

**Swap Meets, Flea Markets, and Open-Air Public Markets:
A Community and Economic Development Model for Low-Income
and Underserved Neighborhoods**

By

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B.A. in Political Science
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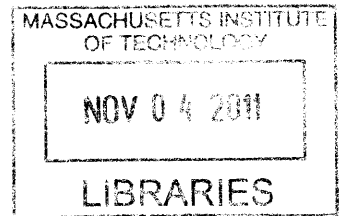
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Abstract

Swap meets, a type of public marketplace, are sites that provide low income and minority communities a place to buy and sell affordable merchandise, as well as create a regular meeting space. In particular, open-air swap meets are places where many social networks form between individuals of different ages, residency status, cultures, and race.

From my personal experience of growing up selling with my family in a swap meet in California over eighteen years, I believe that these sites have the potential to serve a greater purpose in their respective communities; one in which they occupy not solely an economic niche, but also incorporate social and cultural programs that serve even the most disadvantaged groups in society. Currently, it appears that only a few swap meets have taken advantage of the potential for creating dynamic places where patrons and participants can partake in activities not solely concerned with buying or selling goods. These “best practice” swap meets understand the value of having a lively environment and the importance of using the physical space innovatively. They open up the venue for performing musicians and non-profit groups to outreach and fundraise, as well as expose the interesting resources and talents that exist within the vending site. These types of activities could benefit other swap meets by increasing awareness as to what makes the community a great place to live and engaging participants in cultural and social resources. In short, a strategy like this improves the overall quality of life for everyone inside the swap meet community and the neighborhood as well.

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“All of us—we should do everything we can to make sure this country lives up to our children's expectations.”

–Barack Hussein Obama, 44th President of the United States

Biographical Note

Jeffrey Juárez was born and raised in South Central Los Angeles. Prior to arriving at DUSP, he worked as an English and Math instructor for an after school program teaching students, primarily Latino and Black, basic academic skills as well as helping to cultivate their inherent potential and creativity to succeed at higher grade levels and onto college. Jeff is the son of immigrants who came to the United States from El Salvador during the 1970s, which was a period of heavy economic and political pressures. His upbringing and encounters with relevant planning issues in an urban and immigrant community, including civil uprisings in 1992 that resulted in much of his community being burned down, problems relating to gang violence, discrimination towards undocumented immigrants and African American communities, and the overall stasis in effecting economic and community revitalization heavily influences his desire in becoming an urban planner. Jeff greatly values his dual identity as an American citizen and as a product of modest working-class immigrants because they shaped his ideology and philosophy that involves working with communities (regardless its socioeconomic or political status) in a manner that is collaborative and reciprocal. Thus rather than attempting a top-down or bottom-up approach, he is interested in learning about how horizontal relationships can create both sustainable and socially equitable communities.

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I also want to say thank you to the other actors that played a huge part in my time at MIT and who understood where I was coming from and kept me focused and motivated to complete this chapter in my life. Included is my Students of Color (SCC) friends and colleagues, in particular my fellow co-chair Stefanie Ritoper, as well as Athena Ullah, and Elijah Hutchingson—you three were always there to encourage me and make me laugh—thank you! I also want to thank the following special people: Alexis Taylor, Brian, Drew, Rob, Dorian, Will Chin, Miriam, Farzana, John Arroyo, Sole Mendez, Sarah Lince, Barika, Kristal Peters, Nick, and Ben. Thanks to my custodian friends (Maria, Tencho, Virgil, Dawn, and Elijah) for keeping me company and inspiring me by your hard work.

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A mis padres : Gracias por siempre enseñarme a que nunca me aquite y que siempre me recuerde de los tiempos difíciles que hemos sobrepasdo. Nunca me olvidare de donde vengo y siempre los tendré a ustedes en mi corazon. ¡ Que viva el espirito Latino e inmigrante pa' siempre!.

To the love of my life Sonia Perez: You've been by my side for eight short years. Yet, these last two years at MIT were the most trying for both of us and I love you so much more for ALWAYS being there for me and for being so patient. This thesis is also for you.



Chapter 1: Introduction

I grew up selling women's undergarments alongside my parents at outdoor swap meets in the city of Los Angeles. On weekends, the three of us would wake up before the sun had risen and hop into an old sky-blue 1989 Chevy G-20 that was packed from floor-to-ceiling with the merchandise and supplies. We hardly missed a weekend. The two communities we sold at were in the El Monte and San Fernando valleys, which were about an hour away from home. Once we arrived at each site, we quickly set up a tent constructed from aluminum pipes and a large nylon tarp at a designated spot my parents paid for monthly. I helped my mom unpack and display the merchandise and plastic mannequins wearing lingerie. We tried doing this before the venue opened to the public. After a ten-hour work schedule, and once the sun was setting, it was time to pack up all of the things and head home. This was the typical routine week-in and week-out.

What is a Swap Meet?

Swap meets are underappreciated and little understood assets that are found in many low-to-moderate income communities. They are just now beginning to gain the attention within urban studies and planning circles. Although indoor swap meets do exist, and are covered in this research, for the most part the focus throughout this thesis is on open-air markets situated on large plots of privately owned land. This land often serves different functions—a parking lot during the week, a drive-in theatre in the evenings, or at times serve as the site for a county fair or carnival during specific seasons. Vendors take up a majority of the space at swap meets—these are typically small independent entrepreneurs who have full-time jobs during the week, but take

advantage of the opportunity to sell new or used merchandise (anything from clothing, electronics, furniture, automotive parts, tools, and anything in between) to make a supplemental income. The demographic of the entrepreneurs varies, though it often reflects low- and moderate-income groups of people in the community or nearby areas. These groups include both white and non-white racial and ethnic groups, undocumented immigrants and their children, senior citizens, people with criminal records (which can also include former gang-affiliated members), individuals with low education levels, single parents, temporarily unemployed people, and a combination of these groups. These vendors provide the local community with affordable products. Business on swap meet premises is generally conducted in an informal manner with cash-only transactions or prices that can be negotiated between vendors and patrons. However, some markets are slowly evolving and now include acceptance of more formal payment methods, such as Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) vouchers.

