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President, Los Angeles City Council
COUNCIL DISTRICT 13



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ACTIVISTS BEAT BACK LAUSD SCHOOL SITE “RIGHT SITE COALITION” WINS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT IN ECHO PARK

Persuaded by a coalition of neighborhood activists, elected officials and homeowners who saw their homes condemned, a Los Angeles County Superior Court judge has ordered the Los Angeles Unified School District to do a full environmental review of a controversial school site in Echo Park.

“Our schools must be built together with the community, for the benefit of our children, our neighborhoods, and our urban fabric,” said Council President Eric Garcetti. “The proposal for site 9A was flawed from the start. I applaud the decision.”

“We got an early holiday present in court,” said Christine Peters, an Echo Park Neighborhood Council member who led the Right Site Coalition. “The decision pays tribute to the coalition of homeowners, civic leaders and preservationists who kept fighting for justice in Echo Park, aided by attorney Robert Silverstein and Council President Eric Garcetti, and surviving on only perseverance and a shoestring budget.”

Jesus Villanueva grew up on Mohawk Street and lived there for 26 years before moving in the face of the project. “The people who lived in the area knew it was a bad plan that put children’s lives at stake,” he said. “We are so glad that the Right Site Coalition has prevailed.”

“It’s a bittersweet victory, coming after my parents had to leave the home that they lived in for many years, and after they put such hard work into their home and neighborhood,” said Ben Barragan, the son of homeowners Benjamin and Ana Barragan, who lived on Santa Ynez St. for over 30 years, and whose property was condemned.

The decision by Judge Daniel Solis Pratt, Los Angeles County Superior Court, granted a writ of mandate that compels LAUSD to do a full environmental impact report on the Site 9A proposal, and that voids LAUSD’s approvals up to this point.

“I believe LAUSD has a moral obligation to restore these properties to their rightful owners,” said Robert P. Silverstein of the The Silverstein Law Firm in Pasadena, who represented the Right Site Coalition in this case.

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The Right Site Coalition consists of homeowners, property owners, residents, tenants, business people, and civic organizations affected by LAUSD's proposed Central Region Elementary School #14 in Echo Park at Site 9A. The Right Site Coalition's members also include the Echo Park Historical Society and members of the Echo/Elysian Neighborhood Council and Echo Park Improvement Association.

The location covers a neighborhood bounded by Alvarado, Marathon, Santa Ynez and Mohawk streets.

The judge ruled in favor of the coalition's argument with regard to six grounds: Traffic; public services (specifically, impairment to Fire Station 20's emergency route and response time); pedestrian safety; population and housing; cultural and historic resources; and land use and planning.

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