ENGAGING THE EAST SACRAMENTO COMMUNITY AROUND INFILL DEVELOPMENT:

A STUDY OF TWO HOUSING PROJECTS, MCKINLEY VILLAGE AND SUTTER PARK NEIGHBORHOOD

A Thesis

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Abstract

of

ENGAGING THE EAST SACRAMENTO COMMUNITY AROUND INFILL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:

A STUDY OF TWO HOUSING PROJECTS, MCKINLEY VILLAGE AND SUTTER PARK NEIGHBORHOOD

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In April 2014, the Sacramento City Council approved two infill housing development proposals in East Sacramento: Sutter Park Neighborhood and McKinley Village. Following the council's approval, the Sutter Park project moved to the next development phase. The community overwhelmingly supported this proposal. Litigation and lawsuit delayed McKinley Village construction for another three years. Many opposed this housing development. My research focused on what explains these differences and how it related to public engagement.

Debates and controversies around housing proposals can intensify or weaken during the public participation process. I hypothesized that public engagement played a role in generating community support and opposition. The central research question asked how the public engagement strategy influenced the outcomes of community opposition to and support of two infill housing development projects in East Sacramento, Sacramento.

For McKinley Village and Sutter Park Neighborhood public participation case studies I conducted qualitative semi-structured in-person interviews with people involved in the engagement process: residents, developers and local government representatives, including elected officials and staff. I analyzed the data from the interviews by identifying emerging

themes. I also reviewed the recordings of the Sacramento City Council and Planning and Design Commission hearings as well as project documents including staff reports and public comment letters for additional information such as project features, approval timelines, community concerns and engagement events.

My research found that historical starting points – location, history of opposition, community attitudes and project externalities – were critically important to the success of the public engagement. Yet the public engagement strategy did influence the outcomes of community opposition to and support of infill housing developments. Even recognizing that the two projects started from separate places with respect to historical context, it mattered whether or not developers used a collaborative, bottom-up project planning strategy that focused on dialogue, listening and trust building.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In April 2014, the Sacramento City Council approved two housing development proposals in East Sacramento: Sutter Park Neighborhood (Sutter Park) and McKinley Village. The Sacramento City Council hearing about the Sutter Park proposal lasted 40 minutes. Following 30-minutes of public comment supporting the project proposal, the city council approved it unanimously. The McKinley Village project hearing lasted five hours. More than 40 stakeholders and community residents lined up to voice their support and opposition during the public comment session. The city council approved the proposal by a 6 to 3 vote. Following the council's approval, the Sutter Park project moved to the next phase. Litigation and lawsuit delayed McKinley Village construction for another three years. Why did the East Sacramento community react so differently to the two residential housing projects?

While community opposition against housing and other infill developments is a common phenomenon in California (Hernandez, 2018; Whittemore & BenDor, 2019**)**, this issue requires new attention in light of the housing crisis. In 2017, the California legislature passed a landmark housing package to address the state's housing shortage and affordability by speeding up the development of new housing, providing new funding and incentives, streamlining the development process and introducing new accountability and compliance mechanisms (Office of Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr., 2017). The state mandates that local governments meet housing construction targets and goals. With the inevitable acceleration of housing construction, it is critical for local governments to prioritize strategizing public engagement to prevent potential delays and project cancelations due to community opposition.

The Institute for Local Government (2007) explains that "debates and controversies over housing proposals begin when people in the community have questions, concerns, fears or doubts

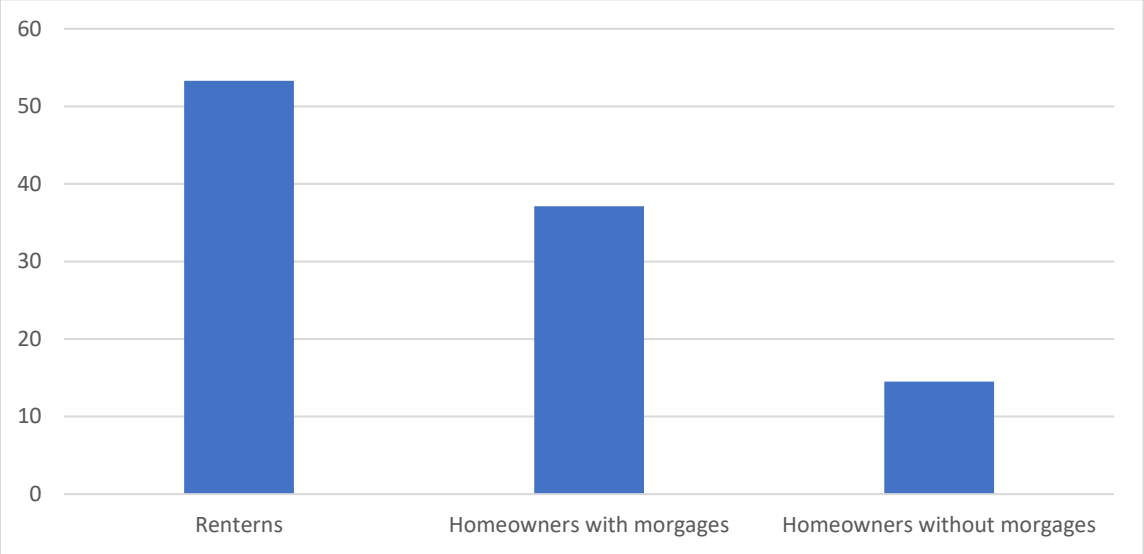
about the proposal" (p.14). Debates and controversies can intensify or weaken during the public participation process. This thesis seeks to understand the following: what is the role of public engagement in generating community support of and opposition to housing development projects? The central research question asks how the public engagement strategy influenced the outcomes of community opposition to and support of two infill housing development projects in East Sacramento.

Why study public engagement in the context of housing development

Housing shortage affects many Californians and requires an urgent acceleration of housing production

The shortage of housing supply impacts people across all socio-economic groups. It is a state crisis and a public policy issue. From 2000-2015 California underproduced housing units by 3.4 million (Baron et al., 2018). The market equilibrium model predicts price increases when demand exceeds the supply. Inflated housing prices affect renters and homeowners by making the cost unaffordable. The general marker of affordability is spending 30% or less of gross household income on housing, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (n.d.). For many Californians housing cost is a burden. The American Community Survey estimates that 53.3% of renters, 37.1% of homeowners with mortgages and 14.5% of homeowners without mortgages spend over 30% on housing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Baron et al. (2018) estimate that housing supply shortage has contributed to 21% increase in prices.

Figure 1: Percentage of California Households Burdened by Housing Cost



Source: American Community Survey, 2019

Housing supply shortage and rapidly rising housing prices disproportionately impact the middle class, working poor and low-income residents. In California low- and moderate-income levels can vary dramatically by county. For example, in Sacramento County low-income levels range between $65,250 - $98,249 for a household of three, while in the Bay Area, they range between $131,750 - $161,549 (Kirkeby, 2021). Often households move to lower priced areas with better and cheaper housing options, thus triggering gentrification by pricing out lower income residents (Zuk et al., 2017). Families displaced by gentrification and high housing cost must migrate somewhere else. With few affordable housing options available, some individuals and families can become homeless (Buhayar, 2019).

The shortage of affordable housing is a crisis for people experiencing homelessness and low-income working families who compete for a small supply of affordable units. Many spend most of their earnings on housing payments. Assistance is not always available. For example, Leopold et al. (2015) estimate that only 24% of eligible applicants receive federal rental

assistance. Housing availability, affordability and supply as well as gentrification and soaring housing prices affect many Californians. To help address the housing crisis, California mandates cities and counties accelerate housing production for all income levels.

Public opposition can stall and delay proposed housing developments

There is a connection between community opposition and housing shortage. While the public tends to recognize the housing needs, many do not favor new construction. A 2017 survey conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California found that even though most Californians support affordable housing, only 55% of homeowners and 73% of renters support new housing developments (Baldassare et al., 2017). Fischel (2005) and Rothwell (2019) link public opposition with increased housing costs.

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) (2018) lists several ways that the public can delay housing construction process. The community can support referendums and ballot measures that overturn local decisions and limit development opportunities. Residents may voice opposition during the public participation process thus leading to significant proposal changes and project interruptions. To respond to vocal community opposition and concerns, local elected officials and staff can ask a developer to commission additional studies and make project modifications that might increase project cost and cause delays (Einstein et al., 2019).

Another widespread tactic to block or delay a housing project is to file a lawsuit to legally challenge the permit review process under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Taylor, 2015). It the past decade, the number of filed CEQA lawsuits has been steadily increasing in California, with 87% of all filed CEQA cases targeting infill development housing projects in 2015 (Hernandez, 2018). In the Sacramento region, public resistance is one significant constraint to the affordable housing production (Levy et al., 2007; Rios & Louie, 2016).

Beyond mitigating opposition – engaging the community to ensure equitable housing solutions

One of the strategies in addressing the housing crisis is to ensure equitable access to housing by reversing housing segregation policies of exclusionary zoning and redlining. Equity is a concept that implies a fair distribution of public goods and services and fair treatment of all residents. In the context of housing development, equity means housing for all - homeless, low-income and moderate-income. Community opposition to infill development has a significant impact on social equity and justice because often projects that aim at providing housing for the vulnerable population are stalled (Nguyen et al., 2012; Scally & Tighe, 2015). Construction of homeless shelters, affordable and market rate housing continues to elicit a myriad of community concerns including strain on neighborhood resources, increasing traffic, a fear of changing neighborhood and decreased property value (Whittemore & BenDor, 2019).

Even though many concerns are valid, community opposition can occur outside the democratic process while representing the voices of only few residents (Scally & Tighe, 2015). Representative community engagement can be one of the ways to address concerns, develop creative alternative solutions and educate residents about equitable infill housing development. However, the legal structure of public participation may limit the intervention.

Expanding public engagement to ensure equitable access to housing supply

Legal requirements of public participation at the local level are ineffective in addressing community questions, concerns, fears or doubts about housing proposals

Several California laws require local and state agencies to provide public commenting opportunities. Under CEQA, the process of community involvement around housing proposals includes public notices, solicitation of, and response to, public comments on environmental impact documents. The Ralph M. Brown Act (Brown Act) of 1953, with a few exceptions, mandates government agencies' hearings to be open to the public (League of California Cities,

2016). Individuals can review posted meeting notices and submit verbal or written comments. Oral comments at the hearings are often subjected to an adopted 2-3 minute time limit. A governing body's discussion and response is limited to agenda items; however, members can "briefly respond" (League of California Cities, 2016, p.35) to comments on items not listed on the agenda. The Brown Act applies to the governing bodies with housing proposal approval power, as well as to the various citywide and county commissions and subsidiary bodies that approve individual aspects of the proposal such as project design.

The Brown Act and CEQA review process guarantees the public the right to attend meetings and participate in the government process. However, the participation format is limited. Some refer to the Brown Act as a "gag rule" (Mathews, 2017, para. 2) because it limits verbal public comments to several minutes thus making it ineffective (Adams, 2004) and difficult to respond to concerns and questions (League of California Cities, 2016). Public officials, community members and scholars recognize the need for an additional participatory structure that allows for better dialogue and public discussion, a better quality of public involvement and more effective community participation opportunities (League of California Cities, 2016; Adams, 2004; King et al., 1998; Nabatchi, 2014).

To address the limitations of the ineffective and unsatisfactory participatory structure of the Brown Act, cities and counties may develop and adopt additional guidelines and policies that expand engagement opportunities and create a space for two-way communication to address community concerns around infill development.

Public participation beyond the minimum legal requirements – nonconventional engagement

Cities and counties may encourage developers to engage with the public. To distinguish this engagement from public hearings and meetings governed by the Brown Act, some describe it as a less traditional or nonconventional engagement (Nabatchi & Leighninger 2015). This less

structured participation can have various engagement goals and take on a variety of forms with different levels of public input desired: from co-designing a housing project, to informing the initial design ideas, to providing feedback on previously drawn plans or educating the community about a housing proposal in the works. Engagement goals ultimately inform the public engagement strategy and its components: public engagement approach, tactics and implementation style. Various engagement activities form a public engagement approach: workshops, surveys, canvassing, one-on-one conversations, educational panels, forums, online engagement tools, social media, etc. Among tactical choices, one can choose how to design individual events and identify ways to receive community feedback and provide dialogue opportunities: small group discussions, presentations followed by Q&A, voting and prioritization activities, etc. Finally, one decides on the overall implementation style: collaborative problem solving, community-led participation, impartial facilitation, trust-building, etc. Ultimately, the engagement process generates various participatory experiences and outcomes of opposition to, support of, or neutrality to a proposed housing development or other projects.

Public engagement definitions

The International Association for Public Participation (IPA2) defines public engagement as a spectrum of community input influencing government decisions. It varies from no influence and one-way communication to acknowledged or incorporated concerns and community-driven solutions (IAP2, 2018).

Table 1: Public Engagement Definitions

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Source: IAP2, 2018

This thesis defines public engagement as a public participation process that consists of a mix of engagement activities that create multiple opportunities for receiving and responding to community feedback. This process primarily occurs in the *Consult, Involve* and *Collaborate* segments of the IAP2 spectrum and expands beyond one-way educational outreach. It is worth noting that education is part of every engagement as it is a prerequisite of informed feedback.

Furthermore, this thesis defines public engagement strategy as a combination of:

- *what* - public engagement approach or mix of various engagement activities; and
- *how* - tactical choices and implementation styles (format and meeting structure, collaboration, feedback opportunity, stakeholder participation, communication, etc.).

This thesis uses public/community engagement/participation/involvement interchangeably and refers to the engagement activities led by the development companies – owners, staff, consultants – for the residential housing projects approved by local agencies.

Sutter Park Neighborhood and McKinley Village: background information

The Sutter Park and McKinley Village projects are located in East Sacramento, an old Sacramento neighborhood with rich history and unique character. The Sutter Park housing development site sits on a 19-acre land parcel previously occupied by the Sutter Memorial Hospital for 78 years. The StoneBridge Properties development firm, a subsidiary of the Teichert Land Co., proposed to build 120 residential units, a city park and a small retail site (City of Sacramento, 2014a). Randy Sater, StoneBridge Properties President and East Sacramento resident, and a public engagement consultant led the public participation process.

Less than two miles away, the McKinley Village investors owned a 49-acre land parcel, the site for the McKinley Village housing development. Co-led by a longtime Sacramento developer, former state treasurer and Sacramento resident Phil Angelides, the Riverview Capital Investments and other companies proposed to build 336 homes, a recreation center with pool, a community garden and three neighborhood parks (City of Sacramento, 2014b). Phil Angelides, Riverview Capital Investments President and his team ran the public participation process.

Figure 2: McKinley Village (on the left) and Sutter Park (on the right) Infill Development Sites

Source: Sacramento City Planning Department, 2018

Sutter Park and McKinley Village housing projects are infill developments - new construction that takes place in the developed and well-established urban area. According to public documents (City of Sacramento Planning and Design Commission Agenda Reports, Planned Unit Development Guidelines and Schematic Plans), proposed single and multi-family housing developments had similar design variations and included a variety of architectural styles to complement the historical architecture of East Sacramento and neighborhood features. The McKinley Village and Sutter Park proposals included elements valued by the East Sacramento residents: sidewalks, bicycle lanes, open green space, trees, parks and modern energy-efficient technologies. Homeowner associations would maintain and manage the future housing sites.

Even though both projects had a lot of similarities - architectural styles, communal features, East Sacramento neighborhood location, Sacramento City Council approval timeline and the ratio of proposed homes to sites' acreages - community support of the two projects varied. Following the community engagement run by the local development firms, the Sutter Park project received overwhelming community backing and praise. The McKinley Village project polarized the community resulting in bitterly divided opposition and support.

Thesis organization

There are five chapters. Chapter 2, the literature review, focuses on public participation strategies and elements that impact community opposition and support. The literature review further illustrates the evolution of our knowledge about public engagement and concludes with gaps in our understanding of this topic.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology and data. I conducted qualitative interviews with people involved in the engagement process: residents, developers and local government representatives, including elected officials and staff. Using the snowball method, I increased the initial interview sample. I also reviewed council hearings and city project documents for supplemental data. I analyzed the data from the interviews by identifying emerging themes. Chapter 4 presents findings from the data analysis. Chapter 5 provides a summary of work, answers the research question, discusses surprising findings and provides policy recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE LITERATURE

The purpose of the literature review is to understand what is already known (and unknown) about how public engagement shapes community support and opposition for housing development projects. The chapter proceeds in the following way. First, I describe the challenges associated with social science research on specific public engagement strategies around community opposition to and support of infill housing projects. Second, I present three themes that impact public engagement outcomes of support: increasing participation to represent the community's socio-economic makeup; shifting away from traditional community engagement practices; and approaching engagement as a stakeholder collaboration and deliberation process. The chapter concludes by arguing that while prior research sheds some light on the impact of public engagement strategies on community support, it is difficult to draw generalizations from the literature. Hence, there is a need for more study such as the present one.

Literature review challenges

I encountered several challenges while conducting the literature review. First, the literature lacks empirically tested hypotheses on how public engagement strategies influence the outcomes of opposition and support. Analyzing research conducted until the 1990s, Freudenberg & Pastor (1992) point out two shortfalls: limited social science research on the topic of community opposition and a mixture of empirical and non-empirical policy-oriented research. These challenges continue to persist. Hundreds of articles analyze reasons and motives behind community opposition to different projects while trying to understand and explain "not in my backyard" or NIMBY phenomena (for example, see a list of 172 articles put together by Richardson & Beaudreau, 2013). Scholars often research opposition attitudes and its drivers; the validity of housing opponents claims about impacts of affordable housing construction on

property values (De Souza Briggs et al., 1999; Nguyen, 2005; Ellen et al., 2007; Di et al., 2010) and impacts of individual project features on the severity of opposition (Pendall, 1999). Scholars (Chess & Purcell, 1999; Liao, 2017; Stilgoe et al., 2014; Eisenstein & Lucken, 2017; Duke 2009) continue to point out the overall shortage of empirical studies that test the hypothesis of public engagement that broadens community support.

Second, public engagement research spreads across various social science disciplines: psychology, sociology, political science, communication, public relations, conflict resolution, etc. (see McComas, 2003). Public engagement research covers a variety of topics including land use, environmental issues, green technologies, natural resources, science, art, education, health, etc. Many public participation articles focus on evaluating outcomes and effectiveness (Brown & Chin, 2013), comparing modes of engagement (see Chess & Parcel, 1999), analyzing typologies of participation (Reed, 2008) and lessons learned. Research of individual public engagement activities and strategies that have the potential to shift attitudes is not consistent. Furthermore, existing research on public engagement activities has been criticized for becoming a strategy in itself to build community buy-in and generate support (Burningham, 2000).

Finally, while there is a general understanding about what public participation is, the definitions are broad and inconsistent (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015; Holley, 2016). They are interchangeably used with all types of activities that involve the public. For example, Nabatchi & Leighninger (2015) describe public participation as an activity to incorporate “people’s concerns, interests, and needs” (p.6) in the decision-making process. Civic engagement is another term that often describes public participation. The Institute for Local Government (2016) clarifies the distinction: while civic engagement includes political activism, advocacy and voting, public engagement is about involving community residents and stakeholders in the local decision-making process. Influenced by a classic Arnstein (1969) essay on the ladder of public

participation, the IAP2 public participation spectrum further distinguishes gradual influence of public participation and input on a final decision - from no influence, to empowering stakeholders in the decision-making process (IAP2, 2018). Public participation has distinct levels of engagement and distinct participant groups that can vary from a community-at-large to a narrowly selected stakeholder group (Reed, 2008). To put it differently, defining public engagement as a consistent and set process is challenging because it occurs around various projects; it has various participant groups, distinct levels of community input and influence on the final decision-making. Ultimately, the process of public participation strives to imbed community feedback and priorities in the decision-making (Cass & Walker, 2009; ILG, 2016). In reality, public engagement activities are often limited to educational outreach and gathering minimal community input that is not always adequately reflected in the decision-making process (Holley, 2016).

To overcome literature review challenges associated with inconsistently defined engagement processes, I incorporate domestic and international literature that empirically tests public engagement strategies around common developments (for example, housing and waste management facilities.) and provides non-empirical insights into engagement strategies.

Increasing participation to closely reflect the community's socio-economic landscape

The literature does suggest that one of the effective public engagement strategies is to broaden the representative diversity of participants. Einstein et al. (2019) measured the representation at public meetings by analyzing public comments on housing developments submitted at the zoning and planning commissions hearings. They found that the socio-economic characteristics of frequent meeting participants significantly differed from the socio-economic makeup of the community. Opposing positions of a small group of participants did not represent community opinion. For its methodology, the study coded public comments and matched it with

82.6% or 2,580 meeting participants (from 97 Massachusetts jurisdictions) using a voter registration database. To understand who was more likely to participate in the hearings and their prospective positions, Einstein et al. (2019) compared characteristics of the participants (gender, voter registration, age, residential status) with a demographic composition of the community by analyzing means and running three logit regression models. The findings showed that long-time residents, older individuals, males and regular voters were overrepresented at the meetings. People of these demographics were likely to participate in future meetings.

Comments submitted at commission hearings tended to be overwhelmingly against new housing (only 15% and 23% of comments were positive and neutral respectively). When testing other participant characteristics that may predict attitudes towards housing developments, Einstein et al. (2019) found that females, infrequent voters, frequent meeting participants and registered Republicans also tended to oppose new housing. Variables of age, residency length and political identification with Independent Party were not statistically significant, meaning that these factors did not explain the attitudes of opposition to housing development.

Using the voter registration database limits the analysis of community-at-large representation because authors do not analyze all socio-economic characteristics including race, income levels, homeownership status, occupational and educational levels. Voter databases also exclude non-citizens and unregistered voters, for example. This study shows that positions of frequent meeting participants do not necessarily represent the community. The overwhelmingly negative comments against housing developments at public meetings may not reflect the majority of public opinion.

Fung (2006) refers to a group of people who are more likely to show up to public hearings, volunteer for a steering committee, submit comments, etc. as a “self-selected” (p.6.) group. In his essay about the framework of public participation’s institutional choices, Fung

(2006) emphasizes that a self-selected group does not always reflect a community's socio-economic composition. To generate representative participation, one needs to use a variety of strategies that include random selection of participants and more targeted outreach to underrepresented communities. Scally & Tighe (2015) echoes the importance of achieving engagement diversity beyond a self-selected group of individuals.

Thus, while the research mentioned above does not test the relationship between broadening the pool of participants and project support, the findings indicate that the predominant views articulated at public meetings and hearings do not always reflect the views of the whole community. Reaching out to diverse socio-economic groups and under-engaged individuals not only brings representative priorities and input of the community-at-large but eliminates participatory inequalities.

Using nontraditional public engagement methods and tools

When it comes to inclusive public participation and feedback that reflects voices of the whole community, broadening representative participation is key. Another strategy is to use nontraditional public engagement methods and tools. Scholars agree that conventional methods of public participation that include official public meetings, written comments and even citizen advisory committees are not effective (Fung, 2006; Innes & Booher, 2004; McComas et al., 2010; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). In his essay, Fung (2006) explains that allocating three minutes at the microphone to comment at public hearings narrows the participatory process to a level of a "spectator" (p.8). Such participation is unsatisfactory as there is no space to listen, address and validate community concerns. Participants are often not happy with the process and outcomes (Fung, 2006).

Negative experiences with traditional participation further highlight the need to shift towards new formats and different engagement opportunities that generate more positive

participatory experiences. McComas (2003) looked at the outcomes of two traditional public hearings from a participant point of view. Using an item-test correlation to analyze data gathered from a paper survey (76% response rate) mailed to meeting attendees, McComas (2003) found that 40% of meeting attendees felt worse about a proposed waste project site after attending meetings and 25% felt the same. The low expectations from public hearings prior to the meeting correlated with feeling worse about meeting outcomes. Ninety five percent of participants felt that their opinion and comments made no difference. To put it differently, public hearings were counterproductive in generating positive participant experiences about public meetings. The study has several limitations: a small sample of 67 participants, a one-year break between two distinct meetings and respondents' demographics - the majority of whom were older, male, long-term residents. Despite the limitations, the research sheds some light on the effects of traditional public hearings. The public often finds them unsatisfactory. Public hearings aggravate negative feelings. Different options and formats may result in more positive experiences for engagement participants.

Before reviewing more engagement strategies, it is worth mentioning the most commonly used - education. New York developers, surveyed by Scally & Tighe (2015), identified informational sessions with the focus on informing about the project as the second most effective meeting format to engage opposition groups. While it is a popular method of engagement, some scholars question its positive impact and effectiveness. Innes & Booher (2004) doubt the impacts of educational outreach since it is one-way communication that shares information and facts about a project without inviting community feedback. Burningham (2000) cautions about using education as a strategy to address opposition's claims that, at times, are labeled as irrational. Citing sociological research, Burningham (2000) states that providing factual and accurate one-way information is similar to filling engagement participants up with education like "passive

vessels" (p.57); this strategy does not always shift attitudes because humans are complex and emotional individuals. Zheng & Lui (2018) echo these arguments by pointing out that people choose not to accept incoming information when there is no trust. While knowledge is powerful, the real power comes from a mutually generated knowledge between all stakeholders in a participatory and trusting environment. When there is distrust, knowledge that comes from the "other side," whether it is a government agency or a developer, "will not be accepted by the residents" (Zheng & Lui 2018, p. 68). Education should be part of every engagement approach. It can be a powerful public engagement strategy; however, scholars caution against over relying on just education and one-way communication because its effectiveness depends on a number of factors.

Back to the discussion about nontraditional public engagement approaches, Scally & Tighe (2015) surveyed 150 affordable housing developers in New York (50% response rate) to identify the most common and effective public engagement and concluded that nonconventional engagement was more effective than traditional participation. One of the survey questions asked about effectiveness of engagement activities when engaging community opposition (referred to as NIMBYs in the study). Forty two percent and 29% of responders ranked informal meetings with community leaders and informal public informational sessions respectively as the most effective. While a traditional public hearing was listed as the second most common type of engagement, respondents rated it as one of the least effective. The survey had several surprising results: 27% of developers identified litigation as a common strategy to address opposition and 6% found it effective. Avoiding community resistance by choosing development sites with no potential opposition was another common strategy. Such sites were likely to be located in non-white neighborhoods with traditionally less political clout to oppose. These sites were also likely to be less affluent. One of the limitations of the Scally & Tighe (2015) study is that the authors do not

define effectiveness. It is unclear if the effectiveness refers to the engagement process or outcomes. Additionally, the study presents a one-sided developer perspective that may differ from the community perspective. Still, the study validates nonconventional engagement approaches such as informal meetings with community leaders as a more suitable option.

Konsti-Laasko & Rantala (2018) developed and tested a public engagement strategy designed “to explore messy, problematic situations" (p.1043) around urban planning in a Finnish city of Lahti by using a case study methodology to empirically validate their model. The consensus building literature informed four engagement tactics and implementation styles: problem-solving that provides learning opportunities to understand decision points and trade-offs; structure for dialogue and issue mapping; ideas from non-experts; and impartial facilitation. After testing these elements at three workshops, the researchers found that the acceptance of workshops’ outcomes had increased. Even though participants did not always agree with the particular outcome, individuals with opposing views “felt that they better understood” (p.1046) the outcomes and reasoning (Konsti-Laasko & Rantala, 2018). All three workshops included opportunities to learn, share, identify new ideas and engage in dialogue. This study has several limitations. It is a single case study with unique situational and cultural context. Workshop participants were not randomly selected and included predominantly business community representatives. Finally, researchers facilitated the workshop. Their investment in the outcomes of their study might have impacted their ability to be impartial facilitators. While this research builds up our understanding of public engagement strategies that can positively influence the outcomes, one cannot generalize the findings.

Halvorsen (2003) assessed how the participant experience shaped individual beliefs by measuring the quality of participation in 13 facilitated meetings - three open-to-everyone dinner-style meetings and 10 stakeholder group meetings. Specifically, Halvorsen (2003) looked at types

of meeting qualities that had effects on individuals' trust in a public agency and the agency's ability to value diverse opinions. Halvorsen (2003) identified the following components: convenience to attend, deliberation opportunities, delivery of satisfactory outcomes and comfort of participation. The study surveyed 115 participants before and after public meetings and used indices and linear regression to analyze the effect of meetings' qualities on individual shifts in beliefs.

The study found that participants' assessment of a public meeting as being comfortable and convenient had a positive effect on beliefs about the trustworthiness of the agency. The past exposure to the agency had a positive effect on believing that the agency valued diverse voices. The past exposure to meaningful deliberative meetings also had a positive effect on beliefs about agency's responsiveness. In other words, an accessible, convenient and comfortable public participation experience that provides opportunities for meaningful discussions can positively impact community attitudes and trust. The study has its limitations. The R-square coefficient that varies between 0.17 and 0.25 is low. Most of the explanatory variables are not statistically significant, and the model of quality public participation does not explain most of the variations in participants' beliefs.

The literature highlights several engagement strategies and activities that can potentially shift community and individual attitudes, generate a positive participatory experience and increase support for a project. Traditional public hearings that take place during evening hours at government locations provide limited quality participation and increase dissatisfaction. Limiting comments to three minutes at the microphone is a one-way communication that leaves no space for recognizing and addressing concerns. Moving towards nonconventional engagement matters because it has more potential to generate positive participation, shifts beliefs and increases acceptance of outcomes. Informal meetings, learning opportunities, deliberation and dialogue,

convenient, comfortable and accessible participation, satisfactory meeting outcomes, community expertise, community-generated knowledge, impartial facilitation and environment of trust are some of the tactics, implementation styles and approaches that can inform public engagement strategies and impact the development of support and opposition.

Approaching community engagement as stakeholder deliberation and collaboration

Structuring public participation around collaboration and deliberation is another way to build satisfaction with a process and acceptance of outcomes. Straus (2002) defines collaboration as "the process people employ when working together in a group, organization, or community to plan, create, solve problems, and make decisions" (p.19). Because various problem-solving processes resonate differently with individuals, problem-solving becomes a trial-and-error process where no single approach guarantees success (Straus, 2002). Nevertheless, the research on collaboration and deliberation outlines several preconditions for success.

Reed (2008) uses the literature review methodology to identify best practices of stakeholder collaboration. While acknowledging the existing disagreements about what works best, the author points out the emerging scholarly consensus around several positive elements of collaboration - trust, intentionality and clarity, early start, power rebalance, empowered and equitable participation. Drawing on the deliberative democracy theories, Innes & Booher (2004) highlight that a model of collaborative participation is more suitable for working with multiple community concerns and diverse opinions. The main idea behind a collaborative approach is to create space for meaningful dialogues and discussions between the community and agencies. It is different from a traditional two-way communication that is limited to agencies receiving community comments and trying to provide answers to individual concerns or by grouping concerns by issues.

The collaborative approach model provides a structure to represent broad interests, hear and acknowledge individual voices and robustly discuss the alternatives. In the essay, Innes & Booher (2004) shared several examples where the model worked. When Davis, California, was facing a significant budget deficit, various community representatives and agencies engaged in dialogue, mutual learning and deliberation to craft a tax measure solution. The measure passed. The acceptance among the public who were not at the table increased as well (Innes & Booher, 2004). In Cincinnati, Ohio, a collaborative approach was used to work with the community to rebuild trust and develop a new set of policies and procedures after police shot and killed an African American man. A collaborative approach to public engagement can tackle complex problems such as budgeting and racial tensions (Innes & Booher, 2004).

Zheng & Lui (2018) used a comparative case study methodology to analyze responses of Chinese residents to the construction of waste incineration facilities located near each other. Zheng & Lui (2018) conducted 42 stakeholder interviews and analyzed documents using a "process tracing and life story method" (p.66) to tease out public engagement and stakeholder collaboration components. Both projects encountered community opposition at the beginning. However, opposition shifted toward support for one of the projects. Zheng & Lui (2018) identified several factors that contributed to this shift. Active residents or "policy entrepreneurs" (p.68) played a critical role in initiating the collaboration between the Chinese government and a community. The collaboration process and ongoing public consultation included the development of shared knowledge, dialogue and consensus building around shared goals and alternatives. Ultimately, the community accepted the joint decision-making outcomes regarding the construction of the waste incineration facility.

Anger and distrust characterized the community engagement process for another waste incineration project. The fact that the government already made decisions fueled emotions and

caused the community to lose trust. There was no productive dialogue or building a shared understanding around proposed project solutions to address concerns in the absence of community leaders who would initiate the consultation process (Zheng & Lui, 2018). Although the case study takes place in another country with distinct cultural and political realities, the conclusion of this comparative case study echoes best practices in collaboration - building trust, engaging early and creating space for dialogue, deliberation and mutual learning.

While the research is not entirely conclusive on whether a deliberative process can change individual perceptions (Davison et al., 2013; Scally 2013; Schively, 2007), the literature demonstrates that collaboration and deliberation are notable engagement strategies that have potential to create meaningful community participation, shifts positions and generate acceptance of outcomes.

Conclusion

The field of public engagement is broad. The definition refers to a myriad of participation options and degrees of involvement: from outreach and education to collaboration and deliberation. The audience ranges from a narrow group of hand-picked stakeholders to a large community. Engagement approaches are diverse - from mandated traditional public hearings to an innovative series of consensus-building workshops. There are a variety of tactics and implementation styles - from listening to what the public has to say to actively engaging in dialogue that builds shared knowledge and creates space for collaborating on projects. Despite the lack of robust research on empirically tested engagement strategies, some domestic, and mostly international, scientific literature sheds light on some elements and their potential to shape participant experiences and to shift community attitudes of opposition and support.

It is clear that traditional public hearings are ineffective, often worsening participant attitudes. Public engagement needs to occur outside the conventional engagement methods that

are limited to one-way communication. Intentionally increasing the diversity of participants can rebalance dominant voices of opposition by ensuring that participant voices are representative of the community. Organizing convenient and comfortable meetings, conducting informal meetings with community leaders, providing engagement opportunities that allow mutual learning, dialogue, trust building, incorporating ideas from non-experts, discovering community knowledge and having impartial facilitators are some of the elements that the literature finds effective. Approaching public engagement as stakeholder collaboration and deliberation has a transformative potential when certain conditions such as trust, equity and clear goals are present.

While research shows what can influence a community's position, the multidimensional and complex construct of each community makes it hard to draw generalities beyond individual, often international, case studies about specific strategies. In other words, what works in one community, may not work in another. Nevertheless, the research shows that some public engagement strategies correlate with positive outcomes more than others. My aim is to explore the details of such engagement in more depth.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Through this study, I seek to determine if differences in public engagement impact support and opposition for residential infill development. I accomplished this through conducting a case study of the Sutter Park Neighborhood development project, which met virtually no community opposition, and the McKinley Village project, which faced strong community opposition. To examine if public engagement influenced the outcomes of the development projects, I utilized qualitative data using the thematic analysis research method. I collected primary source data by conducting semi-structured interviews. Public comment submitted to the City of Sacramento in response to the Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) as well as City Council and Planning and Design Committee hearings and staff reports provided supplemental data to support the research story.

The goal of the interview process was to understand if and how the public engagement process influenced the two different outcomes for the development projects in East Sacramento. The purpose of the EIRs and hearings was to identify additional public engagement components, as well as the differences and peculiarities of the two projects.

Conducting semi-structured interviews

I held 21 semi-structured in-person interviews. Prior to the interviews, I reviewed *Sacramento Bee* articles and recordings of Sacramento City Council hearings to identify key players and stakeholders for interviews. I identified four groups: local government representatives, development company representatives, stakeholder groups representing various organizations and East Sacramento residents. While interviewing participants, I asked "who else should I talk to" to determine the rest of the interview participants. I interviewed a similar number of people from each of four groups to ensure a more representative sample. Each interview lasted

60-90 minutes. I tape-recorded the conversations using a cell phone application and took notes on main points. After the interviews, I transcribed the recordings.

The objective of the semi-structured interviews was to determine what type of engagement process took place for both development projects, how participants experienced it and how it resolved or did not resolve the concerns. I then analyzed whether each engagement process influenced the opposition of the McKinley Village project and support of the Sutter Park project. The overarching goal for interviews was to understand respondents' experiences with public engagement, including strategies and tactics, community responses and shifts in attitudes.

Appendix A includes the interview protocol with a list of open-ended interview questions. The four-part interview started with an introduction explaining the research study and defining public engagement. The questions from part one provided an opportunity to better understand a participant's involvement in one or both projects, anticipate the length of the interview, and adjust some questions as needed. In part two, I inquired about community engagement processes and how they did or did not address community concerns. Part three included a series of specific questions about public engagement elements and the difference that they might have made in generating opposition and support. I wrapped up the interview by asking about policy recommendations and how the public engagement process could have been done differently.

I altered questions based on each interviewee's involvement in the projects. For example, instead of asking each interviewee to compare two engagement processes, I asked them to describe engagement experiences for a specific project. When interviewing residents or stakeholders, instead of asking for policy recommendations, I asked what public engagement recommendations they had for their city government. To seamlessly alternate between different versions of questions, I created two worksheets (Appendix B). The semi-structured design of the

interviews and a comprehensive list of questions not only allowed me to gather detailed data but also adjust questions and provide additional opportunities to collect in-depth responses and new facts.

I transcribed each interview using a verbatim approach. Out of 21 transcripts, I then randomly selected 11. First, based on the initial content analysis, I brainstormed different categories, or buckets. More specifically, I reviewed a list of coding suggestions for qualitative analysis (Gibbs, 2011) from various social science scholars and compared them with potential buckets derived from the literature review, verbal and written public comments received during council and commission meeting testimonies and EIR comment periods and interview protocols.

Several categories were apparent from the sources mentioned above:

- public engagement approach – community outreach, meetings, workshops, public comments, door-to-door, community conversations, one-on-one conversations, publications, public comments;
- tactics and style – impartial facilitation, dialogue and feedback opportunities;
- community opposition – not listening, not consulting, ignoring, not including stakeholders, incomplete proposal analysis, not addressing concerns, not working together with the community to develop proposals, not trusting;
- community support – listening, hearing, collaboration, consulting, incorporating public comments, community-oriented, incorporating comments/concerns into the development plan, trust, meaningful public engagement, inclusive public engagement; and
- community concerns – density, traffic, hazardous spills, health risks, access to amenities, emergency vehicle response time, noise, pollution.

I started with these five broad categories. First, I grouped the text together while looking for repetition, relevant and surprising facts, as well as a validation of concepts. I also grouped and

regrouped buckets as they referenced positive and negative engagement outcomes and analyzed the frequency of repetitions to identify broader themes that would explain the research question. I then analyzed how broader themes could be weaved together to create a story and a cohesive narrative. I determined and narrowed down the final buckets and themes after conducting and transcribing all the interviews.

Reviewing city documents and public hearings

The City of Sacramento's public documents provided additional facts and data for the analysis and to prepare for the interviews. I watched more than ten hours of Sacramento City Council and Planning and Design Commission meetings. I sorted through the public comments provided during these meetings to identify the main reasons behind the support and opposition. I then asked the interview participants why these concerns were not resolved during the engagement process.

The public comment process allows three minutes at the microphone to state the position and the reasons behind it. Thus, most of the comments are brief and to the point. I also analyzed the mention of community engagement components to identify if it was perceived as a positive or negative experience. This strategy served as a supplement to the interview data. It deepened my understanding of how community members experienced public engagement and to what extent various public participation components might have affected the positions and attitudes of support and opposition groups.

Studying written public comments on the draft and final versions of the EIRs helped to further identify community concerns with the proposed developments. I then compared similarities and differences between comments that community members and stakeholders provided and analyzed how community concerns were addressed. While the Sutter Park EIR received two letters from individuals and two letters from organizations, the McKinley Village

EIR received more than 98 letters from individuals and 19 letters from local organizations. Written public comments submitted for draft EIRs provided supplemental data for analysis. The city's responses to written public comments allowed me to inspect the city's approach to public participation through addressing written comments and responding to concerns in the final EIR.

Studying similarities and differences in verbal and written comments allowed me to collect additional data and recognize the complexities and peculiarities of each project. Reviewing official records and public comments provided further insight into how the engagements led by developers interact with the city's participatory process governed by the Brown Act and how both processes might have influenced the outcomes of opposition and support.

Conclusion

Throughout my research, I collected robust data for qualitative analysis of how public engagement might have an influence on community support and opposition to development projects. A review of public comments submitted to the City of Sacramento during public hearings provided background information and initial insight as to why residents in the East Sacramento neighborhood supported the Sutter Park Neighborhood housing development but mostly opposed the McKinley Village project. The interviews allowed to peel more layers off to better understand each "why" and tease out how public engagement strategy was the influencing factor. The next chapter reveals what I found.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

My thesis research seeks to determine how the public engagement strategy influenced the outcomes of community opposition to, and support of, two infill housing development projects in East Sacramento. The interviews revealed that in addition to public engagement, a variety of other factors were critical such as the distinctive starting or historical points for engagement. Thus, I present two themes in Chapter 4. The first theme reports findings about project distinctions including history of community engagement and project externalities. I explain why these factors matter and how they have impacted the process of "how you go about creating something new in the community." The second theme reports engagement strategies for each project and discusses how they have influenced the outcomes of community opposition and support.

Theme 1: The historical starting point for public engagement is critical for its success

The initial review of the proposed housing developments showed a number of similarities across the two projects. Both were infill developments in East Sacramento with similar Sacramento City Council hearing and approval timelines; both were residential developments with similar design elements and goals to blend into the historic neighborhoods and honor community values. Local developers proposed mostly single-family homes and a smaller number of multi-family units (and secondary units in McKinley Village). Both proposals included park areas and commercial retail space for limited neighborhood uses (the McKinley project proposed half the amount of commercial space than Sutter Park and later removed it). The projects featured low-to-medium density: Sutter Park at 8 units per acre and McKinley Village at 11.2 units per acre (City of Sacramento, 2014a, 2014b). Despite the apparent commonalities on paper, interviewees emphasized that the projects were dissimilar and only named a few similarities:

"You have to travel through an existing neighborhood to get to both of them. I mean, I think that is the one, you know, the strong common link. And both developers are trying to do infill, large scale infill projects in a historic neighborhood." The interviews revealed that two projects were more different than originally perceived. While these differences did not automatically precondition engagement results, location, history of site development attempts and community opposition, community's attitude toward development, project economies and externalities partially explain the outcomes of opposition and support.

Land use development history of the sites and location peculiarities

The Sutter Park infill development site was never an empty lot. The Sutter Memorial Hospital occupied the site until it was demolished in 2018. Built in the 1930s, this small maternity hospital on the outskirts of old Sacramento was expanded to ten-stories around the 1960s. "The neighborhood grew around it," recalled a long-time resident. Many East Sacramentans were born in this hospital, with memories echoed throughout public comments at the Sacramento Council hearing on April 8, 2014. The community initially worried about site's repurposing after the Sutter Health announced hospital relocation to the other side of the East Sacramento in 2005. "As the hospital was coming down, the Sutter outreach team told the community that it's going to be a residential development. So, they kind of alleviated some of the worries early on," shared an interviewee.

The relatively small, 19-acre Sutter Park site sits in the middle of a developed residential neighborhood, an "everybody sees it every day" type of location. The only site history was that of housing a hospital where half of East Sacramentan were born. Residents were used to having a developed lot, even though the busy hospital in the middle of the residential neighborhood was not an ideal. When news about the hospital relocation hit, no one expected this site to remain an empty lot. The community hoped, however, for better neighborhood integration. "You're taking a

gigantic property that was a public institution, and you're simply scraping and erasing the entire project, removing everything, scraping it down to dirt and building a neighborhood that has a seamless connection to the established neighborhood," shared one interviewee. The community was looking forward to a new development: "You are taking an area with the Sutter Memorial Hospital that has been there since the 1950s, and now we have an empty lot in the middle of the neighborhood. So, they [community] are naturally more receptive to some thoughtful way of creating something that would mesh with the rest of the neighborhood." Overall, the community was cautiously optimistic about the proposed development. They were hoping for more appropriate site usage.

The McKinley Village infill development site was a vacant lot sitting on 46-acres of undeveloped land. Interviewees remembered how this site used to be an orchard with cherry and peach trees: "The property where McKinley Village sits on was very pastoral if you will." The new landowners later cut down the trees. In the early 90s, a high-density, high-intensity, high-traffic, high-rise office-hotel-retail development and new freeway interchange proposal surfaced. The community fiercely and successfully opposed Centrage proposal. Many interviewees still remembered it: “I think a lot of people kept raising Centrage from the 90s. It's like: Oh, I remember Centrage. (…) We go back to that and think about these really tall buildings and high density and all that." In addition to Centage, a series of other development proposals circulated, including an auto mall, an industrial park, a warehouse and a prison. "Over there, it was a property that, if you were a long-time resident, you knew that many different things were proposed (…). So, there was bad feeling built in (…). This property became so loaded with negative (…)." One of the interviewees succinctly summarized the community feelings about McKinley site: "There was a little bit of history that you needed to get past. And people don't forget, you know, especially an old neighborhood."

The crescent-shaped McKinley Village site also had a unique location that closely borders the Union Pacific Railroad tracks on the east and Interstate 80 Business, a busy commuter freeway, on the west. Different jurisdictions controlled these distinct physical barriers that separate East Sacramento neighborhood from McKinley Village lot. To access the site, one would travel through the McKinley Village Way underpass, a special tunnel later constructed under elevated railroad tracks. The physical barriers created a sense of isolation from the neighborhood and contributed to the overall public sentiment that McKinley Village was not really East Sacramento because there was no "seamless integration." One of the interviewees described: "It was a new thing on the edge of the neighborhood." Another emphasizes the separation from the neighborhood: "McKinley, like I said, it's not a grid. It has really restricted limited access." Overall, the history of failed development attempts loomed over the McKinley engagement process as the public questioned the utility of the site's development and whether future residents could be even considered East Sacramentans.

Micro communities within the East Sacramento community with different attitudes about infill development

Any developer conducting public engagement in East Sacramento would find savvy residents who are experienced in government processes. Many worked or retired from government agencies. Many were active in various organizations and neighborhood associations. Many did not trust government. Opposition to development projects was common: "East Sacramento used to have a reputation of being a very difficult place to try and develop." Conducting public engagement in East Sacramento had its challenges. It required trust building as mistrust in government and past opposition experiences had shaped communal attitudes. One interviewee summarized: "I don't have an expectation that they, government, has my interest at heart. I don't have expectations that they are listening. Like, Mercy [Hospital] was railroaded

though; McKinley Village was railroaded through; Golden One [Center] was railroaded through." Another interviewee reiterated: "There is very little they could do to build my trust because I have a series of very negative experiences." Mistrust and past negative experiences would shape the engagement strategy: "East Sacramento is not a place where you come up with a big plan on a very visible property without any input from the neighborhood and then take it to them and say, 'What do you think?'"

Besides engaging the East Sacramento neighborhood, McKinley Village developers also engaged Midtown residents since one of the entrances connects McKinley with Midtown. An interviewee described the Midtown residents and community in this way: "Midtown is historic neighborhood, but it is always changing. So, Midtown residents aren't necessarily completely afraid of infill development. Because infill development is just part of our DNA down here. Infill development, in one shape or another, has been going on in our neighborhood for 20 years. Whereas I think the [East] Sacramento folks - because there's fewer swaths of developable land, and we have a lot of empty lots down here; I don't think East Sac has as many - so they probably have a different preconception of what infill means." In other words, Midtown neighborhood had different attitude to infill development. Residents appeared to be more receptive.

The Sutter Park community also had a different vibe. Some interviewees described the Sutter Park as more amicable: "Sutter Park is located in the much older Sacramento. It is an area with less young children, older [residents] with less focus on public schools. Sutter does not have a string of neighborhood associations. So, they are naturally more receptive to some thoughtful way of creating something that would mesh with the rest of the neighborhood." Another underscored: "That's the other interesting thing, you just go a short distance, and the culture of that neighborhood is quite different."

Even though both projects were located in East Sacramento and less than two miles apart from each other, residents and stakeholders involved in both projects were not the same group of people. “The appropriate constituency for each project is the immediate neighbors,” explained one interviewee. Another rationalized their involvement with only one project: “It's not my neighborhood. It's not my fight. You know, I think if I was to get involved, you know, over there, people would say, ‘What, what are you doing here?’”

To summarize, East Sacramento had its own micro communities with different culture and attitudes about infill development. Sutter Park, even though “a traditional East Sacramento Park neighborhood,” was a micro community with residents who were optimistic but cautious about the Sutter Park development. East Sacramento was a micro community with “some hangover from the old days” or a history of opposition and mistrust in government. It was (and still is) a community with active neighborhood associations. East Sacramento was less welcoming to infill development than, for example, neighboring Midtown. One interviewee acutely summed up how these differences impacted McKinley Village engagement: “I think Phil [Angelides] had a much larger uphill battle for a variety of reasons.”

Different impacts on the neighborhoods

Another important factor that played a role in determining engagement success was project externalities or the projects’ impacts on the surrounding community. The Sutter Park project had positive externalities of reducing “significant stress” on the community by proposing a low-density residential development on the previously industrially used site. With the relocation of the busy hospital, residents were looking forward to less cars, people, pollution, emergency sirens and other noise. One of the interviewees recalled the excitement: “They gave us estimates that our traffic here would be reduced by 80%, eight zero!” Another shared enjoyment they’re of not having to deal with “picking up trash that people don’t [pick up]; and with people parking in

front of your driveway; and people dumping their, you know, their cigarette butts…" Neighbors were thrilled with upcoming change: "In the end you're talking about a residential development rather than hospital. There were a lot of the tradeoffs. They were very positive for the neighborhood in terms of less truck traffic and other construction, no ambulance coming in, not as many people coming to work." The Sutter Park infill site went from having heavy negative impacts on the community caused by hospital activities to positive externalities from the proposed low-density residential housing. Interviewees agreed that this uniqueness had benefited the project: "A lot of it had to do with taking an existing land use that is considered to be high impact, high traffic, such as a hospital, and reducing it to more of a residential product, low density. And so that developer, I think, had one foot up."

McKinley Village was a vacant lot. Any infill development of vacant parcels tends to generate new impacts and require adjustments: increased traffic, adjusted school boundaries, overloaded sewer lines, increased demand for neighborhood resources and parking spaces. With any vacant site's development, the intensity of site usage increases from having zero impact to having high impact. These changes and adjustments are concerning to many. One of the interviewees confirmed this general knowledge: "McKinley was, like I said, a challenging [site] because people had concerns about vacant land being developed into some type of project."

The two infill development projects had two different impacts on the neighborhoods. One project reduced site intensity. Another increased it. This mattered in the engagement process and outcomes because communities favored positive externalities of the Sutter Park proposal and resisted the proposal with negative externalities, "…like I said, if you're developing a vacant land, you know, that it's going to be a lot harder and a lot more outreach in the beginning than compared to another project where you're going to be just reducing intensities."

Theme 1 conclusion

Findings from the first theme revealed that historical starting point for public engagement - development history, location peculiarities, community attitudes towards infill developments and project externalities - were critical for engagement success. On the surface, the Sutter Park public engagement activities were to take place in a more favorable environment as neighbors were looking forward to a project that would reduce density and other negative externalities. People living around the Sutter Park site were excited about the hospital being gone but cautious about its replacement. One of the interviewees shared: "So there was a possibility of a 25-acre chunk in East Sacramento where anything could happen. They could build a high school; they could build a…, they could build Walmart; they could build anything because it was 25 acres of property right here, smacked down in the middle, surrounded completely by neighborhood." While initial community excitement was not necessarily a sign of automatic community support, the project with unique features of reducing negative externalities scored points of support upfront from a more receptive community.

The McKinley Village engagement had less favorable engagement conditions from the start due to the history of community opposition, project location and negative externalities. Many residents historically opposed site's development. They did not trust the government. However, a lingering opposition mood did not translate into automatic opposition right away. Some groups were looking forward to working with the developer as they saw the infill developments as part of the solution to address the regional housing shortage and climate change. One of the interviewees recalled that a stakeholder group was open to "collaborate with them [developers] early on (…); we saw infill development was inevitable - how can we make this a good project." Even with little excitement, some did recognize project opportunities. Thus, understanding project peculiarities, site history and community distinctions is critical. This

knowledge can help to anticipate engagement opportunities and challenges and inform a strategy to address concerns, past grievances and transform initial excitement (or lack thereof) into support.

Theme 2: While not a silver bullet, collaborative bottom-up community planning with an emphasis on dialogue is critical for public engagement success

Engagement matters. History and other factors surrounding the proposed developments can help to predict the initial degree of community opposition and support. However, the core opposition or support evolves and magnifies during the engagement process. The interview data has revealed that a successful public engagement strategy is not about *what*; it is about *how*. It is not about types of engagement activities and participation options. It is about how one goes around implementing these activities while generating positive participatory experiences. Creating an opportunity for collaborative community involvement at all stages of the projects and developing a housing proposal that incorporates community feedback and reflects community priorities is the strategy that helps to foster positive experiences and support.

The Sutter Park engagement case shows that a bottom-up planning strategy with an emphasis on dialogue and collaboration was critical for public engagement success. An initially excited and cautiously optimistic community cherished the project that they designed in tandem with developers and neighbors. The McKinley Village engagement case shows that a top-down approach of having the community react to an already designed project proposal did not alleviate community concerns and did not turn around a neighborhood that was not looking forward to the development in the first place. To understand how the collaborative bottom-up community planning strategy made a difference, I will discuss the impact of the individual elements that surfaced during interviews: a mix of engagement activities, choices and formats of community meetings, listening, dialogue, collaboration, communication styles and engagement leads.

Public engagement approach as a standalone mix of outreach activities does not predict engagement outcomes

Both developers implemented extensive and intensive public engagement and outreach. The McKinley project had several outreach phases starting in 2007- 2008 and resuming in 2012-2013 (the Great Recession of 2008 put the project on hold). The Sutter Park engagement took place over the course of three years. Table 4.1 outlines engagement activities mentioned in the interviews, project documents, public hearings and earned media. The table omits a timeline since this information was not always obtainable but includes available details and metrics. The table does not list public hearings required by law including commission and council hearings since the research questions specifically analyze community engagement beyond the legally required processes.

Table 2: Community Engagement and Outreach Activities

McKinley Village Project
Neighborhood canvassing with 1100 door-to-door conversations with individuals
More than 52 community meetings including: • meetings hosted by the developer or a councilmember • big townhall meetings organized by the developer • small meetings with local organizations and interested parties • roundtable style meetings with neighborhood groups • meetings organized by neighborhood groups • community meetings (including informational meetings) and meetings with community leaders hosted by the councilmembers representing the neighborhoods
McKinley Village project planning books
City's ten master responses to 98 public letters submitted to the planning department
Newspaper coverage from local publishers
Email outreach

Sutter Park Neighborhood Project
One-on-one meetings with residents who lived adjacent to the project's streets
Meetings hosted by community members in their own houses adjacent to the project site
Meetings with neighborhood associations and other community groups
Initial small meetings (coffee meetings) with stakeholders
Three books that describe East Sacramento neighborhoods history, architecture, trees
Designated webpage with regular project updates
Emails to stakeholders
Informal outreach to community leaders
Newspaper coverage from local publishers (positive articles)
City's line-item responses to four public letters submitted to the planning department.
Street by street flyering

The McKinley Village engagement included neighborhood canvassing, small and large meetings, workshops, townhalls, informational panels with residents and meetings with neighborhood associations and interested parties. One interviewee summarized the outreach: "Phil and Megan [engagement leads] ran a pretty standard civic engagement." In addition to a developer-led engagement, members of the Sacramento City Council also hosted townhalls, informational panels and meetings with their constituents. City staff attended many meetings and provided ten master responses to 98 letters received in support of and in opposition to the project.

The Sutter Park project outreach included coffee meetings with stakeholders, small gatherings with neighbors hosted at the private homes by community members who lived near the project and larger meetings with community members, neighborhood associations and community groups. Developers researched, published and gave away three book bundles describing the history and features of East Sacramento. City staff received four letters and provided line-item responses.

Despite thorough outreach which spanned several years, interested parties and stakeholders, neighborhood organizations, city staff and councilmembers, the community reacted differently. And while the list of engagement activities does not explain how and why the outreach influenced opposition and support, it does reveal that the Sutter Park project had a more targeted engagement of residents living around the development site and prioritized small and one-on-one meetings.

Tactical choices and implementation styles of engagement shape participatory experiences

Choice and format of public meetings stifle or foster dialogue opportunities

Reflecting upon participation in community workshops, small and large meetings, townhalls and speaking panels for the McKinley Village project, interviewees did not recall having a pleasant participatory experience. When asked about the structure of a public meeting or workshop, they could not recall individual elements. Interviewees did remember meetings being controversial and antagonistic: "(…) and they [meetings] would, and they would be kind of contentious. I mean, the people would stand up and they would be all up in arms." There were small and large meetings. They were not welcoming or inviting. According to the interviews, the McKinley Village developers "did meet with folks over time and in small groups and in large groups. And there was just sort of this arrogance (...) [S]tyle was much more debate."

Engagement participants recognized that public participation for the McKinley project was not collaborative: "The kind of interaction between the community that developer was kind of set pretty early on in that, you know, they ran the meetings, so they were kind of telling people the way it was going to be, and that naturally made some people feel left out of the process." Residents saw it as a marketing push to sell the housing proposal to the community: "To me, those were like meetings with the dog and pony show and look how beautiful the project is." The purpose of the meetings and engagement was mostly to inform the community about the project

and ask for feedback on the project design. The contentious nature of meetings kept fueling more opposition. One of the interviewees summed up the frustration with the process: “Big town hall meetings – those turn into a riot really fast. Instead of trying to get input, they were selling the project, pitching. They were pitching it. That is the way all those workshops came across. Every single one.”

The Sutter Park project engagement participants recalled more details about the structure and format of the meetings. There were a series of small group meetings that took place in people’s homes. The setup included blank pieces of chart paper to capture feedback and ideas. The goal was to gradually design the project proposal with the community, learn about community preferences, address community concerns and answer all questions. One interviewee reflected on the experience: “It was a virtual love fest. I mean, everybody, everybody is like, ‘Wow, that’s really nice. What about this? What about, where’s the traffic going to go? And what, how are you going to run the streets?’ And you know, ‘What, what kind of houses are they going to build? Are they going to be mansions? And are there going to be apartment buildings? And these are going to be high density?’ You know, all the questions you expect to be asked were asked.”

Small group meetings with an emphasis on community conversations generated a more positive participant experience. The engagement of neighbors who lived in the boundaries adjacent to the project and who hosted meetings at their homes worked well because it created a space for collaborative planning to turn a development concept into a project proposal while addressing community concerns. One interviewee recalled: “Sutter, they did a bunch of back and forth first and a lot of outreach to sort of ask about people’s concerns and, best they could, they responded to those concerns as far as I could tell.” Large meetings also occurred but after the neighbors living near the project site developed the proposal in a small group workshop

environment: “I think it was pretty much all small groups. And then as the rollout happened and check-ins with the large groups, but there wasn’t any need for any type of community meetings, […] because everybody was on board from the beginning.”

When engaging the public, the choice and format of public meetings can make a difference. The Sutter Park engagement largely focused on small group meetings often hosted by neighbors. Paired with the community conversation format and a goal to design the project with the community while addressing community concerns upfront, this tactical choice generated a positive participatory experience and support. The McKinley Village developers chose more traditional formats that included large public meetings, panel discussion and townhalls. Large workshops and townhalls can be effective if carefully designed to create space for dialogue, listening, acknowledging and valuing feedback. In public meetings that focused on presenting information about the project (promoting the project), participants felt excluded from the process. The negative participatory experience affected the support for the project.

Collaborative community-based project planning paired with listening and dialogue build trust

Listening and dialogue turned out to be a pivotal tactical choice. Paired with community-based project planning, this tactic contributed to a positive, participatory experience in the Sutter Park engagement case. The absence of these elements led to negative participatory experiences and attitudes towards the McKinley Village project. As one interviewee stated: “The style in which you do these things is critically important. I mean, people know when they are being heard, and people know when they are being shut down or handled.” Being heard meant various things. For some it was about having open and authentic dialogue rather than one-way communication. “And it’s not just going through the motions. Where people would go through the motions, it’s like they have their script; they know what they want; they know what they want to hear - sort of

pushing in that direction - as opposed to really having open conversations," said an interviewee when referring to the lack of dialogue in the McKinley Village case. For others, it was about seeing how a project incorporated community suggestions. One interviewee shared this observation about the Sutter Park engagement: "They did a lot of listening, which were important before they actually came back with a detailed proposal." Some linked listening with trust. When talking about the McKinley Village engagement, an interviewee summarized, "And if they listened (…) and thought about a neighborhood… Yeah, then there will be trust."

Through listening and dialogue, the Sutter Park developers learned about community preferences and priorities. The community recognized and appreciated it: "The Stonebridge folks basically went door to door to talk to the people who lived around the hospital and started to kind of build these dialogues. And then they just continued overtime to build these dialogues before they even started drawing a plan as I understand. So, they had a real sense of what the community's concerns and interests were prior to even putting a single drawing down, which I found to be very impressive." Another summarized the power of dialogue and listening in this way: "I think that dialogue about a project is important because once the developers are gone, the people who live in the neighborhoods are the ones who are going to be living with this project. So, I think it's critical that the stakeholders be heard."

Collaborative community-based project planning or co-designing a project with residents early on to ensure that it addresses concerns and blends into the neighborhood was another tactical choice that shaped positive community attitudes towards the Sutter project. "And so, I think that the neighborhood really, they appreciate it when people go out with an idea or with asking questions about what are your ideas rather than just maybe coming up with your own concept, and then taking it to them and saying, 'Okay, provide the feedback' or whatnot. They kind of feel like that they're more part of the process," shared one interviewee. Residents valued

an opportunity to provide feedback on the project concept early on: “If you can go to a neighborhood before you have plans, you get a lot of bonus points for showing up early.” Another interviewee elaborated on what early community-based project planning meant - providing space for community conversations, having feedback loops (seeing how a project incorporates community input) and collaboratively designing a project proposal rather than reacting to a developed plan: “It’s not just - go out early. Ask the neighbors what they want. Incorporate what they have suggested. Go back. Make sure that you’ve visualized what they wanted to see.” Reflecting on why the Sutter Park engagement yielded so much community support, one of the interviewees assessed: “We weren’t ignored. That’s the bottom line.” Incorporating community concerns into the proposal distinguishes an authentic public participation process from one that engages and then ignores. Some refer to the latter as check the box engagement.

The public does not appreciate check the box engagement. In the case of the McKinley Village engagement, the community often recognized that engagement was not authentic. One interview participant shared their experience: “This [community meeting] was more of ‘we are checking the box’ type of thing. Community meetings - check - as opposed to, ‘We’re having a community dialogue; I want to hear what you have to say; let me tell you what I have to say; and let’s see what we can, you know, problem solve.’ So, it didn’t, it didn’t ever feel like the development team was, was really listening.” Another explained how the community knew that their feedback did not matter. Communities in “East Sacramento, Midtown, these are pretty sophisticated people. They kind of know that once the plans are drawn, those are the plans. So, your ability to be able to have any sort of input from them is diminished because they [developers] have already invested all the money in drawing up the plans.” Many were frustrated with the lack of meaningful dialogue and with the engagement process that mainly focused on project promotion. “It wasn’t, ‘We heard what you said; this is how we’re implementing it.’ It

was always like, 'Why don't you like our project?'" The top-down planning process and check the box engagement did not provide space for listening and dialogue. It hindered a positive participatory engagement experience in the McKinley Village case.

Not everyone opposed McKinley Village. Developers did work with the community to identify solutions and address concerns. At the April 2014 Sacramento City Council hearing, a little less than half of the public comments were in favor of the project: "But the Midtown people ended up being pretty satisfied with the mitigation. So, I would say it worked pretty well. And in the end, the East Sacramento wasn't. But some were. I think they [developers] addressed them [concerns] as much as they could." Addressing some of the concerns did help to generate support for the project: "In case of the McKinley Village, it did not, obviously, addressed everyone's concerns, but I would definitely say it [addressing concerns] had an effect." An interviewee shared that community feedback influenced the project: "…but and I think that's where the outreach helped to downsize the project a little bit and certainly affected the design." Another interviewee summed up how the community input shaped the project: "I mean, they've they've done a good job of creating a community that doesn't seem out of place with the existing historic community. I would say, in the end, the nature of the project itself being only housing and commercial and being scaled back to three hundred units certainly addressed the neighbor concerns about traffic and impacts on traffic." Overall, the community was divided in their opposition and support.

However, there could have been more support for McKinley Village because community was willing to work with the developer. "But I would say there were a number of people who actually went in with an open mind and we're willing to listen and learn," shared one interviewee. Some recognized the need and benefits of infill development because they "saw infill development was inevitable." Some interviewees wondered about unexplored creative solutions

to better address community concerns: “I think that if there had been more community engagement prior to the presentation of the plans, I think perhaps there could have been some more creative thinking with regard to how to get that third access.” And some felt a little sad to see unrealized potential: “I felt that really McKinley is a missed opportunity to do something special, do something different, do something.”

Ultimately, a feeling of being ignored contributed to negative community attitudes towards the McKinley Village project. “We [developers] have done that, we’ve done that – involving, informing – then we ignore them [community] because we checked these boxes,” summed up an interviewee. A feeling of being heard in the engagement environment characterized by collaborative dialogue and community-based planning contributed to positive attitudes towards the Sutter Park proposal. As one of the interviewees concluded: “It was very thoughtful in how they created the dialogue between the residents and the development team (…). They took their time to actually have a conversation. And I think it was to their benefit in the end.”

Reputation and communications styles and of project leads matter a lot

The earlier findings revealed that dialogue, listening and community-based planning had a positive impact on community attitudes towards a proposed development. The interview data explained why dialogue was prevalent in one engagement process but not the other. For McKinley, power imbalance and communication styles hindered an opportunity for authentic dialogue and generated mistrust and a negative participatory experience.

The public knew the McKinley Village developer as a savvy and powerful individual with political experience and connections. There was initial mistrust and a perceived historical power imbalance. “It’s kind of a sophisticated group of, you know, of people, and they are kind of known for the work he [Phil Angelides] has done in other areas. And so, I think, unfortunately,

that the team itself brought a little bit of inherent distrust," said one interviewee. Another echoed: "When you go as the developer, there's there's always some baggage especially when, you're known, people know you or they think they know you; so, there's distrust to begin with." Having previously experienced check the box engagements, the public also mistrusted the city: "Someone once told me that the city's mantra is involve and inform and then ignore." Between an influential developer with political connections and perceived ties with the city, the engagement process had no room for open dialogue: "With his [Phil Angelides] political track record all cards were stacked against us in a way." In other words, community did not feel empowered to participate.

Personalities and communication styles of those leading the public engagement impacted participant experiences as well. When describing a person leading McKinley's engagement, interviewees did recognize him as a "smart" and knowledgeable person. They described him as "numbers and teach guy." But interviewees also pointed out the dominance of one-way communication: "(His) style was much more like debate, 'Here is this, this and this, and this is why these issues are not an issue," reflected one interviewee. "There was just sort of this arrogance (…)," echoed another. One interview participant described how assertive communication style effected the engagement experience: "They [McKinley team] ran the meetings. So, they were kind of telling people the way it was going to be, and that naturally made some people feel kind of left out of the process. And in turn, would anger folks, like, 'Why am I coming to this meeting if you're not going to listen to what I say?' That was the tenor and tempo pretty early on, and it never really changed over the course of the meetings."

Sutter Park engagement participants experienced a positive tone from people who ran the meetings. "Genuine," "humble," "extremely well respected," "personable" were some of the adjectives that interviewees used when describing the Sutter Park developer and engagement leads. "Both were about doing a community engagement right," said one interviewee. Another

pointed out an open and inviting communication style: “He was like: ‘Here, we’re here to listen. We’re here to get your input. We need your input. We don’t have all the answers, and, before we start, you know, putting things solid - the proposal or whatever - we want your input.” Communication styles and personality traits played an essential role in nurturing a participatory environment that balanced power dynamics and valued all voices.

Theme 2 conclusion

Engagement tactics, implementation styles and meeting formats were interconnected in ways that shaped community attitudes toward the projects. These elements also reinforced each other. Small, dialogue-focused meetings created the right space for bottom-up project planning. Personable project representatives who prioritized listening, collaboration, addressing concerns and incorporating suggestions helped to create positive participatory experiences and generate community buy-in. The community felt heard. They knew that the developers cared. Collaborative process and the top-down engagement could not co-exist. The choice and format of large public meetings did not foster dialogue. The community felt angry and ignored as their input made no difference. Many concerns were not addressed. As frustration increased, more residents and community groups came to oppose the project.

Conclusion

The public engagement strategy did influence the outcomes of community opposition and support. Even recognizing that the two projects started from separate places with respect to community attitudes, it mattered whether or not developers used a collaborative, bottom-up project planning strategy that focused on dialogue and listening. Meeting format, townhalls or small meetings did matter in the context of creating a space of authentic dialogue and collaborative community-based planning. Still, small meetings, for example, did not automatically guarantee positive outcomes if they were part of a check the box engagement

approach ridden with mistrust, top-down project planning and negative participatory experiences. Tactics and implementation styles including listening, dialogue, community-based project planning, personalities, communication styles and meeting formats fostered positive experiences and collaborative environments. A myriad of interconnected factors including project types, the location's unique features, history of land use development, community opposition and attitudes also influenced the outcomes. With the Sutter Park Neighborhood development, the outcomes might have been varied if the proposed land use project was different. With McKinley Village, the outcomes could have been more positive if the engagement tactics, implementation style and top-down planning approach were different. How one strategizes, designs and implements the engagement process matters.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSION

In Chapter 1, I presented my research question and introduced public engagement concepts. In Chapter 2, I shared scientific studies that looked at public engagement strategies and tactics impacting opposition and support of housing developments. Chapter 3 explained my approach to gathering and analyzing data. In Chapter 4, I presented the findings under two themes: historical starting points and collaborative bottom-up community planning with emphasis on dialogue. In Chapter 5, I will analyze the findings and connect them with the themes identified in the literature review. I will then share additional answers derived from the research that explains why trust, or lack thereof, influences opposition and support. I will wrap up the chapter by providing recommendations, briefly mentioning political and institutional implementation challenges and suggesting topics for future research. Note that this chapter includes quotations from interviewees. See chapter 3 for details about the interview process I used.

Connecting the literature review with thesis research findings

My findings support some of the themes from the literature about the requisites for effective collaboration and dialogue. However, they also suggest that other claims may be overstated. This is especially the case with the claim about broadening participation as one of the strategies to deal with opposition by engaging under-represented voices. East Sacramento had many actively engaged residents. It was a highly active community. The McKinley Village project's outreach was expansive and inclusive of most stakeholders, local community groups and residents. Sutter Park used the approach of targeting and gradual broadening: first engaging a group of residents living around the proposed development in project design, then reaching out to stakeholders and other residents to present the plan and hear additional feedback. Broadening public participation or increasing the outreach did not seem to differentiate the two projects. My

research shows that broadening public participation alone to include a variety of voices representing the community may not lead to desired outcomes of project support. Engaging people directly affected by the proposed development early in planning processes is more imperative than broadening participation to ensure diversity of voices when commenting on a proposed project plan later, for example.

However, my findings strongly support another theme from the literature: effective engagement needs to move beyond simply broadening participation to change *how* people are involved. The McKinley Village and Sutter Park public participation processes included an abundance of engagement and outreach opportunities (see Table 4.1). The distinction was that Sutter Park's engagement centered around dialogue, trust-building and positive participatory experiences. Just like the literature review outlined, to achieve positive outcomes, engagement opportunities needed to focus on generating comfortable and positive experiences, collaborative problem solving and recognizing and addressing concerns via open dialogue. Sutter Park's engagement featured all these elements. My research also shows that communication style, personalities and reputation enabled positive experiences throughout the engagement process in the Sutter Park case. The McKinley Village engagement tactics and implementation style generated less positive experiences and often stifled open dialogue, a precondition for collaboration. Contentious meetings, assertive style and one-way communication of powerful project leads made neighbors feel ignored and overruled. Concurrent with the literature review studies, negative participatory experience and lack of dialogue led to opposition. How engagement and participation make people feel does matter.

My research also supports another theme from the literature: stakeholder collaboration and involvement in actual proposal development is critical. This strategy tends to generate the most preconditions to success. Sutter Park developers implemented authentic public engagement

that focused on collaborative bottom-up project development. The community appreciated an opportunity to collaborate and co-design the housing project. Meaningful engagement focused on listening, dialogue and collaborative community planning led to overwhelming community support of multi-story housing development in the middle of a one-story single-family home neighborhood. As discussed in theme two, this approach was different from the top-down McKinley Village approach. Combined with a more challenging site and a neighborhood with different attitudes, the top-down project planning approach intensified opposition. McKinley Village's check the box engagement with top-down project planning and broken dialogue resulted in a divided neighborhood and heavy community opposition.

In addition, my research found that historical starting points - location, history of opposition and community attitudes and project externalities - were critically important to the success of the public engagement. A more receptive community with less history of public opposition was thrilled with the proposed project that reduced sites intensities generated by hospital activities. The Sutter Park Neighborhood engagement appeared to be "an easier path to success" because it scored community support points upfront. However, the developers never took the initial support for granted and chose to collaborate with the community to co-design the project from the ground up. The community was less thrilled about the McKinley Village project replacing an empty lot. Opposition intensified during the engagement. Toward the end of the engagement "the battle lines were drawn." Even though the two projects started from different places with respect to community attitudes, project externalities and unique features, it mattered whether or not developers used a collaborative, bottom-up project planning approach with emphasis on listening and dialogue.

Trust building is essential to generating community support

Collaborative bottom-up community planning mattered not only because it led to support of infill development but because it generated trust and helped to effectively address community concerns. My research shows that without trust, open dialogue could not exist in the McKinley Village case. Stakeholders rejected data and proposed solutions presented by developers and the City of Sacramento that could have addressed concerns. Power imbalances and top-down engagement generated mistrust and opposition.

Initially, the low levels of community trust in government and developers characterized McKinley Village engagement due to the site's history, nature of the infill development project and the fact that the head of the development company leading the community engagement was a polarizing figure: "The neighbors were not at the table. The developer had a city in their hands." Neighbors felt left out of the process, and trust continued to deteriorate as opposition increased: "That feeling [of not trusting] comes from the fact that from pretty much the first discussion, very little changed. It did not seem like the community had much of an impact upon anything having to do with the project from design, etc." Overall, power imbalances and trust-building were two incompatible concepts. "So, it's kind of an impossible task, with the playing field so uneven."

Mistrust, among other things, affected the process of addressing community concerns in the McKinley Village project. While developers made 52 changes based on community feedback, some perceived these changes as insignificant: "Well, if they [changes], reflected the community [input], we would have heard more positive things from the community about that. No one believes that they [developers] have incorporated anything of substance." Others did not believe that a genuine effort went into finding solutions that would work for the community. One interviewee reflected: "If there is a problem, he [developer] pencils out the financial piece, makes it physically doable. But he never made people feel like he was solving their problem." Many

were disappointed and frustrated with the process: "I don't know that we ever could get to a place where, you know, that we felt like they [developers] were going to make a sincere effort."

Often, McKinley Village engagement participants did not accept the proposed solutions and questioned the explanations behind the inability to implement the solutions. "Uh, so considering the political firepower of those two gentlemen [developers], it's just difficult to believe that they were stopped by the railroad," said one interviewee when discussing building alternative access that required a clearance from the Union Pacific Railroad Company. The community questioned traffic studies. They did not believe the findings: "And [a] good traffic engineer can massage numbers any way you want. It is just statistics and numbers. People read those studies and their eyes glaze over and so do mine." Overall mistrust underlined the opposition: "[The developer] did a lot of public engagement (…); it just never really worked out. They [the community] just don't believe them." Lack of trust in the public participation process, in developers and in local government explains why the opposition was strong in the McKinley Village project: "All the time was wasted on the McKinley Village because they [the community] could not get past what was true and what wasn't true about that project."

The community trusted the Sutter Park engagement process and the people who ran it. By initiating early conversations about site development and partnering up with residents directly impacted by the project to co-design it, the developers signaled that they cared about this community. As a precursor to the engagement, developers researched the history of East Sacramento and published three books about its trees, architectural styles and features. "They were very sensitive to neighborhood styles, history, parks [and other] features. So, they published a guide they could point to," reflected an interviewee. The books also signaled that the developers wanted to prioritize a project that would honor neighborhood character and legacy: "And when

they showed up with the books, the assumption was that whatever they would do will be of high quality, is reinforced."

The books helped to establish trust initially: "I don't think that was just all pretty pictures. I think there was substance to them. I think the neighborhood would have perceived that they were being taken a bit more seriously." Co-designing the project proposal with the community also helped to build trust: "And so it just shows people that you're not just drawing something in a vacuum and basing all of your decisions on profitability, and like what you want to do, but that you're also, like, looking at how does my project fit into the neighborhood, and how does this make it, you know, wonderful, not only for future residents but for existing residents too." Positive participatory experiences that included being heard and addressing concerns were central to building trust: "But, you know, I think everyone in this process would come away with a positive feeling, because the project itself was so popular, but also that any, any particular, as far as I can tell, any particular objections or refinements that we we asked for were incorporated or, or at least considered, and, and responded to."

It was apparent that Sutter Park "had an easier path to success" and less challenging engagement due to the more favorable historical starting points and project features. However, the Sutter Park engagement team and developers never took it for granted and invited the community to partner up on the project development and design. They also had the time and resources to do that. The Sutter Park team listened with empathy. They engaged in dialogue. They built trust. The community felt heard. The community was heard.

The McKinley Village developers and engagement team faced a more challenging infill site due to different historical starting points and project economics. Asking the community to react and ultimately support the proposed plan did not resonate with those who distrusted the

government and developers. As the engagement unfolded, unresolved concerns and broken dialogue generated polarization and deepened mistrust.

Recommendations

When planning and executing community engagement, developers and government agencies should consider including the following elements:

Early community-based planning and project design

- Engage directly impacted residents and stakeholders in the earliest stages of project development.
- As possible, start with a "blank paper" approach that includes open-ended questions and visioning exercises to hear community ideas, best-case scenarios and preferences.
- Ideally, do not come to the community with pre-developed plans. If some aspects of a project are pre-determined, be clear about what is negotiable and what is not.
- Form partnerships with residents directly impacted by the project; seek to "co-design" the project.

Dialogue-centered participation

- Design and execute an engagement process that focuses on authentic and open dialogue.
- Prior to large meetings, have one-on-one conversations with community members to better understand underlying concerns.
- Incorporate empathetic and reflective listening, acknowledging concerns, addressing questions and framing positive outcomes in all informal and formal meetings when engaging your community.
- Consider less-traditional meeting formats to support dialogue: round tables rather than rows of seats, or a series of smaller gatherings rather than very large meetings.

Authentic collaboration

- Include dialogue and deliberation opportunities to share community knowledge and lived experiences and explore community proposed solutions. Consider less traditional avenues for gathering knowledge such as local community events, an outdoor movie screening, or a craft fair.
- Approach community engagement as a partnership process that emphasizes listening and learning from the community. Reframe your engagement from the transactional collection of input to relationship building. Avoid the top-down “decide-develop-defend" approach.

Trust-building

- Trusting the process:
    - Make the engagement process transparent.
    - Close communication loops by responding to all comments.
    - Provide ongoing project updates, at least quarterly.
    - Provide equitable access to engagement opportunities. Ensure that people directly impacted by a project are engaged early. Design meetings and workshops that create positive participatory experiences and allow participants to be heard.
- Trusting the people running the process:
    - Be mindful of, and seek to minimize, power imbalances.
    - Hire a professional, impartial and trusted facilitator(s) to run the meeting(s).
    - Explore opportunities to connect and build relationships; get to know residents and learn their values.
    - Be reachable, responsive, empathetic and honest. Own your mistakes.
- Trusting the outcomes:

  - Manage participants' expectations by clarifying how the feedback will influence the final project design.
  - Do a reality check since not all community proposed solutions and asks are going to be feasible.
  - Strive to have the final project reflect community values and priorities. In other words, deliver a project that matters to the community.

Engagement quality over quantity

- For infill development projects, prioritize engaging residents immediately impacted by the proposed project. Focus on targeted engagement that creates a positive experience.
- Give preference to small group, informal meetings.
- Consider facilitated listening sessions that allow residents to express their concerns, feelings and experiences.
- Ensure feedback is brought back to the community to support residents to "feel heard."
- For controversial projects, avoid large townhalls and forums.

Political and institutional implementation challenges

Time and resources

Authentic and meaningful engagement that emphasizes trust-building, collaboration and dialogue may not always be feasible because it takes time and resources. Staffing within a government agency may be lacking both from a personnel point of view as well as community engagement expertise. Often, planning department staff have not had formal public engagement training.

Lack of requirements for authentic engagement

Project economics may trump bottom-up project design, community-proposed solutions and investments in collaborative engagement. Without engagement policies and requirements,

there might be an inclination to do the bare minimum. Local governments approve infill housing development applications, but they do not build or prescribe how developers engage the community unless there are internal public engagement policies that require authentic engagement strategies and tactics beyond the Brown Act public hearings and mandated notices.

Lack of trust

Public trust in government's ability "to do what is right" is low (Pew Research Center, 2021). Communities also distrust developers. When it comes to infill development projects, the lack of trust is often intertwined because while developers design and build the project and local governments issue permits and approve housing applications. Unless local government agencies and developers prioritize and institutionalize trust-building throughout their operations, mistrust and past negative engagement experiences or "hangover from old days" will continue to affect future projects and engagement even though the faces of the development teams and government representatives change.

Study limitations and future research

This study does have some limitations. First, the findings from this case study cannot be used to draw causality between public engagement processes and building local support for proposed developments. Each instance of community opposition or support is unique due to the local socio-economic and political contexts. Each instance of community engagement requires a customized public engagement strategy and intentional tactical choices. Second, a variety of factors can determine support for a proposed project. Public engagement is one of them. Thus, the study is not representative of how to generate support for housing proposals or prevent opposition to housing developments. This thesis provides an insight into how the public engagement process might contribute to the success of proposed housing development projects and meaningfully engage groups that both oppose and support the project.

There is a need for more scientific research to better understand public engagement process influences community support and opposition to infill development. While the claims of health, safety, declining property values and increased traffic traditionally drive opposition movements, one must peel back more layers to understand why people really oppose projects. In the City of Sacramento alone, there are several interesting public engagement case studies for future research. One can look at engaging the public around building two hospitals in the middle of two Sacramento neighborhoods – Sutter General Hospital in Midtown and Mercy General Hospital in East Sacramento – another fascinating case of community opposition and support. While my research sought to understand why residents opposed McKinley Village, future research can identify whether public engagement helped generate support among McKinley Village projects supporters.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to understand the following: what is the role of public engagement in generating community support of and opposition to infill housing proposals? Specifically, I considered how the public engagement strategy influenced community opposition to and support of two infill housing development projects in East Sacramento. My research found that historical context was critically important to engagement success. Additionally, a public engagement strategy that incorporated authentic collaboration, early bottom-up community planning, open dialogue, listening and positive participatory experiences led to buy-in. Through these processes, the engagement and developer teams built trust, addressed concerns and achieved community support. A top-down strategy, lack of listening, absence of open dialogue and prevailing mistrust led to opposition.

I started Chapter 1 with the quote: "Debates and controversies over housing proposals begin when people in the community have questions, concerns, fears or doubts about the

proposal." Addressing concerns is a vital part of every engagement. And while many concerns are common across infill housing development projects, the process of addressing concerns and alleviating fears is different in each unique community. Therefore, historical and community context must inform public engagement strategy. An engagement strategy that focuses only on the "what" of public engagement - number of engagement events, participants and input metrics - is not a suitable approach. To be successful, the engagement strategy/process should focus on implementation tactics and style, or the "how" of public engagement: how to acknowledge the past; how to create positive and meaningful participation for all; how to collaborate; how to engage both supporters and the opposition in authentic dialogue; how to listen and build trust.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

I am researching two infill developments: McKinley Village and Sutter Park Neighborhood (Sutter Park). Both housing developments are located in East Sacramento. The purpose of the research is to understand the role that public engagement played in these two projects. Specifically, how the public engagement processes influenced two different outcomes of community support and opposition. I am interviewing people who were directly involved in the process: elected officials, staffers, community members and other key stakeholders. Your response will be kept confidential. Nothing that you say will be attributed to your personally or to the entity that you represent (or represented).

A. First, I would like to get a better sense of your involvement in this project (or both projects) - 5 min.

- What was your official capacity for involvement? Were you involved in both projects? Tell me about your role in both projects.

B. Now I will ask you some general questions about the two projects - 15 min.

- Can you tell me about the community engagement in the Sutter Park Neighborhood Project?
    - What were the major community concerns?
    - How were these concerns addressed or not addressed?
- Can you tell me about the community engagement in the McKinley Village Project?
    - What were the major community concerns?
    - How were these concerns addressed or not addressed?
- Why do you think that the Sutter Park project received community support, but the McKinley Village project did not?

C. Let's spend the remaining time talking about public engagement components. Both projects had extensive public outreach and engagement - 25 min.

- Who conducted the various public engagement efforts/ activities?
- What are some of the public engagement activities that you observed or were part of?
- Based on your observations (and/or scope of involvement), were there any differences or similarities in the approach to public engagement for these two projects? In other words, how different or similar was the public participation process?

Probes

Shifting attitudes through public engagement

- Have you observed changes in community attitude as the projects unfolded? What might have influenced such change?
- Was there a specific process technique or public engagement component that, in your opinion, shifted this attitude?

Mitigating community concerns and addressing interests

- To what extent did the public engagement process help address or not address the community's concerns?
- What role did the public engagement process play in addressing community interests?

Effective and ineffective elements of engagement

- What were some of the community engagement components that were effective in generating support for the projects? Why?
- What were some of the community engagement components that were not effective? Why?
- Overall, how critical was the public engagement? Why do you think so? Can you elaborate on this a little more?

- Is there anything else that is important to know to understand the role of community engagement?

D. I would like to wrap up with some key takeaways from this experience and lessons learned - 15 min.

- Reflecting on these two projects, what should have been done differently?
- What are the lessons learned?
- What are potential policy recommendations?
    - For example, formal policies such as city ordinances, city resolutions.
    - For example, informal policies (city's best practices, city's internal processes, city's capacity to implement public engagement, partnerships with developers to engage residents).
- Reflecting back, do you think the community was right in their support and opposition of the projects? Why do you feel this way?
- Is there is anything else you would like to tell me that I have not covered?
- Whom else should I be talking to?

Thank you for you time. Please let me know if I can follow up with you if I have any clarifying questions?

Appendix B: Interview Worksheets

Scenario 1 **An Interviewee Participated in Both Engagements**											
A. Your involvement in this project											
What was your official capacity for involvement?	Were your involved in both projects?	Tell me about your role in both projects?									
B. General questions about two projects											
Can you tell me about the community engagement in the Sutter Park Neighborhood Project?	What were the major community concerns?	How these concerns were addressed or not addressed?	Can you tell me about the community engagement in the McKinley Village Project?	What were the major community concerns?	How these concerns were addressed or not addressed?	Why do you think that the Sutter Park project received community support but the McKinley Village project generated a lot of opposition?					
C. Public engagement components											
			PROBES: Shifting attitudes through public engagement		***PROBES: Mitigating community concerns and addressing interests***		***PROBES: Effective and ineffective elements of engagement***				
Who conducted the various public engagement efforts/ activities?	What are some of the public engagement activities that you observed or were part of?	Based on your observations (and/or scope of involvement), were there any differences or similarities in the approach to public engagement for these two projects? In other words, how different or similar was the public participation process?	Have you observed changes in community attitude as the projects unfolded? What might have influenced such change?	Was there a specific process technique or public engagement component that, in your opinion, shifted this attitude?	To what extent did the public engagement process help address or not address the community's concerns?	What role did the public engagement process play in addressing community interests?	What were some of the community engagement components that were effective? Why?	What were some of the community engagement components that were not effective? Why?	Describe specific components of community engagement that, in your opinion, helped to generate support or/and opposition to the projects.	Overall, how critical was the public engagement? Why do you think so? Can you elaborate on this a little more?	Is there anything else that is important to know to understand the role of community engagement?
D. Key takeaways; lessons learned; policy recommendations											
Reflecting on these two projects, what should have been done differently?	What are the lessons learned?	What are potential policy recommendations? *If resident: What would you recommend to your local government about how to approach and carry out public engagement around housing development?*		Reflecting back, do you think the community was right in their support and opposition of the projects?	Why do you feel this way?	Is there is anything else you would like to tell me that I have not covered?	Whom else should I be talking to?				
		For example, formal policies such as city ordinances	For example, informal policies (city's best practices, city's internal processes, city's capacity to implement public engagement)								

Scenario 2 **An Interviewee Participated in One Engagement**											
A. Your involvement in this project											
What was your official capacity for involvement?	Were your involved in both projects?	Tell me about your role in the project.									
B. General questions about two projects											
Can you tell me about community engagement in the Sutter Park/ McKinley Project?	What were the major community concerns?	How these concerns were addressed or not addressed?	Why do you think that the Sutter Park project received community support but the McKinley Village project generated a lot of opposition?								
C. Public engagement components											
		PROBES: Shifting attitudes through public engagement			***PROBES: Mitigating community***			***PROBES: Effective and ineffective***			
Who conducted the various public engagement efforts/ activities?	What are some of the public engagement activities that you observed or was part of?	Have you observed changes in community attitude as the project unfolded? What might have influenced such change?	Was there a specific process technique or public engagement component that, in your opinion, shifted this attitude?	To what extent did the public engagement process help address or not address the community's concerns?	What role did the public engagement process play in addressing community interests?	What role did the public engagement process played in enhancing community values?	What were some of the community engagement components that were effective? Why?	What were some of the community engagement components that were not were effective? Why?	Describe specific components of community engagement that, in your opinion, helped to generate support or/and opposition to the project.	Overall, how critical was the public engagement? Why do you think so? Can you elaborate on this a little more?	Is there anything else that is important to know to understand the role of community engagement?
D. Key takeaways; lessons learned; policy recommendations											
Reflecting on this project, what should have been done differently?	What are the lessons learned?	What are potential policy recommendations? *If resident: What would you recommend to your local government about how to approach and carry out public engagement around housing development?*		Reflecting back, do you think the community was right in their support and opposition of the project?	Why do you feel this way?	Is there is anything else you would like to tell me that I have not covered?	Whom else should I be talking to?				
		For example, formal policies such as city ordinances policies such as city ordinances	For example, informal policies (city's best practices, city's internal processes, city's capacity to implement public engagement)								

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