In general, swap meets help fill a financial gap for marginalized communities by creating economic opportunities for individuals who otherwise might not have access to them. In the case of my parents, the swap meet was a vehicle for them to lawfully earn an extra income in order to pay for invaluable goods and services. Without a swap meet economy, they, like many other vendors, would have most likely struggled to achieve a similar level of success. While swap meets do not guarantee success or wealth, they do help families from socially disadvantaged, economically strapped, or resource-deficient neighborhoods (including immigrant households, failing school systems, gang-afflicted neighborhoods, and limited healthcare opportunities) to supplement weekly income

streams. In short, they help make life more bearable. In the case of my family's experience, we saved up the money made at the swap meet and used it to support family in El Salvador (e.g. transforming my grandmothers one-story shack into a large two-story house), send me to private parochial school rather than an inner-city public school, and put a down payment on a mortgage for a modest house in South Central Los Angeles. Hence, swap meets can function as a positive force for families and individuals to take a step towards the "American Dream".

Untapped Potential for Swap Meets to Serve as Community Hubs

When I decided to leave behind the life of the swap meet at the age of eighteen, I thought that I was closing a chapter of my life for good. However, the fact that I am now, ten years later, revisiting this topic attests to the positive impact these venues have left on my life and how powerful their role is in disadvantaged communities, even today. Yet the great potential of swap meets, in terms of both the physical and social space created, has largely gone unnoticed or under-appreciated. Thus, my underlying motivation in writing this thesis is that by initiating an academic dialogue on the topic more urban planners, swap meet owners, and policy-makers will realize this potential and take action towards making these venues an even greater asset in their host communities.

Despite their primary role of serving the community as a commercial enterprise, swap meets are more than a business model. The swap meet is a cohesive meta-community within a larger neighborhood that is strongly connected via longstanding

social networks and a unique culture. These networks and culture not only refer to the vendors, but involve the swap meet staff (e.g. managers, administrators, security, and custodians), as well as the patrons or visitors from both local and distant areas that attend the swap meet.

A swap meet is in many ways a very intimate affair. It is not uncommon to visit an outdoor swap meet on a weekend and come across entire families who treat the venue as a destination place for recreation. One of the more interesting things I remember seeing as a kid was the sight of families arriving straight from Sunday Mass all dressed up in their church attire while walking through the aisles and “window shopping” or eating concession stand food. Swap meets are places where both youth and couples go to spend some time together strolling aisles not necessarily to shop but to be seen. They would treat the swap meet space as a recreation area, much like a park. Disadvantaged communities—particularly those in Los Angeles—are often situated in areas that are deficient in amenities, resources, or attractions. These are communities that lack or are far from beautiful parks, beaches, museums, libraries, or flower gardens. Also, alternative substitutes require spending money that may not be available in the household; such destinations include theme parks or movie theaters. Outdoor swap meet therefore occupy a convenient and affordable recreation niche in many communities. They help create an informal and ephemeral civic space—a community hub—during weekends or even weekdays. In addition, swap meets become fascinating places where thousands (even hundreds of thousands) of diverse individuals come

together to shop on a weekend, but also to relax and use much-needed public space (regardless of the fact that it is located on private land).

The swap meet welcomes, harnesses, and creates human capital from the people who enter. For a lot of youth or day laborers the swap meet is the first real job they obtain. Whether it involves assisting the vendors or working formally as swap meet personnel, it is a first chance at making some money. Aside from that, the uniqueness of the venue and its implications of opportunity, mean that it attracts and promotes diversity among the groups that sell, visit, and work there. The space is filled with vendors of all nationalities living in the city, or at least those in the vicinity, hence it means that different groups can come into contact with one another regardless of the barriers created by language or the differences in cultures, races, or ethnicities. In fact, differences are an asset of the swap meet because they allow a good amount of learning to occur and promote shared experiences among the groups. These experiences can often develop into longtime friendships among vendors, staff, and patrons. Also, children, particularly those that sell with their parents, grow up with each other at the site and become close friends that share in play activities while there is down time and also might work for each others' parents. On a personal note, my first boss was a Korean kitchen appliance vendor from whom I learned a lot about marketing strategies as well as traditional cuisines from his country. My parents also often made friendships with day laborers from various countries in Central America and Mexico and we often visited their homes for parties long after they stopped working for us. All in all, swap meets cannot be thought of or minimized as just another type of business model—

this would be a far too simple argument and ignore the multidimensional significance that the venue holds in the lives of many people.

Community Programming within Swap Meets

Interestingly, although swap meets clearly occupy an important role within the communities they are found in, they fall short in offering or promoting programming that would serve the public welfare of the people who step onto the premises. This is a rather peculiar thing considering that some venues, especially the larger outdoor markets, attract tens of thousands of people from the local community and surrounding areas. Without overlooking that swap meets are private business models, these unique neighborhood hubs, especially in disadvantaged areas, warrant more creative innovation to provide a space for community development groups, non-profit organizations, and other agencies that seek to bring vital services to the residents in one central location on a consistent basis. It is as if owners of the swap meet sites either do not fully grasp the potential positive impact on the area the venues can create. In addition, they may not be taking into consideration the potential economic benefits these changes might lead to such as better public relations, more customers, and greater profits. However, it could be that they are risk averse and afraid of losing profits. This is especially evident at the outdoor swap meets that remain relatively the same as they have in the past, meaning that some public markets continue to exist as an agglomeration of small entrepreneurs brought together private land with the purpose of attracting customers. Whatever the case, without a secondary purpose some swap meets miss out on an opportunity and thus offer nothing more than an economic

advantage to a relatively small amount of individuals compared to the neighborhood as a whole. They ignore the social and cultural issues that are also important to address in the swap meet space which no doubt spills over into different neighborhoods.

Yet, a central challenge of this research is to move beyond a limited perception, or, better yet, conception, about swap meets. My focus on collecting research and information depended on finding if there are swap meets right now that address social concerns. More importantly, I asked myself “what do these sites look like on the ground?” By investigating and analyzing both qualitative data and case studies, we can better understand how swap meets operate and focus on the ones that are pushing for a more socially-conscious or integrated approach in various communities.

Research and evidence from the case studies support the argument that swap meets cater to, and provide opportunities for, people in distressed or disadvantaged neighborhoods. However, these markets remain an informal or undervalued public space. Many participants share similar experiences dealing with social and political challenges including: lack of employment, immigration status (or sense of belonging), racial or ethnic tensions, educational attainment, financial hardships, health-care access, crime prevalence, housing issues, and blight (or threat of gentrification). However, in order to become a truly public space, information and ideas need to be shared within that space (Kohn 2003). Currently, within the majority of outdoor and indoor swap meets much of this sharing happens informally or on an individual basis, rather than through formal channels.

The people shopping and selling in the swap meets are often the same ones who face living in an information-deficient environment and very often they know little about the resources that exist in the community or who they should turn to for help during times of need and crisis. Furthermore, the aspirations and concerns within the swap meet are as diverse as the people who make them up. There are vendors who want to open up their own businesses (my mother included) but they either do not know how to initiate this process or do not know who to trust if they do have the financial means in place to make this happen. In addition, many participants (including vendors, patrons, and day laborers) within the swap meet face complications relating to their legal status which can trickle down into other areas of their lives such as family needs such as medical services or educational attainment. These basic needs are often foregone in order to avoid fearful penalties and limitations like deportation or high expenses from bills.

Admittedly, the world has changed from the time I used to sell with my parents, and acquiring information is relatively easier and more straightforward today. The Internet makes finding and using valuable information a few keywords and click of the mouse away. For instance, if a person needs a certain business address or wants to check the track record of a school, a medical practice, or a professional, they can Google a word or phrase. The result is a vast amount of up-to-the-minute information through a variety of channels such as business listings, research papers, maps, or (pseudo-) encyclopedia pages (e.g. Wikipedia). And yet, despite the ease and speed at which finding data is improving, in reality many people have trouble accessing (or

knowing how to access) information. As a result, they cannot reach essential resources to help meet certain challenges.

For non-native English speakers or under-educated individuals (particularly the senior or pre-adolescent generations) access to a computer is difficult and basic technology skills such as how to use the Internet—or even the ability to type—are often lacking. The improvement in technology and means of communicating ideas or information, such as portable phones with wireless Internet or electronic books, fails to reach these in-need or at-risk populations and therefore makes the role of community organizations and social services in the area more important. It is up to these groups to provide the community with the needed information, skills, and experts at their disposal.

To put it simply: there is a spatial mismatch which swap meets can help tackle. Resources needed to alleviate and address important problems in disadvantaged areas are available but located in parts of the neighborhood that residents do not visit often or they are not centralized with other programs (which could make it easier for residents to know what is available to them). The community organizations are limited to the physical sites they rent and operate out of; they may be in a neighborhood ready to serve the area, but geographically isolated from their target groups. In contrast, the swap meet is a central location where thousands of residents from the area and surrounding neighborhoods come together, yet there is either little or no kind of social and community services available to residents because those benefits are found outside the venue. Presumably, many of these people are the target groups that the outside

organizations want to interact with and help. The question that emerges from this conundrum is “Why are the people and the place not more integrated?”

Research Question

This thesis will attempt to figure out if there is a way to bridge together the spatial gap between residents and community organizations mentioned above by focusing on the role that swap meets occupy as community hubs in their respective neighborhoods. In order to address this challenge, I explore and attempt to answer to the following research questions:

Research Question 1:

Are there currently any swap meets in California that offer non-vending activities?

In particular, do any of the venues have community service or information components to them that could be valuable to participants?

Research question 2:

What likely factors are contributing towards making it possible to incorporate these kind of activities in swap meets?

In addition, there are some important sub-questions that also deserve attention including:

- **Why would some swap meets have non-vending activities and not others?**
- **Why are some more successful in these non-vending endeavors than others?**
- **What importance does location, size, and design of the swap meet play in determining the availability of non-vending activities?**

Together, the research questions and sub-questions are pieces to a much larger process of answering, “How can we expand programming of swap meets to include social services, community group information, and other opportunities on-site?” This thesis therefore sets out to cover just a portion of this important issue.

Essentially, the research question and sub-question emerged from my interested in learning how to leverage the people and resources that are already rooted in a community. This curiosity led me to focus on swap meets and how to transform these venues into greater assets in the neighborhood, assets that serve not just an economic function, but also a social service or community development function. By analyzing several case studies, the research is intended to function as a learning tool in what works and what does not and better understand how to plan swap meets in an information and resource generating fashion.

Several variables were selected to help identify key information which I am certain are helpful towards creating a typology swap meets equipped to handle providing non-vending activities on their property. These variables include the physical size, type (indoor or outdoor), proximity to residences or businesses, evidence of non-vending activities, number of vendors, number of patrons, and days of operation. Locating any or all of these things will offer valuable information and help get closer towards answering the broader question about expanding non-vending services at other swap meets.

Why Study this Issue?

In many inner-city communities, such as in Los Angeles, there is a huge need for access to resources and information. Communities, particularly poor, immigrant communities of color have a void in these assets. There are few real hubs for residents to find amenities or services (e.g. health, education, employment, immigration, or other services) that are conveniently available in their neighborhood. Residents feel as if there are few options to confront common challenges including mediocre schools, crime-

riddled neighborhoods, understaffed libraries, unhealthy restaurants, and overcrowded medical facilities.

Conversely, while strong social networks and human capital are abundant in swap meets, they tend to go unnoticed or under-appreciated by outsiders as well as by urban planners and policymakers. This is wasted potential that could be harnessed if different people and organizations came together.

Swap meets have the potential to meet the challenge of providing opportunities for people that are in desperate need of resources, yet lack the accessibility to take advantage of them. By updating the current use of space in swap meets that was originally established for purely economic purposes, a new asset can emerge that creates a greater good for the whole area, where outside community organizations or city services are able to engage with the vendors, patrons, and residents, thus making the place better than it was before.



Chapter 2: Literature Review

The scholarly research that currently exists on swap meets and public markets, in general, is rather sparse. When viewed from an urban planning perspective especially one focused on land use and community engagement tactics it is evident that much of the published works are relatively new and uncharted territory. If such themes do emerge in the academic discussions, they are often covered superficially within a chapter of a larger work or only a small section of an on-line resource.

Regardless of the depth or the scope that swap meets receive, there is evidence of noteworthy ideas and critiques that are covered in this section. Once again, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate and try to answer the question of what kinds of swap meets in California currently offer non-vending activities, what are these activities, and can other swap meets expand their programming to carry out the same model. The following sections will look at what scholars and experts of public markets write regarding the role of swap meets.

Definition of Swap Meets

Swap meets are one kind of venue within a larger scope of what some scholars classify as “public markets”. There are various types of venues which appear similar to swap meets but which are recognized by different names and may be managed in different ways by its ownership. This is something worth noting because people who have visited or shopped at a swap meet may not realize they attended one if it utilizes a different moniker. For example, other names often associated with swap meets include flea market, rummage sale, outdoor market, auction, indoor market, open-air market, sales yard, market place, and *mercados*, *pulgas*, and *remates* (these last three are in

Spanish). Farmers markets, particularly those that include vending stalls not selling edible or organic products, can also be considered as being swap meets. As the name of some of these imply, many public markets can be found either indoors or outdoors or within any region (urban, suburban, or rural).

Ownership of the markets market can be either public or private, but within each type there are important differences. Pyle and Sweet both argue that while terms such as municipal market, public market, and farmers markets are used inter-changeably, it's important to clarify the nuances. Municipal markets are places, sites, or buildings which cities or government agencies rent to vendors in order to sell food under the city's supervision. In contrast, public markets are often headed by private ownership in charge of a site or building, although their operating strategy is similar to the municipal market. Furthermore, farmers' markets are similar to public markets but most of the vendors are farmers (Pyle, 1971; Sweet, 1961).

Historically, public markets in the U.S. were under the supervision of local governments. The markets were "municipally owned and operated buildings where vendors [sold] fresh food from open stalls" (Project for Public Spaces, 2003). Governor John Winthrop established one of the earliest public markets in 1634 (142 years before Independence from English colonization). The site was located in Boston, Massachusetts and it resembled a modern-day farmers' markets. More recently, in 1912, the city council of Illinois approved and created several public markets, including the famous Maxwell Street Market in Chicago (Morales, 430). From early on, it's clear

that American cities were trying to incorporate public markets like swap meets into mainstream society. The question is “why”?

While there are many reasons capable for answering such a question, a few key points stand out. Alfonso Morales, Professor at the University of Wisconsin and one of the more prolific writers on public markets, argues that public markets were planned, designed, and implemented for specific purposes. Morales analyzes the case of Maxwell Street Market and highlights two key reports (both compiled in 1914 by a city commission) that offer overlapping explanations of how cities like Chicago originally envisioned the role of public markets. The first reason is that cities wanted people to make use of public streets and sidewalks to address larger social and economic issues; the streets were views as a place where entrepreneurship and access to affordable goods could combat serious problems like unemployment and a high cost of living in the City. A second important reason was to help with the process of incorporating a burgeoning immigrant population. Many of these new arrivals were already familiar with the public market concept back in their native homelands and the venue gave them an opportunity to make a living as well as adjust to fluctuations in the prices of various goods and services (immigrants according to the 1912 report are the most sensitive population to such changes). The third reason was that cities wanted to address discrepancies in the labor market that kept certain populations like women and non-white poor people from being able to acquire jobs (Morales, 2009). Many public market advocacy groups today continue echoing these early concerns by the city of Chicago.

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is an organization that promotes self-sufficient public spaces and public uses including parks, public squares, and transportation. PPS argues that public markets (e.g. swap meets) are entry points, or sites, for entrepreneurs such as women, immigrants, non-whites groups, and the poor. Minimal investment and the capacity to allow business incubation create an opportunity for these people to grow a business for themselves and thereby improve the community.¹

Today, the definition of how public markets function varies. At the most basic level, all markets including swap meets are created to serve as a monetary purpose. The function of a swap meet is economic; it is created to provide exchange of goods that consumers demand (Pyle, 1971). Furthermore, the sites are staples in a neighborhood, thus making sure the goods demanded are offered in a continuous manner rather than appearing inconsistently or temporarily such as a street vendor or food truck. Present day public markets are made up of vendors that meet at the same location regularly and are overseen by a sponsor that accepts legal or financial responsibility either for the vendors, the site, or the facilities that are used to host the market (Project for Public Spaces, 2003). Today's markets typically are distinguished from other retail activity on account of three characteristics:

1. They must have public goals—this means that swap meets and other public markets either activate underused public space (e.g. drive-in movie theater) or displace undesirable public usage of space (e.g. vacant lot) in order to attract shoppers to an area (Project for Public Spaces 2003);
2. They must be made up of locally-owned and independent businesses (Project for Public Spaces, 2003; Spitzer and Baum, 1995);

¹ Read more about how public markets create economic opportunity at the Project for Public Spaces website: <http://www.pps.org/markets/>

3. They must create a public space in the community that offers a safe and lively place that draws in a diverse crowd, and not necessarily just to shop (Project for Public Spaces, 2003).

Most swap meets meet including in the case studies section meet the first two characteristics of public markets. It is the last qualification that requires more attention toward improvement. It is also arguably the most valuable because it transforms the swap meet from a typical retail business which has no identity into a place that is “the heart and soul of a community” and becomes a destination “where other community activities take place” aside from consumption (Project for Public Spaces, 2003). This important piece of the puzzle, which emphasizes civic engagement, is what many swap meets are currently lacking. It is a point that will be emphasized throughout the rest of this work. While the researchers implicitly define civic engagement as generating amusement and entertainment, I go a step further to include access to non-profit and community services or information.

Swap meets are a kind of public market (regardless of whether they are publically- or privately-owned) that both creates an economic opportunity for the people who sell there and an affordable alternative for people who shop there. Historically, these sites were not intended solely for that purpose, but were envisioned by city officials as places that could address larger socioeconomic problems and to include marginalized groups of people. Today swap meets continue promoting similar endeavors throughout various neighborhoods in different cities of California (and across the country for that matter). Yet as we’ve seen, in order to meet the requirements for

truly being called a “public market” swap meets must also make an effort to create a community space that separates it from a profit-driven model.

Swap Meets and the Role of Local Leadership

Public markets and swap meets, in particular, are informal civic centers and serve as hubs in a particular neighborhood on a continual basis. Some community leaders and local governments understand these sites to be places that tackle on large challenges in urban areas (Project for Public Spaces, 2003). Challenges include: bringing different ethnic and income groups together, creating safer public spaces, encouraging low- and moderate-income communities to support small-scale economic activity, providing fresh and high quality food to people in inner-cities, and protecting open space (Project for Public Spaces, 2003). These challenges imply a needed response from individuals in leadership positions interested in swap meets (such as owners, civic leaders, and urban planners) to go beyond economic benefits and include assets that add value into the neighborhood inside and outside the vending site.

Non-economic advantages have the capacity to impact a place just as much as economic advantages. According to Morales:

Community-oriented planners should consider the personal economic *and non-economic benefits* merchants can realize when they work with neighborhood groups to site markets and recruit potential merchants. Self-employment can empower people, *but markets and merchants can strengthen and enliven neighborhoods by contributing to community connectedness and distinctiveness*” (2009) [italics added].

Another way of stating this is that non-vending activities can bring fragmented neighborhoods together as well as invite outsiders to visit a place they might stay away

from. Swap meets that choose to include these activities became an agent of positive change and help foster a unique identity to an otherwise anonymous place.

Regardless of whether swap meets are indoors or open-air, neither are limited nor defined by just the physical structure of a building or the land on which it sits. Instead, swap meets are about how well the space is utilized. Planners and other leaders need to be conscious of this fact. Several scholars have argued that public markets are amenities, created by their attractiveness to the near-by residents, because they contribute to the quality of life and sociability (Morales, 2009; Balkin and Mier, 2001; Hinshaw, 2008; Knack, 2008; Project for Public Spaces, n.d.). While it may seem that having thousands of vendors occupy a plot of land near other businesses could harm the profits of the latter, public markets actually help local businesses by bringing in more patrons to an area. In addition, public markets help address health, ecological, and environmental issues. For example, swap meets are often located on many acres of land broken up into vending aisles, thereby promoting activities such as walking from aisle to aisle while also taking advantage of activating open space in the neighborhood (i.e. a parking lot). Furthermore, public markets help to contribute towards economic and community development by providing a variety of benefits such as creating new business incubators, expansion of existing businesses in the area, and promoting income earning opportunities for individuals (Morales, 2009; Balkin and Mier, 2001; Morales, Balkin, and Persky, 1995; Spitzer and Baum, 1995).

It is important, according to Morales, to view public markets as multi-functional because by doing so planners will discover the tools that can help bring a significant and positive impact to both community and economic development.

Advantages and Challenges Created by Swap Meets

Swap meets can become hubs in their respective communities when planned out correctly. According to Bullock, “in their most evolved state, public markets become the centers of districts where related businesses choose to locate, creating a highly synergistic and dynamic economic zone” (Bullock, 2000). The venues attract potential clientele into a neighborhood and create opportunity that is not just for the small entrepreneurs on the swap meet site, but also for retail shops and restaurants nearby (as well as help street vendors and food trucks who sell in the area). A 2002 survey of over 800 customers by Project for Public Spaces showed that approximately 60% of the public market patrons visited local stores. Surprisingly, 60% these people visit the stores only on days that the public market is open. This suggests that market patrons invest more money in a community and its businesses when a public market is available than when it is not (2003). The same study noted that even if the market was only there once a week, it was still enough to act as an “anchor” for the local businesses in the area. Hence, swap meets help other business owners in a neighborhood by attracting more customers and presumably increasing the tax base, real estate values, and keeping dollars in the local economy.

Yet, Swap meets don't just benefit the neighborhood as a whole, but also create individual opportunity. In their comprehensive book *Public Markets and Neighborhood*

Revitalization, Spitzer and Baum describe how that these markets allow immigrants, women, and non-whites to initiate into their own business with very little risk or capital—sellers only pay for the merchandise and the equipment they need and the owners may charge rent only on days they show up (1995). Swap meets create a strong incentive for low- and moderate-income individuals to find a temporary source of employment or an alternative source of income. They are also natural business incubators that help vendors interested in opening up their own brick and mortar store go forward in their endeavors (Spitzer and Baum, 1995). Some markets that have these incubator programs provide training and professional assistance to increase vendors' likelihood for having a prosperous post-market experience in the business world. These are also places that are great for experimenting with innovative loan programs—these are sponsored revolving loan funds that provides micro-loans for people to open up their own stalls (Spitzer and Baum, 1995).

In regards to the physical site used to house the swap meet or public market, Spitzer and Baum believe is important because it establishes the actual space that the entrepreneurs cannot afford to provide individually (1995). Moreover, the space is a unique possibility that brings together experienced and inexperienced vendors together and helps both groups share new skills and knowledge (Spitzer and Baum, 1995).

Public markets are one of the few places that bring the rural and urban communities and economies in contact with each other.² The markets introduce healthy food options to city dwellers and helps fight against diseases such as diabetes,

² Ibid, <http://www.pps.org/articles/link-urban-rural-economics/>

childhood obesity, and depression—especially in areas that lack adequate grocery stores or public spaces where people can interact with each other³. At the same time, they help support the farms and families that operate them by creating a space a demand for selling the produce.

There are public markets are sites where education occurs. For example, some farmers' markets allocate space for chefs to hold cooking demonstrations, to provide nutritional advice, or teach healthy recipes; for museums to display educational exhibitions (e.g. global warming); or to teach classes about urban gardens (Spitzer and Baum, 1995). Some sites also allow service providers to set up booths at particular times during the year to provide community services such as blood pressure tests. A few exemplary markets even have social services providers built into their strategic model (e.g. Eastern Market District in Detroit) where patrons can drop-in for a medical appointment at the public market. Pike's Place in Seattle, Washington offers childcare services, a food bank, and senior center.⁴

Public markets help build a sense of community. By merely adding minimal improvements like benches facing fountains, installing a playground, or hosting social events (i.e. soccer matches or outdoor movie screenings) a market can bring residents in a neighborhood together to have a good time.⁵ Markets that meet regularly encourage local residents and visitors to change the use of the place, consequently making it safer from unwanted vices like drug dealing (Spitzer and Baum, 1995). As

³ Ibid, <http://www.pps.org/articles/promotes-public-health/>

⁵ Ibid, <http://www.pps.org/articles/marketsplacemaking/>

mentioned before, each site creates a unique identity for the area it is located within, hence some experts suggest that public markets help to give non-community members a portrait of the distinct cultures that a place offers. Markets effectively bring together different income groups as well as racial and ethnic groups (regardless of historical divides). Furthermore, the venues allow community spirit and cultural exchange to occur (Spitzer and Baum, 1995).

Despite the benefits public markets offer, there are also challenges and criticisms that cannot be overlooked. According to Project for Public Spaces, the public markets model introduces three main problems. First, they are very costly to operate over the long haul. This is especially the case for public markets that occur inside actual buildings. Similarly, cost can become a burden when the swap meet or public market is located in a poorly trafficked location (see Mercado La Paloma in *Ch.3 Case Studies*), particularly for markets that are not privately owned and dependent on things like in-kind contributions or government assistance to keep them in operation. Second, public markets struggle when they are solely about economic benefits and fail to provide a public purpose. Swap meets that function in this manner are indistinguishable from other types of businesses that also create jobs and tax revenues. Third, the failure to create a spillover effect in the wider community threatens to make the venue become isolated from the neighborhood. (Project for Public Spaces, 2003).

Negative critiques directed at public markets centers on the idea that these places (which are often managed by private ownership) are predictable and uncreative in their engagement with the public. Morales in comparing privately owned flea markets

to the Maxwell Street Market writes that the flea markets are in general “bland by comparison” with “predictable merchandise, fees to enter, no live music, no ethnic cultural tradition, mundane experiences, difficulty of access, and the absence of a heritage (Morales 1995). In another example, James Rojas, in his Master thesis, refers to privately-owned public markets as “[t]he greatest deception”. He argues that “[t]he problem with these concepts is that they are overly planned out and there is no room for genuine authenticity left for the people on the land to create their own space or the use of that space...” and “[p]eople are not allowed to express themselves as freely as they could on a publicly owned street” (Rojas, 1991). In the case of Morales, the issue is around swap meets’ failure to include a more engaging environment and a lack of neighborhood pride. Rojas, in contrast, is worried that having an overly planned marketplace deters the use of space by the participants and becomes too mechanical and uninteresting. Both are credible assessments in informing designers and planners about the complexity of the problem facing swap meets and other markets, that is: how can these sites be more inclusive of non-vending activities (community services and information) while not letting them become too formalized and making them inaccessible to the people that already value them.

The biggest critique, and perhaps the greatest challenge within the research on public markets, is how to bring different stakeholders together to ensure public markets are more publically engaging (e.g. providing non-vending activities). The burden falls on urban planners who must establish relationships with public and private groups, chambers of commerce, micro-entrepreneurship incubators, non-profit organizations,

immigrant groups and others to help promote a mix of merchants and appropriate products (Morales, 2009). This is crucial because it leads towards comprehensive planning strategies that help develop better models that “are attractive as well as fulfill appropriate economic functions” (Morales, 2009). At this moment there is minimal overlapping interest on expanding non-vending programming on these sites and therefore the full benefits offered by public markets remain untapped.

In summary, this section analyzed the existing literature to evaluate what experts have to say about swap meets and its relationship with non-vending activities, which is the focus of this thesis. What I discovered is a gap in the current scholarship. Most of the publications focus public markets in general, rather than narrowing the scope to swap meets. This specificity of information made using term “swap meet” difficult because it was unclear how much of the term “public market” applied to swap meet models. In addition, themes emerged about the advantages and challenges that public markets or swap meets create, the majority of them focus on economic and individual advantages. It was rare to find specific examples of how these programs work on the ground. Nevertheless, the three characteristics included in the definition section offered the most promising contribution from the experts, saying that public markets are places that have public goals that invite the neighborhood into an area that is underused and that it offers opportunity for small business owners. Moreover, the most interesting take-away was the argument that public markets (or swap meets) must provide a safe and lively place for the community to engage with each other in both vending and non-vending activities and transform the site into the “heart and soul of the

community...where other activities take place” (Project for Public Spaces, 2003; Spitzer and Baum, 1995). However, this requirement had a shortcoming because the non-vending activities referred to were more about entertainment and cultural appreciation. This is a great start. However, this thesis expands the definition of “non-vending activities” to include access to social and community services as well as information offered by outside community development groups that can help participants at swap meets with issues relevant both inside and outside the venue. Only then can a swap meet truly be called a “public market”. The next chapter describes the methods and variables used to identify possible candidates meeting the new criteria.



Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter explains the methods used to collect data on several swap meets throughout California. The purpose of the data is to help answer the questions “Are there currently any swap meets in California that offer non-vending activities?” and “Do any of them have community service or information components?” The other part is finding out “What possible factors are contributing towards making it possible to incorporate these kind of activities in swap meets?”

The first section details the process of finding swap meets in California. It is followed by a description of the variables selected to identify key qualities of the swap meets and why they are important. Included is a table created using the variables and the data pertaining to each one. This table will be analyzed in the Chapter 5 (Findings). From there, the chapter moves on to explain the process of finding my case study sites. There are seven different swap meets that I visited to conduct these studies. The sites were located near Los Angeles and San Jose, cities that are in different geographical regions in the state (the former in the south and the latter in the north) and separated by approximately 350 miles. I then describe the methods used to collect data once I was out in the field. Finally, a brief explanation for the physical layout for each case study is as well as how that information was collected and diagramed. The map in figure 3.1 on the next page illustrates the swap meets covered in the table below.



Figure 3.1: Swap Meets in California (Source: Google Maps)

Identifying Swap Meets in California

Information on the swap meets was compiled by collecting information found on webpage searches, such as looking through organizations like the California Swap Meet Association or National Flea Market Association, via search engine queries or by visiting an actual site in-person. Please note that the table below does not reflect all of the swap meets in California. For example, there are at least two swap meets, one indoor and one outdoor, which were not listed in the online queries. However, despite their absence online, I have visited them within the last year and presume that they are currently not listed through a business bureau or remain too informal to merit recognition. Thus many sites such as these remain “invisible” to the general public (particularly smaller informal markets that spring up on vacant lots or on private property such as a church). The ones that I found online were most likely the ones that had an official website or were referenced through another source. Therefore, the data that is available heavily favors swap meets that are more formal, are more organized, and have a higher level of publicity, thereby increasing their standing as legitimate business models to the general public, cities, or other businesses.

There were a total of 38 swap meets identified for this study. This includes markets that are outdoors and indoors. Of these swap meets, 29 are outdoor public markets and 11 are indoor markets. Compared to outdoor swap meets, the indoor swap meets are much harder to find through web searches because they generally do not have public websites and so there is less information available about where they locate and their activities. In addition, indoor swap meets tend to be less involved in associations or

special interest groups that promote swap meet-related business such as the California Swap Meet Association and the National Flea Market Association, hence adding to the degree of difficulty in locating or identifying them. The outdoor swap meets that have their own websites generally have at least 100 or more vendors.

Table 3.1: Swap Meets Throughout California

	Name	City	Type (Indoor or Outdoor)	Proximity to Residential Areas	Proximity to Other Businesses	Evidence of Non-Vending Related Activities	Opportunities for Non-Profits or Outside Groups Available	Size (In acres, if available)	# Of estimated Vendors per week	# Of estimated Patrons per week (and year)	Operating Schedule	Additional Information
1	Antelope Valley Swap Meet	Palmdale	Outdoor	Isolated	Isolated	-	-	-	-	-	Saturday and Sunday	-
2	Bear Valley Indoor Swap Meet	Victorville	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	-	-	Open everyday (except Tuesday)	-
3	Capitol Flea Market %	San Jose	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	-	-	300-600	-	Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday	Drive-in movie theatre in the evenings.
4	College of the Desert Street Fair	Palm Desert	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	100-340	15,000-20,000 (78,000 - 1 million / yr)	Saturday and Sunday	Located on college property. Operated by Alumni Association. The Street Fair patronage enables the Alumni Association to continually support College of the Desert.
5	Cypress College Swap Meet	Cypress	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	-	500	-	Saturday	Located on college property and part of the "Cypress Puente Program".
6	Denios Roseville Farmers Market & Swap Meet	Roseville	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	Friday (Farmer's Market Only); Swap Meet on Saturday and Sunday	-
7	Fontana Indoor Swap Meet	Fontana	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	No	-	70	-	Open everyday (except Tuesday)	-
8	Fox Indoor Swap Meet	Venice	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	-	-	Open Daily	-
9	Integrated	Huntington Beach	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	No	-	-	-	Saturday and Sunday	Located on college property.
10	High Desert Indoor Swap Meet	Victorville	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	-	-	N/A	-
11	Kobey's Swap Meet At The Sports Arena	San Diego	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	-	1,000	25,000 (1.3 million / yr)	Friday, Saturday, and Sunday	-

	Name	City	Type (Indoor or Outdoor)	Proximity to Residential Areas	Proximity to Other Businesses	Evidence of Non-Vending Related Activities	Opportunities for Non-Profits or Outside Groups Available	Size (In acres, if available)	# Of estimated Vendors per week	# Of estimated Patrons per week (and year)	Operating Schedule	Additional Information
12	Long Beach Antique Market	Long Beach	Outdoor	Integrated	Isolated	-	-	20	800	-	Sundays (once a month)	-
13	Los Angeles City College Swap Meet %	Los Angeles	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	No	-	150-200	-	Saturday and Sunday	Located on college property.
14	Los Angeles Harbor College Swap Meet	Wilmington	Outdoor	Isolated	Isolated	No	-	-	40	-	Sundays	Located on college property.
15	Maclin Markets – Victorville	Victorville	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	-	-	-	-	Saturday and Sunday (except during annual county fair)	Located on San Bernardino County Fair grounds.
16	Maclin Markets-Indio	Indio	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	-	-	400	-	Wednesday and Saturday	-
17	Maclin Markets-Ontario	Ontario	Outdoor	Isolated	Isolated	Yes	-	40	500	-	Tuesday, Saturday, and Sunday	Located next to auction barn (livestock) open to the public
18	Mercado La Paloma %	Los Angeles	Indoor	Isolated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	34,000 sq ft + 1/2 acre	11+7 full-time community non-profits	-	Open Daily	Includes seven in-house non-profit organizations, a community kitchen, financial help, and arts-related activities; and a conference room
19	Merced Flea Market	Merced	Outdoor	Integrated	Isolated	No	-	-	-	-	Saturday	Located on Merced County Fair grounds.
20	Orange Coast College Swap Meet	Costa Mesa	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	-	-	-	-	Saturday and Sunday	Located on college property.
21	Orange County Market Place %	Costa Mesa	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	20	1,100	50,000 (2 million / yr)	Saturday and Sunday	Located on Orange County Fair Grounds. Next door to animal farm and farm food exhibit.
22	Pacific-Foothill Swap Meet	Glendora	Outdoor	Integrated	Isolated	No	-	-	530	6,000 (312,000 / yr)	Sundays	Located on college property.
23	Pacific-San Fernando Swap Meet	San Fernando	Outdoor	Integrated	Isolated	Yes	-	36	1,000	26,000 (1.4 million / yr)	Open everyday (except Monday and Wednesdays)	Property recently sold to school district and retail developer.

	Name	City	Type (Indoor or Outdoor)	Proximity to Residential Areas	Proximity to Other Businesses	Evidence of Non-Vending Related Activities	Opportunities for Non- Profits or Outside Groups Available	Size (In acres, if available)	# Of estimated Vendors per week	# Of estimated Patrons per week (and year)	Operating Schedule	Additional Information
24	Pacific-Vineland Swap Meet	City of Industry	Outdoor	Integrated	Isolated	Yes	-	-	600	25,000 (1.3 million / yr)	Open Daily	Drive-in movie theatre.
25	Paramount Swap Meet	Paramount	Outdoor	Semi-Integrated	Isolated	Yes	-	46	823	48,000 (2.5 million / yr)	Open Daily	-
26	Pico Rivera Indoor Swap Meet	Pico Rivera	Indoor	Semi-Integrated	Isolated	-	-	-	-	-	Open everyday (except Tuesday)	-
27	Roadium Open Air Market	Torrance	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	-	15	500	40,000 (2 million / yr)	Open Daily	-
28	San Bernardino Indoor Swap Meet	San Bernardino	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	-	-	N/A	-
29	Santa Fe Springs Open Air Market Place	Santa Fe Springs	Outdoor	Isolated	Isolated	Yes	No	-	-	-	Open everyday (except Monday)	Stage where bands perform
30	Santa Maria Hiway Drive In Theatre And Swap Meet	Santa Maria	Outdoor	Integrated	Isolated	-	-	-	-	-	Sundays	-
31	Saugus Swap Meet	Santa Clarita	Outdoor	Isolated	Isolated	Yes	-	-	-	-	Tuesday, Saturday, and Sunday	-
32	Slauson Super Mall %	Los Angeles	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	No	-	-	-	Open Daily	-
33	The (San Jose) Flea Market, Inc. %	San Jose	Outdoor	Semi-Integrated	Isolated	Yes	Yes	120	6,000	77,000 (4 million / yr)	Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday	Quarter-mile long farmers' market. The book <i>Kite Runner</i> reference's authors experience here.
34	Treasure Island Flea	San Francisco	Outdoor	Isolated	Isolated	Yes	No	-	-	-	Saturday and Sunday (last weekend of the month)	-
35	Valley Indoor Swap Meet – Panorama City	Panorama City	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	No	-	300	"millions" (according to its website)	Open everyday (except Tuesday)	-
36	Valley Indoor Swap Meet – Pomona	Pomona	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	-	550	"millions" (according to its website)	Open everyday (except Tuesday)	-

	Name	City	Type (Indoor or Outdoor)	Proximity to Residential Areas	Proximity to Other Businesses	Evidence of Non-Vending Related Activities	Opportunities for Non-Profits or Outside Groups Available	Size (In acres, if available)	# Of estimated Vendors per week	# Of estimated Patrons per week (and year)	Operating Schedule	Additional Information
37	Visalia Sales Yard	Visalia	Outdoor	Isolated	Integrated	-	-	-	350	-	Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday	-
38	Washington Square Discount Mall %	Los Angeles	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	-	-	Open Daily	-
N=38												
* Represents swap meets that were found through online searches and through field visits. It is not an exhaustive list.												
% Represents Swap Meets Visited for Case Studies												

Variables

Several variables in Table 3.1 were created to identify the type of swap meets in existence. The column “Name” gives the nomenclature that the site is officially recognized by. As mentioned in the literature review, swap meets are often subsumed under the broader category “public markets”, meaning there are other types of identical or closely related models as a swap meet, however the venues might use a different name. The ambiguity in names means that people who shop at swap meets or have visited them in the past may not even realize this due to the fact that the site ownership chooses to call itself by another name. Therefore the variable “Name” warrants its own column to show some of the possible ways similar activities vary in nomenclature. The different names include ‘flea market’, ‘rummage sale’, ‘bazaar’, ‘street fair’, and in Spanish a ‘pulga’ or ‘remate’.

The next column, “City”, list the places where the swap meets are located. Areas vary from places that are large metropolitan cities (such as Los Angeles, San Jose, San Francisco, Torrance, and Long Beach) to smaller cities away from denser urban areas (such as Roseville, Visalia, and Palm Desert). As the map in Figure 3.1 above shows, swap meets are located in various parts throughout the state of California.

The next three variables identify the kind of swap meet and its spatial location. The column, “Type”, lists the spatial enclosure of the swap meet. This column highlights whether the site is inside a building (shown as “Indoor”) or if it is an open-air market (shown as “Outdoor”). Next, the column “Proximity to Residential Areas” shows whether a swap meet site is located within a residential neighborhood, near a dense community,

or if it is in an isolated portion of its respective city. The labels “integrated”, “semi-integrated”, and “isolated” are used to identify the setting which best describes the swap meet. Integrated swap meets are those that are surrounded by homes and are often in denser areas closer to the center of the city. Semi-integrated sites are those that are perhaps near the outskirts or the city or located within industrial areas but still near homes. Isolated sites are swap meets that are away from any homes and might require some time to drive to or are separated from communities by things such as freeways, industrial plants, or farmlands. Similarly, the column “Proximity to Other Businesses” shows whether a swap meet is relatively close to other retail or commercial locations in the neighborhood. The label “integrated” identifies places that are adjacent to, across the street from, no more than one block from, or on the same property as other businesses. “Isolated” lists the sites that have no businesses nearby (these sites might be those that are within residential communities or out on the periphery of the city, note that there may be other reasons).

The column, “Evidence of Non-vending Related Activities”, gives information about whether or not the swap meet provides programming not associated with vendors and their merchandise. Non-vending activities include entertainment events such as music concerts, children’s’ activities, community workshops, or other activities.

The column, “Opportunities for Non-profits or Outside Groups Available”, is similar but goes a step further to show any evidence of non-vending activities or events that incorporate elements of community development or social services on-site. More importantly, this column shows whether or not the swap meet offers opportunities to

outside community development groups so the later can promote their agenda while providing services to swap meet participants. Activities include health fairs, charity or fundraising events, formal classes, arts and crafts activities, and expert advice or help (e.g. nutritionist on site). The community organizations reflect the resources found in the surrounding area and inform the public about how to plug into their services or programs.

The column "Size" gives an estimate for the space occupied by the swap meets. The unit of measurement is in acres. Information is limited, so only a few sites have this field filled-in. The next two columns, "Number of Estimated Vendors per Week" and "Number of Estimated Patrons per Week", give us an idea of the amount of people who work, shop, and visit the swap meet weekly. The column for patrons also includes an estimate of how many people come to the site annually.

The column, "Operating Schedule", lists the days of the week that the swap meets are open to the public. Swap meets vary and some are meant to be open all the time while others are set up to allow people with full-time jobs elsewhere to act as part-time entrepreneurs on designated days.

The last column, "Additional Information", includes any relevant information that did not fit neatly into the other categories. Each swap meet is unique and the characteristics that make it so are found in this portion. The information is based on the details provided by swap meet websites and field visits.

Together, these ten variables will be used to give a better idea of how swap meets function and use the space. While there are other possible factors that could be

included in the table, these are the ones that can best help to answer the research question.

Case Study Selection

The criteria used for selecting the case studies in this research were multifaceted. A crucial factor was deciding where to start. As mentioned before, larger swap meets tend to be the ones that are often the easiest to find because they appear in business listings or have their own websites. This makes it easier to find out where they locate, how they operate, and what activities (if any) they offer vendors and visitors. This was my initial starting point in identifying possible candidates for the case studies.

Another important factor in the selection process was the location of the swap meets. I chose a few sites based on my personal knowledge and experience, either due to growing up near them or visiting them on various occasions while running errands. This insight provided an advantage in regards to certain unquantifiable details that might not show up in the data. Another reason I selected some swap meets is because they demonstrated signs of incorporating non-vending activities into their business models, which is a key component in this study. It was important to visit these venues and see first hand how they operate and experience the environment they create on the ground as if I were a patron or hypothetical community member. Three out of the four markets that offered non-vending activities—The San Jose Flea Market, the Orange County Marketplace, the Mercado La Paloma—provided information on these endeavors online (Capitol Flea Market was the only swap meet that offered non-vending activities but did not have a website). These places implicitly or explicitly promoted themselves as places

of both businesses and destinations for family fun and public engagement. Hence, I felt that these innovative swap meets warranted a more in-depth observation.

Most of the swap meets I visited were in working- or middle-class areas. With the exception of one site, the Orange County Market Place, the neighborhoods where the markets were located in places that experienced different degrees of blight (for example litter in streets, vacant lots, and gang-related/ non-artistic graffiti on private property). Other notable qualities of the areas include an abundance of fast food restaurants and many small businesses offering affordable goods and services to the community (e.g. discount stores and ethnic-owned shops).

The names of the seven swap meets selected for the case studies are included in Table 3.2 on the next page.

Table 3.2: Swap Meets Visited for Case Studies

	Name	City	Type (Indoor or Outdoor)	Proximity to Residential Areas	Proximity to Other Businesses	Evidence of Non-Vending Related Activities	Opportunities for Non-Profits or Outside Groups Available	Size (In acres, if available)	# Of estimated Vendors per week	# Of estimated Patrons per week (and year)	Operating Schedule	Additional Information
1	Capitol Flea Market	San Jose	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	-	-	300-600	-	Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday	Drive-in movie theatre in the evenings.
2	Los Angeles City College Swap Meet	Los Angeles	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	No	-	150-200	-	Saturday and Sunday	Located on college property.
3	Mercado La Paloma	Los Angeles	Indoor	Isolated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	34,000 sq ft + 1/2 acre	11+7 full-time community non-profits	-	Open Daily	Includes seven in-house non-profit organizations, a community kitchen, financial help, and arts-related activities; and a conference room
4	Orange County Market Place	Costa Mesa	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	20	1,100	50,000 (2 million / yr)	Saturday and Sunday	Located on Orange County Fair Grounds. