the state, which combined with local funds, was more than half the amount needed to complete the district’s first phase of new and expansion projects (158) under its Facilities Master Plan (Smith 2002). However, even after those schools are completed, the district will still need 140-160 more schools to provide a two-semester seat for every child in the district.\(^3\) Currently, LAUSD is in the middle of Phase II of its Master Plan, which will result 35,000 new classroom seats or approximately 40 schools. To receive state funding, the district must have “approvable sites” ready by July 2004.\(^4\) Phase III, which still looms in the future, would require LAUSD to build 39,000 seats and accommodate approximately forty percent of the remaining need. Completing these

\(^2\) Because siting schools is so much more difficult in highly urbanized areas, due to a lack of land and toxic land, LAUSD has been at a disadvantage in competitive funding processes.

\(^3\) Two-semester seats allow each student to attend school for two continuous semesters a year.

\(^4\) “Approvable” refers to California Department of Education guidelines of an acceptable site, including size, adjacent uses, accessibility, toxicity and other factors.
schools relies on continued funding from state and local sources as well as locating acceptable sites according to size, environmental and community standards.

**Lack of Community Trust**

The community in general distrusts school districts with large capital funds and expansive building projects because of past siting controversies and poor management. During the last three decades, many school districts have built few schools; Los Angeles Unified School District built its last traditional full-service high school in 1973 (Booth 2000). Recently, districts have exacerbated their relationships with local communities through project mishaps and controversial site selections (Interview with community organizer 2004). A negative track record is especially evident for LAUSD where various communities have been shut out of new school construction and where many community members have been displaced by new schools and have witnessed missteps in school construction projects. According to one community organization staff member, low-income residents in Los Angeles have been displaced with little notice or compensation for schools that still have not been built (Interview 2004). These circumstances are problematic for districts that need to maintain a positive community image to continue funding and building their projects. The lack of community trust is based on two phenomena: (1) a lack of acceptable land leads to displacement of residents and businesses; and (2) poorly sited schools and mismanaged funds have led to suspicion of backroom business deals and criticism of school district officials.
In highly urbanized areas like Los Angeles, residents, usually low-income communities of color, are often displaced to build schools. LAUSD’s Phase I of its Master Plan included relocating 234 homeowner families, 1,064 renter households and 268 businesses (Gao 2002). The argument for displacement is twofold: (a) the lack of appropriate land where new schools are needed most; and (b) the strict site guidelines enforced by the state. In urban central city neighborhoods, open and available lots for developing and constructing new schools are limited at best. In Los Angeles, the neighborhoods with the highest density of school-age children are low-income communities of color that have the highest population density in general. These areas have the greatest need for new schools but also have the most overcrowded housing and the greatest need for parks and other public services and amenities.

California’s strict guidelines for determining an appropriate site also effectively lead districts to target existing neighborhoods, demolish low-income rental housing, resulting in displacement. The guidelines regulate site size, toxicity, adjacency, accessibility and other factors. Often sites that are available and vacant are brownfields, contaminated by previous toxic uses. Because decontamination of these sites is an expensive process, LAUSD and other school districts across the nation often choose “easier” sites, such as those with existing housing and lower levels of toxicity (Interview with former LAUSD real estate executive 2004). Usually, the easiest housing to “take” is low-income rental housing because of the relative lack of organized opposition by low-income tenants (Interview with resident 2004). According to one Los Angeles resident, the threat of losing her home is very real, “it’s
like ‘here comes big foot again’ when they (LAUSD) are looking for school sites,” (Interview 2004). Complaints against resident displacement are publicized in the media, with headlines like “LAUSD displacing families to build schools,” which increases the negative image of the School District (Gao 2002). The threat and reality of displacement due to school construction leaves residents distrustful of the school district.

Secondly, poorly sited schools and mismanaged funds have led to suspicion of backroom business deals and criticism of school district officials. Los Angeles Unified School District has been heavily criticized for these reasons through the last decade. One prominent example of this problem, the controversial Belmont Learning Complex has resulted in local and national criticism of the district. Belmont Learning Complex, located just west of downtown Los Angeles, was supposed to house as many as 5,000 students until construction was halted in 1999 when the school was found to be on top of a potentially hazardous oil field (Garcia 1999, Rabin 1999). As the environmental problems were investigated by an independent auditor, the public learned that “bad legal advice, sweetheart deal-making, ignorance of environmental requirements and plundering of public dollars” created this $250 million problem (Rabin 1999, LA Times Editor 1999). Other construction sites have encouraged criticism, including Jefferson New Middle School, a South LA school sitting on a subterranean reservoir of hexavalent chromium, a carcinogen, and the proposed site at the old Ambassador Hotel, a historic landmark that could cost over $300 million total to develop into school (Timmons 1998, Helfand 2003). While environmental and
economic experts differ on whether these schools are physically or financially sound developments, the debate and public criticism around these sites has created distrust among community members who must approve bonds and accept schools into their neighborhoods. According to one Los Angeles resident aware of the need for schools in her neighborhood, “we don’t want another Belmont. We need the school but we want it clean; we’re going to make sure they check out all the problems in the soil,” (Interview 2004). These problems became the symbol of poor school construction decisions in Los Angeles, both to local communities and in the national press (Booth 2000, Rosta 2001, interview with resident 2004).

In addition to controversial deal-making, poor site selections are due to fast-tracked decision making processes. Under tight deadlines, school districts often speed up the development process. Following the court decision mentioned earlier, LAUSD had approximately 18 months to prepare and submit applications for available bond funds (Smith 2002). Desperate for the funds, the district hurried site analysis and selection. According to a former LAUSD real estate executive, the School Board approved numerous “negative declarations” during this period, which meant that many potential hazards were essentially ignored during the site selection process (Interview 2004). Further, during the current Phase II of its Master Plan, LAUSD is using a program-wide environmental impact report (EIR) rather than developing EIRs on a case-by-case basis as is usually done (LAUSD 2003). Compounded with the district’s existing power of eminent domain, these processes give the district nearly unaccountable power that requires little community involvement. While fast-track
decision making processes are often required to meet stringent deadlines and preferred by the school districts, such processes not only forego community participation but also can result in less than thorough site analysis. Such negative results worsen an already negative reputation, eroding the community’s trust in the school district.

School Boards are not Planners

For urban planning practitioners and researchers, these circumstances are most alarming because school district officials and staff are doing what is essentially planning work – making land use decisions, organizing local jurisdictions, determining local and regional needs, working with communities with little power – with little understanding of the processes necessary for credible and successful land use development. Furthermore, these public school institutions largely work independently from municipal planning agencies although these agencies serve the same communities in the same locations. Facing stringent deadlines, the school districts prefer to shut out community involvement or input from other agencies unless required to by state or federal regulations.

This separation among public agencies occurs because of the cultural nature of education affirmed by court mandates and because of the heavily regulated process in which school siting occurs. Education has historically been separated from other government services in part because of society’s connotation of education as the basis of social reform (Kirst 1995). To protect education from political influences and non-technical opinions, educational institutions and policy-making processes have been
largely sequestered from other municipal and local political processes, and highly regulated. This approach goes back further than the current educational administration, but is in fact a reflection of social values established and institutionalized in the 1930s during the rise of the “technical expert.” In this era, government agencies, comprised of highly trained bureaucrats, were identified by government officials themselves as better than the community to design and implement policies to achieve social progress (Kirst 1995). Further, the courts repeatedly have held that schools are agencies of the state, legally and administratively independent of other government agencies (Cronin 1973). Although in many other areas of government it is becoming widely accepted that community members along with municipal staff have valid opinions and credible information, the educational policy arena has remained relatively untouched, a reflection of the high value we as a society place on schools as the future of our country. This attitude however excludes non-experts from decisions about how and where schools operate and justifies limiting community participation.

Educational policies and practices are also separated from other municipal functions because of heavy regulation by state mandates. Local school districts often have to meet a series of deadlines and benchmarks in order to receive continued state funding. Large districts like LAUSD trying to build record numbers of schools in short time periods (as required by the superior court decision) often see their one and only mandate as building schools. Their processes, instituted by state agencies, do not leave time for community outreach or collaboration with other municipal agencies.
Thus not only the issue of education itself but also the decision-making process excludes community members from engaging in school decisions.

Resulting from these circumstances, education facility planners are working in relative isolation from the community and from other local municipal agencies. They are unable, or unwilling, to work with local jurisdictions or the community. In addition, because of the contextual factors discussed previously, municipal planning agencies do not know how to work with school districts to try to jointly plan for multiple facilities. No one outside of the school district understands its non-transparent planning process. Community groups in particular end up feeling isolated from decisions affecting their neighborhoods. According to a resident affected by recent school siting decisions in Los Angeles, “It’s like it is none of our business, the School District is building in our neighborhood and it’s none of our business!” (Interview 2004). There have been efforts to address these shortcomings in the school development process. In Los Angeles, LAUSD, the Mayor’s Office and the Community Redevelopment Agency have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate future developments as LAUSD implements the rest of its Master Plan. Directly resulting from this, agencies have shared data and maps about possible locations for proposed projects and have organized neighborhood cabinets to geographically focus conversations and decisions (LAUSD 2003). Whether such an agreement will be helpful remains to be seen.

Nationwide, new schools are being built and increasing numbers of individuals and groups have become more involved. People, residents, parents, school boards,
cities, community activists, regional, state and national advocacy groups, researchers and organizers are becoming aware that school development cannot continue as in the past. Not only are public schools a valuable asset to neighborhoods, but also such a significant degree of urban development, like mass school development, should involve a greater degree of community involvement. As such, there is a crucial role for planners, either through the state mandated development processes or by promoting grassroots organizing, to make sure that the school districts and local governments know what communities demand and to open and make transparent the decision-making process. As planners, our responsibility is to understand how community input is being treated in this process and how communities are able to influence the decisions of such a top-down and sequestered agency.

**Organization of Thesis**

To address this call, there are many areas of research that are needed, such as understanding how elected school officials make decisions, the form and function of school district bureaucracies, and the process of decision making for new schools construction. However, one important issue that needs additional exploration is the role of relatively powerless communities in influencing school district decision-making. Therefore, this thesis asks the question: what factors affect a grassroots neighborhood group’s influence on school siting decisions? To address this question, this thesis explores two related cases studies of school site selection that occurred in a low-income, Latino neighborhood in South Los Angeles between 1999 and 2002, a
time of institutional evolution for the Los Angeles Unified School District. Both cases involved similar groups of residents but focused on two separate school proposals which were designed to serve this neighborhood where nearly 3,000 students are bussed out daily (Barrett 2003). In the first case, a small group of residents opposed a School District proposal to build a primary center on a site that included owner-occupied single-family homes. Instead the school was built a few blocks south on a site occupied by less mobilized tenants living in rental housing. In the second case, the residents that opposed the original proposal identified and advocated sites in their neighborhood that they believed were appropriate for a school. One of these, the site of a former dairy manufacturing plant, was selected by the School District and a high school that will accommodate 2,112 students is under construction there (Barrett 2003). A more in depth narrative of these cases appears in chapter three.

The goal of this research is to understand what factors led to the school district’s site selection in each of these cases and how instrumental community mobilization was in influencing those decisions. In both cases, the sites selected matched the neighborhood group’s goals, however the conclusion of this thesis is that mobilization was not the deciding factor in the school district’s site selection. In these cases, luck, manifested in the openings in the political opportunity structure, and lack of community opposition to a viable available site had a larger influence on LAUSD site selection than mobilization. Political opportunities included unstable relationships among the school district and the community, relationships among elite and an emergent theme, institutional changes to an agency. Beyond basic site requirements, a
lack of community opposition was more important in determining the sites’ viability. Furthermore, this case suggests that mobilization has a variety of benefits for communities, particularly in resources poor areas, even when it does not influence an end result.

The remainder of this thesis is organized in the following chapters. The next chapter critically reviews the literature relevant to this research question, drawing from scholarship on public participation in planning. In this literature review chapter, public participation in planning is divided into two areas of research: participatory planning, which evaluates the effectiveness of an agency’s inclusion of the public and the influence of stakeholders on a process, and community mobilization, which studies the ability of groups to mobilize around and influence decisions affecting their neighborhoods. The chapter closes with a brief discussion of community participation in educational planning. Though such scholarship in educational research is relatively limited, such research is focused on the local control and the community schools movements.

The third chapter sets up the case studies by explaining the governance structure of Los Angeles Unified School District and recounting the narratives of the case studies. The chapter then explains the specific research question and hypotheses, and defines the variables and conceptual model that will be used to organize the later analysis. The research design and methodology for the analysis of the conceptual framework is discussed in chapter four. Chapters five and six form the core of the case studies. The fifth chapter consists of the analysis of Case A, in which residents in
a South Los Angeles neighborhood mobilized to oppose a school site. Chapter six analyzes Case B in which the resident mobilization, political relationships and institutional changes resulted in LAUSD choosing to build a high school on a site identified and advocated for by the same resident group. This chapter closes with a comparison of the two cases, highlighting significant elements and relationships that were present in both. Chapter seven summarizes the major findings of the case study, outlines implications for planning practitioners and poses future research questions.
Chapter Two
Participation, Mobilization and Educational Governance

Public involvement in the planning process can take many forms: outreach around a comprehensive plan, a community design charrette for a redevelopment project, an empowered community opposing an environmental hazard siting or NIMBY’s rejecting an affordable housing project. While these various forms may appear substantively different at first glance, they do share the basic element of resident participation in urban planning decision-making processes. This chapter provides an overview of existing research on public participation in planning with a special emphasis on community involvement in public school decisions. Public participation in planning in this chapter is divided into two areas of research: participatory planning, studies of the effectiveness of a planning agency’s inclusion of the public and the influence of stakeholders on the decision making process, and community mobilization, research on the ability of community groups to organize around and influence decisions affecting their neighborhoods. The chapter closes with a discussion of educational governance historically and how the public has become more involved in educational governance through recent reforms. Though scholarship on public participation in siting decisions in the educational literature is relatively limited, there is growing research focused on the local control and community schools movements.
Participatory Planning

Community input in local land use planning has been a consistent theme in planning literature and practice during the last forty years (Godschalk and Mills 1966, Arnstein 1969, Burke 1979, Fainstein and Fainstein, 1985, Innes 1996, Sanoff 2000). The federal government began actively supporting participatory planning in the 1960s, particularly through urban renewal programs, anti-poverty programs and the Model Cities program, all of which sought to include public input (Arnstein 1969), though many might argue that these 1960s efforts to eliminate blight were ultimately disempowering and marginalizing. Since the 1960s, participatory processes have been required of municipalities by federal and state funding programs, particularly in the areas of environmental management, health service planning, and more recently, public school siting (Berke and French 1984, U.S. EPA 2000).

Much debate still surrounds the issue of participatory planning including its influence on creating higher quality plans, its representation of diverse opinions, its effectiveness as a means of community empowerment, and the capacity of local government agencies to meaningfully engage participants (Beatley, Brower, Lucy 1994, Hibbard and Lurie 2000, Brody 2003). Advocates for participatory planning argue that plans generated through participatory processes are of a higher quality than those not including public involvement because of the representation of community opinions (Burby and Dalton 1994). Consequently, participatory processes should create more peaceful decision-making and approval processes (Innes 1996) and, ideally empower communities because they incorporate local perceptions of needs.
(Arnstein 1969). Participation has been seen to create better plans, although the definition of “better plan” remains in question. Some scholars argue that public participation helps to define the community interest and works through issues of difference while creating the plan, rather than waiting for the approval process for opposition to emerge (Innes, 1996, Hibbard and Lurie 2000). This consensus building not only allows the public to come to terms with opposing views, but also provides the planner with a broader picture of the community’s interests. While scholars focusing on planning processes see public participation as a way to improve both the process and the potential plan, scholars focusing on outcomes argue instead that the type of stakeholder influences the end result more than simply broad participation (Brody 2003).

In addition to these issues of efficiency, there is also the pragmatic question of whether or not an inclusive and representative participatory process is practically possible. Research on participation calls for “planning processes that actively communicate all proposals to the public and provide meaningful opportunities to respond” (Kingsely 1996 in Hibbard & Lurie 2000, p. 191). Communicating all opinions and proposals can be done through direct involvement or representation. Planning scholars promoting consensus building have often cited communicative action planning as a viable strategy to include all participants and ensure that language used creates an open process for all (Innes 1996). These scholars are aware that in most situations, complete participation is impossible and must rely on representation of interests. In practice, however, most planners, even those dedicated to
participation, find it difficult to ascertain how all perspectives might be represented. For practitioners, an ongoing challenge is the choosing among the numerous measures for representation that various scholars have promoted. While a group of participants may appear to represent the large community because of its similarity to the demographic characteristics of the community (which should influence the group’s opinions on a proposal), such categorization does not guarantee that all opinions are represented (Beatley, Brower, and Lucy 1994). In other words, similar demographic characteristics do not translate directly into similar views, opinions, and perspectives. Furthermore, participating in the process may change participants’ opinions about the proposal, making it more difficult to measure the process’s representation of the community at large (Beatley, Brower, and Lucy 1994).

Representation also brings up the question of whether or not participatory processes increase resident and community power or result in manipulation and co-optation by the government. Arnstein first addressed this question with a ladder of citizen participation (1969), claiming that simply including residents in a process does not necessarily result in effective or empowered participation. Her analysis used this ladder of citizen participation to reveal that most examples of participation were gauged at “placation” level five or below. Furthermore, in the cases where participation registered at a higher level, the citizens had taken, and not been given, that power. Meaningful participatory processes require not only the capacity of the planning agency to incorporate community input in a meaningful way, but also the capacity of the participants to engage in the process and articulate their needs (Hibbard
and Lurie 2000). In cases where formal participation facilitated by planning agencies is nominal, non-existent, or ineffective, groups may mobilize and act to ensure their opinions are heard and considered.

**Community Mobilization**

The other side of the public participation coin is community mobilization, which is the grassroots organizing and action of community groups to demand power from a state or market entity. Communities organize in response to a government decisions that has ignored or ineffectively included the public. Mobilization most often occurs among people who have been left out of formal public decisions or who feel they have been unjustly affected by public decisions. Communities with different racial and socio-economic backgrounds mobilize around a variety of issues. Depending on these characteristics of the residents, these mobilizations are characterized in different ways. Most of the literature around mobilization focuses on the empowerment of marginalized groups with limited access to resources (Piven and Cloward 1979, Castells 1983). This thesis also focuses on this type of mobilization. From a planning perspective, understanding how, when and why these marginalized groups mobilize and are successful is important both for decision makers and for groups organizing themselves. Despite much scholarship on the complex phenomena of community mobilization, many questions are still unanswered about where, when, how and why groups mobilize and succeed.
The question of where groups mobilize is in part a question of scale. Social movements studied at the regional or national scope are “collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities” (Tarrow 1994, p. 4). These movements often focus on national or international issues, with some focus on local issues as incidents arise. Social movements at this scale include the French Revolution in the mid-19th century and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (Tarrow 1994). Urban social movements occur at a more localized level and tie actions to a specific space; such research studies “collective action consciously aimed at the transformation of the social interests and values embedded in the forms and functions” of cities (Castells 1983, p.5). Neighborhood mobilization includes “residents and organizers dedicated to addressing one or a range of issues, including social, political, economic and quality of life issues” and demanding that municipal policy be drawn to an extremely localized neighborhood scale (Martin 2003). These local groups have had increasing influence on proposed land use changes on specific sites, allowing organized residents to have their demands met even if they are unable to change larger political or economic structures that define the local context (Davies and Townshend 1993).

When and how mobilizations occur is constrained by the particular circumstances of marginalized groups. “Contentious collective action” requires specific circumstances and a shared consciousness of the actors (Tarrow 1994). According to Piven and Cloward (1979), exceptional conditions are required for low-income people to organize, including a loss of system legitimacy, an assertion of rights
by fatalistic people, and belief among helpless people that they have the capacity to change their situation. These circumstances therefore are related to the groups’ understanding of their situation, the tactics used by organizers, the existing resources of the group and the political climate.

Consciousness has long been identified as central to a group’s ability to mobilize and take power. For Marx and Engels (1848), mobilization was to be based on class-consciousness, a shared understanding of worker’s position in the production process. This type of mobilization occurs at the work place around economic issues. In contrast to production-based mobilization, urban social movements more often organize around issues of collective consumption of government services and around protecting a shared space (Castells 1983). In these struggles, groups frame their consciousness around a shared identity, including race, ethnicity, gender, and the shared location itself (Castells 1983).

Extending Marx and Engel’s class-consciousness and Castells’ protected space arguments, Davis (1991) claims that a consciousness around shared housing issues arises because of the very nature of land as use and exchange value. Neighbors, whether owners or renters have “an interest in what happens to their property and an interest in what happens to the neighborhood in which their property is located” (Davis 1991, p. 7). People living in close proximity to one another have “accommodative” interests including security, amenity and autonomy, as well as “accumulative” interests, such as equity, liquidity and legacy that provide a framework for organizing (Davis 1991, p.13). Location and space are integral to the potential for
Geographically defined populations do act collectively on the basis of interests and solidarity that are endemic to the locality itself” (Davis 1991, p. 5). These arguments suggest that residential space provides a basis for consciousness that leads to action.

Geographers have studied this place-based mobilizing through neighborhood mobilization. The residential space forms a basis for social cohesion, neighborhood identity and collective action (Gotham 1999, Martin 2003). According to Suttles, place is more important than race or ethnicity in mobilizing people (1972, as cited in Gotham 1999). Gotham (1999) identified a “defended neighborhood” in which community identity and political mobilization results from an outside threat to a place. Furthermore, place-based consciousness not only rises from neighborhoods indigenously, but is also successfully used as a framing tool by organizers. “Place-framing” identified by Martin (2003) is used by organizers to define and justify collective action in terms of how the issue affects shared space and experience. The meaning of the place is thus created and impressed upon the people living there as a way to motivate them to act in their own interest.

In addition to analyzing different types of consciousness shared by people involved in urban mobilizing, researchers have argued that there is a common evolution of local grassroots movements. Urban neighborhood mobilization often occurs in response to redevelopment projects, either state or market sponsored (Castells 1983, Bennett 1997, Martin 2003). This redevelopment can be a tool in organizing and sustaining mobilization for a specific neighborhood. In the case of
municipally-sponsored redevelopment, which is the focus of this thesis, projects are often concentrated in low-income residential areas where land is relatively easy to legally take. When a community is organized, the short-term response to redevelopment proposals is local resistance to projects involving clearing and rebuilding in a residential area (Bennet 1997). This trend was seen throughout the 1950s and 1960s: the U.S. Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Housing Act brought redevelopment plans that required displacing low-income residents and demolishing their homes (Bennet 1997). Some communities that organized in these cases achieved short-term success of halting these projects. Fewer communities enjoyed long-term results, reorienting municipal planning priorities and changing processes to empower participant roles (Bennet 1997, Mayer 2003).

While consciousness and the evolution of mobilization are critical elements of scholarly arguments on community mobilization, neither of these notions fully explains why neighborhoods faced with redevelopment are able to mobilize and successfully influence decisions. Newer frameworks have attempted to fill this remaining gap in scholarly understanding by exploring why some neighborhood efforts are effective and why others are not. These frameworks have indicated that neighborhood mobilizations are (and are not) successful because of two factors: the social capital within the neighborhood and the political opportunity structure in which the mobilization occurs (Tarrow 1994).
**Social Capital**

Social capital has been used widely to explain the role and function of community movements within a context of urban revitalization and development. First popularized by Coleman (1988 as cited by Mayer 2003), social capital consists of the resources that allow individuals and collective actors to achieve specific goals that could not be achieved without it. It includes the strength of the relationships among individuals and the trust in reciprocity that comes out of shared experience and understanding. Putnam (2001) added to this definition that by utilizing its social capital, the community as a whole stands to gain in economic, civic and democratic terms. Social capital is built from existing social organizations that bring people together (Coleman 1988; Putnam 2001) and can be increased by political activity (Mayer 2003). For mobilizing neighborhoods, social capital is important for building trust internally and gaining access to power holders.

From this perspective, in order to move from consciousness to action, people need not only a shared understanding of the world but a trust in each other. Purdue (2001) defines this trust as “acceptance of the risk and vulnerability deriving from action of others and expectation that others will not exploit this vulnerability” (p. 2212). “Goodwill” trust is the emotional acceptance of other’s moral commitment not to exploit vulnerability (Purdue 2001). In neighborhood mobilizing, this trust is needed among the members and between the members and community leaders. In a study of active and dormant neighborhoods based on collective action, for example, Basu (2002) found that the interdependency of participants was one of the critical
factors in determining neighborhood action. “Competence” trust is when one trusts that another organization or person can control risk by meeting his/her commitment (Purdue 2001). This trust is important in relations with external players, including elected officials and agency staff that are championing a neighborhood’s cause. To move forward from collective trust to tapping into this power source, however, communities need an internal leader.

The social capital defining the leader’s relationships is important in determining the leader’s accountability to the group and his/her access to power holders (Diani 1997, as cited in Purdue 2001). Leaders can be “positional,” identified through their position on an official board, or “reputational,” identified by residents based on action (Purdue 2001). Regardless of position, leaders need to accumulate both internal and external social capital in order to be successful. Internal, or “communal” social capital is based on a leader’s relationships and accountability to residents represented (Purdue 2001). This social capital can be seen in the relationships between a leader and individual residents as well as in the leader’s skills and ability to represent the residents. External or “collaborative” social capital comes from partnership relations with other organizations and elected officials and provides access to elite networks and power holders (Purdue 2001). In redevelopment conflicts, social capital, internal and external, is especially important in reframing state-society relations (Purdue 2001, Mayer 2003). Gaining access through these relationships is dependent on the opportunities presented in the political structure.
Political Opportunity Structure

Although social movements historically have been studied separately from the political context in which they emerge, the political structure is as important as social capital in terms of understanding mobilization, particularly for resource poor movements and local mobilizations (Piven and Cloward 1979, Tarrow 1994, Almeida and Stearns 1998, Amenta and Young 1999). The political opportunity structure consists of the “various aspects of government structure, public policy and political condition that ‘bound the possibilities for change and political action’ and explain differential outcomes of social movements” (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996 cited in Gotham 1999, p. 335). By paying attention to the context in which they are organizing, resource-poor mobilized groups can build their own power by tapping into relationships with stronger players and by exposing the vulnerability of power holders (Tarrow 1994).

Often attached to changes in power, opportunities in the political structure present themselves through four key phenomena, as described by Tarrow (1994). In these situations, groups are more likely to mobilize, and to do so successfully. First, *increasing participants’ access* to power somewhat, but not fully serves to empower and educate the group while also frustrating them in regards to their limited capacity. Second, when *unstable alignments* or new coalitions exist among political allies, challenging groups are more likely to be able to divide and influence power holders. Third, when mobilized groups have used their social capital effectively to build *influential allies* they will be more likely to risk action. Lastly, when the political
structure includes *divided elites* that mobilized groups can pit against each other they are more likely to be successful. These opportunities in the power structure enable groups to mobilize and often lead to successful action. Almeida and Stearns (1998) used elite instability and external allies as indicators of the political opportunity structure. *Elite instability* was defined by elections, intra-governmental conflict and symbolic government gesture. *External allies* were defined through political allies and mass media. Almeida and Stearns (1998) compared the status of these variables to the tactics used and success rates of a local grassroots environmental movement and found that the political environment explains both tactical choices and movement outcomes of local collective action.

To conclude this discussion of community mobilization, I will address the issue of evaluating the success of a grassroots neighborhood mobilization. Similar to participatory planning, mobilization can be evaluated according to its ability to represent, its inclusivity, its ability to transform government, or the outcome of a specific decision. In terms of local grassroots groups, particularly around land use issues, success can be more narrowly defined specifically because such groups have more narrowly defined goals than broad social movements (Almeida and Stearns 1998). According to Lefebvre (1991), the potential for power is realized through the transformation of space. Drawing from this social production model, power is the ability to achieve desired outcomes, not necessarily the ability to directly control other social groups (Purcell 1997). Thus, for local grassroots groups, their power is realized successfully when their demands around a specific development are met. In terms of a
conflict over a school siting, success is determined by an outcome over a specific
decision to change the site selected for the school.

**Educational Governance**

Educational governance has historically been the least addressed area of school reform
(Cronin 1973). To improve education, policy makers and communities usually focus
on problems such as low-test scores and high drop out rates. Governance, however,
includes a number of issues that influence the learning environment including who is
allowed to participate in decisions. From a planning perspective, it is important to
understand the historic and current changes in educational governance, the structure of
which determines the role of communities in educational planning. Historically, local
school governance has shifted from local wards to centralized authority and back
towards local boards. In the last thirty years there has been an increase in reform
efforts to enhance community power, including community control of schools through
site-based management and citizen oversight committees. This section traces the
historic trends in educational governance in the U.S., reviews the community control
centered reform movements, and explains the current critique of such reforms
according to the education literature.

*Historic Trends*

The succession of struggles to reform local school governance parallels similar efforts
in planning to manage city services although the institutions have long been separate
entities (Cronin 1973). Educational administrators have long sought to keep
themselves separate from political influences and from community input (Rogers, 1968, Cronin 1973, Kirst 1995). This isolation comes out of management theory’s concept of the technical expert and the cultural notion of education as social reform (Kirst 1995). Through the late 19th century, educational governance was highly decentralized and localized, existing at the local ward or even individual school level (Cronin 1973; Kirst 1995). In the late 19th century, upper class professionals were displeased that local board control was situated in political machines dominated by lower class and immigrant groups, and consequently, these professionals fought to centralize school board power. While claiming to remove education from politics and establish a strong professional expert in charge of school decisions, these higher income professionals effectively removed lower class influence and replaced it with their own agendas (Cronin 1973). The power relations of educational governance remained centralized through the first half of the 20th century. During the 1950s, suburban and city schools became racially polarized as the issues they faced and constituents they served became increasingly distinct due to “white flight” and the increased movement of low-income families to the cities (Cronin 1973).

The 1960s brought demands for local control of schools through opposition to and support of desegregation, increased activity of teachers unions, and the rise of a community schools movement that opposed the insulated and unresponsive bureaucracies often typical of centralized institutions (Rogers, 1968; Cronin 1973; Kirst 1995). In some districts, these demands brought substantive changes in governance as exemplified in the partial break up of the New York City School district
into manageable-sized sub-districts in the late 1960’s (Kirp 1999). Since the 1970s, education reform movements have focused on increasing local control, community participation, and parent choice through a variety of strategies and with varying degrees of success.

Recent Reforms

The momentum of the 1960s and 1970s reform movements and the worsening of public education led federal policy makers in the mid 1980s to encourage public schools to “restructure” existing organizational arrangements to delegate more decision-making to local school sites (Ortiz and Ogawa 2000). This devolution of power was happening in many areas of government, based on the philosophy that increased local control would result in more efficient systems. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw school reform efforts that increased community participation and control in many major cities including Chicago, Atlanta, Detroit, Baltimore, and Washington DC, as well as the entire state of Kentucky school system (Henig, Hula, Orr, and Pedescleaux 1999; Johnson and Scollay 2001; Nakagawa 2003). In an effort to “reconcile decision making responsibility and accountability” reformers turned to site-based management that “moves decision making to the school site, decreasing central office control and enabling educators most knowledgeable about local issues to make decisions about key issues” (Ortiz and Ogawa 2000, p. 487). Site-based management has taken the form of local school councils and integrated teams of parents, teachers, and principals that have had limited success in improving educational achievement or redistributing power but have often raised community
interest in participating in school issues (Bryk, Bender, Kerbrow Sebring, Rollow, and Easton 1999; Henig, Hula, Orr, and Pedescleaux 1999; Johnson and Scollay 2001; Nakagawa 2003). For example, a 1988 Detroit school reform established local school councils and site-based management at selected schools. Performance rose at these schools but the effort fell apart when the board pushed for rapid expansion of the program (Henig et al 1999). Further, the Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 created local school councils that failed to raise student achievement but did increase parent interest and participation in school governance (Nakagawa 2003).

Another way to increase community control, Citizen Oversight Committees have gained recent nationwide support. These committees, which oversee school board expenditure decisions, help to maintain the board’s accountability and honesty in designing contracts and approving projects (21st Century School Fund 2003). They have sprung up in many major school districts motivated by the rapidly growing capital funds and state policies that facilitate their participation (21st Century School Fund 2003). California voters, for example, passed Proposition 39 in November 2000, which lowered the number of votes required for passage of local school bonds from 66.6 to 55% in exchange for certain requirements, including establishing oversight committees (21st Century School Fund 2003). These committees are legislatively required to have interaction between school boards members and community representatives, often leading to meaningful input for the people serving on the committees.
Planning and Education

Although their paths of organizational development and power restructuring run parallel, school districts and city governments have long been separate jurisdictions. Legally, education is a function of the state not of the municipality. Locally, school boards, either elected or appointed, govern school districts while city governments are generally managed by an elected city council. Public administration scholars, however have argued for the disbanding of school boards and insertion of education among other city provided services (Cronin 1973). Educators have coolly opposed such proposals and the courts repeatedly held that schools are agencies of the state, legally and administratively independent of other government agencies (Cronin 1973).

This separation of jurisdictions has insulated school districts from other municipal functions and limited political influence on school decisions. Although legal decisions have made school districts independent of municipal jurisdiction, in some cases, city officials have influenced school decisions through the selection of school board members or the approval of school budgets. For example, in Chicago, the school board is dependent on the city government in two ways: The mayor appoints board members and sets the budget limits; city council approves the school budget (Cronin 1973). Further, in New York City, the mayor, with city council and board of estimate, reviews and approves the budget. Each borough president selects one school board member. On the other hand, in the case of Los Angeles Unified
School District, the city government(s) has little power over the school board as no members are appointed or budgets approved by city officials.

**Critiques of Reforms**

While some of these reforms are recent, education scholars have already begun evaluating the effectiveness of site-based management. Results, thus far, are mixed, with few studies actually showing that parental participation leads to significant improvements in schools operation or educational achievement (Bryk, et al 1999). The major critiques of these reforms are that they are too time and cost-intensive and they take too long to see results. These critiques are not unlike the critiques of participatory planning processes, which often take longer and cost more than traditional state-based planning procedure. These reforms need full participation and support from parents, teachers and administrators, and often take a long time to show results. First, site-based management or local school councils must receive adequate training to overcome traditional power roles and structures (Ortiz and Ogawa 2000; Johnson and Scollay 2001). Second, citizen oversight committees must receive full support and cooperation from school board members and district staff to obtain the necessary knowledge and technology to process and use existing information (21st Century School Fund 2003). Third, reforms must be implemented on a pilot basis first and then slowly expanded to full districts bearing in mind the public’s tendency to quickly reject any proposals that do not show immediate improvements in school
scores (Henig et al 1999). Many pilot projects have already been terminated because of the lack of immediate impacts.

Even with these reforms in place, and perhaps due to these reforms, the political structure governing education has become more confusing and more difficult to influence (Kirst 1995). The complexity of organizational structure erects barriers to effective reform and sustainable community participation. First, the increased localization of governance over school performance without clear delineation of responsibility of duties obfuscates the responsible agency for inadequate academic performance (Kirp 1999). Second, there is a lack of effective coordination between state and local governance, particularly in the area of financial approvals, leaving unclear which agency is responsible for maintaining adequate facility conditions (CA Legislative Analyst Office 2001). With so many players trying to influence school board decisions and the myriad of approvals required for school board action, specifically in regards to new facilities development, community members desiring to influence decisions are left overwhelmed and often excluded by the decision making process.

Further, many of the existing reforms, excepting oversight committees, focus on involving principals, teachers, and parents of existing schools, a participatory structure that does not address the issue of schools that are not yet built. The typical community schools increases participation of parents, teachers, and principals does not quite work for an unsited school that does not yet have such players. Community engagement then must be focused on people within a specific geography, most often a
neighborhood. This structure of participation throws the issue back to the planner who has little understanding of school development, as discussed earlier. A greater understanding of how communities influence school siting therefore is needed.

Besides the lack of practitioner-based understanding between education and community development professionals, a number of gaps exist in the scholarly planning literature around this issue. Planning scholars and practitioners tend to have limited knowledge concerning educational governance and the field of education does not often have the capacity to include community participation in either their professional practice or theoretical musings. Little planning research has addressed education in general or school siting in particular, although it is definitely a relevant land use and planning issue. Research aimed at planners that is about school development will help to close the gap in understanding and practice between these two fields.

An analysis of community influence in education decisions has not been contextualized in the larger social and geographic theories that are the basis of community mobilization literature. No research has evaluated how communities effectively mobilize around school siting decisions. This is important because school districts are becoming land use planning institutions, though they have not been studied as such. In the context of these land use decision-makers, it is unknown what factors will determine the success of community mobilizations trying to influence such land use decisions or if the findings of the broader literature on community mobilizing will uphold in this context. Also, because school districts have recently increased their
capacity for school development and increasing their role as a political land use
decision-maker, openings in the political opportunity structure may exist that have not
yet been identified that will affect the success of grassroots groups to influence siting
decisions. The remainder of this thesis tackles these gaps in the literature by providing
a conceptual framework that ties community participation to school siting decisions,
and by applying this framework to case studies of school siting in Los Angeles.
Chapter three outlines the conceptual approach used in this thesis to explain how communities effectively mobilize and potentially influence school district facilities planning. The first part of the chapter provides a brief description of the governance of the Los Angeles Unified School District, where the case studies occurred, and a narrative of the events that make up the two case studies. The second part of the chapter includes the conceptual model and specific research questions and hypotheses regarding community influence on educational governance.

**Governance of Los Angeles Unified School District**

As described in the previous chapter, educational governance today has become more complex because of the variety of players and influences on state and local school boards, where most power remains concentrated (Kirst 1995). Many of the auxiliary players including community members, local advocacy groups, and other elected officials, however, are not central to the established governance structure as determined by educational policy. Furthermore, despite reform efforts to increase participation, education still maintains a hierarchical structure, as revealed in the governance structure of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

As in most states, California statewide agencies have extensive influence over local school governance. The California Department of Education (CDE) regulates school curriculum, teacher requirements, operating funds and facilities. CDE is
governed by and carries out the mandates established by the California State Assembly in the California Education Code. The code designates those issues that are local and those that are reserved for state agencies. Specifically in terms of building new facilities, three other state agencies play important roles. Within the CDE, the Department of Public School Construction’s (DPSC) State Allocation Board (SAB) approves and awards state funds to local projects that meet state requirements. The Division of the State Architect (DSA) approves designs for each project according to CDE’s space requirements. The Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) approves environmental quality of soil on proposed sites for new schools.

At the local level, a seven-member elected school board governs LAUSD, a district that covers 703.8 square miles including 26 cities and instructs over 870,000 students at nearly 1,000 K-12 schools, magnet schools, skills centers and other facilities (LAUSD 2002). The representatives are elected through seven districts during city general elections and serve four-year terms. Board members elect a president of the Board each year. The Board employs a superintendent who oversees all matters of the district and reports to the Board (LAUSD Board Secretariat 2003). Since 2000, the District has been divided into eleven subdistricts, each with its own superintendent to oversee day-to-day activity of local schools and principals (LAUSD 2003). The superintendents of each of the eleven subdistricts report to the Superintendent. A map of the District and its subdistricts appears in Figure 1 on the next page.
Since 2000, Roy Romer has been the Superintendent, overseeing a variety of issues including the operation of existing schools and the maintenance and development of facilities (LAUSD 2003). The Facilities Department maintains existing schools and develops new facilities. The Head of Facilities answers directly to the Superintendent and oversees geographically defined teams of staff from a variety of divisions within the department including program, design, real estate, financing, community outreach and demographics (LAUSD 2003). Figure 2, on the next page, depicts governing structure of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Figure 1 Boundaries of Los Angeles Unified School Districts and subdistricts.
Figure 2: Governing Structure of Los Angeles Unified School District
Case Study Narratives

This thesis examines the issue of community participation in educational facility planning through two case studies that occurred between 1999 and 2002 in a South Los Angeles neighborhood within the Los Angeles Unified School District. Both cases involved site selection processes for new schools. The cases occurred in the same neighborhood, involved similar groups of residents, and overlapped in terms of the order of events. Essentially, resident opposition to one site that threatened their homes led into proactive site identification and suggestion for other schools. Case A is the first site selection-process in which residents opposed an LAUSD proposed site for a new primary center school; the site was discarded and a new one found. Case B is the second site selection process in which residents proactively supported a site that LAUSD selected and used for a new high school. Although these stories overlap, for clarity, I will recount and analyze them as two separate cases.

Case A

In the fall of 1998, LAUSD officials were looking for sites for a primary center in a neighborhood just south of downtown to relieve overcrowding at 28th Street and Trinity Elementary Schools. LAUSD had hired an outside firm on a consultant basis to conduct the site search process and community outreach, as the District was doing for most site selection at this time. According to the Real Estate Director at LAUSD at that time, the District had held a community meeting to discuss sites in the

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*Because this story involves multiple versions and viewpoints, this narrative is not completely chronological. For a complete chronology of the events during the period of the case study, see the “Timeline of Events” in Appendix G.*
neighborhood in March 1999. By June 1999, the Real Estate division had looked at eight sites and proposed two of them to the School Board for further study. Although the search and site study lasted for at least eight months, residents within the search area claimed to have been unaware that the School District was looking for a site in their neighborhood until the sites were being proposed to the Board for further study.

One of those sites was the block between Trinity and Maple and 31st and 32nd Streets (See Figure 3). This block included housing, an out of use railroad right of way and a small church. A resident living on 28th Street heard the District was considering this site and passed out flyers to the community that said the District was looking for sites and that there was the potential that residents would lose housing. One long-time homeowner who had been involved with other neighborhood issues, received a flyer on a Sunday in June 1999. Along with a few other residents, she went to the June 22, 1999 School Board meeting when the site was being proposed for feasibility studies.

These residents spoke in opposition to the site during the public comment period of

Figure 3: Existing and proposed school sites in Case A. Source: www.nkca.ucla.edu.
the meeting because they did not want to lose housing in their neighborhood. Despite the residents’ presence, the Board approved the site for more feasibility studies.

At this point a Community Outreach Department did not exist within the Facilities Division at LAUSD, leaving residents to try to speak with individual real estate consultants or school board members. Unable to communicate with the District and upset about the possibility of losing homes, residents contacted City Councilwoman Rita Walters to assist them in contacting LAUSD officials who were unresponsive to resident phone calls at this time. One resident received a fax from the Councilwoman’s office on June 29, 1999 detailing the eight sites LAUSD Real Estate staff looked at in the neighborhood. Two sites, noted with stars on the map, had been approved for future studies. One of those sites, the block between Trinity, Maple, 31st and 32nd streets was clearly marked as the “Recommended Site.”

Unhappy with the sites the District was considering because of the housing that would be taken, residents took site searching into their own hands. One woman, a long time resident, who came to be identified by residents, outside allies and LAUSD staff as a leader in the neighborhood, organized residents to walk the streets of their neighborhood looking for sites they thought were appropriate for a school. They photographed sites they preferred for a school as well as the sites preferred by the School District to show the amount of housing that would be lost. These photos were mounted onto large pieces of cardboard. Photos in tow, the residents went to School Board meetings and waited for the time at the end of the meeting for miscellaneous speakers. The resident leader spoke to the Board about the sites the residents preferred
and the sites they opposed while other residents showed the picture boards to the School Board members.

After presenting these sites to the Board, the residents met with Board Member Victoria Castro in October 1999. They explained to her both their opposition to the site on 32nd Street and support for other sites they had identified. At an October 1999 School Board meeting, the Board was going to vote on moving forward with a preferred site for relieving overcrowding at Trinity and 28th Street Elementary Schools. The preferred site until this point had been the site between Trinity, Maple, 31st and 32nd. The leader and the other residents were present to voice their opposition once again. When they were allowed to come forward and speak, a representative from the Real Estate Division ran forward to the podium. He announced that the site the residents were opposing had been rescinded and the District was looking at other sites in the area. It is unclear why the site was pulled from the table at that point, and there is little institutional memory among District staff about the community opposition to that site. According to one Real Estate executive at that time, the site could have been pulled for a number of reasons including environmental hazards in the soil, expensive cost of relocating homeowners or a desire to avoid confrontation with the opposing residents.

Shortly thereafter the District moved forward with an alternative site that had been previously studied but not proposed, a site between 36th Street, Maple Avenue and 36th Place. According to one resident opposed to the original site, she attempted to alert residents on that block about the possibility of losing their homes. However,
the people living there did not organize to stop this new proposal. These residents were relocated, the houses demolished and today a school is being constructed. At this point, it appears that the residents opposed to the original site “won” because the school they opposed was not built in their immediate neighborhood. However, the result, similar to many NIMBY cases, was that the school was still built, just four blocks south where residents were less organized or adamant about staying in their homes.

Case B

Aware that LAUSD officials were looking for school sites in the neighborhood and afraid that such searches would result in losing their homes, a group of residents began looking for other sites they thought were acceptable for a school. In the summer of 1999 these residents began walking their South Los Angeles neighborhood, identifying and photographing sites that they thought were acceptable for a school. As described in Case A, the residents attached these photos to poster boards and took them to School Board meetings. One of the residents’ highest prioritized sites, the former Santee Dairy, became available in August 1999, it was announced that the factory located between Washington Boulevard, 23rd Street, Maple Avenue, and Los Angeles Street, had gone bankrupt (see Figure 4 on the next page). According to residents and outside allies, they were eager to have the 18.5-acre site used for a school rather than a swap meet or oversized discount mall because the site seemed like the perfect place for a school with amenities that would serve the students and the
neighborhood. A school at this site could truly become a center for the community that did not open and close according to school hours.

At their October 1999 meeting with Board Member Victoria Castro, the residents explained that this site was their highest priority site. According to the residents, they pushed for the District to acquire the Santee Dairy property before something else was built there. Ms. Castro instructed her deputy to look at the site and meet with the neighborhood group.

Once the original site proposed and opposed by residents in Case A was removed from consideration, many of the residents involved believed their work was done - their homes had been saved and they had accomplished their goal. However, the resident leader saw this just as the beginning. She knew that the District had to build these schools, and she knew the District would be back before too long looking for sites in the neighborhood, putting their homes at risk again. According to her, she saw the available Dairy site as an opportunity to have an input not only in where schools were sited, but also in the programming of these schools, in creating after school opportunities, naming the schools and hiring the principals.
Through the fall and winter of 1999, the group of residents continued to attend School Board meetings to suggest the sites they had identified. During this time, however they had little direct contact with School District staff. Although Ms. Castro had been receptive to their concerns, after that meeting, the residents had no contact with her. Through the winter of 1999/2000, their calls were not returned and often met with a “why are you bothering us? This isn’t your business” attitude (Interview with resident 2004).

At this time Sister Diane, executive director of Esperanza Community Housing Corporation and a long time community activist who had worked with these residents in the past, encouraged the residents to meet with the people working on the Figueroa Corridor Coalition under the organization Strategic Action for a Just Economy (SAJE). SAJE donated a community organizer to work with residents; the organization helped facilitate meetings, made copies and aided in the distribution of materials. The organizer worked with these residents for about two years. During this time the organization grew as more residents were contacted through outreach to community centers, churches and other facilities. By June 2000, the grassroots neighborhood group had taken on an official name, Neighbors for an Improved Community.

During the winter of 1999/2000 LAUSD was undergoing extensive changes in personnel and organizational structure. After facing increasing criticism stemming from controversial school developments, years of declining test scores, and charges of mismanaged funds, the School Board took steps to make internal changes. A new
Chief Operating Officer was hired to essentially “clean house” and improve the organization. Superintendent Zacarias Ruben was removed from office. An interim superintendent, Ramon Cortines, was instated for a term of less than a year. In January 2000, LAUSD hired real estate, community outreach, and project management consultants as well as new permanent staff to move forward on the New Facilities Master Plan that had been established. The new Facilities staff was charged with the task of establishing a new internal system to deliver the new schools.

One real estate executive working as a consultant to LAUSD did attempt to work with the community to look for new sites. The residents in this neighborhood set up a time for him to meet with them in the neighborhood, but at the last minute he cancelled on them. Knowing all the neighbors were expecting to meet with him, the resident leader called Superintendent Cortines to complain about this behavior. Later that day, the consultant called her back, furious that she had called his boss. The next day the Superintendent himself called the resident back and sent an army of LAUSD representatives to the meeting. Obviously the District’s attitude toward and treatment of the community was improving.

During the summer of 2000, LAUSD began setting up a permanent, in-house New Facilities Division that included a Community Outreach department. In August 2000, the new Director of the Community Outreach department contacted the resident leader to meet with the group about their interest in the Santee Dairy site. Before meeting with LAUSD, the resident leader wanted to make sure that the group’s support of a school at the Santee Dairy site reflected the desires of the wider
community. To verify this, Neighbors for an Improved Community, with the assistance of SAJE, All People’s Christian Center, and other community-based groups, conducted a survey of residents about building a school at the Santee Dairy Site. Out of hundreds of questionnaires returned, only one respondent opposed building a school there; support was overwhelming.

In the fall and winter of 2000/2001, LAUSD studied the former dairy site as a potential site for South Central High School # 1 and Jefferson New Continuation High School #1. The School Board approved the site for purchase in the first quarter of 2001. According to newspaper reports that came out a year and a half later, the sale and development of the site as a turnkey project was negotiated without a bidding process. The owner of the site, Corporate Property Associates 4, was willing to sell the property to the District for $24 million if Corporate Property Associates 4 could lease it back from the District for a nominal fee and develop the school without the District soliciting other bids or request for proposals (Barrett 2002). Influence of the relationships of then-mayor Richard Riordan in making this deal happen without the usual and legally required bidding process called the deal into question, though ground had already broken at the site. District staff defended the deal as a quicker process, which was needed to meet deadlines for state funding and as a cost-efficient way to build a much needed school (Barrett 2002). It remains to be seen if this turnkey project will be less costly than a school developed by the District.

Ground broke on the site in September 2002, with a community march to the site and a press conference. Neighborhood groups involved in the site selection
process requested and received an opportunity to speak during the press conference. Since groundbreaking, resident groups have continued to be involved with decisions about the school. Residents are concerned about potential hazards on the soil as well as about the principal selection process. The neighborhood group recently completed another survey asking what kinds of after school programs the residents would like to see at the school. Construction is set to be complete by the end of 2005. Still today, LAUSD regularly contacts this group in regard to decisions made about this high school and new schools needed in the neighborhood. Furthermore, the grassroots group that formed out of opposition to the first site and support for the second has taken on other development agency activities in their neighborhood including a proposal from the Metropolitan Transit Agency to build a rail line through their neighborhood.

**Conceptual Model**

The literature of community participation and educational governance presented in Chapter Two point to a number of gaps, namely a poor understanding by planners of how school decision processes work, little capacity to apply participatory strategies developed by planners to school decisions, and scarce analysis and understanding of how community groups are able to influence such decisions. The planning literature does reflect that a variety of factors, including social capital and the political opportunity structure, influence a grassroots group’s capacity to mobilize and influence governmental decision-making processes, but there is a lack of
understanding of the complexity of political opportunities as applied specifically to land use decisions. Understanding these factors is especially important with regard to resource poor groups trying to influence insulated bureaucratic processes, like the school district site selection. To analyze how neighborhood groups mobilize around and influence school site selection, I have created a conceptual model that shows the relevant variables and their relationships to one another (Figure 5). The conceptual model was created through an iterative process. Originally based on information drawn from the literature, these relationships became clearer as I understood events of the case studies.

The model traces the factors influencing a school district’s site selection through a set of context variables (neighborhood social capital, openings in the political opportunity structure, and availability of alternative sites), and a set of

![Figure 5: Conceptual model](image-url)
organizational action or behavior variables (grassroots group’s capacity to organize a community and mobilize resources, and the school district’s receptiveness to community input) that lead to such an outcome. This model is based on a two-step analysis including independent variables, independent/dependent variables and dependent variables. The independent variables are those factors considered to be already present in the situation under study. These are the context variables: neighborhood’s social capital, opportunities in the political structure, and a viable alternative site. The independent/dependent variables are those factors affected by the independent variables but also influencing the dependent variable. These are the organizational action or behavior variables: a grassroots group’s capacity to organize and the school district’s receptiveness to community input. The dependent variable is affected by the independent/dependent variables. This is the school district’s site selection, which is the ultimate outcome I am interested in understanding. The following section describes each variable in detail including the indicators through which they will be measured.

Independent Variables

Social capital consists of the resources drawn from the strength of internal and external relationships built on trust and reciprocity (Putnam 2001; Purdue 2001; Mayer 2003). The neighborhood’s social capital is the strength of the relationships found among residents within a specific geographic area stemming from their shared experiences and existing community ties. High levels of social capital can be seen in
the shared life experiences of the residents, existing social relationships and residents’ trust in an internal leader. The relationship of this independent variable to the independent/dependent variables is that social capital increases a group’s capacity to organize. First, social capital improves organizing capacity because it links shared experiences to a shared consciousness and builds the internal trust among neighbors, both necessary elements for collective action (Davis 1991). Through social capital residents learn to trust each other and trust in an internal leader who may have skills to choose successful strategies for mobilization (Purdue 2001). Therefore, an increased level of neighborhood social capital should be positively correlated with increased capacity for a group to organize.

To evaluate the presence of neighborhood social capital, I identified the presence of relevant indicators that reveal its existence. First, shared life experiences help to create a shared consciousness. Shared life experiences were indicated by the homogeneity of the neighborhoods’ residents as reflected in housing tenure. Second, existing social relationships form the basis for the trust and reciprocity that builds social capital. Existing relationships were indicated by participation in local community groups and the familiarity of neighbors with each other. In addition to relationships among residents, relationships with and trust in the leader can serve as an indicator of trust within the community. The residents’ and external allies identification of a leader reveals the presence of adequate trust among residents. Residents of the neighborhood and external allies identified an internal leader and the skills of that leader, indicating their trust in that person. These indicators were
combined to give a general level of social capital present in the neighborhood, and were extracted from the interviews with community members and neighborhood leaders.

The political opportunity structure consists of government structure, public policy and political relationships and conditions that determine the possibilities for change and political action (Gotham 1999). **Openings in the political opportunity structure** are particularly important in determining the success of resource-poor, local grassroots movements. Openings in the political opportunity structure are spaces for political action and change. They occur when unstable or new relationships, divided elites and/or external allies are present (Tarrow 1994). These openings are important because they provide temporally and spatially defined opportunities for groups to organize and access power holders. In my model, openings in the political opportunity structure should be positively correlated with the group’s capacity to organize and the school district’s receptiveness to community input.

First, openings in the political opportunity structure increase capacity to organize because they can lead to shared resources among groups as well as encouragement from elected officials needed to build trust among residents (Tarrow 1994). Shared resources are drawn from coalition building with other groups and elected officials. Second, openings in the political opportunity structure increase the receptivity of the school district because they provide extra credibility to a group’s plea and put power holders in potentially precarious positions (Tarrow 1994). External allies can build the case for a grassroots movement while unstable
relationships can force an agency to be more accountable to community demands. Therefore, openings in the political opportunity structure offer opportunities for grassroots groups to organize and influence decision makers through increased resources and credibility as well as unstable political relations and context.

To evaluate the political opportunity structure three indicators of openings in the structure are used. First unstable relationships were indicated by past problems and future expectations that put pressure on the relationship between the school district and the community at large. Past problems include misspent public funds, controversial site selections, backroom business deals and unfinished school projects. Future expectations include bond measures awaiting public approval and strategic plans for future buildings. Second, divided elites were indicated by competing politicians, antagonistic relationships among elected officials, and debates between public and private elites. Third, influential allies were indicated by the presence of external leaders working within the neighborhood, coalitions working with the neighborhood group, elected officials spearheading the group’s cause, and media support to the group’s effort. All of these indicators were extracted from interviews and media accounts.

An alternative site is an area of land acceptable to the school district’s site requirements for a school and within their targeted search area. A viable site offers a possible alternative to the school district’s preferred site. It provides an opportunity for the community to organize and builds momentum for their demands. An alternative site also increases the school district’s willingness to listen to the group
because it reveals that other realistic possibilities exist. In this conceptual model, a viable alternative site should be positively correlated with high levels of the group’s capacity to organize and the school district’s receptiveness to the community group.

To be a viable alternative, a site must meet three types of standards. First, the site must meet district site requirements, including size, environmental toxicity, and location. Second, acquiring the property and demolishing existing structures must not be more expensive than the projected cost for the original site chosen by the district. Lastly, the site must be acceptable to neighborhood residents, which is dependent on residents’ values of land use options. These indicators of a site’s viability were found in school district reports and interviews with school district staff and community members.

*Dependent Variables/Independent Variables*

As described in the literature a number of factors, including social capital and openings in the political opportunity structure, affect a group’s capacity to organize. A group’s capacity to organize is that group’s ability to work collectively toward a common goal. In this conceptual model, the group’s capacity to organize is dependent upon the neighborhood’s social capital, openings in the political structure and a viable alternative site. Further, the group’s capacity to organize should be positively correlated with the school district’s receptiveness to the community input and the school district’s site selection.
A group’s capacity to organize around state funded neighborhood redevelopment is dependent on at least three elements. Social capital, including shared consciousness, trusting relationships, and trust in a skilled leader provide the basic foundation needed for people to act collectively (Piven and Cloward 1979; Castells 1983; Davis 1991; Tarrow 1994). Openings in the political structure, including unstable relationships, divided elites and external allies build momentum for a group’s cause and lend extra resources such as personal relationships and financial support (Tarrow 1994). A viable alternative site, acceptable to the neighborhood and decision makers, provides a focal point for building momentum.

Organizing capacity is important in determining a group’s overall success because it affects the willingness of power holders to listen to the group’s demands and the school district’s site selection. More organized groups, particularly those working within an opening in the opportunity structure and with the support of external allies, more likely will garner the attention of power holders. Further the more organized groups especially those with a viable alternative proposal more likely will influence final decisions. To measure the capacity to organize, I looked at the organized group’s size and representativeness in regards to the neighborhood as a whole, the tactics used, and the group’s ability to gain access to power holders. These indicators were assessed using the interviews with residents and neighborhood leaders.

A public agency’s receptiveness to community input is that agency’s willingness to listen to and be swayed by the opinions of various groups. The school district’s receptiveness to community input is the level of attention staff gives to
addressing concerns of groups outside the district’s official structure and the agency’s vulnerability that forces staff to listen to and respond to group’s suggestions. In this conceptual model about neighborhood influence in school site selection, the school district’s receptiveness should be dependent on the political opportunity structure, a viable alternative site and a group’s capacity to organize. As the school district becomes more receptive to community input it is more likely that the agency’s final decision will match the goals of the organized group.

At least three factors influence a school district’s receptiveness to community input. First, the political opportunity structure, which determines the stability of the district’s relationships, conflicts among elites and the support of external allies to a group’s cause, should all influence the district’s vulnerability to pressure by local groups. Second, a viable alternative site should influence the district’s receptivity towards local input because it makes other development options a stronger reality and less likely to be a waste of scarce district resources. Third, a group’s organizing capacity, which is also dependent on the previous three factors, should increase that group’s credibility and political power in the eyes of the district, thus increasing the district’s receptivity to that group’s input.

The school district’s receptiveness to community input is important in determining the district’s site selection and reflecting an organized group’s influence on that site selection. In a situation where a district is highly receptive, the decision more likely will reflect the goals of the organized group. The district’s receptiveness was measured through records of meetings held between the district and the organized
group, outreach done by the district to this neighborhood around the site, and interviews reflecting school district response to local and regional political pressure.

**Dependent Variable**

The ultimate dependent variable this thesis seeks to understand is the **school district’s site selection**. This variable is essentially the success of the organization in influencing the decisions made by power holders. If the agency’s decision matches the goals of the organized group, then they were successful in influencing the decision. The success of the group is specifically defined as the results of a particular site selection because of the often-limited capacity of neighborhood grassroots mobilizing. According to Purcell (1997), local mobilizations, particularly in redevelopment situations, do not aim to change entire political and economic structure. Rather, they have specific goals in regard to particular sites and policies. Success for these groups therefore, is measured by the response to such demands rather than systemic change to the agency’s structure or policy.

In this model, the school district’s site selection is tied to the organizing capacity of the group and the district’s receptiveness to community input. When groups are more organized, they will have a higher likelihood of influencing final decisions. Also when the school district is more receptive to input, their decisions more likely will reflect the goals of the organized group. The group’s influence on site selection was measured by comparing the final decision of the power holder as it compares to the goals outlined by the group.
Research Questions

To apply this conceptual model, I use a two-part research strategy. This thesis studies the complex relationships among these variables by asking the following questions:

Question 1: How does the availability of an alternative school site, a neighborhood’s social capital and the school district’s relationship with the community affect a group’s capacity to organize and the school district’s receptiveness to community input?

Three hypotheses are related to Question 1:

H1: If an alternative school site is available, a group will be more likely to organize and the district will be more receptive to community input.

Null H1: An available site does not increase or decreases the likelihood of the group’s organizing and district’s receptiveness.

H2: If a neighborhood has a high level of social capital, a group will be more likely to organize.

Null H2: The level of social capital does not increase or decrease the likelihood of group’s organizing.

H3: If the district needs to maintain a positive relationship with the community, it will be more receptive to a grassroots group’s efforts to influence site selection.
Null H3: The district’s need to maintain a positive relationship does not increase or decreases its receptiveness.

Question 2: How does the mobilized group’s capacity to organize and the receptiveness of the district affect the group’s influence on the site selection?

Three hypotheses are related to Question 2:

H4: If a group has a high capacity to organize, it will be more likely to influence the district’s site selection.

Null H4: The group’s capacity to organize does not affect or negatively affects its influence on site selection.

H5: If the district is highly receptive, the group will be more likely to influence the site selection.

Null H5: The district’s receptiveness does not affect or negatively affects the group’s influence on site selection.

Chapter Four lays out the data and methods that are used to address these questions to increase our understanding of this situation.
Chapter Four
Research Methodology

Real-world situations are more complex than the causal relationships we try to identify and understand. These complexities are necessarily simplified when conceptual and empirical models are used to analyze them. However, using such conceptual and empirical models helps planners, policy makers, and researchers to pinpoint important relationships and sources for change. In this chapter, concrete indicators are defined to analyze the conceptual themes identified in the previous chapters. This thesis relies on two case studies. Though this approach reduces the potential for the ability to generalize the results, it affords the opportunity for deep analysis into a variety of variables. This chapter describes the process used to collect and analyze data that are used as measures of these indicators. Qualitative data from archival documents and semi-structured interviews were used. These data were analyzed through a coding scheme. To explain the data collection procedures and data analysis strategies, this chapter proceeds as follows: a justification for using a case study design, an explanation of the data collection and an in-depth description of the coding scheme used to analyze the data.

Case Study Justification

In this thesis, I use two case studies to explore the research question. To justify this method I will explain why a case study approach is appropriate for this question, why
two case studies is best at this point in the research of this topic and why these particular cases are most fitting for this study.

First, a case study approach allows me to study contemporary events within the context in which they exist. According to Yin (1994) a case study is most applicable when “a ‘how’ or ‘why’ question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control” (p. 9). This rationale is especially applicable in which the context – the time, place and political climate in which events occurred – is as much a part of the case as the events and players themselves. In this thesis, I ask how certain factors influenced a specific phenomenon, namely grassroots group’s influence over school site selection. I study this phenomenon through a contemporary set of events that happened during the late 1990s through the early 2000s in Los Angeles. As a contemporary phenomenon, studying these events within their context, rather than in a removed controlled environment, allows for a greater understanding of the multiple factors involved.

Second, using only two case studies, rather than multiple case studies, allows me to look at a variety of factors and to deeply understand the case. This is particularly useful in researching a question that has not been well studied. Urban planning scholars have paid little attention to school facility planning. Because of the lack of research on this issue, an in-depth approach to discern important dimensions of this phenomenon is warranted. Furthermore, through these two cases I can explore multiple and distinct factors that were involved, including the larger political climate. A case study is an appropriate research design for this type of research, which is
studying a not-yet studied question. Although the conclusions drawn from this study are not generalizable to community organizing or school facility planning, they provide a jumping off point for future research in the area. This study can identify the most relevant or influential factors that can then be researched through comparative case studies or other methods.

Third, these particular cases are appropriate for this study because these events happened recently in a place where the issue is contemporary but they are not the most controversial cases of their kind. The issue of school development and community outreach is particularly relevant in Los Angeles as many schools are currently being planned and constructed though little land is readily available, leading to the potential for site conflict and the need for effective community outreach. As a consequence, Los Angeles is rich with cases of controversial school development in recent years. The two cases chosen for this study, the events surrounding the site selection for Jefferson New Primary Center #6 and South Los Angeles Area High School #1 are closely related to each other from the community’s perspective. These cases are slightly less politically volatile than others so participants may be more willing to talk. Other similar cases, such as the Belmont High School development site explained in chapter one, which may become more plausible to study in the future and appropriate for comparative studies, make Los Angeles an ideal place to begin studying these issues.
Specifically, the neighborhood in which this case took place is appropriate for studying resource-poor mobilizations, as it is a low-income, marginalized neighborhood. The events of this case occurred just south of downtown Los Angeles, in a neighborhood bound by Washington Boulevard, Central Avenue, Jefferson Boulevard and Main Street (Figure 6). The income for 68% of households is less than $35,000, for 52% of households is less than $25,000. Further, 35% of the population is living in poverty, compared to 18% statewide. Also, 90% of the residents have a high school diploma or less. The neighborhood’s power is also limited by language limitations and immigration status. Language isolation and immigration status limits access to services, to government officials and to resources. Seventy-four percent of the households speak Spanish at home, compared to 23% statewide. Furthermore 52% of the residents are not citizens. These socio-economic

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6 As a proxy for the neighborhood, Census tracts 224020, 224600, 26410, 226420, and 226700, which roughly coincide with the neighborhood boundaries cited by residents, were used. These census tracts are highlighted in Figure 4.
characteristics of the residents make this neighborhood fitting for exploring how disempowered neighborhoods can achieve power through mobilization and political relationships.

Prior to data collection, informal conversations with professionals in the field were held to help identify relevant themes based on their experiences organizing communities and working with LAUSD. These professionals were identified by my knowledge of their experience. I talked with these professionals in December 2004. These conversations lasted approximately sixty minutes and included questions about their organization’s relationship with LAUSD, the School District’s biggest strengths and problems, their involvement in LAUSD outreach efforts and in siting conflicts, the involvement of parents, teachers, students and residents in conflicts and planning efforts, and the successful and unsuccessful organizing strategies and pressure points they found in the district. These informal conversations assisted me in narrowing my research question and methodology and were particularly enlightening because their responses resonated with what I found in the literature about factors for successful mobilization to influence the decisions of large bureaucracies.

Data Collection

The data collected for this study were in-depth semi-structured interviews (with participants in the school siting case) and archival documents (publicly and non-publicly available). Data were collected and analyzed by a research team consisting of two research assistants and myself (the principal investigator). This project was
supported by a grant from the UCLA Lewis Center for Regional Studies, and the procedures used to collect and analyze the data were reviewed and approved by the UCLA General Committee Institutional Review Board (GC-IRB). This section describes in depth the purpose of these data and how these data were collected.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key participants in the school siting cases. These interviews provided most of the data for the case studies, revealing the presence and influence of the relevant themes identified in Chapter 3. The purpose of these interviews was to gain first hand accounts of the events surround two LAUSD site selection processes and decisions. Subjects were identified through a snowball method with each subject identifying other people to be interviewed. I identified the first subject through prior knowledge of her involvement in the case. She provided the names and contact information for the next subject, who in turn provided names for future subjects. In total, eleven interviews were conducted, five were with neighborhood residents and community organizers, and six were with former and current LAUSD personnel, including facilities development staff and school board members and staff. Because these cases involved at least two distinct “sides” – the community and the school district – it was important that representatives from each side recounted their version of the story. Within the community, a distinction was made between staff of community-based organizations and residents that volunteered their time to be involved in this issue. Also, due to the high turnover among LAUSD staff that happened during and since the events of this case, it was important to
interview multiple personnel from a variety of viewpoints and eras, including the Facilities Department and School Board. All interviews were conducted between February and April 2004.

Because this study involves interviews with human subjects about potentially sensitive personal and political information, I took careful steps to protect the identities of the subjects. Prior to data collection, I received approval from the UCLA General Committee Institutional Review Board. Pursuant to this approval, before each interview began, subjects were informed about the goals, risks, and potential benefits of participating in this study, and signed an informed consent form acknowledging their consent to be recorded, their willingness to be interviewed and their right to end the interview at any time. A copy of the consent form appears in Appendix A. Only the principal investigator and the research assistants, all of whom completed the UCLA on-line program in Protecting Human Research Subjects in Social and Behavioral Research, handled interview recordings and transcripts. Identities and identity indicators were stripped from interview transcripts and all interview recordings will be destroyed by December 2004.

Subjects were contacted by phone and through email to request interviews. Interviews were conducted at subjects’ places of work or homes, according to their preference, and lasted between sixty and ninety minutes. A list of sample interview questions also appears in Appendix B. Each interview was recorded with a digital voice recorder and through hand written field notes. Research assistants transcribed the interviews verbatim into a word processing program. A sample of how these
transcriptions were formatted appears in Appendix C. Transcriptions were stripped of names and other identity indicators. Each transcription was assigned a number and the principal investigator maintained a separate list of the corresponding interview numbers and subjects. This list will be destroyed by December 2004.

Upon completing each transcription, the research assistants completed a Transcription Field Notes form to note any important or surprising elements as well as stylistic characteristics heard in the respondent’s voice not conveyed in the transcription. These forms provided a brief summary for the principal investigator and aided in discussion of the interviews among the research team. A sample Transcription Field Notes page appears in Appendix D. Interview transcripts were analyzed for indicators of relevant themes. The coding scheme used to analyze the transcripts will be explained later in this chapter.

Archival documents
Archival documents, both publicly and non-publicly available, were the second type of data used in this research. I searched the archives for stories of the events surrounding school site selection in South Los Angeles between 1997 and 2002. Archival documents provide a second account of events recounted during interviews. These documents both affirm such events and order them within the context of events occurring across the School District and the City of Los Angeles. This section describes the purpose of each type of archival document, and data collection methods used for searching these archives.
First, publicly available archives included three sources: newspaper archives, LAUSD School Board minutes, and the LAUSD New Facilities Department website. Newspapers provide a public recounting of events and also reveal and shape public opinion about LAUSD management and school site selection throughout the district. Newspaper articles often expand on events mentioned in interviews and explain the relationships between events within LAUSD and the City of Los Angeles. LAUSD School Board minutes present an official record of School Board discussions and decisions as well as public comment given during meetings. The LAUSD New Facilities Department website also gives an official record of current LAUSD procedures, strategic building plan and status of school development sites.

Each of these sources was searched for articles and items relevant to the case studies. Newspaper archives were searched online via Lexus Nexus through the UCLA Library system and the Santa Monica Public Library System search engines. Lexis Nexus provides access to all major national newspapers. Santa Monica Public Library searches the Los Angeles Times, Orange County Register, Christian Science Monitor, San Diego Tribune, Washington Post, USA Today, San Francisco Chronicle. The following key words were entered into these search engines:

“LAUSD, new schools”; “LAUSD, overcrowding”; “Santee Dairy”; “LAUSD, Belmont”; “LAUSD, Superintendent Zacarias”; “LAUSD, Superintendent Romer”; “LAUSD Littman”; “Trinity Park Los Angeles”; “Neighbors for an Improved Community”. The search was conducted in March 2004 and the search engines returned articles from 1983-March 2004. Articles were scanned to determine their
relevance to this case. Articles were kept only if they reported on LAUSD site selection processes, changes in LAUSD governance, public opinion of LAUSD, overcrowding of LAUSD schools, LAUSD plans for building new schools, funding for new schools and Board decisions about new schools. The remaining articles were analyzed with a coding scheme explained later in this chapter.

LAUSD School Board minutes are archived on the School District’s website (http://www.lausd.k12.ca.us/lausd/board/secretary/html/agendas/agendas.html). Minutes must be searched manually, not by a search engine. Minutes from 1998, 1999, and 2000 regular meetings were searched for reference to the Santee Dairy Site, South Central High School #1, and residents’ names as speakers during public comment. Only minutes including those references were included as data. These data were used to corroborate information provided during interviews.

The LAUSD New Facilities Department website was searched manually for documents relevant to this case. Documents about two specific projects, South Central High School #1 and Jefferson New Primary Center #6, including the Draft Environmental Impact Report, site maps and architect’s renderings were downloaded and printed as data. These documents were used to corroborate information provided during interviews and confirm facts about the site.

Second, non-publicly available archives were searched as I gained access to them through the process of conducting interviews. These archives included residents’ personal files of their involvement in School District issues and personal archives held by current and former LAUSD staff members about site selection in
South Los Angeles. Residents’ archives included correspondence with the School District, internal correspondence of their organization, flyers announcing events, newspaper articles, and lists of participant contact information. LAUSD staff archives included general and area-specific maps used in site selection, lists of potential sites, and descriptions of site selection and community outreach process. Due to the rapid change in personnel, LAUSD has not maintained archives from the time period of this case. Thus, individual staff members maintained the only LAUSD archives on site selection available to search. To obtain access to these archives, I asked each subject interviewed if they had fliers, maps or documents relating to the case or school site selection in general.

These informal searches were conducted in the presence of the subject being interviewed. Materials relevant to the specific case were copied when the subject consented. These documents provide background to the case, corroborated (or called into question) facts given by subjects during interviews and led to other subjects for interviews. The residents’ materials revealed how the neighborhood group communicated internally, how involved different residents were and how many people were involved. The LAUSD materials explained the evolution of site selection and community outreach process in general and LAUSD evaluation of potential sites and proposed school sites in South LA between 1997 and 2002.

After collection, data were divided into two categories for analysis. The first category, the primary data, consisting of interview transcripts and newspaper articles, were analyzed through a coding scheme to understand the presence of relevant themes
discussed in previous chapters. The second category, consisting of school board minutes and non-newspaper archival material, secondary data, were used as descriptive background and confirmation of information found in interviews and newspaper articles. While this information in the second category was not analyzed in a formal process, it was an important piece of this study because it helped to create a timeline of events that occurred within the School District and among residents. This confirmatory timeline was critical to understanding the case because information from interviews was possibly skewed, inadvertently by memory or purposefully for political reasons. Furthermore the two “sides,” the school district and the community, often told seemingly separate stories, although events overlapped in real time. To cope with contradictory recollections of the events, relevant information from school board minutes and non-newspaper archives was ordered into a timeline of case study events.

**Coding Data for Analysis**

Because of the sheer volume of interview and newspaper data, a coding scheme was used to identify important information. This helped the team to locate repeated themes, both those anticipated and described in previous chapters, and emergent themes that proved to be relevant to the case. This section explains briefly what coding is and describes how the codes were developed and used.

Coding is a process used to organize qualitative data into categories of important themes derived from the literature and organized in the conceptual model. Codes are phrases that represent or are indicative of each theme. These codes refer to
specific events happening during a specific period of time, in a specific geographic area and involving specific people. Codes are organized in a coding manual, arranged by theme, with each code given a number. The research team uses this coding manual to analyze the interview transcripts and newspaper articles. In the analysis, the research team looks for phrases in the text that match with those in the coding manual. These phrases are identified and denoted with the corresponding number of the code. Through this analysis, the original codes become more clearly defined and new codes are added through the coding process itself. Clearly defined indicators and themes as well as inter-rater agreement, or shared understanding of themes, are important for objectively interpreting qualitative data.

In the coding manual, each major code is listed in bold with a distinct number assigned to it. A copy of the coding manual appears in Appendix E. Under each major code are numerous sub-codes, which represent more specific indicators of the presence of the major code. Each sub-code has a number corresponding to the larger code under which it falls. Original codes are the major codes I started with that are based on the literature, informal interviews with professionals, and the conceptual framework in Chapter 3. These original codes (1-11) each have numerous sub-codes beneath them. The sub-codes (1.1, 1.2) are drawn from the interviews and become more specific and elaborate with each transcription coded. Two of the original codes are descriptive codes (1, 2), which give background on the individual being interviewed and the neighborhood being studied. The remaining original major codes (3-11) are based on the six elements of the conceptual framework, with some elements
divided into two major codes. *Affiliated codes*, or new sub-codes falling under original major codes, were added each week during the coding process. New codes also emerged that did not fit within the established conceptual framework. These *emergent codes* are important factors influencing the situation and reported in the data but not identified prior to the data collection. To be identified as such, these codes, or groups of codes, had to be repeated in at least two interviews and had to fall under a major heading that did not match those already identified. Furthermore, such codes had to refer to the neighborhood and sites described in the original codes, LAUSD’s search for a site in South LA between 1997 and 2002, or other events occurring during this time that affected the case. These codes were assigned a new number and sub-codes were developed under them. Three emergent codes were found during analysis (12, 13, 14). Emergent codes and corresponding sub-codes were assigned a new number to distinguish them as a new major category. Both affiliated and emergent codes were identified by the research assistants, discussed among the team and approved by the principal investigator before being added.

**Process of creating the codes**

As noted above, coding is an iterative process in which new codes are identified through the analysis itself. Maintaining inter-rater agreement, or a mutual understanding of the codes among team members is, important for consistent coding. To explain how codes were created and how inter-rater agreement was maintained, I
will now explain the process of developing the codes and training the research assistants.

To ensure inter-rater agreement, research assistants were trained on both the content of the codes and the process of coding. Content training began in the beginning of February 2004 with transcribing interviews, completing transcription field notes and discussing important elements of interviews based on transcriptions. For three weeks, I met with the research assistants weekly to collect completed work, assign new work and discuss the content of the case. During these content training sessions, I explained the conceptual model and the major themes. I also gave the research assistants background on the case itself, including a list of major players involved, a map of the neighborhood around the Santee Dairy Site and a timeline of events. The timeline continued to evolve based on information found through the interviews and newspaper articles (See Appendix G). This information helped them to understand the story of the case rather than just the specific interviews they transcribed. Also during these meetings, research assistants explained what they heard during the interviews they transcribed and what they noted on the Transcription Field Notes page. By sharing this information with the other assistant and myself, each research assistant was able to hear the other sides of the story from the interviews they were not transcribing. I also was able to gauge how well the assistants were grasping the conceptual elements and important pieces of the case.

In mid-February 2004 I began creating the coding manual by listing the elements of the conceptual framework as major codes. I listed sub-codes under each
major code. The sub-codes were based on specific pieces of the conceptual elements described in the literature. These specific pieces indicated the presence of a conceptual element in a real world situation. With this preliminary coding scheme, I analyzed the first interview conducted with a resident, which was rich with information. In coding this first interview, I identified more sub-codes and reworded existing sub-codes to make them clearer. As part of the coding manual, I also prepared a description of the coding process, directions for coding and descriptions of each of the major themes, which was used in to train the research assistants.

Procedural training for coding began at the end of February 2004. Research assistants were given a copy of the coding manual, which explains how to code and lists all the codes with corresponding numbers, arranged by theme. I explained each theme in depth, listing and discussing the corresponding codes. The research assistants asked questions to clarify the meanings of the codes. As a team we discussed which information was relevant to the case and should be coded, and which information was not. To be relevant, information had to fit into specific temporal and spatial guidelines.

After discussing the meanings of the codes, each research assistant was given the same portion of an interview, previously selected for its rich and possibly confusing content. They coded as instructed in the following way. First, consider the subject’s position (i.e.: neighborhood resident, community organizer, LAUSD facilities staff, LAUSD Board member) because their position in the case influences how they interpret events, which events they are a part of and their perception of other
players. Then, quickly read through the article, and noting any particularly interesting sections. Next, carefully read each line, looking for phrases that match up to codes listed. When a code is found, indicate the line numbers and the code number that it corresponds to. Attach a color indicator if the code requires it with the corresponding letter written on it to define the code. Also, research assistants were instructed to note information that they thought was relevant but did not correspond with an existing code. This information led to new affiliated or emergent codes.

After both research assistants completed this initial practice coding, we discussed as a team the lines they had identified and what codes they had assigned. The goal was to have at least eighty-five percent inter-rater agreement, which means that the research assistants correctly identified eighty-five percent of the codes I had previously identified in this section. This goal was met. We also discussed lines they had coded that I had not previously identified. Some of these were discarded and we discussed why they were not relevant to this specific case or why they did not fit into the specific temporal and spatial limitations of this study. Some of these were relevant but had not been previously identified as codes. New codes, either affiliated or emergent, were assigned to this information and marked in the coding manual.

The research assistants coded interviews from the end of February 2004 through the beginning of April 2004. Each week I gave the research assistants transcriptions to code. Prior to giving them the transcription, I coded the interview for the subject’s background (code 1) to protect the subject’s identity. At each meeting as the assistants completed coding each transcription, we discussed possible new codes
and added those that were relevant. To maintain a consistent manual, only the principal investigator made changes in the digital file of the coding manual. A new manual was redistributed to the research assistants each week. By the end of the coding process, the manual consisted of fourteen major codes: two descriptive codes, nine original major codes and three emergent codes. Each major code had two to thirty-six sub-codes beneath them. The list of final codes appears in Appendix F.

The same coding process was used to analyze the newspaper articles. One research assistant took all the articles obtained during the internet searches and coded the material. Coding was limited to only those codes that were likely to appear in major newspaper articles. None of the articles discussed the neighborhood organization, residents living there or the specific search for a school site in this neighborhood. A limited number of articles discussed the availability of the Santee Dairy site. Thus, the newspaper articles were used as further description of the larger political context in which this event took place, particularly in regards to relationships with, pressure put on and the image of LAUSD. This data was only coded for three major codes and corresponding sub-codes:

- 4 Political relationships and situation prior to and at the beginning of this case
- 5 Available viable site for a school in the neighborhood
- 13 Changes in LAUSD as an institution in terms of governance and community outreach

This coding scheme was used in the analysis of interview transcripts and newspaper articles. A detailed description of the major themes, corresponding
subcodes, affiliated codes and emergent themes appears in the Appendix as *Substance of the Codes*. The information pulled out through the coding process indicates the presence of relevant themes identified in the conceptual framework in Chapter Three. In the following two chapters, each case is discussed by looking at each theme and the links between.
In Case A, a group of residents opposed a site proposed by the School District for a new elementary school. The site was occupied at the time with single-family homes, a church and a railroad right of way, no longer in use. The School District dropped this recommended site from consideration and chose a site a few blocks south. At the time of this site selection, the School District was under tight timelines to site schools and experiencing considerable public criticism due to internal changes and controversial site selections.

Based on my analysis of Case A, I found the residents’ organizing was not as important in influencing the School District’s site selection as political opportunities and an alternative site. An unstable relationship between LAUSD and the entire community made the agency vulnerable to political pressure. In terms of determining a viable alternative site, lack of community opposition to a site appears to have been the deciding factor for the district to select a site. Lastly, the district’s receptiveness to community input did not appear to influence the school district’s site selection.

In this chapter I analyze the Case A site selection process according to the conceptual framework and major themes described in Chapters Three and Four.

**Major Themes of Case A**

The analysis of the data will follow the conceptual model outlined in Chapter Three. For each element of the model, I will explain the indicators of that element, using
quotes from interviews, newspaper articles and school board minutes to illustrate the presence of that indicator. I will explain both the indicators that I expected to find and those that were unexpected or that appeared in slightly different ways than expected. Following this section on the major themes, I will explain the relationships among the themes that were significant in this case and those that were non-existent or less significant than expected. In the last section I will explain the emergent themes and how they fit into the conceptual model. This analysis structure will be repeated in the next chapter with Case B.

**Neighborhood’s Social Capital**

Social capital consists of the resources drawn from the strength of internal relationships built on trust and reciprocity (Putnam 2001; Purdue 2001; Mayer 2003). The neighborhood’s social capital is the strength of the relationships found among people within a specific geographic area indicated by their shared experiences, existing relationships and trust in an internal leader. The residents involved with opposing this site identified their neighborhood boundaries as between Washington Boulevard, San Pedro Street, Jefferson Boulevard and Main Street (11).

*Existing social relationships* were found among the residents although they were not a strong indicator of social capital or a strong influence on other factors. This is due in part to the small number of people involved in opposing the proposed site in Case A. According to one resident “at that time, maybe we had 15 people…” (3). Existing relationships were identified through the presence of existing community organizations and a history of community activism among the residents. One existing
community organization was the Trinity Park Block Club formed in 1998, which suggests residents’ familiarity with each other and with working together on neighborhood issues. It also provided a formal name for outsiders to identify with residents in this neighborhood before the grassroots group took on a name of its own, seen in LAUSD staff references to this group and leader as part of this block club in phrases like “I don’t know if you’ve been to the Trinity block meetings that she has over there by Trinity Park,” from an LAUSD Board member staff member (5). While this organization was a vehicle through which residents became involved with school district issues, it did not appear to have a major role in opposing the proposed site in Case A.

The residents involved with opposing this site did have some shared life experiences though it is unclear how instrumental these experiences were in bringing the residents together. The most important shared experience of these residents was their long time in the neighborhood and their status as homeowners. Many of the residents had lived in the neighborhood for substantial periods of time. Most of the residents involved with opposing this site had lived in the neighborhood for at least their adult lives, some for their entire lives. “You have people who have been here 50 years, 60 years,” explained one resident, “members of the community have been here 20, 25 years, 40 years.” Another shared experience of the residents involved in opposing the first site was that they were homeowners. The census tract in which the original site was located (226700) had a higher homeownership rate than surrounding census tracts (see Figure 7).
Homeownership and long time residency in the neighborhood may have encouraged residents to oppose the site because of their feeling of ownership over this neighborhood. Many also come from Latino families, though the resident leaders are not recent immigrants to the United States, which may have provided a common background although the residents did not mention this.

A third indicator of social capital is the trust in an internal leader, which proved to be an important aspect of the social capital as it related to the neighborhood’s organizing capacity. One resident was a clear leader among the rest, identified by residents and external allies. She had been active in past issues and was willing and able to bring residents together. Her willingness to organize around this issue was clear in her action to attend a School Board meeting as soon as she received notification that the site was being considered, “and I received one of the flyers that the school was looking for sites and that we had a potential to lose housing…and (went to the School Board meeting two days later) to deter them from taking housing” (3). This leader contacted most of the residents that became involved in this case and they trusted her call to action. According to one resident “She is a leader in the community and she said that we needed to get together in the community – so all of us get together to find out what was happening with the schools and what we could do together” (6). She saw the threat to the community that LAUSD’s proposal created, developed a plan of action to stop that plan, and was empowered to take action and to

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motivate others to action. This characteristic as well as the neighbors’ trust in her was important to mobilizing the community.

One important and unexpected aspect of social capital related to both the history of activism and the length of time in the community was the residents’ desire to protect and improve their neighborhood. For example, when one resident first heard that his house and his neighbors were being threatened by the LAUSD proposal, he took it upon himself to distribute flyers alerting his neighbors and urging them to attend the School Board meeting. Even with the other aspects of social capital, it is hard to imagine residents mobilizing to defend their homes if they do not feel a sense of ownership and empowerment towards their community. This defense of their home or self-preservation was key to getting the residents and the leader to move forward. Although the importance of the defended spaces has been seen in the literature (Castells 1983), I did not consider this important attitude and belief among the residents as an element of social capital, although it certainly helped to build trust and a shared vision among the residents as well as push them into action.

**Openings in the Political Opportunity Structure**

Openings in the political opportunity structure are spaces for political action and change that are particularly important in determining the success of resource-poor, local grassroots movements. To identify these openings, I collected data about the political structure as defined by political relationships and power dynamics. In this case, openings were external allies, divided elites, and presence of unstable
relationships. The opening that was most important in this case, however, was the presence of unstable relationships.

The presence of *external allies* can be very important to grassroots groups that do not have access to resources or to power. External allies were present in this case, though they were not as important as in the second. One community leader, Sister Diane Donoghue, executive director of Esperanza Community Housing Corporation and a long time activist in the area, was an ally to the group of residents opposing the site. This relationship did not appear to play a role however in helping the residents gain access to power in this first case.

The presence of *divided elites* did not create as much of an opening in the political opportunity structure as expected. Divided elites are present when elected officials or other recognized leaders are competing for popular support, thus creating an opportunity for voters to get leaders to side with them. The only small possibility of divided elites present in this case was between the City Council member for this neighborhood at this time, Rita Walters, and the LAUSD School Board members. This possible divide was indicated by a fax received by a resident from the Council member’s office that explains all of the sites LAUSD was studying at this time. The Council member was privy to information about LAUSD’s decision and chose to share it with the residents. Possibly, Council member Walters was willing to provide them with this information because she knew of the community’s distrust of the District and did not want the community to distrust her as well. However, this is not a strong indicator.
The presence of不稳定关系 was the defining element in the political structure that created an opportunity for residents. Unstable relationships create unbalanced power dynamics and also leave one group more vulnerable to pressures from another group or groups. An unstable relationship existed between LAUSD as an agency and the community at large. The community had a negative opinion of the District because of past problems and the District had reached a point of crisis. The District needed to improve the community’s opinion in order to select sites without more controversy and to secure funding through voter approved bonds.

First, the community was and had been critical of LAUSD at this point because of a history of problems and broken promises, as noted in statements like “I would try to get people to come out but there’s a lot of distrust and the community doesn’t trust what the District says” from a former LAUSD Community Outreach worker (5) or “There is a lot ill feelings in the community because we’re talking about years and years and years of no systematic communication with the community,” from a current LAUSD Community Outreach staff member (8). The public’s negative opinion of the District was due to a host of problems in LAUSD’s recent history, as noted by most interview subjects, including:

- Ignoring the need for new schools in this neighborhood that were severely needed as noted by one community organization staff member “This was the second area to go to year-round schools which was during the late seventies...it’s amazing that it would take thirty years for you to actually build a new school…and I think that
essentially just the neighborhood was ignored and there was poor planning on the District’s part” (4).

- Disregarding community opinion and displacing residents, as one LAUSD Board member staff member explained, “You hear incidents about how the District treated people from the residents themselves, you know they say, ‘you guys moved my family thirty years ago and I’m not moving for another school’” (5).

- Mismanaging of Proposition BB funds, as noted by a staff member from a community-based organization who said “…it was a disproportionate allocation (of Prop BB funds) that in the inner-city area…the schools in this area – that those schools were not receiving their fair share and were not identified as priority even though those schools really should’ve been priority just because of the building conditions” (4).

- Overcrowding and bussing of students was a problem that the District received a lot of criticism for as well, though in this case, the identification about this as a problem came more often from LAUSD staff than from community members, as in “We were busing maybe about 40% of our high school students. We were busing middle school students. There was one school, Miles Junior High, was so overcrowded when you dropped off your kid to school at 6:30 or 7:00 in the morning, you were surrounded by buses for students who were going to the schools they need to be bused to in the San Fernando Valley…So when I came aboard, that’s what she wanted me to focus on,” from a former LAUSD Board Member staff member (10).
Second, the District was reaching a point of crisis during the summer of 1999, the period of site selection for the elementary school in this neighborhood. Besides all the criticisms just listed, the District was dealing with the controversies surrounding Belmont and South Gate High Schools, which were under construction on toxic soil, as well as strategizing about how to change the bureaucracy’s leadership to initiate internal reform. These issues consumed most of the time of LAUSD staff time. “In reality there were so many bigger issues at the time that it was kind of like on the backburner” (10). This point of crisis meant that Board member staff did not have the time to respond thoroughly to every opposing group.

The district’s negative image alone is not what makes its relationship with the community at large unstable. What also contributes to instability in this relationship is the district’s need to improve its image in the community as part of its mission to build schools. In 1997 a local bond had passed, in 1998 the district created a Master Plan for new school projects and by August 1999 the Real Estate Department was working on over 50 potential projects. Furthermore, LAUSD had to move quickly in identifying sites to meet state funding guidelines. With so many schools to build and so little time, the district needed to avoid controversy with the community. According to an article in the October 4, 1999 edition of the *Los Angeles Business Journal*, “The school board must identify 100 new-school locations throughout LA…If sites and designs are not completed by June 30, 2000, the district risks losing $1.5 billion in funding from Proposition 1A, a state bond measure…” (Garcia 1999). Having limited time for site selection, the district could not spend long periods negotiated with
opposing residents, meaning it would either appease residents or walk away from controversial sites.

This unstable relationship created a space in which the residents could pressure LAUSD to respond to their demands. The district did not have time to deal with this community or a controversial site for three reasons. First, politically, in light of all the public criticism, the district did not need one more school to be a black mark on their record. Second, in terms of daily work, the staff, particularly Board Member staff, did not have time to address other problems, their plates already full with controversies surrounding the Belmont and South Gate High Schools. And third, the reality of the state funding deadlines meant sites had to be selected quickly. For these reasons, the district had to deal with opposition in a way that did not evoke too much opposition or take too long, thus creating an opening that made the agency vulnerable to political pressure.

**Viable Alternative Site**

A viable alternative site is an area of land besides the original site that is acceptable to the school district’s site requirements for a school and within the targeted search area. In this case, the community acceptance – or lack of community opposition – became one of the deciding criteria. For clarity, the original LAUSD recommended site is #8; the viable alternative site where the school was built is #2. Figure 3 on page 44 displays the location of these sites and Figure 8 summarizes the sites according to the criteria described in this section. The alternative site where the elementary school was
actually built, is located between 36\textsuperscript{th} Street, Maple Ave, and 36\textsuperscript{th} Place. This analysis refers to that site.

This viable alternative site met all LAUSD criteria for site location, size and environmental standards. According to the LAUSD descriptions of potential sites for this primary school, this site was located within the preferred location area, approximately between Hill Street, 30\textsuperscript{th} Street, San Pedro Street, and 37\textsuperscript{th} Street. This site was 1.8 acres; the average site size of those being studied was 1.89 acres. According to the description provided in the District’s Summary of site information, “There is low to moderate traffic on the side streets and moderate traffic on Maple. The site had good accessibility and has no apparent known health and safety problems.” Thus, in terms of LAUSD criteria, the site met the first basic criterion.

In terms of the cost of acquisition and relocation, site #2 was actually more expensive than site #8. According to the District’s Summary of site information, the total acquisition and relocation costs for site #2 was $4,785,000, or $2,658,333 per acre. Site #8, however, had a total cost of only $3,494,000 or $1,480,000 per acre. While these figures do not show that the alternative site did not meet District cost requirements, they do clearly show that the viable site was more expensive. This finding suggests that costs were a less important criterion than size/location standards or community approval.

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<th>Figure 8: Summary of site characteristics, Case A</th>
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Another criterion that emerged from conversations with multiple LAUSD staff members was the benefit of taking rental housing versus owner-occupied housing. Although housing was the not District’s first choice, taking rental housing rather than homeowner property was sometimes favored even when it meant taking a higher number of units. In this case the viable site had forty-three dwelling units while the recommended site had fourteen. However, all but one of the dwelling units on the viable site were multi-family units, while half on the recommended sites were single-family residences, and most likely homeowners.\footnote{LAUSD Real Estate staff members claim that taking rental housing has some positive impacts, “because of the relocation program. You were in many cases able to put people in much better housing that they were in because they were going from substandard housing which they were occupying very intensively to housing where the district was subsidizing their move into roomier quarters” (11). No data was available about the compensation provided to the former residents at the site on 36th Place where the school has been built. One resident speculated however, that initial offers to tenants were reduced because many units housed multiple families, and some, illegal immigrants (12).}

The last criterion to make a site viable was whether the community accepted – or did not oppose – the site. In this case, different groups accepted site #2 for individual reasons. The residents that lived on and around the recommended site (#8) accepted site #2 because it did not take their individual homes and was located south of Jefferson Boulevard, beyond the borders of what they considered “their” neighborhood (12). The property owners of the buildings on this site approved the site because they were justly compensated for their property, according to the same resident “owners of the property didn’t want to tell the people anything; they wanted to sell the property” (12). Lastly, the residents themselves approved or at least did not oppose the site. It is not clear if these residents approved the site because of relocation
benefits promised, did not understand their rights or the process, or just did not have the resources to mobilize and oppose LAUSD’s proposal to build a school there. Whatever the reason, less opposition came from this site than from the original site, making site #2 a more viable site.

**Organizing Capacity**

A group’s capacity to organize is the group’s ability to work collectively towards a common goal, as measured by the mobilization and tactics of the group. Mobilization refers to the groups that formed, their internal operations and the issues they organized around. Tactics includes the actions and strategies the group uses to get people together, to keep people informed and to get the attention of the School District. The organizing that took place during this case overlaps with the organizing in case B. The organizing I will include in this case took place between June and November 1999, as that is the time between when the residents heard about the proposed site (#8) and when another site was chosen (#2).

The mobilizing that happened in this case was very quick and grassroots with a goal of maintaining existing housing. It was successful in spreading the word about the District’s plan to build and in getting residents involved. Four indicators characterized the mobilization: how people got involved, the number of people involved, the operations of the organization and the issues activists organized around. Residents first got involved with opposing this school because a “neighbor found out … on 28th Street, and he handwrote flyers, paid for them himself at Kinko’s and came and distributed them here all over a two-block area” (12), a resident described. Over
time, the main resident leader called on people she already knew in the community to join them in opposing the site. During this period, the group of residents was small, “it was really just seven (residents),” described a former School Board member Field Deputy that met with the group (10).

At this point, the group of residents did not even have an official name. They did not have money from any sources outside of themselves and the work they put into opposing the site was voluntary. “We’re just a community grassroots group…nobody gets paid; we have no funds,” described one resident leader (3). The community members primarily were involved to protect housing. As the group evolved, the group became interested in suggesting school sites and influencing the operations of the school, but in the early stages, the fear of losing housing was underlying most of the organizing. This was noted by residents, “the School District wanted to put houses down, ...we need more housing really because we are short on housing” (6) and by LAUSD Facilities staff, “…her agenda wasn’t to build schools…her (the resident leader’s) agenda was to protect her neighborhood from no one taking a house” (9).

The tactics used in this case were successful in bringing people together and attracting the attention of the School District. Various tactics were used to showcase residents’ opposition to the original site, to offer alternative sites and maintain a presence in the eyes of the School District. To oppose the original site, residents attended and spoke at the School Board meeting on June 22, 1999. According to School Board minutes of this meeting, the board voted on the “Approval of Specific Sites for Feasibility Studies for a New Primary Center to Relieve Overcrowding at
Trinity Street and 28th Street Elementary Schools…” including site #8. The minutes show that at least two residents spoke in opposition to this site.

To offer alternative sites, residents walked their neighborhood, identifying and photographing sites that they felt were appropriate for a school. To show these sites and to maintain their presence, the residents took these photos to School Board meetings repeatedly, even when the site was not being discussed, and waited until the end of the meeting “‘til ten o’clock…to talk about that, and they’d (School Board members) be like all confused like ‘this isn’t on the agenda’, what are they talking about?’, ‘what school is that?’” (12). Although these suggested sites did not include Site #2, the alternative site in this case, the residents’ initiative and presence may have been sufficient to attract the School District’s attention. Furthermore, they contacted the School Board member for their area at that time and met with her to explain their opposition to site #8 and their suggestions. Although this School Board member had many other site selections and controversies happening at this time (e.g., Belmont, South Gate), this small neighborhood group made enough of an impression that she remembered them almost five years later. She explained, “I do recall…them bringing me alternatives…the team that brought alternative sites to us” (7). These tactics and grassroots mobilizing, therefore, were successful enough to bring a small group of people together and get the attention of School District officials.

School District’s Receptiveness to Community Input

The School District officials’ receptiveness to community input is defined as their willingness to listen to and be swayed by the opinions and demands of various groups.
In this case I looked specifically at the School District official’s receptiveness to the residents in this neighborhood. There was little increase in this receptivity. Most of the indicators for receptivity had to do with how the School District staff communicated with and treated residents living in the neighborhood. To see an increase in receptivity, I looked for indicators of non-receptivity and receptivity to see how and when the receptivity increased.

In the beginning of this case, LAUSD was highly non-receptive to this neighborhood or any other. Without a Community Outreach Department established, the District had little communication with residents. Real estate agents and subcontractors, who had little experience or capacity for working closely with communities, did most of the site selection according to a former LAUSD Real Estate director (11). Most residents felt that the District’s site selection processes and community outreach were highly insulated and closed off from them during this time. “It was more like an internal process and it wasn’t being shared with a lot of people,” an organizer for a community organization remembered (2). Thus, the District staff appeared not receptive to listen to or act on the residents’ demands.

LAUSD’s receptivity to the residents appeared to increase very little at this time. Communication initiated by LAUSD staff did not increase during this time. The one indicator of a higher (but still low) level of receptivity was the School Board member’s willingness to meet with the residents about the sites they opposed. However, even she stated that such meetings could not always sway her because sometimes she had to “do what I was elected to do…to build schools” (7).
Furthermore, this meeting seemed more instrumental in the resident’s support of the site in Case B rather than in opposing the site in this Case A.

**School District Site Selection**

The school district’s site selection reveals the group’s influence on a decision made by power holders. There are two parts to this element: if the demands of the residents were met and if those demands were met due to the pressure of the residents. While the residents’ demands were met in the Real Estate’s decision to pull the site from consideration, it is unclear why that happened.

The first indicator of the final site selection was that the original site was dropped from consideration at a School Board Meeting in October 1999. Further, another site for this school was approved at the November 23, 1999 School Board meeting.

In terms of resident influence on the site selection, it is difficult to clearly ascertain whether resident influence was the primary reason for retracting the proposed site. According to one Board member’s staff members, if there had not been another site, the houses would have been lost: “if we can work it, we’ll move the site but…if it doesn’t work, we’re going to take their homes” (10).

Whether or not LAUSD staff admit to being influenced by such pressures, the Real Estate Division’s decision to pull the site from consideration during a meeting where residents were prepared to speak against it, suggests that the officials may have done what the residents wanted in part because of the residents’ continued pressure and the political pressure to choose sites quickly without controversy.
Analysis of Case A: Important Relationships

The conceptual model included a host of relationships among the elements. Rather than go through each relationship one by one, I will limit this explanation to the relationships that were either important or surprisingly absent. Figure 9 presents these relationships graphically. The darker lines represent stronger relationships in Case A, while the lighter lines represent weaker relationships.

Neighborhood’s social capital increased the group’s capacity to organize.

This relationship is not particularly surprising as it is has been discussed in the mobilization literature at length. However, what was interesting in this case was the strong role of the leader and relationships with the leader that indicated social capital. The leader in this case was “reputational,” gaining the residents’ trust through her
initiative and actions. Most of the subjects interviewed from the community perspective did not understand or remember the detailed history of LAUSD sites proposed in their neighborhood but they did understand there was a threat to their homes and that they had to do something about it. This perception of the situation was shaped by the leader’s message. The leader has an important role in bringing people together when other indicators of social capital are not strong.

Also, the capacity to organize increased the social capital in the neighborhood. This relationship was not included in the original conceptual model. As the residents worked with each other the trust among them and the trust in the leader grew. As the residents saw success in this case, the leader gained credibility. Strengthening these relationships was important for the organizing that occurred in Case B.

**Openings in the political opportunity structure** influenced the school district’s site selection. In the original conceptual model described in detail in Chapter Three, such openings influence site selection indirectly through the group’s organizing capacity and LAUSD’s receptivity to the neighborhood. However, through this case, I found that these openings directly influenced the site selection. The presence of unstable relationships between LAUSD and the neighborhood made LAUSD more vulnerable to resident demands because LAUSD needed to select sites quickly. It is not clear if the most important reason the original site was dropped was because of the pressure to choose a site quickly, though this was one important factor for site selection. The neighborhood group’s demands, which could have made site selection a more difficult and longer process, leveraged that opening. Whether they
did it strategically or not, the residents were able to act within this particular opening and influence the site selection. This influence however is attributed to the political opening rather than the group’s organizing however, because it is not clear that the group’s tactics had as much influence as the overall political situation.

Presence of a **viable, alternative site** did **NOT increase** **organizing capacity**. In the original conceptual model, the presence of a viable alternative site increased the group’s organizing capacity because the site provided a possibility to mobilize people around. In this case, however, the residents involved were focused on saving their own homes and less concerned with where this particular school was eventually built. Thus the strength for organizing came mostly out of the social capital (specifically strong leadership) and the threat of the original site, an emergent theme that will be explained in the next section.

The **school district’s receptiveness to the neighborhood** did **NOT increase** the group’s influence on the **school district’s site selection**. In the original conceptual model, LAUSD’s receptiveness increases the group’s influence on site selection. However, in this case because the School District did not become receptive to the neighborhood, this variable did not have any effect on the group’s influence on site selection. Originally I had hypothesized that in order to have an influence on site selection, the group would have to be in communication with School District staff members that were interested in taking their suggestions. This case showed that the receptivity was not an important factor in achieving influence on the site selection.
Analysis of Case A: Emergent Themes

While this entire case is an emergent issue itself, there were two specific themes that emerged: the original site proposed and a lack of institutional memory.

The original site proposed was the initial threat that residents opposed that brought them into interaction with the School District. Had the original site not threatened the homes of these residents, they would likely not have gotten involved with school site selection. During data collection, it was difficult to find out the location of the original site because of the few people involved that were available for interviews. The original site had an important influence on organizing capacity because it was the key issue around which residents were mobilized. This resonates with scholars that have noted the importance of a real threat to people’s livelihoods in order for them to mobilize and act. Furthermore, once the site was moved off of these residents’ homes, they did oppose the new site in order to protect that housing. Thus the original site, the threat, defined who acted and on what basis.

A second emergent theme is LAUSD’s lack of institutional memory, which consists of the perceived gaps in what LAUSD staff members know or will tell about this case. These gaps can be due to turnover of staff, lack of documentation and individual lack of memory. Many of the staff working on this site are no longer employed by the School District Facilities Department and few records were left. In addition, this case happened at a time when many other controversies, including Belmont, South Gate and the plans to oust the superintendent, were happening. All of these controversies made this small opposition to a site seem much smaller in the eyes
of LAUSD. For example one Board Member staff member said of this opposition, “…on a scale of one to ten, it was probably a point two” (11). Lastly, some people, particularly former LAUSD staff, may have chosen not to provide all the information they have or may have already forgotten some of the events surrounding this site, making this type of research difficult. This lack of memory also played a role in how Case B is defined.

Conclusion

To summarize this analysis of Case A, the important findings are:

- A trusted internal leader is an important aspect of social capital when social relationships and shared experiences among residents are not clearly present. A leader who is willing to take action and who is trusted by her neighbors was important for mobilizing this group.

- The traits defining the viable alternative site in this case were slightly different than was originally conceived. Community approval has to be qualified as to which community provides approval, and what actually constitutes approval. Apparent approval can really just be a lack of opposition, which is due to a range of factors. However, from LAUSD’s point of view, a lack of opposition, for whatever reason, makes a site viable, especially in light of an original site that is being actively opposed.

- The school district’s increased receptivity to this neighborhood was not present in this case, removing this element from all relationships in the initial conceptual
model. The school district did not become more receptive to the residents before it changed the site selection to meet resident demands. However the residents did have the perception that the receptivity was increasing, due to the tactics that they were using. Thus the relationship between organizing capacity and receptivity does exist from the view of the residents, but perhaps not from anyone else.

- An opening in the political opportunity, specifically an unstable relationship between LAUSD and the entire community, increased the group’s influence on site selection. Because of this unstable situation, the school district was more vulnerable, and consequently more amenable to responding to vocal and organized neighborhood residents.

- The original site proposed was an important variable that was previously left out of the initial conceptual model. The threat of this proposed site was the point for mobilizing residents. Without this threat to their individual homes, residents would not have gotten involved.

In the following chapter, I will analyze Case B and compare the conclusions of that case to Case A.
Chapter Six
Case B Analysis: Advocating for a School Site

The events of Case B occurred between the summer of 1999 and the present, in a similar neighborhood as Case A. In this case study, the group of residents proactively identified and advocated for potential school sites in their neighborhood until LAUSD Facilities Department staff, recreated after a period of organizational change, began discussing these sites with them and eventually selected one of the resident group’s proposed sites.

Although the school district did select the site advocated for by residents, this case did not give a clear indication that the group’s organizing influenced the school district’s site selection. Similar to Case A, openings in the political opportunity structure and the viability of the site appeared to influence the site selection. The relationships and agendas of the elite, which were in line with the goals of this group, influenced the site selection. The viability of the site was determined by its size, the absence of community opposition and the political relationships of the property owners. Also in this case, institutional changes within the school district influenced the school district’s receptiveness to community input.

Despite the lack of influence the group of residents and activist had on site selection, this case provides an interesting picture of the factors leading to neighborhood mobilization, namely trust in an internal leader, a direct threat to residents and resources gained through external allies. Furthermore, although the
increased receptivity did not clearly influence the ultimate site selection, the institutional changes may indicate another kind of political opportunity.

Similar to the last chapter, this chapter organizes this case using the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Three. I will conclude the chapter with a comparison of this case’s important findings to those of Case A.

Analysis of Case B: Major Themes

For each theme, I will explain how that element’s presence is similar to or different from Case A, with detailed descriptions of elements found in Case B that were absent in Case A.

Neighborhood’s Social Capital

Similar to Case A, shared life experiences, existing relationships, and the presence of a leader indicated the social capital, with the presence of a leader proving to be the most crucial aspect of the group’s social capital. One other indicator that was important in Case B was pride in the neighborhood, similar to Case A.

*Shared life experience* in terms of race and housing tenure was similar to Case A. However, differences in assessing the degree of shared life experience in Case B stemmed from the larger number of but also different composition of involved residents. Residents in Case B were drawn from a broader geographic area. Because activism in Case B focused on advocating for a new school site, community organizers that work with children and parents with children in the school system joined the work of the homeowners who were active in Case A. Further, not all the homeowners
active in Case A remained active in Case B. Some of the homeowners believed that their work was done, having saved their own homes. Furthermore, because the mobilization around the site in Case B drew from a larger geographic area, it was difficult at times to discern the residents that constituted the “community” and how this “community” was geographically defined.

Existing relationships were slightly more important in Case B than in Case A because these relationships indicate a larger network and an established base. The Trinity Park Block Club, formed in 1998, helped to recruit residents into the group that focused on identifying a new school site. The Block Club was more involved in Case B than in Case A. Between these two groups, a set of core residents involved in neighborhood issues exists: “…we do a lot of networking and that’s how we get larger…we’re all part of each other’s group,” one resident said of the two groups (12).

Existing relationships were also indicated by past neighborhood activism. The history of activism was related to relationships with external allies that were instrumental in raising the neighborhood’s organizing capacity. Years before, residents had opposed a factory that would have required demolishing housing and would have created an environmental hazard (2). Residents joined with a community organizer to protest the proposal at City Hall. This was explained by one community organizer as: “…we want(ed) to stop that building of the factory…and they went to City Hall, battled those private investors...finally it was decided that no factory was going to be built here” (2). This experience created relationships and trust among residents in Case B.
The second example of activism was the mobilizing done in Case A. As noted in Case A, the group’s organizing in that case increased social capital. Whether or not the residents influenced the site selection in Case A, a certain amount of confidence came from the school district’s decision not to use the proposed site. The resident leader had developed a set of relationships that could be used in other neighborhood issues. The past activism aspect of social capital was especially important in the group’s organizing capacity.

*Trust in an internal leader* was again a significant element of the neighborhood’s social capital. The same resident leader identified in Case A spearheaded the neighborhood’s efforts in Case B. Nearly every person interviewed, regardless of his/her position, knew this resident by name and recognized her as the leader. “I know without her really kind of taking it on and spearheading it, it would not have taken place in the way it did,” remarked one community organization staff member (4). As the group of people involved grew during this case, the leader was an important position as a contact person. Although all the residents and activists involved in this case did not know each other, most were in contact with the internal leader, thus creating a sort of proxy for the social relationships that usually indicate social capital. Relationships remained horizontal between the leader and the participants, but the position of the leader allowed many people to work together without knowing each other directly.

Also, in Case B, the leader’s personal vision emerged and was reflected as the group’s vision. In Case A, most residents involved shared the common desire to save
their housing. In Case B, many residents believed that the school district was a direct threat to their housing, not because of a letter they received or any knowledge of a potential school site, but because they trusted the statement and vision of the leader. In this case, the vision was not only to save housing, but also to create a school that would be a center for the community, to serve students and adults during all hours of the day. While the leader’s vision for a community-centered school was not hers alone, she may have been one of the first to vocalize it and it clearly is something she personally desired: “…the community will be there (at the school) to support them (the students), it’ll bring everybody together. That’s how I envision it and that’s what we’re working on,” the leader explained (12). To say that the strength of her vision was important in mobilizing is not to downplay the work or vision of the entire group, as the work and vision were both shared. However, having a trusted leader who was able to articulate a vision was an important part of social capital.

**Openings in the Political Opportunity Structure**

In Case B, similar to Case A, openings in the political structure were similar to those defined by Tarrow (1994): unstable relationships, external allies, and divided elites, with the latter two playing a larger role in Case B than in Case A.

The *unstable relationships* that existed between the community and LAUSD in Case B were essentially the same that existed in Case A. Due to many past problems listed in the previous chapter, the District had a very negative image in the community and many residents distrusted the District, particularly when it came to building new facilities. “There’s been such a distrust in the top-down attitude of LAUSD from the
community in regards to a lot of decisions that are made,” explained one LAUSD community outreach staff member (8). The beginning of Case B coincided with the District’s organizational crisis discussed in the last chapter. However, the difference was that this unstable relationship did not directly influence the site selection in Case B. It did, however, create an opening in which mobilization could happen because of the context of prevailing distrust in the District.

The divided elites in Case B did not present a significant opening through which the residents worked, but these relationships were another force influencing the final selection to use the site advocated by the residents. Then-Mayor Richard Riordan became an important player in LAUSD politics soon after the passage of Proposition BB by endorsing numerous winning School Board candidates. For some School Board members, this election defined clear political groups aligned with Riordan and those that were not. This situation also may have given Riordan greater influence in a range of LAUSD deals and decisions, most of which were outside the scope of this analysis.

Riordan’s relevant role in this case, however, was influencing site selection through his alleged relationship with the owner of the Santee Dairy property, and his alliance with particular School Board members, giving him a motivation and position to influence site selection. This information was not made public until after ground had been broken on the site, and there was no clear data to prove Riordan’s influence on site selection. However, some School Board members believed that he directly influenced such decisions, even if distantly: “…there’s a relationship with Riordan’s
business there. So I believed he helped broker it…a removed influence,” commented one former School Board member (7).

Riordan’s relationships with the Santee Dairy property owner and with certain School Board members may have steered the deal to result in what the neighborhood was advocating for, but this overlap was coincidental. Riordan and his allies would have worked to make this deal happen not for the residents’ reasons but for their own. The fact that the deal with the property owner was negotiated without the required public bidding process indicates a strong possibility of backroom deals among political elites. I was unaware of these relationships before data collection.

Also, this relationship was slightly different than the way Tarrow defined divided elites, but it did illustrate an underlying theme I heard in many interviews: that the relationships among the elites or power holders, can be much more important or at least as important as the mobilization and tactics of neighborhood groups in achieving neighborhood goals (1994). I will return to this point in the section on relationships between the major elements.

The last indicator of an opening in the political structure, and one that the residents most actively used to their benefit, was the presence of external allies. External allies are people or groups outside of the direct circle of residents that can help the grassroots group access resources and power. The first important ally was Sister Diane Donoghue, long time community activist in the area. A relationship existed between Sister Diane and the resident leader because of their work together on previous community issues. Sister Diane was an important ally because of her
credibility as an activist in the neighborhood and because she linked the neighborhood group with Strategic Actions for a Just Economy, SAJE. “Sister Diane…told me I should go to these meetings this group was having; she encouraged me,” the resident leader said of her first contact with SAJE. In turn, SAJE was an important ally because of the resources it offered as well as its reputation because of its successful activism around the Staples Center Development.

The grassroots group also had external allies in other neighborhood organizations including All People’s Christian Center and A Place Called Home. These community centers serve large numbers of people including students attending schools in the area and parents of those children. The neighborhood group had relationships with these allies because of the resident leader’s initiative to tap into these key groups. These alliances were crucial to the groups’ mobilizing and tactics, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Viable, Alternative Site

The site selected in this school was in fact, not an alternative as previously hypothesized. The site did have to meet the district’s requirements to be viable for a school. This site was viable because of its size, its use, the lack of community opposition and political relationships of the owner. In terms of size and location, the site was an important find. Most residents and LAUSD staff commented on the rarity of finding an 18.4-acre site in the middle of a dense neighborhood south of Downtown Los Angeles: “…that big piece of land (was)…very unusual in South Central LA…there aren’t places like that…where you can build…a high school…” a
community organization staff member commented (2). Most likely though, the size of the site was a more important criterion than the location, and LAUSD would have targeted any site this large in nearly any area of the District.

While the site’s size may have first interested the District, the current use of the site made it viable to LAUSD and more acceptable to the community. The Dairy’s bankruptcy coincided with resident activism and the District efforts to search for sites in the area. Prior to the Dairy bankruptcy, this site was probably not even considered by the school district, because the Dairy had been a hopeful target for economic development. The LA Community Development Bank was investing funds to revitalize the dairy. This high-profile investment plus the dairy’s history as a viable job center kept the District from considering the site for a school until the dairy went bankrupt: “a fully, operational major dairy servicing all of southern California. The cost of acquiring and relocating that would have been phenomenal,” explained a former LAUSD Real Estate executive (11).

Furthermore the past use made the site acceptable to the community. Most importantly, the site did not include any homes, which meant there was no apparent opposition to the site. “There’s no need to demolish affordable housing in this area…when there’s a huge piece of land available” a community organization staff member explained (2). Second, although the site had been industrial, it had not involved a use that would have made the soil toxic. Residents remain concerned about the toxicity levels in the soil and want to know for certain that the soil is clean. They have continued to watch over the District’s soil tests and remediation efforts to ensure
the land is free of toxins. “Right now, that’s what we want. We really want the high
school but it has to be on clean land,” explained one long-time resident (3). The
community’s strong support, which can also be read as a lack of opposition to this site
helped the District in pursuing this site.

The last factor that made this property viable for LAUSD was that the property
owner was willing to negotiate with the District. Although the site size, location and
environmental status made the site preferable to both LAUSD and the community, this
deal may not have been possible without an owner who was willing to negotiate with
the District. According to November 2002 article in the Daily News, LAUSD had
approached the company owning the property in August 2000 and threatened to
condemn the property, but the owner wanted to make a deal instead (Barrett 2002).
According to Superintendent Roy Romer, also quoted in this article, that was a “good
economic deal” because it would have taken longer if the property had to be taken by
eminent domain (Barrett 2002). Thus the owner’s willingness to negotiate with the
District made the site much more viable.

Organizing Capacity

A group’s capacity to organize is the group’s ability to work collectively towards a
common goal, as measured by the mobilization and tactics of the group. The
organizing in Case B overlaps at first with the organizing in Case A but then extends
over a longer period of time, involving more people and more sophisticated tactics.
The organizing in Case B took place from the summer of 1999 through the winter of
2002, when the site was acquired by LAUSD. Mobilizing in Case B happened over a
longer period of time and in a slightly different way than in Case A. In Case B, more and a wider range of people were mobilized for different reasons. Although the core group of people consisted of usually ten or fewer, at times the group working on this issue in Case B numbered at least 25, according to one resident (6). By the time groundbreaking occurred for this school, the site was so supported by the community that a number of organizations marched from multiple places to meet at the site for a press conference.

People were also involved in the issue in Case B for different reasons than in Case A. One reason people indicated that they mobilized was because they did not trust the District to find appropriate sites in their neighborhood, and specifically, wanted the District to not pass over the Santee Dairy Site. We “began telling LAUSD representatives that they should check out that site because if they didn’t start looking at it” someone else would buy it, a community organizer said (2). As mobilization continued, other people became involved because of the need for a new school in the neighborhood and a desire to improve the neighborhood. One individual supported it because of “how important it is to have a high school in the area...we know the overcrowding issues the District faces,” explained the director of an organization that works with school-aged children and who supported the Santee site (4). Because the issue in Case B focused on supporting a school, rather than protecting individual houses, more people and organizations became involved. Many of these people were involved, however, through other groups that the neighborhood group networked with, rather than joining the resident group itself.
As this group of participants grew, organizing tactics also became a little more formalized. In June 2000, the group officially became Neighbors for an Improved Community (NIC). The decision to name the group stemmed from the desire of the group to be more officially recognized, particularly when attending School Board meetings (3). Even with this name, however, the group maintained a grassroots operation with no funds. Everyone involved were still volunteers and the group relied heavily on the resources of established non-profit organizations, which constituted key tactics for NIC.

One tactic that remained the same between Case A and Case B was identifying and suggesting potential sites for a school to the School Board. Through this process, the residents selected the Santee Dairy site as one of their highest priority sites, “like number one or number two,” according to one resident (3). The group also took these sites to their School Board representative who in turn instructed her deputy to look at the sites.

The group also had a repeated presence at School Board meetings, similar to Case A. The difference in Case B was that the group organized large numbers of people to attend the meetings. On the day the School Board was going to approve the site, for example, the residents brought busloads of people from the neighborhood: “we networked with other groups…to help take people on busses to the (School Board) meetings” (3). Although the site was not controversial at this point, the presence of a large group of residents affirmed the community’s support for the site.
One new tactic in Case B was *surveying residents* to see if they supported a school at the Santee Dairy property. In August 2000 when LAUSD Community Outreach staff wanted to meet with NIC about the site, the residents wanted to make sure that they reflected the desires of the community. They distributed three thousand questionnaires into the community by way of formal and informal community centers. They received back at least 500, with 99% supporting a school on the site. “So then we felt confident that we were going with the voice of the community to the school board,” one resident said (3). The group shared these results with LAUSD staff and School Board members. This tactic was important not only because it showed the overwhelming support for the site, but also because it informed residents that were not involved in the group’s activities that the site was being considered. Furthermore the tactic demonstrated to LAUSD staff and School Board members that these residents were serious about their involvement in and support of this site.

A new major tactic of the group in Case B was *networking with other organizations*. This helped the group in at least three ways: to access more residents, to obtain resources and to benefit from established credibility. In terms of access to people, All People’s Christian Center and other groups allowed NIC to leave flyers in their buildings and to talk with their staff and students. A Place Called Home and other groups allowed NIC to talk with staff to invite them to get involved with supporting the Santee Dairy site selection. Reaching out through these organizations also increased the numbers of NIC. One of the group’s core members got involved after hearing one resident talk at the community center where she worked (13).
Furthermore, all the organizations that NIC worked with were helpful in distributing questionnaires to their constituents and clients.

In terms of resources, one organization, SAJE, helped cover costs of supplies as well as lent professional expertise. SAJE provided access to copy machines for flyers and questionnaires. Also, an organizer from SAJE worked with the residents, at no cost to them, for approximately two years. The organizer regularly helped to run meetings. According to one resident “SAJE had been very helpful to us…’cause we have no funds. So they helped with flyers and…” other expenses (12). Many of the organizations also provided resources such as transportation for residents to attend School Board meetings.

Lastly, groups provided legitimacy to NIC by being involved with them and speaking at School Board meetings. According to the director of one established community group that provided resources to NIC and spoke on its behalf at School Board meetings, “People look to see what other groups are involved and if they know those groups”…I think our involvement “lends a sense of credibility…some support” (4). Similarly, well-established activists, including an environmental justice lawyer, wrote a letter to the School Board on behalf of the group and in support of the site (12). As these dimensions and examples indicated, the organizing in Case B, therefore, lasted over a longer period of time, involved more people and organizations and utilized more sophisticated tactics.
School District’s Receptiveness to Community Input

The school district’s receptiveness to community input is defined as its willingness to listen to and be swayed by the opinions and demands of various groups. In Case B, I looked specifically at the school district’s receptiveness to the residents in this neighborhood. LAUSD’s receptiveness to the residents increased significantly; there was almost a complete turnaround in the District’s engagement of the community from the beginning to the end of Case B. To examine changes in District receptivity, I looked for indicators of non-receptivity and receptivity to see how and when the receptivity increased.

At the beginning of Case B, the school district was highly non-receptive to this neighborhood. As explained in the previous chapter, LAUSD did not have meaningful ways to engage the community about site selection, and in fact, had a very insulated decision making process that did not take residents’ concerns into consideration. This non-receptiveness was part of the District’s larger history of not asking for community input and not having meaningful ways for residents to be involved. “They would ask for our input and you give your input and nothing happens…they already know what they’re gonna do…it was just an exercise in futility,” explained one frustrated community organization staff member involved with earlier LAUSD outreach efforts (4). Although the District’s outreach policies had improved and evolved over the last two decades (according to one long time LAUSD Real Estate executive, 12), the community saw LAUSD’s decision-making process as very closed off from resident participation (3).
After the residents met with their School Board member, it seemed that the District’s receptivity increased, but was not consistently sustained. The School Board member’s deputy, for example, met with the group of residents and looked at the Santee Dairy property. Supposedly, the District began looking at the site at that time, but the residents could not find anything out about the progress. “We’d call the office and it was like it was none of our business – that sort of attitude,” explained one resident (3). Despite their efforts to mobilize and communicate with the District, the residents did not hear about this issue for months.

The district’s receptiveness to the residents increased in the spring and summer of 2000, indicated by district staff member’s willingness to meet with residents and discuss potential sites. First, in the spring of 2000, a District Real Estate executive called the resident leader to set up a meeting with residents. This action by the District Real Estate executive indicated that the resident leader’s name had been retained within the Facilities Department or School Board. Although he cancelled the meeting at the last minute, the residents were able to force the District to respond to them; one resident called the Superintendent to complain about this cancellation. According to the resident, the Superintendent called the resident himself and promised “that there would be LAUSD representatives at that meeting” and the group got “people from higher up and people from real estate,” an indicator of a much higher level of receptivity than the residents ever experienced before (13).

Another indicator of the high level of receptivity was when the newly established LAUSD Community Outreach department met with the residents in
August of 2000. Community Outreach wanted to meet with the group, specifically to
discuss the Santee Dairy site because the District was interested in building a school
there. According to a Community Outreach staff member that attended a NIC
meeting, the District was very receptive to the neighborhood’s demand that homes not
be taken and to the potential use of the Santee Dairy site because the District had also
identified this as a viable site (8).

After LAUSD purchased the site, communication between the District and the
residents has been more regular. “They do hold meetings, they showed us the
architectural designs (for this school) at one and the School Board member was there,”
explained one resident (12). Residents and community organizers are able to call
LAUSD staff when they have a question and LAUSD Staff inform NIC about
meetings that are being held in the neighborhood. “They e-mail me. They e-mail us.
They send us flyers and…advise us when they hold meetings” (3). Through this
process NIC has developed relationships with Community Outreach staff and the
Superintendent of the sub-district.

School District Site Selection

The group’s influence on school site selection is essentially the success of the group to
see its demands manifested in decisions made by power holders. In Case B, while the
residents’ demands to use the Santee Dairy site for a school were met, it is unclear if
this change in site selection occurred because of the group’s pressure on LAUSD.
The school district did choose the site that the group was advocating for, which is evident by the current construction on that site. In terms of resident influence on the site selection decision-making process, it is difficult to clearly ascertain whether resident influence was the primary reason for the District using this site. According to one community organizer and a former LAUSD Community Outreach consultant, the residents were “actually the ones that identified the site” (5). According to an LAUSD Community Outreach staff, the community’s suggestion “coincided with the fact that the District had also realized that there was this wonderful site” (8). According to an LAUSD Facilities Consultant, “the site just came and it was perfect. I’m not so sure (the residents) had that much to do with it” (9). Thus, although NIC’s advocating for this site may have kept the District focused on it, the District’s selection of this site might have been primarily due to its characteristics (e.g., large and available for purchase).
**Analysis of Case B: Important Relationships**

Similar to Chapter 5, I will explain the relationships among the elements that are especially significant or different from my original conceptual framework. These relationships are depicted in Figure 11. The lighter lines indicate weak relationships, the dark lines indicate strong relationships. In this section I will not repeat any explanations of relationships among elements if they are the same as in Case A.

**Openings in the political opportunity structure** increased the **group’s organizing capacity** in two ways in Case B. First, the unstable relationship between LAUSD and the community increased the organizing capacity by providing residents a reason to mobilize. Distrust of the District was an important element in organizing residents. Residents did not believe that the District would not take homes or in site selections. They also believed that the District might pass over this site for a school.
Therefore, residents mobilized to make sure that District did what they thought it should do. If residents trusted that LAUSD would have found that site on its own, they likely would not have mobilized.

Second, relationships with external allies provided increased organizing capacity by providing access to organizations and resources. These relationships with external allies were established through the residents’ pre-existing relationships with community activists and through residents’ initiative to contact these organizations. As described earlier, these organizations provided access to people, resources, and credibility. Specifically, one resident’s relationship with Sister Diane, a community activist, was instrumental in obtaining necessary resources for NIC, including establishing a relationship with SAJE that provided an organizer to NIC pro-bono and assisted NIC with printing and disbursing questionnaires and flyers. These resources expanded NIC’s organizing capacity beyond what it would have been if the residents had to depend on their personal resources. In Case B, therefore, the residents used the external ally opening strategically to boost their organizing capacity.

**Openings in the political opportunity structure** influenced the school district’s site selection. Though it may not be as strong as other factors, the opening created by divided elites led to the district’s use of the NIC preferred site. The relationships between former Mayor Richard Riordan and the owner of the site, and his relationships with certain School Board members may have influenced the District’s decision to use this Santee Dairy site. Interestingly, these relationships were not connected with NIC’s organizing efforts except that the goals for site selection
happened to coincide. In other words, NIC did not use this opening (Riordan’s priority to have the Santee Dairy site used for a school) as a means to achieve its goal and in that way this opening can be considered a missed political opportunity.

The power of the relationships among elites in general is further illustrated by one Facilities Consultant’s beliefs about the influence of elected officials and other elites on site selection. This consultant was involved in a few cases where residents opposed a school site and were successful in influencing site selection. According to him, resident success in influencing school site selection in these cases was determined by the direct involvement of an elected official who was pressuring the district, not by the number of people mobilizing or the tactics used. Basically, the political influence of an elected official and the district’s political situation was more important than anything related to the residents themselves.

The **viable site** influenced the **school district site selection**. The viability of the site did not necessarily increase the group’s ability to influence the district, but it did result in the district doing what the residents wanted – using the Santee Dairy site for the school. The fact that the dairy property was a viable site influenced the district’s decision to use it more than any other variable. The site met all the district’s basic criteria for site selection, was available at the right time and had an owner that was willing to negotiate. Furthermore, the site had community support and, more important to the district, did not have active community opposition. These characteristics made the site an obvious choice for the district, possibly even without the neighborhood mobilization to support the site.
A strong relationship was not seen between the group’s organizing capacity and the school district’s site selection. In the original conceptual model, I hypothesized that the group’s tactics would give residents leverage over the school district to influence the site selection decision-making process. It is unclear from the analysis if the school district would have considered this site without the neighborhood’s activism. Most current LAUSD staff found it hard to believe that the District would not have seen this site. The group’s organizing did, however, ensure that the District continued to pursue the site. NIC’s organizing also won the group other victories, the most important of which was a role in decisions made about this site and other sites in the neighborhood. Residents cited this as their important influence on the District more often than the selection of Santee Dairy as the site for the proposed school.

School district’s receptiveness to this neighborhood did NOT increase the group’s influence on site selection. Although the District did become highly receptive to the residents and involved them in discussions about the site, these communications did not seem to have led to the District’s decision to use the site. In fact, according to one newspaper article, the District had approached the property owner in August 2000 about condemning the site (Barrett 2003). This was the same time that LAUSD’s Community Outreach department contacted NIC members to discuss LAUSD’s interest in the site. Thus this receptiveness may have been related more to the District’s need to maintain a positive community image and less about soliciting community suggestions about this particular site.
Analysis of Case B: Emergent Themes

In Case B, four themes emerged that were not included in the original conceptual model. Two of these are similar to ones that emerged in Case A and two are different.

The first emergent theme was the original threat to the neighborhood, which is similar to the theme original site proposed in Case A. In Case B, however, the threat was more broad and vague than a specific site that would take homes. One factor that facilitates mobilization is a threat to residents’ quality of life (i.e., an original threat to the neighborhood). In Case A, the threat was a specific proposal to take their homes. In Case B, most residents did not know about the original threat, but they believed strongly that the school district search for sites was a threat to their homes. The residents distrusted the District and trusted the leader’s vision that their homes were endangered. These two elements in combination created a reason to mobilize. This threat sustained the group to stay involved longer than might have occurred with a lesser or less well defined and understood threat. Often when a grassroots group responds to a specific threat, the group disintegrates once the threat is gone (Mayer 2003). In Case B, however, because the threat was not limited to a specific site, but was a general distrust of the District, residents stayed involved longer. Therefore, the original threat was an important factor in the group’s organizing capacity.

The second emergent theme consisted of institutional changes within the school district. During the time period of Case B, LAUSD underwent a major internal organizational restructuring. These changes had begun before this case started
with voter approval of a facilities bond in 1997 that mandated the creation of a Bond Oversight Committee and a Community Outreach Department. The changes were institutionalized when the School Board realized, the District needed a new approach within its Facilities Department (8). To do this, new departments were established, with almost completely new staff, and new policies were developed for site selection and community outreach. In the fall and winter of 1999/2000 the Superintendent was ousted and a new one installed. In January of 2000, a new Facilities Department was established and Facilities consultants were employed. Later that year, the Community Outreach department, a division of the Facilities Department, was created.

This emergent theme has interesting relationships with some of the elements of the original conceptual model. First, the unstable relationship opening in the political opportunity structure was a major factor that led to these institutional changes at LAUSD. The District was aware of this distrust across communities, and knew that it needed to regain the community’s trust to pass more bonds and build more schools. Part of regaining this trust was changing LAUSD decision-making processes and the organizational structure to be more open and transparent to the community. To gain community support for Proposition BB in 1997, the Board had included clauses that mandated creating the Bond Oversight Committee and the Community Outreach Department (8). These measures were aimed at making voters/residents feel more comfortable with allocating future tax dollars to the District. Two years later, the Board was ready to establish the Community Outreach Department, but that change had to occur within a larger structural change to the District to ensure that the creation
of this department was not viewed by the public as a stop-gap measure to merely attract votes. In part because of the Board’s view that organizational change was necessary, and in part because of the controversy surrounding Belmont High School, numerous staff within the Real Estate Department were removed from their positions (10). Thus the District responded to an unstable relationship, created by years of controversy and criticism, by trying to create a clean slate with new departments, staff and policies.

Residents involved with the issues in Case B believed that they had a role in motivating this change in the District as well. According to one resident, though she is not sure how big of an impact her group had, “I do think we did have an impact in having the (Community) Outreach Department created” (3). NIC may indeed have had an influence on these organizational changes in the District, though it seems from the District perspective, these changes were already in process by the time this particular neighborhood became involved in school siting issues. Undoubtedly, however, the pressure over the years from multiple community groups, and the District’s inherent need for voter support, were driving factors in creating this organizational change.

Second, internal institutional changes to LAUSD increased the District’s receptiveness to this neighborhood. By changing the political situation, these internal changes actually may be an opening in the political opportunity structure. As stated earlier, the District’s receptiveness increased dramatically throughout Case B. This change, however, was not primarily because of the group’s organizing or directly
because of the unstable relationships, but could be argued to have stemmed from internal organizational restructuring. From an interview with a long time LAUSD Real Estate staff member and a long time community organizer, I gathered that effective outreach requires not only the meaningful processes but also personnel that want to and know how to engage the community. Throughout the 1980 and 1990s, the District’s site selection and outreach processes were continually evolving to be more community oriented, but the District was not successful in creating meaningful ways for the public to participate. From the community’s perspective, the many staff changes made the District less receptive for awhile because residents did not know who to contact with problems or questions (2). It was not until the most recent establishment of the Community Outreach department, with staff trained in explaining complex processes of school development and in bringing residents into these processes, that the District became more receptive to community’s needs from the point of view of the residents. However, once new staff were in place, the District’s internal organizational shifts had the biggest influence on increasing this receptivity because the restructuring put in place new policies for community outreach and new staff with a more community oriented attitude.

Related to these internal changes is the third emergent theme, **LAUSD’s lack of institutional memory**, which consists of the perceived gaps in what LAUSD staff knows or will tell about the issues in Case B. This theme also emerged in Case A. In Case B, the lack of memory was created by the huge turnover in staff and the other controversial issues that overshadowed Case B. Most of the LAUSD staff that would
have been involved with this site in 1999 were no longer with the District by the time this site was selected. Many of the staff involved with first looking at this site in the winter of 1999/2000 are no longer with the District today. Furthermore, just as much of the staff was removed, many of the District’s files related to facilities development no longer existed by the time new staff were employed by the District. Thus today, LAUSD staff members have different interpretations of what happened with Case B. The Community Outreach staff members have heard from the residents about their homes being threatened though few LAUSD staff members that I talked to could explain what sites those were. Whether because of changes in staff, lack of individual memory or political reasons to hold back information, there are gaps in LAUSD’s institutional memory in regards to Case B and probably to other issues in this and other sub-districts as well.

The last emergent theme is other results benefiting the organized group. While some of these have been touched on in discussion of the other elements, they are worth noting specifically because these benefits are an important aspect of the social capital and organizing literature. In the original conceptual model, I considered influencing site selection the group’s main goal and main achievement. Interviews with residents showed however that other benefits have been gained that are perhaps even more important than the site selection by LAUSD. Furthermore when mobilization does strongly affect the outcome it aimed to influence it is important to identify other benefits of mobilization.
First, these residents gained a place in the site selection process and became recognized by LAUSD staff members as important stakeholders in this neighborhood. Today, NIC regularly meets with the Superintendent of the sub-district and Community Outreach staff contact residents about upcoming meetings. Based on residents’ interviews, the number of comments about this achievement was comparable to the site selection achievement, consequently, this new and legitimate role in the site selection process seemed more important. In this particular case the district’s increased receptiveness to community input did not result in residents’ influence on site selection, but this increased receptivity was only the beginning of LAUSD’s Community Outreach Department. In the beginning the outreach was not effective. As the outreach department has become more sophisticated and staff members more skilled, the district’s outreach has become more meaningful. Some skeptics, however, still consider this outreach to be only tokenism with little influence on actual site selections.

Second, the residents demonstrated increased levels of social capital. The social capital was enhanced because of perceived success among the residents. Regardless of the influence the group had on the school district’s site selection, the residents perceived that their demand for a school at that site. Residents therefore had a greater reason to trust members of NIC, other residents, and the leader. This is an important question that the social capital literature considers – whether grassroots groups dealing with specific neighborhood issues stay together once those issues are resolved. In Case B, the grassroots organization, Neighbors for an Improved
Community, established during this organizing stayed together after the site selection victory occurred. The longevity of this group is probably due to the vision and efforts of the leader, and because the group was not dealing with a site-specific threat, but a larger more amorphous threat to the neighborhood. Through this activism, the residents have worked together, apparently successfully and are even beginning to tackle other neighborhood issues like transportation and affordable housing.

Conclusions of Case B

To summarize the analysis of Case B, the important findings were:

- **Trust in an internal leader** and the **leader’s skills and vision** were important components of social capital. The leader’s initiative to bring residents together around this issue and her vision of what the proposed school could be were key in the beginning of this activism. The residents’ trust of this leader and her vision of the threat and what was possible were important in motivating the residents.

- The **original threat to neighborhood** was a crucial element in mobilizing residents. Residents may not have mobilized if there had not been a previous threat and if they did not believe that there would likely be a future threat. This threat and lack of trust in the District may also have been important in sustaining the residents to continue their work in the group.

- Relationships with **external allies** and using these allies’ resources were important for organizing. The grassroots group could not have reached as many people or had access to resources and power without the help from established non-profit
organizations that were willing to share supplies, time, and expertise. Networking with other groups was an important tactic to building the power of the NIC and created a larger base to advocate for this site.

• The relationship between unstable relationships in the political structure and institutional changes in LAUSD and the District’s receptiveness to the neighborhood was an important concept throughout Case B. The relationship among these three elements shows how long-term problems and pressure can lead to change when an organization such as LAUSD reaches a point of crisis, especially when the organization is in need of community approval. LAUSD was experiencing an intense period of upheaval, scrutiny, and change during Case B, which is interesting both because of the causes (long term problems and pressure) and in the results (more community-friendly policy).

• The role of relationships between elites and elected officials influenced the viability of the site and the site selection. Coincidentally, these relationships may have caused the District to do what the community had been advocating for (using this site) more than anything the residents were doing. In terms of community organizing, this may indicate that the best thing a group can do is make sure that other powerholders are interested in the same results as the group, and to leverage such motivations.

• Lastly, the residents’ perception of their own role in Case B is an interesting statement on organizing and its benefits. The residents believed that they suggested the site and pushed the District to be more community oriented.
Although they did not disagree, some LAUSD staff members did not see this group as being as influential as the group saw itself. Consequently, whether or not the District changed its site as a response to the mobilization of NIC, the group’s actions and achievements are important because the activism built trust among the residents that will boost future efforts.

Comparing Case A and Case B

These cases both explored the influence of neighborhood mobilization and other factors on school site selection. In the end of both cases, the demands of the group were met, although the data did not reveal the group’s influence on the district’s decisions. To conclude analysis, I will highlight the significant similarities and differences in these two cases with regards to the communities involved, the motivations to mobilize and the realization of the group’s goals.

The “Communities”

In Case A, the community affected by the threat and involved in opposing it was smaller than the community that advocated for a specific site in Case B. Based on interviews with residents involved with Case A, the main community affected consisted of homeowners that would lose their properties/homes to the District and those in the immediate vicinity of that school. This “community” lived between Washington Boulevard, San Pedro Street, Jefferson Boulevard and Main Street. The core residents involved with Case A lived in and surrounding the site, which can be approximated by Census tract 226700. This neighborhood had a higher rate of
homeownership than the surrounding census tracts, including the census tract where the school is being built. That neighborhood to the south has a smaller base of homeownership, which decreased the numbers of people losing both their property and their home to the new school. Figure 12 depicts the proposed and alternative sites and the homeownership rates surrounding them. From one resident’s perspective “those people” were a different community (13). The differentiation in communities is further demonstrated by the fact that the residents involved in the issues in Case A did not take up the fight to oppose the District when site to the south, in the area where renters predominantly presided, was selected.

In Case B, however, because the issue was defined as not only protecting homes but also supporting a new school, the base of residents supporting the site expanded. This new high school will draw students from a large area and so there are many more residents interested in seeing this project come to fruition. Further, NIC’s
outreach and networking brought other organizations on board that, although these organizations did not become a part of NIC, they did become a part of the larger base supporting this site. The neighborhood that NIC serves today is bounded from Main Street to Central to Washington Boulevard to Martin Luther King (3).

Motivation to mobilize

Related to the “communities” involved in each case, the residents had slightly different reasons to mobilize in each case. These motivations influenced who mobilized and for how long. In Case A, the motivation to mobilize was a specific threat to residents’ homes from LAUSD development of a new school. Residents mobilized to protect themselves and their homes. At this point the involved residents had a narrowly defined goal that was achieved within a short period of time.

In Case B, the motivation for residents to mobilize came from a more general threat of the school district’s continuing need to build schools in this neighborhood. The residents that mobilized in Case B were both homeowners afraid of losing their homes and community organizers and parents who wanted a school in the neighborhood. This combination of participants made for a strong coalition that was able to tap into the resources and participation of other community groups for added support.

Realization of group’s goals

In both cases, the school district’s decision met the group’s goals, but for slightly different reasons. In both cases, the group’s organizing was not the main factor influencing the site selection. The political opportunity structure and the presence of a
viable site were the deciding factors in the group’s achievement of the change in site selection. The difference in these cases is the type of opening in the political structure that was important and the defining features of the viable site.

In Case A, the unstable relationship between LAUSD and the community and the viability of an alternative site influenced the site selection. The District was more vulnerable to community demands because of this unstable relationship and Real Estate staff decided to change the site. The alternative site was viable because of the lack of community opposition to it. The lack of opposition was due to the current use (low-income rental property owned by absentee landlords), the lack of organizing capacity among the residents there and its location outside of the “community” that organized to oppose the original site. Had the District not needed to select a site quickly without being criticized or had there not been a viable alternative site, the school district may not have changed its site selection, despite opposition to the original site.

In Case B, the viability of the site and the relationships among elites influenced the site selection. First, the site was viable both because it met the basic District requirements (size, location and toxicity) and because it was politically appealing because of the dairy’s bankruptcy, the property owner’s willingness to negotiate and develop and the community’s support of the site (or lack of opposition to it). Second, relationships between Riordan, the property owner and certain Board Members also influenced site selection. These relationships may have made negotiations easier or may have put extra pressure on the Board Members to make this
site work. Had any of these elements (the site’s viability or the elite relationships) not been in place, the school district may not have selected the site, regardless of community support for it.

Furthermore, the school district may not have selected this site if the viable site, the relationships of elites and the community support had not all pointed to it. According to one former LAUSD Real Estate Consultant, in numerous cases communities and/or elected officials opposed what was a viable site. Because of political pressure, the School Board members backed away from those sites. In these situations, empowerment of some people and political pressure resulted in a negative outcome for the community because no school was built.

This concludes the analysis of the two-part case study. The following chapter will close this thesis with a summary of major findings and will outline future research questions to be addressed.
In conclusion, this thesis finds that the existing political structure and a lack of community opposition to sites had more influence on school district site selection than did community mobilization. The existing political structure included unstable relationships between LAUSD and the general community, relationships among elites and, an emergent opening, institutional evolution. A lack of community opposition to sites was measured in the viability of the site. Although site viability was first dependent on basic criteria, beyond that a lack of community opposition to the site was the deciding factor in both cases. Although mobilization was not a key factor in the site selection, these cases suggested that trust in a skillful internal leader and relationships with external allies can be important aspects of social capital and organizing. Further, these cases revealed that mobilizing has benefits for communities even when the mobilization does not influence decisions.

To conclude this thesis, I will explain these findings, discuss the practical applications of these findings for community organizers and school facility planners, and outline new questions to continue this research.

Political Opportunities

The first major finding is that the political relationships and situations influence school district site selection. Whether identified by organizing groups or not, the luck of the existing political structure can have a larger influence than the community
mobilization itself. Political opportunities that influenced site selection in these cases included unstable relationships and relationships among elites. A third political opportunity that was previously unidentified and warrants further investigation by planners is the institutional changes to the school district. These relationships and situations can be used by groups to leverage power but can also influence situations without the knowledge of organizing groups. As a single variable, the political opportunity structure is complex and requires further study.

One opening was the unstable relationship between a school district and the community, which makes the agency vulnerable to the community’s demands. In this story the unstable relationship was created by the school district’s need for approval from a general public that had become highly critical of the institution after years of academic, financial and administrative failures. This instability created an opening in which the neighborhood group’s demands pressured a weak spot in the school district, magnifying the pressure of the what might have been somewhat minor demands from a relatively small and non-influential neighborhood. It is not clear that the neighborhood group consciously knew and strategically used this opening, although their actions within this opening made their demands more urgent to the district.

The second opening was the relationships among elites, which occurred parallel and independent to the neighborhood group’s actions, but was coincidentally driving towards the same goal. Relationships among these elites may have pressured School Board members to support a specific site and assisted in negotiating a deal for LAUSD to use that site. In this story, that site was the same site advocated for by the
neighborhood group. The residents did not appear to have any awareness of these relationships, although some School Board members and LAUSD staff did. Therefore, the neighborhood group did not strategically use this opening, although its existence may have resulted in realization of group’s goals without knowledge of it.

A third opening that emerged from these cases was institutional change to the school district, which increased the district’s receptiveness to this group but did not influence the site selection because of the timing of these changes. When faced with controversy from multiple sides and a need for community support, the School Board began reforming a portion of the bureaucracy, hiring new personnel and creating new internal structure and external attitude. New staff members, particularly the Community Outreach staff, had to determine the best ways to relate to each other, to the Board and to the community. These changes caused some confusion for the community but also created an opportunity for residents and allies to influence how the reforms were institutionalized. As the new Facilities staff became settled into their roles and created new processes, community groups have been increasingly involved in the site selection process in recent years. This opening is particularly important for planners and people organizing around land use decisions, an area of planning in which new and evolving institutions are often present.

For grassroots neighborhood groups, these openings are very important because they can be more influential to decisions makers than mobilization. The existence of these openings, whether strategically used or not, may be the difference between groups achieving their goals or not.
Determining Site Viability

The second major finding is that the presence of a viable site influenced site selection and that viability was determined by a lack of community opposition. Although sites were first measured based on established criteria regarding location, size and cost, the lack of opposition from immediate neighbors and politicians and the willingness of property owners to sell determined the sites’ viability. Essentially an absence of active opposition from immediate neighbors, property owners or politicians may be more important to the school district than community acceptance of or support for a site. The importance of the lack of opposition does suggest, however, that active opposition to a site can influence a school district to steer away from a site.

In both cases there was a lack of vocal opposition from the immediate neighbors to the site ultimately selected. The lack of opposition can but does not necessarily indicate approval. In the first case, residents may not have opposed the viable site because of a lack of information or mobilization or because they believed they were receiving relocation money. In the second case, lack of opposition did indicate resident approval, according to the survey conducted by the neighborhood group. In both cases the lack of opposition from residents made the site politically acceptable to School Board members.

The property owner also did not oppose their sites being selected and were willing to negotiate with the school district. The willingness of the property owner was indicated more clearly in the second case than in the first. According to news reports one of the school district’s deciding factors on that site was that the owner
negotiated and was even able to develop the site (Barrett 2002). The owner’s willingness to negotiate meant time and money saved that would have been spent on eminent domain and acquisition processes. If the owner had resisted the school district’s negotiation, the site may not have been viable.

Lastly, politicians and the community at large did not oppose the sites that were selected. This was also particularly important in the second case because the site selected had been in the public eye as a site for economic development. According to a school district real estate executive, opposition from politicians and community members not directly related to sites can often influence site selection, at times to the detriment of the neighborhood (interview 2004). In some cases, a small group of residents have opposed a site that many other residents approved. With the voice of the local politicians, these residents have been able to shut down school projects. In these cases, no such opposition existed on the selected sites.

Recognizing that a lack of opposition makes a site viable suggests that active opposition can make a site not viable. Although mobilization by itself may not be influential standing, under the correct political situations, it can make a site less politically appealing to School Board members and School District officials.

**Factors and Benefits of Mobilization**

Although mobilization was not a key factor in site selection, these cases reveal interesting aspects of the factors and benefits of mobilization. These cases suggest that trust in a skilled internal leader and relationships with external allies are important
aspects of social capital and organizing. Further, these cases revealed important benefits of organizing even when it does not influence the ultimate decision that the group aimed to affect.

Much of the social capital literature discusses trust among people as the key factor for people to work together for communal goals. While this trust is certainly important, in these cases, relationships between the internal leader and other residents and allies was more often indicated as important for bringing people together than relationships among all residents. In this story, the leader, a lifelong resident and a homeowner, was a central figure from both the community and LAUSD perspectives in terms of social capital, organizing and even the District’s receptivity to this neighborhood. Residents trusted this leader because she came from them and proved her skills and dedication over time. She was a “reputational” leader, having gained her position because of her own actions and because residents trusted that she could speak for them. Particularly in the second case, residents’ trust in this leader stood as a proxy for trust among all residents, allowing them to work together without knowing each other directly.

A second factor of the group’s organizing was tactical use of relationships with external allies to increase resources. The leader used existing relationships with allies and established new relationships to access people, resources and expertise. These resources were particularly important in the second case, in which community-based groups assisted with distributing information, bringing residents to School Board meetings and facilitating group meetings. Without help in both tangible and
intangible resources, resource-poor groups may struggle to reach a threshold at which they can effectively participate in high-level political issues. Although the group in these cases did not influence site selection, external allies and resources did help them to at least be recognized as part of the political scene surrounding these decisions.

Lastly, these cases suggest that even when mobilization does not clearly achieve its goal, groups often reap other benefits, namely increased social capital and recognition by outside groups and officials. These benefits can increase their access to and power in future political decisions. Organizing can build social capital, as it did from the first case to second, because leaders and participants gain skills and confidence and residents become more trusting of leaders. Organizing can also increase group recognition by other agencies and organizations. In the second case, if the group had not been mobilizing, the newly established Community Outreach department would not have contacted them for input once the department was established. According to residents and activists in the neighborhood today, the school district continues to include them in discussions about the construction of the new high school and about other new school sites. Further, the neighborhood group is addressing other issues including a proposal to build a rail line through their neighborhood, suggesting that the lifetime of grassroots groups can extend beyond their initial cause.

These factors and benefits of organizing suggest that though trust and resources may be present, mobilization may not be influential on site selection and that though mobilization is not influential on site selection, neighborhood groups can
reap other benefits for their effort including increased social capital and political recognition, which can increase power over time.

**Practical applications**

Because many cities are currently reinvesting in educational facilities, this study has numerous important implications for practitioners in the field. Planners who work as community organizers, school facility planners, or on any participatory planning process may also benefit from these findings.

*Community Organizers*

From a community organizer, or even resident leader’s, perspective, it is important to understand how openings in the political opportunity structure create windows in which work can have a greater impact. This is particularly important for resource-poor groups. To boost group’s power and impact, organizers use these openings in the following ways:

- Identify unstable relationships in which power holders need voter approval, making them vulnerable to community demands. Understand how the larger community perceives an agency, what deadlines the agency must meet and how their processes work. Strategically insert your demands into their processes in such a way that ignoring your demands is a mistake for them because of repercussions from the larger community or not meeting deadlines. Understand these pressure points and use them to your advantage.
• Understand the power structure among and agendas of the elites. Elected officials and other powerful leaders can influence decisions more directly than organized grassroots groups. Know which elites or alliances are working towards the same goals as you. While it may be helpful to tap into these elites as external allies, it is also possible to just structure your campaigns along the same veins as powerful elites without an established alliance with them.

• Recognize when an agency is in crisis, in evolution or newly established. During these times, institutions are often more vulnerable to political pressure and are often somewhat malleable. As new staff members come in or new policies are established, your group can have an influence by having a continuing presence and building relationship with new staff. Using these opportunities, like all those listed above, requires initiative on the community’s part to insert residents into the institution’s work.

• Establish relationships with and reach out to external allies with resources you need. Often these relationships can be built well before the time you need to call on them. Understanding the resources your organization lacks and which organizations have similar goals as your group can help identify useful potential allies. Resources can include money, supplies, expertise and even credibility by lending their name to your group.

*School Facility Planners*

Many school facility planners are realizing, or being pressured into realizing, that participatory planning is an important component to successful school planning. In
establishing such processes, these planners must realize that creating such departments and policies is a gradual evolution for both the institution and the community. Once you have realized that participatory planning is needed, you must still convince the power holders that the process is valuable, establish the procedures and personnel, and engage the community meaningfully.

- Engage power holders about the value of this process. Power holders in the case of school development can be school board members, real estate selection staff and/or superintendents all of whom must be addressed by community outreach staff. The acceptance and respect by these power holders for a participatory process is crucial to develop and sustain a meaningful role for the public in decisions. Often power holders want to know the benefits of such processes. Explain that participatory planning does take longer, and requires more resources, but in planning a public facility, the community has a right to be involved. Further, participatory processes allow residents to air their opinions early rather than at decision times, thereby preempting possible opposition.

- Establish meaningful procedures and employ personnel dedicated to do outreach work. Building relationships with communities requires both an institutional and personal commitment. Simply setting up meeting times or sending flyers is not enough for meaningful outreach. Having a participatory process requires staff that is dedicated to going out to the community, explaining the process and bringing the public into the
process. For such processes to be successful, both successful methods and committed personnel are needed.

- Engage the community on its terms. Communities are often distrustful of agencies that attempt to establish new participatory processes. Recognize that trust will not come immediately and that you may have to be blamed for institutional errors that occurred before you were employed. Outreach and engagement involves multiple steps and relationship building. Talk with people, listen to their concerns, invite them to participate and explain the process and how they can be involved.

Urban Planners and School Facility Planners

In many cities, urban planners and school facility planners are quickly, and at time begrudgingly, learning that they must work together in school development and neighborhood revitalization. While these professional roles have long been separate, the issues they address and tasks they perform are often similar. Particularly, the evolutionary aspects of participatory planning reflect what city planners have learned throughout history and what school facility planners are learning in crash courses today. City planners and school facility planners that work directly with communities share a difficult and exciting position. While explaining, and at times defending, an institution’s decisions to the community, staff members in these roles have to continuously ask for participation and input. Furthermore, these planners have to maintain positive relationships with community members in order to be respected and have an entry into that community’s tight circle. Balancing between a bureaucracy
and the public, these planners play the important role of bringing human faces into the process and bringing the process to a human scale. Understanding these similarities can help these professions work together.

**New areas of research**

With many states and local school districts investing in educational facilities the issues of participation and mobilization within this context will need additional research. Because school facility planning involves land use decisions and participatory planning issues familiar to planners, more planning scholars and practitioners should take on school facility planning. Involving multiple communities and occurring in politically charged environments, these cases are rich with opportunity for studying community mobilization and participatory planning within education. Los Angeles is a particularly excellent place for such research because of the large number of recent and rapid school sitings, the controversy surrounding numerous developments and the crisis and evolution of the agency.

*Community mobilization*

Many planning scholars explore community empowerment, but few do so in the context of school facility planning. The cases presented in this thesis raise questions about how mobilized groups access power and how political opportunities influence decisions in the context of school facility planning.

First, groups may access power differently depending on the demographic and socio-economic make up of the group. Planning distinguishes between NIMBY’s,
communities with already established power (wealthy, white, homeowners, non-immigrants) that oppose a community-serving facility marginalized and empowered communities, low-income, communities of color, renters, or immigrants that obtain power to influence public agency decisions. How practitioners define and treat these communities may affect how much influence such groups can have in decisions. Also, understanding the tactics of these groups may help school facility planners to deal with oppositions before they arise. Research questions to address these issues include what are the similarities and differences in multiple cases of community opposition to school facility development? Are there patterns of mobilization despite demographic differences? What determines the success of such groups in influencing site selection? These studies could be compared to the conclusions of this study but also ask the questions how important is income and race in the outcome?

Second, many political openings existed in these cases, making it difficult to address them as a single variable. Since this variable was important in these cases, researchers should be encouraged to study each type of opening, when it appears and how it can be used. Historical research about when these openings have existed and how community groups have used (or not used) them to their success (or failure to) influence land use decisions will help future groups recognize and use these openings. Also the opening identified in this thesis, institutional changes to an agency, should be examined to see if these changes have influenced land use decisions and if community groups have influenced the changes themselves. Research questions include how have grassroots groups gained power through institutional changes to public agencies?
Under what circumstances do political opportunities exist? Does a grassroots group’s awareness of a political opening affect the influence of that opening on land use decisions? Also, specific to Los Angeles, how have grassroots groups used the presence of unstable political relationships as a pressure point to have their demands met? LAUSD’s period of instability and controversy is rich with potential case studies which would provide a similar basis (location, institution, period of time) to compare the activism in multiple communities.

*Participatory Planning and Educational Governance*

This thesis also raised questions about participatory planning within school facility planning and about educational governance, especially in regards to evolving educational institutions.

As school districts are incorporating more community-oriented planning process for new schools, the question remains how effective and meaningful are such processes. Similar to participatory planning research in planning, research is needed to understand which procedures are effective in bringing people into school siting processes and to evaluate how school districts incorporate community input into decisions. As noted in chapter two, participatory planning has been evaluated in regards to general land use plans and environmental resources planning. These measures can be applied to school facility planning as well. In the case of Los Angeles, in particular, I am curious to see how effectively their reformed Facilities department and outreach procedures are engaging the community and if such processes are influencing site selection and public opinion of the school district.
Research questions to be asked include who is involved in site selection process, how and why they are involved and how the school district takes into consideration (or ignores) their position.

Second, this thesis revealed that school board and school districts are political, in their decisions, treatment of the community and decisions to change internally. Although many school districts have not gone through an intense evolution like the Los Angeles Unified School District, many face pressure, criticism and controversy, particularly in large school districts with large budgets. Who is pressuring the school district, why and how successful they are, influences the daily lives of residents, students and teachers. Also how school districts deal with criticism helps us to understand how organizations evolve under such pressure. Research questions about these issues include what political players are interested in school district decisions and why? How are increased budgets related to increased political pressure on school districts? What factors create a crisis situation for an agency and what factors determine how the agency responds to the crisis? Specifically, what factors led up to LAUSD crisis and evolution? How have specific political figures, events and the media shaped that evolution? And, in twenty years when LAUSD’s Master Plan of new school development has been completed, how has the investment in school facilities changed the built form of Los Angeles? What effects have these new schools had on neighborhood redevelopment in terms of population stabilization, economic development and student performance?
Before beginning this research, one former community organizer explained to me her perception of successful mobilization. She cited luck being as important as other factors like social capital. Certainly in this case, serendipitous relationships and events influenced the sites selected, which matched the neighborhood group’s goals. However, even when such political opportunities exist and viable sites exist, mobilized groups have an important role in making sure that public agencies carry through and that promises are kept. Without the skillful tactics and dedicated efforts of this neighborhood group, we cannot be certain whether these schools would be under construction or not. In the larger picture, small groups of neighborhood mobilizations can work together with larger political forces to push for change over time, as has been seen with the institutional evolution of LAUSD to become more community-oriented. Furthermore, successful organizing has long lasting benefits for the residents as they become more empowered to demand that they have a voice in other decisions affecting their neighborhood and their lives.

Today, as I drive around Los Angeles, I pass numerous construction sites, where buildings have been cleared and signs posted to announce the coming of long overdue schools. Across the country national experts are convening to understand the multi-faceted issue of how to work with closed-off school districts, equip communities to influence school decisions and leverage public investment in schools to improve neighborhoods. School districts are not only providing one of our most precious services but also becoming the biggest land use developers in major cities. Constructing them in overcrowded and already underserved neighborhood can pit
schools against housing, parks and other community-serving uses. Planners have an important role and unique view on this complicated issue. Understanding and influencing this development is key to shaping the physical landscape of our cities and the opportunities that are provided within each neighborhood.
# Appendices

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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

How Neighborhoods Use Power: The Influence of Grassroots Groups on Public School Facility Siting Decisions

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Kate O’Hara, MA Candidate in the Department of Urban Planning at UCLA is conducting a research study to help understand how neighborhood groups successfully mobilize to influence public school facility siting decisions. Ms. O’Hara is conducting this research in part to fulfill requirements to obtain a Masters Degree and Dr. Lois Takahashi, PhD in the Department of Urban Planning at UCLA, is supervising the research. You are being asked to participate in this study because of your involvement in public school siting and/or community organizing in South Los Angeles.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in the study, the following will happen:

1. Interview: I will ask you questions about your experience in school facility siting and your impression of the school district and neighborhood groups involved with school siting. This interview is expected to last between forty-five and ninety minutes. The interview will be audiotaped.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the interview questions may make you uncomfortable or upset. You are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, and you may end the interview at any time.

D. BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information that you provide may help school officials to work better with community residents in choosing sites for new schools in the future.

E. CONFIDENTIALITY

Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy, but information about you will be handled as confidentially as possible. The researcher, Kate O’Hara, adviser, Dr.
Lois Takahashi, and a research assistant will have access to information about you. Your name will be kept separate from the information you share during the interview. Only Ms. O’Hara will have access to the names and corresponding interview statements. Your name will not be used without your consent in any published reports about this study.

After the interview is transcribed, Ms. O’Hara will destroy the taped recording. Ms. O’Hara will retain a written transcription of the spoken interview until the study is completed or until December 2004. At that time, interview transcriptions and your personal information will be destroyed. Subjects have the right to review edit or erase the research tapes in whole or in part. You may contact Ms. O’Hara if you wish to do so.

**F. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please fell free to contact Kate O’Hara, Principal Investigator at 310-314-0238 or Dr. Lois Takahashi, Faculty Sponsor, takahash@sppsr.ucla.edu.

**G. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Office for Protection of Research Subjects, 2107 Ueberroth Building, UCLA, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 900956-1694, (31) 825-8714.

**H. CONSENT**

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision to participate or not in this study will have no influence on your present or future status in the school district.

If you wish to participate in this study, you should sign below:

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES
SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How Neighborhoods Use Power:
The Influence of Grassroots Groups on Public School Facility Siting Decisions

1. How important are schools to the community?

2. When did you first get interested in LAUSD?

3. How were you involved with the Los Angeles Unified School District decision to site the new high school in South Los Angeles between 1998 and 2001?

4. What organization/firm were you working for – OR – what group were you representing?

5. How long were you involved in the conflict/discussions? How did you first get involved in this issue?

For community residents and organizers:

6. When and how did residents find out that LAUSD was considering building a new school in the neighborhood? What was your reaction?

7. What had the neighborhood done in the past in terms of dealing with LAUSD?

8. What is your impression of LAUSD’s effort to involve community in decisions? How do parents, teachers, students, residents get involved? How does the community receive LAUSD’s efforts? Has any of this changed while you have been/were involved?

9. How did other residents get involved? Why are you motivated to stay involved?

10. Did you seek help from other communities or other groups? What community organizations helped bring people together? Did these organizations exist within the community before the new school issue came up? Where and when were community meetings held?
11. How did residents communicate with LAUSD? How did you tell the district you were unhappy with the decision? What did LAUSD do? Who did you talk to at LAUSD?

12. Why do you think that LAUSD listened to you? What strategies did your group use that made LAUSD listen to you? What were the least effective strategies used?

13. Did you have direct contact with any School Board members? What role did they play in the conflict? How helpful were they to the community?

14. Did you have direct contact with City Council members? What role did they play in the conflict? How helpful were they to the community?

15. Did any elections, for School Board or City Council happen during the time your group was petitioning the school district?

16. Did your group create flyers or publications to get people’s attention and explain the problem? What did these flyers say? What was the goal of these flyers? Do you have any copies?

17. Did your group write letters to the editors of major or local newspapers? Did your group talk with reporters?

18. Has this neighborhood worked together like this before? Have you been involved before? How long have people lived in this neighborhood? How long have you lived in the neighborhood?

19. Is there anyone you would recommend that I talk to from the community or LAUSD that could tell me more about this issue?

For LAUSD staff member or elected official

20. How does/did the school district reach decisions about where to site new schools? Can you walk me through the process?
21. How did the school district tell the community about the possibility of a new school? Was the school district already doing outreach to this community? What was the community’s reaction?

22. Did the district hold community meetings to inform the residents? When and where were community meetings held? Which department was responsible for this outreach?

23. In the case of the new high school in South Los Angeles, to what extent did LAUSD involve community members in the search for possible sites?

24. Which sites were considered before the final site at the old Santee Dairy was chosen? What criteria were used to evaluate the sites? How was a preferred site chosen?

25. How was the school district’s decision influenced by community response to proposed sites?

26. What experience, if any, have you had with this neighborhood in the past?

27. What was the relationship of the school district with the larger community at this time? How do you think the controversy over the Belmont School siting and toxic land affect LAUSD’s relationship with the larger community?

28. How has LAUSD’s community outreach policy and process changed since the decision to site this high school on the old Santee Dairy site?

29. What is the status of the high school construction today?

30. Is there anyone that work(ed) for LAUSD or the School Board or that worked with the community that you would recommend that I talk to?
Is it important how transcriptions are formatted? Why?

Yeah, each transcription has to follow the same format in order for the coding software to accept the information.

How does it work?

Pages have to be divided into columns – only the first one is used. The pages are set up so the left and right margins are each one inch. All the lines are numbered down the left side. At the top put the Subject – that’s the person interviewed, followed by the name of the interviewer, followed by the transcriber. Then skip a line and put the date of the interview, the location of the interview and the date the transcription was completed.

What about formatting the text?

Oh, right. Um... well....Put the interviewer’s questions and comments in bold. Put the responses in regular text. All of it should be in Times New Roman, 12 point font. Very exciting (laughs).
Transcriptions & Field Notes

I will give you audio copies of the interviews. You will transcribe them into written text. Everything in the tape must be accounted for in the text, including laughter, hesitation, and stuttering. I will not listen to the interviews again and will only use the text versions for analysis. Furthermore, while transcribing, please keep separate field notes about what you hear in the interview – things you expected, things that surprised you. Also note stylistic characteristics of the speaker’s tone that do not come across in the written text. Use this form to make those notes and give them to me with each completed transcription. Lastly, transcribe the interviews into the format found on the sample transcription.

Interview transcribed: ___________________________ Total hours: _______
1. What did you hear in this interview that you expected to hear? __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

2. What did you hear that surprised you? __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

3. What were the most important things the subject said? __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

4. When did you notice subjects speaking very openly and honestly? What was being discussed? __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

5. When did you notice subjects hesitating or sounding uncomfortable? What was being discussed? __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

6. What else is important for me to know about this interview? __________________________
   __________________________
Coding Manual

Coding is a technique to pull important pieces of evidence from qualitative interviews. The codes refer to themes that are in the conceptual model. People say things during the interview that fit into codes, which refer to the broader theme. We want to mark these parts so I can use these quotes as evidence in the written thesis. The coding will allow me to analyze the interviews without rereading the entire transcripts. They will help me pull out relevant quotes to support the story we are telling.

I started with simple codes based on my interview questions and conceptual model. The codes have gotten more complex as I have talked to people and will get more complex with each interview we code. You will help pick up on new or more specific codes that should be added to the manual. You should see some things in the interview that seem important, but do not fit into an existing code. Tell me about those phrases and we will create a new code (called an emergent theme) or a more specified version of an existing code (affiliated theme). I will add them to the manual and re-send it to you. After coding very rich interviews or after more codes have been added, we may have to go back to the first ones and recode them to a higher level of detail.

Coding as a team requires a high level of communication and understanding. We need to make sure that all three of us understand the codes in the same way. This is called inter-rater agreement. If you do not understand what the codes are referring to, please ask. If you see things in the interviews that you think should be noted, please tell me. If any of this is confusing at any point, please stop me.

Coding an interview should take between 3 and 5 hours, depending on the length and the richness of it. As you code more interviews, you will probably get faster.

Substance of the Codes

Original Codes

The eleven original codes consist of two descriptive codes and nine original major codes. The two descriptive codes identify basic characteristics of the subject and the neighborhood. The nine original major codes are based on the elements of the conceptual model (See Figure 3, p. 44). In this section I will describe the two descriptive codes and then describe the nine original major code, arranged according to the six themes used in the conceptual model.

1 Background of interviewed person is the first descriptive code and describes the gender and subject’s position in the case studies. Each transcription was coded for the subject’s background before giving them to a research assistant for coding. Codes describe the subject as:
Resident (renter, homeowner and/or long time resident),
LAUSD staff (from Community Outreach, Real Estate, Board member, or Board member staffer),
Parent, and/or
Community organization staff (Community organizer or Executive Director).

2 Description of neighborhood around the Santee Dairy site was the second descriptive major code, which was used to understand the basic conditions and characteristics of the neighborhood. The neighborhood in which the case takes place is bound by Washington Boulevard, Central Avenue, Jefferson Boulevard and Main Street (see Figure 4, p. 60). These boundaries are based on information provided by residents during interviews. This category coded phrases that described the physical descriptions of the neighborhood, the demographic descriptions of residents in the neighborhood and identification of neighborhood boundaries and name.

- Physical descriptions coded included information about the housing (quality of, age of, overcrowding of and need for more), the schools (overcrowding of, location of existing schools and need for new schools), and land available for development in this neighborhood.
- Demographic descriptions coded included references to residents’ ethnicity, housing tenure, income level, age, length of time in the neighborhood, education level, immigration status and presence of children.

3 Social capital in the neighborhood refers to the relationships among residents and their willingness to trust each other. Social capital is important for people to see that they share common issues with the neighbors and to be willing to work together towards a common goal. When people share common bonds or have worked together on issues before, there is generally a higher level of social capital in the neighborhood. Social capital in the neighborhood was indicated by codes that included existing social relationships, presence of an internal leader, history of activism in the neighborhood, existing grassroots organization, desire to improve community and residents having roots in the neighborhood. Only phrases referring to social capital among people living in the particular neighborhood described in Code 2 were counted as an indicator of this code. The presence of social capital was indicated by the following information:

- Existing social relationships are indicated by phrases such as “Yeah most everyone knows each other on this street, everyone’s been here so long,” from a resident.
- Presence of an internal leader were indicated by phrases such as “She would write the letters to the school district and we would sign them; she was an important leader,” from a resident or “A couple women from the neighborhood were especially diligent in contacting us every week,” from a school board staff member.
- History of activism in the neighborhood is indicated by phrases such as “That neighborhood has always been very active in school issues,” from a school district
staff member or “We were asking for a stoplight at that intersection for ten years,” from a resident.

4 Political relationships and situations is the major code indicating openings in the political opportunity structure, a theme in the conceptual framework. Openings within the political structure occur when unstable or new relationships, divided elites and/or external allies are present. These openings are created by relationships and situations, which may make it easier for grassroots groups to have an influence on government bodies. This code refers to the existing relationships between elected officials, government agency and community groups that create openings in the political structure. The political situation relevant to this case included relationships among LAUSD elected board members, LAUSD facilities staff, City of Los Angeles elected leaders, this neighborhood’s residents, and community organizations between prior to LAUSD site selection in this neighborhood in 1999. Residents’ relationships with these elected officials and with other community groups, LAUSD internal struggles, LAUSD’s need for a good public image and community support all define the political structure in which the neighborhood group acted. The following types of phrases indicated political relationships and situations relevant to this case:

• LAUSD relationships are divided into sub-codes that indicate their relationships with other elected officials, and the owner of the site. These sub-codes indicate the presence of divided elites or unstable partnerships that create openings in the political opportunity structure. Phrases include “I understand that the district has to get schools built, but they have to respect existing neighborhoods too,” from an elected city official or “Sometimes the School Board members would get involved with issues from another district, stepping on the toes of that Board member,” from a School Board member.

• Neighborhood relationships other community organizations and non-LAUSD elected officials indicate the presence of external allies, which can create openings in the political opportunity structure. Phrases indicating these alliances include “We helped the neighborhood group distribute surveys to the community because we have access to a lot of people,” from a community organization staff member or “She’s the supervisor now with the second district, and she was very supportive of our community” from a resident.

• LAUSD’s need for community support and past LAUSD problems are sub-codes that indicate the larger political situation at the time. These sub-codes include phrases like “The District is building a lot of schools; we don’t want community folks upset – we want to work with them,” from a school district staff member. “There was a lot of distrust among the community, so I would try to get them to at least come to the meetings and talk about what they wanted and listen to what the district was working on,” from an LAUSD Community Outreach staff member.

Four areas of affiliated codes emerged. First, the code of past LAUSD problems was expanded to code one site-specific issue, the development of Belmont High School, which brought so much negative attention at this time that it overshadowed everything
else. “To be honest, I was working so much on keeping Belmont under control, I don’t remember any other sites,” from a school board staff member. Second, relationships between specific Los Angeles elites and LAUSD Board members as well as between these elites and the owner of the Santee Dairy Site owner were coded. Phrases coded were “After the BB Bond passed, other Los Angeles elites like Eli Broad and Riordan wanted to have a hand in on how the money was spent,” from a School Board member. Third, media influence on the school district image was also coded in phrases like “There was definitely a lot of negative press on the district then, so I am sure that affected the way people saw us,” from an LAUSD Real Estate department staff member. Lastly, relationships between LAUSD School Board members and LA City Planning staff were coded. Phrases coded included “LAUSD had to request permission from City Planning, but if they didn’t get it, they just went ahead,” from an LAUSD facilities staff member.

5 A viable alternative site for a school in the neighborhood refers to the existence of a site in the neighborhood where a school could be built that LAUSD had not yet chosen for a school. The availability of the site is indicated by the use of the site and the willingness of the owner to sell. For a site to be viable it must meet district and community standards. District standards include size, cost to demolish, not excessively toxic, and receiving community approval. Community standards include the site not resulting in housing lost and being clean from contamination. To be relevant to this case, information for this code had to refer to sites within the neighborhood described in the Code 2. The presence of a viable alternative site is indicated by the following sub-codes:

- The availability of the site was determined by the current use of the site and the property owner’s willingness to sell, including phrases like “The Dairy had gone bankrupt so the land was available” from a resident.
- The District standards for the site were noted in the size and degree of toxicity of the site. Phrases coded were “That site was over 18 acres, it was perfect for a school,” from a resident or LAUSD staff person.
- Community approval of the site is indicated by residents’ support through phrases such as “The neighborhood survey shows resident support of a school at the Santee Dairy,” from a community organizer or “We gave that site our highest priority – it is so big and doesn’t take any houses” from a resident.

The fourth theme is the neighborhood group’s capacity to organize. For coding purposes, this was divided into two major themes: Mobilization of residents around school issues and Tactics of neighborhood group. These refer to the neighborhood group formed and the issues they work on, as well as the actions and strategies the group uses to get people together, to keep people informed and to get the attention of the school district. To be relevant to this case, information coded in both Mobilization and Tactics had to be related to the development of new schools and undertaken by the grassroots group of residents living within the boundaries outlined in Code 2 and calling themselves Neighbors for an Improved Community.
6 The Mobilization code includes the details of how the grassroots neighborhood group formed and operated and the different school issues that they mobilized around (new site, principal, after school programs, contamination).

- Formation and operation of the group was coded by phrases that described the number of people involved, the manners of communication and meeting logistics. Phrases included “We used the phone tree and each one of us would call a few people,” or “Well, at that time, there was about twelve of us meeting regularly,” from a resident.

- Status of the group and volunteerism among the group was described by phrases like, “we’re not a non-profit so no one gets paid; everyone helps however they can,” from a resident.

- Mobilization issues described the specific issues the group worked on, including finding new sites, getting after school programs, or helping to select a principal. Phrases coded included “we wanted to find other sites that were appropriate for a school,” from a resident.

One affiliated theme that was identified in regards to issues that residents mobilized around was residents working to save housing. Although the same residents took on these activities, the issues were slightly different. Opposing schools that took housing was the first issue that brought out many residents. Suggesting other sites and advocating for a role in decisions regarding a new school was a later step in the mobilization. An example of phrases coded was “that site threatened housing and housing is very precious to us; we need to maintain what we have and we need more. So we had to oppose that,” from a resident.

7 The Tactics code describes how the neighborhood group got the attention of school board and district staff and how they influenced their decisions. These include outreach (flyers, surveys), letter writing, going to school board meetings, meetings with individual school board members, networking with other organizations and finding potential sites.

- Tactics for resident-to-resident outreach included passing out flyers, surveying other residents and word of mouth, and were described by phrases like “One of the neighbors handwrote flyers and passed them out,” from a resident.

- Presence at and speaking at school board meetings was described by phrases like “when they discussed that site, we went to the meeting to speak so they knew we didn’t want the school there,” from a resident.

- Contacting and meeting with school board members was described by phrases like “I remember meeting with a few ladies about that site, they came here to my office,” from a school board member.

- Networking with other organizations and using their resources included help in printing, disbursing surveys, bringing residents to school board meetings, getting access to school board members and having other organizations testify at
meetings. Phrases coded included, “Since we don’t have money or a lot of people, they made the copies for us and helped us spread the word,” from a resident.

- Finding potential school sites to offer was a specific tactic the residents used that involved walking the neighborhood, identifying and photographing appropriate sites for schools and bringing them to school board meetings. Phrases included in this were “yes they came to me with suggestions of where they wanted schools in their neighborhood,” from an LAUSD Community Outreach staff member.

Two affiliated themes were identified under Tactics. These are related to Networking with other organizations: working with a lawyer and an organizer from other organizations on a volunteer basis. Utilizing professional assistance as well as the legitimacy offered by the names of these organizations was an important tactic, coded in phrases like “An organizer came and worked with us for about two years, helping us to get formed and facilitating meetings,” from a resident.

School district receptiveness to community input is the fifth original theme. When a school district is highly receptive, organized groups will be more likely to influence final site selection. This theme was also divided into two codes: Non-Receptiveness of LAUSD towards this neighborhood and Receptiveness of LAUSD towards this neighborhood. Both codes refers to the way LAUSD treats the residents, the amount of communication between residents and LAUSD Board and staff, the attitudes and perceptions of the District and the residents about how this communication is going. There has been an evolution of the District from shutting the community out to beginning to engage the community, in part because of the demands of neighborhood groups like this neighborhood opened the decision making process. Information coded into these categories must refer specifically to LAUSD treatment of residents and organizers living and working in the neighborhood described in Code 2. Events must take place during this neighborhood’s efforts to influence site selection, between 1999 and 2001. In general non-receptive behavior from the district happened chronologically before receptive behavior began; however, some overlap between the two existed.

8 The Non-Receptiveness code refers to a lack of communication between LAUSD and residents, resident perception of LAUSD attitude and site selection process, LAUSD’s lack of a Community Outreach Division, and lack of place for residents on Board agenda.
- Lack of communication between LAUSD and residents was coded with phrases like “They didn’t really tell the residents anything, so it was hard to know what was going on,” from a community organizer.
- Resident perception of LAUSD attitude and site selection process was coded with phrases like “It seemed as though they had their own process and it really wasn’t any of our business,” from a resident.
• LAUSD’s lack of Community Outreach department was coded with phrases like “At that time they wasn’t a Community Outreach department. We dealt with the Real Estate department,” from a resident.
• Lack of place for residents on the School Board agenda was coded with phrases like “We were never on the agenda, we had to wait all night to speak at the end,” from a resident.

Two affiliated codes were identified during coding. First, LAUSD pseudo-community outreach refers to apparent attempts by LAUSD staff to do community outreach, that according to residents were not successful or meaningful methods of participation. Specific examples of this are poorly run LAUSD meetings in the neighborhood and ignoring residents’ suggestions, for example, “They came to us after they had already made up their minds, they asked for our suggestions, but did not really do anything with them,” from a resident.

9 The Receptiveness code includes increased communication from LAUSD to residents, LAUSD representatives meeting with residents, and stakeholders that influenced LAUSD receptiveness with this neighborhood.
• Increased communication from LAUSD to residents (flyers, emails, letters, phone calls etc), for example, “Finally they started calling me back and telling me what was going on,” from a resident.
• LAUSD representatives meeting with residents, included all kinds of staff. Examples of phrases coded were “We were happy to go out and talk with the residents to see what they wanted,” from a school district staff member or “Staff members from the Real Estate Department and the Community Outreach Department came to our meetings to talk about the sites,” from a resident.
• Stakeholders that influenced LAUSD receptiveness with this neighborhood included residents, school board members, and other communities, for example, “Once we met with the school board member, she instructed her staff member to meet with us,” from a resident.

The last original theme is the school district’s site selection, which was also divided into two major codes: Perception of residents’ influence on LAUSD’s site selection and Actual changes made in LAUSD site. This theme was divided into these two subcodes because in the interviews with both residents and LAUSD staff, it became apparent that people on different sides had different perceptions. Furthermore, actual changes made in the site LAUSD selected could be stated as fact and corroborated by other documents.

10 Perception of residents’ influence refers to different people’s perception of the influence that the grassroots group of residents had on LAUSD site selection with regards to the new school built at the old Santee Dairy Site. Information coded in this category had to refer to the specific group of residents described in the Mobilization and Tactics section.
• Perception of residents about their own influence included influence on the actual site chosen, on LAUSD’s site selection process, and on the community role in the process, for example, “I do think we had some small influence in how their process is changing,” from a resident.

• Perception of LAUSD staff, board members and people outside the neighborhood about the residents’ influence on site selection included phrases like, “Did they influence where the school was built? I’m not sure I can say that, but they supported that site,” from a Real Estate staff member.

11 Actual changes made in LAUSD site referred to information that showed LAUSD had changed their site selection from one site to another.

• Changes in site selected for new schools and the design is a straightforward code that includes phrases like, “They had been looking at this site, but now the school is built five blocks south,” from a resident.

Emergent Themes

12 Original sites LAUSD looked at for a school in this neighborhood was the first emergent theme. This major concept was omitted from the original conceptual framework. It is important though because it was the first issue that brought LAUSD into this neighborhood and was the first reason that these residents became interested in what LAUSD was doing at this time. This code includes sub-codes about the location and use of the original sites, residents’ awareness and perception of these sites, LAUSD explanation of the original sites, and why Santee Dairy site was not used as a school before this. To be relevant to this code, original sites had to be under suggestion at the beginning of this case, between 1997 and 1999, in the neighborhood identified in Code 2.

• Location and use of the original site described where LAUSD first looked to put a school and what was there, “That site was one suggested, possibly because of the railroad right of way on it,” from a Real Estate staff member.

• Residents’ awareness and perception of these sites describes what they believed and heard about the sites although they may not have know the exact location, including phrases like “we heard they were looking in this neighborhood and that there was a risk to lose housing; I don’t know which ones,” from a resident.

• LAUSD explanation of original sites included why these sites were looked at first, why they were dismissed and a lack of knowledge of original sites, for example “I am not sure where they were looking before that,” from a school board staff member, or “There were some sites suggested in that neighborhood for an elementary school,” from a Real Estate department staff member.

• Reasons LAUSD did not use the Santee Dairy site for a school previously included descriptions of the efforts by the city and federal government to save the still operating dairy, for example “it was actually a project of the Community Development bank and they were trying to keep it open for jobs,” from a school board staff member.
13 Changes in LAUSD as an institution in terms of governance and community outreach was the second emergent code. Through questions about the political opportunity structure and changes in LAUSD’s outreach process, I found LAUSD was undergoing many large institutional changes before and during this case. These changes were indicated by references to changes in the School Board, the creation of a Bond Oversight Committee, sweeping staff changes, including ousting the superintendent and the creation of a New Facilities Division that included Community Outreach Department. To be coded under this category, these events had to happen within the institution of LAUSD between 1990 and 2001.

- Changes in the School Board included both re-districting and the election of a new majority supporting Richard Riordan and Eli Broad, phrases included “when the ‘Riordan Four’ joined the Board, things began to change,” from a School Board member.
- Creation of the Bond Oversight Committee, pursuant to Proposition BB passed in 1997, indicated that the district was willing to give the community some control, phrases included “Promising a Bond Oversight Committee was important to getting Prop BB passed,” from a community organizer.
- Staff changes included ousting the superintendent and creating a whole new Facilities Division that included Community Outreach, for example “Almost everyone here now was brought in new then, they were cleaning house,” from a community outreach staff member.

The last emergent code was 14 Lack of LAUSD Institutional Memory. Due to perhaps the high turnover of employees and intense political pressure during the past few years, gaps exist in LAUSD’s institutional memory. Current employees do not know of past events or processes; past employees are difficult to track down. Large controversies overshadowed seemingly less controversial site selection processes. To be coded, these references had to come from LAUSD staff and describe not knowing of past events.

- Lack of memory/knowledge of previous sites, past employees and past site selection processes coded phrases that included “I don’t remember where they were looking for a site, all those files were gone when we came in,” from a Real Estate Department staff member.

LAUSD perception of the neighborhood group described either positive, negative or a lack of opinion on the group’s influence on site selection, including phrases like “I remember some ladies coming to a school board meeting, but I don’t remember anything big coming from that,” from a School board member staff member.

Some phrases could belong to more than one code. For example a statement about picking a potential site and surveying people on their opinion of that site would refer to both Available viable site (community approval) and Tactics (survey). Some codes
refer to related events but have a slight difference. For example, a statement about taking potential sites to the board is more of a tactic than a statement about there being an available site. It is important to understand these nuances.

**The Coding Process:**

1. Once the interview is transcribed, Kate checks to make sure it is detailed enough. I will give you a printed out copy of the transcription.

2. Note the background codes I have already marked. Read through the transcription once without marking the codes.

3. Then, you read the transcriptions closely, looking for phrases referring to any of the themes. You can either read the whole interview looking for one code, and then repeat for each code, or you can take one page and look for all the codes in it.

4. When you find a code, note which line numbers (ie: 34-38) refer to which themes/codes (1.1, 2.1) in the right column. When identifying relevant lines, make sure to include enough before and after a phrase to provide enough context to understand the statement. Think: if Kate only reads this much, will she understand why this person said this?

5. When you mark something that relates to the six important themes, you should mark that page with a post-it note that correlates to that theme’s color. Some codes share a color because they refer to the same theme. Write a word or two on the post-it to describe which code or section of the code appears on that page. Many pages will have multiple phrases of the same code, but you do not have to put a post-it for each phrase. Please only put one color of each post-it per page. Also, the post-its only need to stick out a few centimeters from the edge of the page.

   a. 3 Social capital in the neighborhood around Santee Dairy Site (pink),
   b. 4 Political relationships and situation prior to and at the beginning of this case (green),
   c. 5 Available viable site for school in the neighborhood, specific to Santee Dairy (orange “A”)
   d. 6 Mobilization of residents in Santee Dairy neighborhood around school issues (yellow “M”)
   e. 7 Tactics of the neighborhood group (yellow “T”)
   f. 8 Non-Receptiveness of LAUSD towards this neighborhood (red “NR”)
   g. 9 Increasing receptiveness of LAUSD towards this neighborhood (red “R”)

175
h. 10 Perception of residents’ influence on site selection, specific to Santee Dairy (light yellow “P”)
i. 11 Actual changes made in LAUSD site selected for school, specific to Santee Dairy (light yellow “A”)
j. 12 Original sites LAUSD looked at for a high school (orange “O”)
k. 13 Changes in LAUSD as an institution in terms of governance and community outreach (light yellow “I”)
l. 14 LAUSD perception of Neighbors for an Improved Community (light yellow “L”)

6. If you come across something that seems important but doesn’t fit into any of the larger themes (an emergent code), mark that and tell me so we can add a new code. You can write the new code into the manual by hand until I provide you with a new version.

7. If you come across something that seems important and is a more specific description of or extension of an existing theme (an affiliated code), mark that and tell me so we can add a more specific code. You can write the new code into the manual by hand until I provide you with a new version.

8. If you think something seems important, but don’t know how to mark it, please note the lines and put a fat yellow post-it on it with a question mark. Write a phrase or two on the page about why something seems important.

9. Not every section or line of the interview should be coded. Only pull out the phrases that fall under these themes or seem like important ideas that are not described in the themes.

10. Coding an interview should only take between 3-5 hours.
1 Background of Interviewed Person
   1.1 Gender
      1.1.1 Female
      1.1.2 Male
   1.2 Resident
      1.2.1 Renter
      1.2.2 Homeowner
      1.2.3 Long time
   1.3 LAUSD staff
      1.3.1 Community Outreach
      1.3.2 Real Estate
      1.3.3 Board member
      1.3.4 Board member staffer
   1.4 Parent
   1.5 Community Organization staff
      1.5.1 Community Organizer
      1.5.2 Executive Director

2 Description of neighborhood around Santee Dairy Site
   2.1 Physical characteristics
      2.1.1 Housing
         2.1.1.1 Quality of housing
         2.1.1.2 Age of housing
         2.1.1.3 Overcrowding
         2.1.1.4 Need more housing
      2.1.2 Schools
         2.1.1.1 Overcrowding of schools
         2.1.1.2 Location of existing schools
         2.1.1.3 Need for new schools
      2.1.3 Land available
   2.2 Demographic descriptions of residents in neighborhood
      2.2.3 Ethnicity of residents
      2.2.4 Housing tenure (if they are renter or owner)
         2.2.4.1 Increased amount of renters
      2.2.5 Income level
      2.2.6 Age of residents
      2.2.7 Length of time in neighborhood
         2.2.7.1 Residents moving out and in
      2.2.8 Education Level
      2.2.9 Immigrants
      2.2.10 Presence of children, parents
   2.3 Neighborhood boundaries
2.4 Naming the neighborhood

3 Social capital in neighborhood around Santee Dairy Site

3.1 Existing relationships among residents
3.2 Trust among residents
3.3 Resident involvement in common activities
3.4 Presence of internal leader among residents
   3.4.1 Importance of leader to move issues forward
   3.4.2 Resident trust of internal leader’s judgment
   3.4.3 Leader’s desire to represent the neighborhood
   3.4.4 Leader’s personal vision
3.5 Existing grassroots organization
   3.5.1 block clubs
3.6 History of activism in neighborhood
   3.6.1 Protest over siting of new factory
   3.6.2 Protest over new MTA line
3.7 Desire among residents to improve neighborhood
3.8 Residents having roots in the neighborhood
3.9 Resident involvement in common activities

4 Political relationships and situation prior to and at the beginning of this case

4.1 Internal relationships of LAUSD
   4.1.1 Relationships between school board and bureaucracy
   4.1.2 Relationships between community outreach and real estate divisions
4.2 Relationships between LAUSD and other elected officials (non-school officials)
   4.2.1 Influence other elected officials had on site selection of other sites
4.3 Relationships between LAUSD and property owner of Santee Dairy site
4.4 Past LAUSD problems and negative image
   4.4.1 Mismanagement of Prop BB funds
   4.4.2 Drop in student performance
   4.4.3 Threat of State taking over LAUSD management
   4.4.4 Proposals to divide the district into separate smaller districts
   4.4.5 LAUSD’s poor treatment of the community
   4.4.6 Community’s negative feelings toward LAUSD
   4.4.7 Bussing students to other schools
   4.4.8 Belmont school development scandal
4.5 LAUSD need for community support
   4.5.1 Impending ballot measures for money for new schools
   4.5.2 Impending school sites that need neighborhood support
4.6 Relationships between Santee Dairy neighborhood and LAUSD
   4.6.1 with School Board members and staff
   4.6.2 with superintendent of this sub-district
   4.6.3 with LAUSD Facilities Division staff
4.7 Internal relationships of neighborhood
4.8 Relationships between neighborhood and other elected officials (non-school officials)
4.9 Past success of neighborhood groups with government bodies and decisions
4.10 Relationships between neighborhood and Community Organizations
   4.10.1 with Esperanza Community Housing
   4.10.2 with All Peoples Christian Center
   4.10.3 with SAJE
4.11 Relationships between LAUSD and other community organizations (not NIC)
4.12 Role of Riordan and other rich white people
   4.12.1 Riordan and Broad interest in LAUSD after BB Bond
   4.12.2 Riordan backing of School board members
   4.12.3 Riordan relationship with Santee Dairy site owner
4.13 Media influence on LAUSD’s image
4.14 Relationship between LAUSD School board and LA City Planning Department

5 Available viable site for a school in the neighborhood
5.1 Use of site prior to LAUSD buying it (dairy)
   5.1.1 Bankruptcy of Dairy
5.2 Size of site
5.3 Cost of demolition of Dairy
5.4 Contamination of site
   5.4.1 Official status
   5.4.2 Neighborhood concern
5.5 Property owner of site
   5.5.1 Willingness of property owner to sell
   5.5.2 Ability of property owner to be developer
5.6 Community approval of site
   5.6.1 Site does not take homes
5.7 Other sites available for schools
   5.7.1 Middle school site across from the Mercado
5.8 LAUSD preliminary approval of Santee Diary as potential site

6 Mobilization of residents in this neighborhood around school issues
6.1 Formation of grassroots group (Neighbors for an Improved Community)
   6.1.1 Need to name the group of residents working together
6.1.2 Operations of the group
   6.1.2.1 Not a non-profit
   6.1.2.2 Emails sent among group members
   6.1.2.3 Calling group members
   6.1.2.4 Using personal funds for supplies
   6.1.2.5 People involved are volunteers
6.1.3 Residents’ perception of NIC
6.1.4 LAUSD perception of NIC
6.1.5 Other organization’s perception of NIC (non-NIC, non-LAUSD perspective)
6.2 Number of people involved with NIC meetings or activities
6.3 Location of meetings
6.4 Frequency of meetings
6.5 Residents working on finding new school sites
6.6 Residents working on getting after school programs
6.7 Residents working on making sure the site is clean
6.8 Residents working on helping to select the principal
6.9 Residents working to save housing
   6.9.1 Attempts to mobilize residents in other neighborhood

7 Tactics of neighborhood group
7.1 Resident to resident outreach to get more people involved
   7.1.1 Passing out flyers
   7.1.2 Surveying other residents
   7.1.3 Word of mouth
7.2 Neighborhood group’s presence at school board meetings
   7.2.1 Giving all school board members survey results of school board meeting
   7.2.2 Using a consistent message to the board of what the group wants
7.3 Contacting school board members
   7.3.1 Writing letters to school board members
   7.3.2 Calling school board members
7.4 Meetings with individual school board members
   7.4.1 Getting access to individual school board members
   7.4.2 Giving individual school board member survey results
7.5 Use of news media
   7.5.1 Letters to the editor
   7.5.2 TV News coverage
7.6 Networking with other organizations and using their resources
   7.6.1 Other organizations help in printing surveys
   7.6.2 Other organizations help in disbursing surveys
   7.6.3 Other organizations help in education educating residents
   7.6.4 Other organizations help in bringing residents to school board meetings
   7.6.5 Getting access to school board members through other groups
   7.6.6 Other organizations testifying at school board meetings
   7.6.7 Working with a lawyer on a volunteer basis
   7.6.8 Working with an organizer on a volunteer basis
7.7 Finding potential school sites to offer
   7.7.1 Residents walking the neighborhood looking for new sites
   7.7.2 Presenting sites at school board meetings
   7.7.3 Presenting sites to individual schools board members
   7.7.4 Taking photographs of potential sites
7.8 NIC meeting with LAUSD staff (ie community outreach and/or real estate)

8 Non-Receptiveness of LAUSD towards this neighborhood
8.1 Lack of communication between LAUSD and neighborhood
8.2 Resident’s perception of LAUSD’s attitude toward community
8.3 LAUSD’s pseudo-community outreach
  8.3.1 Poorly run meetings
  8.3.2 Ignoring residents’ suggestions
8.4 LAUSD not paying attention to residents
  8.4.1 LAUSD not returning residents’ phone calls
8.5 Lack of Community Outreach Division in LAUSD
8.6 LAUSD perception of their communication with residents
8.7 Resident perception of LAUSD site selection and outreach process
  8.7.1 LAUSD process is closed off and internal
8.8 No place on School Board agenda for resident’s comments

9 Receptiveness of LAUSD towards this neighborhood
9.1 Increased communication from LAUSD to residents
  9.1.1 Increased LAUSD community outreach meetings with residents
  9.1.2 Increased flyers given to residents
  9.1.3 Increased emails to residents
  9.1.4 Increased phone calls to residents
9.2 LAUSD going to the meetings held by the neighborhood group (NIC)
  9.4.1 Board members going to neighborhood meetings
  9.4.2 Board member staff going to neighborhood meetings
  9.4.3 Community outreach organizer going to neighborhood meetings
  9.4.4 Facilities Staff, Real Estate people going to neighborhood meetings
  9.4.5 Superintendent going to neighborhood meetings
9.3 Players that influenced LAUSD’s perceptiveness
  9.3.1 Role of residents in increasing receptivity
  9.3.2 Role of school board members in increasing receptivity
  9.3.3 Role of other communities in increasing receptivity

10 Perception of residents’ influence on site selection
10.1 Perception of residents about their own influence
  10.1.1 on influencing actual site chosen
  10.1.2 on influencing site selection process
  10.1.3 on influencing community role in the process
10.2 Perception of LAUSD staff about residents’ influence on site selection
10.3 Perception of LAUSD board members about residents’ influence on site selection
10.4 Perception of people outside community and LAUSD about residents’ influence

11 Actual changes made in LAUSD site
11.1 Changes in site selected for new schools
11.2 Changes in design of school

12 Original sites LAUSD looked at for a school
12.1 Location of original sites LAUSD looked at
12.2 Resident awareness of LAUSD looking for sites
  12.2.1 Residents telling other residents LAUSD is looking for sites
12.3 Current use occupying these sites
12.4 LAUSD explanation of original sites
   12.4.1 Why these sites were looked at first
   12.4.2 Why these sites were thrown away
12.5 Resident explanation of original sites
12.6 Resident’s perception of where LAUSD’s potential sites were
   12.6.1 Residents fear of losing their homes
12.7 Why LAUSD did not look at the Dairy as a potential site at first
   12.7.1 Because of environmental hazards in the land
   12.7.2 Because dairy was still in operation
   12.7.3 Because Community Development bank was trying to save dairy

13 Changes in LAUSD as an institution in terms of governance and community outreach
13.1 Old district versus “New District”
   13.1.1 Changed School Board
      13.1.1.1 from at-large to district representatives
      13.1.1.2 Board members supported by Broad and Riordan
      13.1.1.3 Re-districting of school board districts
   13.1.2 Change in attitude and vision
13.2 Creation of Bond Oversight Committee
13.3 Creation of Community Outreach Division
   13.3.1 Contracting community outreach workers before community outreach division formed

14 Lack of LAUSD Institutional Memory
14.1 Lack of memory/knowledge of previous sites looked at
14.2 Lack of memory/knowledge of past employees
14.3 Lack of memory/knowledge of past site selection and community outreach process
14.4 LAUSD lack of perception of NIC’s influence
   14.4.1 Lack of memory of NIC
   14.4.2 Perception that NIC did not influence site selection
   14.4.3 Perception that NIC was only interested in saving their homes, not in building schools
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>LAUSD created by merging city’s two school districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>LAUSD built its last traditional, full service high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Discussion in district and among City Council members about dividing LAUSD. In Feb David Roberti, D-LA, Senate leader proposed legislation to create a 25-member commission to draw new boundaries. District has a $400 million budget deficit. (2/26/93 LA Times)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March LAUSD board votes against Roberti’s proposal. Instead supports reform from LEARN (LA Educational Alliance for Restructuring Now), 600-member group of civic leaders, parents, teachers, etc that worked on proposal for 2 years, founded by Richard Riordan. Decentralizes decision power about curriculum, standards to individual schools, involves parents and teachers more. (3/17/93 Christian Science Monitor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November LAUSD Supt. Sid Thompson announces plan to restructure into 16-32 school clusters, one or two high schools each plus their feeder middle schools and elementary schools. This is supposed to complement the LEARN reform. Hold community meetings to discuss how clusters should be, who should be cluster leaders (11/12/93 LA Times)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>August Gov. Pete Wilson signs legislation that lowers the number of petitions needed to break up school districts. Break up has been in discussion for 20 years and is based out of the San Fernando Valley. (8/11/95 Christian Science Monitor) of Riordan heads up effort to bring all “break up” organizations together to create master plan (8/26/95 San Francisco Chronicle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Prop B, a bond for modernization of and new school facilities in LAUSD, failed to be passed by the voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>April Prop BB passed $2.4 billion local bond for the construction of new schools, modernization of existing facilities, class size reduction, education technology, various alarm systems and other safety measures. Prop BB mandates the creation of Bond Oversight Committee. Steve Soboroff, former senior aide to Riordan and major developer in Los Angeles is on the committee; Beth Louargand is head of LAUSD facilities (4/10/97 Daily News)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion, especially from the Valley about dividing the district into smaller subdistricts (these continue on and off for the next 5 years)

June
The Belmont Learning Center controversy returns to LAUSD board. The only question is how to finance the estimated $87-million construction costs for a downtown area high school with space for stores. But it is the larger issue that should be addressed: Why won't the L.A. Unified School District start over and use the standard competitive bidding process to come up with a design for a high school only?

1998 May
LAUSD unveiled a $1.8-billion construction plan to end busing and allow all students to attend school in their own neighborhoods within eight years. The building plan calls for 51 new schools, on year-round schedules, spread across the central and eastern portions of the district, which are expected to have the greatest growth over the next decade.

July
Ruben Zacarias takes over as superintendent

August
Santee Dairy is in serious financial trouble; was receiving money from Community Development Bank since 1996; Dairy’s owners (Stater Bros & Hughes Market) had plans to build a new facility in Industry and abandon this one

Throughout 1998 School Board meetings, the board was approving multiple schools at each meeting to go to year round calendars.
Also in 1998, Board was approving multiple Negative Declarations at each meeting.
For example see September 8, 1998

October
LAUSD Real Estate staff begins looking for sites for a primary center to relieve 28th Street and Trinity Elementary schools.

November
Proposition 1A passed: will provide $6.7 billion for K-12 school construction needs, these are matching State funds for District construction projects funded by Proposition BB, and will increase the District's overall participation in the State School Construction Program, which they have not been active in for years.
1999

May

LAUSD Real Estate completes looking at sites for the primary center and prepares to make a recommendation to the Board.

June

LAUSD Real Estate staff recommend a site for further feasibility studies for a primary center to relieve 28th Street and Trinity Elementary schools. The recommended site is between 32nd and 31st Streets at Maple Avenue. Several residents from the neighborhood speak at Board meeting in opposition to the site.

July

Residents opposed to the site for the primary school begin looking for other appropriate sites for a school in their neighborhood.

August

Santee Dairy/Copeland Beverages, despite efforts of LA Community Development Bank, goes bankrupt.

October

Zacarias proposed splitting district into subdistricts. LAUSD names Howard Miler to run daily operations of the district. LAUSD Board votes to buy out contract of Superintendent Ruben Zacarias. At a School Board meeting, in an apparent last minute decision, Real Estate staff dropped the recommended site between 32nd and 31st Streets at Maple Avenue.

November

A new site, at Maple and 36th Place is approved for further studies for a primary center to relieve 28th Street and Trinity Elementary schools. Ramon Cortines is named interim Superintendent.

December

Break up activists get together to discuss breaking up the district, Valley VOTE Richard Close spearheading the LAUSD break up movement (12/4/99) Belmont is standing unfinished, Temple Beaudry Developers are removed; large LA Times story on financing and contributors to Prop BB campaign (12/5/99) LAUSD Chief Operating Officer Howard Miller brings in Army Corps to manage massive school construction and renovation program

Residents suggest the former Santee Dairy property for a school. They bring pictures of the site to School Board meetings.

2000

January

Jan 16, Ramon Cortines takes over as temporary superintendent
Kathi Littmann is working for district – director of school building planning – new facilities department is being put together. New real estate consultants hired by LAUSD. LA Times article about risk of losing affordable housing in order to build the schools

April
Board to vote on proposal to divide district into 11 sub-districts – proposal brought to them by Cortines
Positive vote on subdistricting proposal gets national attention (4/12/00 NY Times, Washington Post, Christian Science Monitor)

June
Roy Romer named as new Superintendent
11 regional sub-superintendents hired to oversee instruction in schools
Community Outreach division formed, Lorena Padilla heads it.

June 30
Deadline for LAUSD to submit sites and designs to State to get $1.5 billion from Prop 1A

July
Supt Roy Romer takes over LAUSD. Robert Buxbaum is interim general manager of facilities

August
LA Times article cites that SAJE and Figueroa Corridor are looking at Santee Dairy Site for community serving use.

October-Dec
LAUSD selects preferred site for South Central HS #1

October
LAUSD nearly closed on buying Santee Dairy site

November
Bob Niccum, Director of Real Estate and Facilities management leaves Facilities department

Robert Buxbaum is LAUSD facilities chief; David Abel threatens to leave Board Oversight committee

2001
January
LAUSD has announced needs to build 86 new schools in the next 5 years; Scot Graham is district’s director of real estate (1/16/01 LA Times)
Community outreach department begins doing outreach

April-June
NTP Design for Santee Dairy site (laschools.org)

2002
February
School Board - Approval to Enter into Agreements for the Performance of Environmental Services and Architectural Services at Santee Dairy for South Central Los Angeles High School No. 1 and Jefferson New Continuation High School #1

March
Approval of project and approval of negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration for Santee Dairy site (board notes)
April – June

- DSA Design Approval for Santee Dairy site
- Board Approval of CEQA (EIR) (laschools.org)

May

- Adoption of a Resolution of Necessity and Authorization to Obtain Funds to Obtain Orders for Possession of Land Parcels Required for South Central Los Angeles Area New High School No. 1 and Jefferson New Continuation High School No. 2 (Washington Boulevard Between Los Angeles Street and Maple Avenue) (board notes)

July-Sept

- NTP for construction for Santee site (laschools.org)

Oct-December

- Santee site Property vacated for construction (laschools.org)

November

- Measure K, another voter approved bond for facilities funding, passes in LA

December

- At new Belmont High School property, an earthquake fault discovered under property. Project at this point has cost $175 million, LA Times says.

2003 March

- Belmont: Romer presents options to build smaller high school on 12 acres of the site

June

- Caprice Young and Genethia Hudley-Hayes lose seats on board

October

- The Board agreed to enter into a lease and development agreement for South Central Los Angeles High School No. 1 and Jefferson High School (Santee Dairy Project)

2004 March

- Measure R, a $3.87 billion neighborhood school bond measure, passed will provide needed repairs at schools throughout the area and relieve overcrowding by building more classroom seats at new and existing schools.
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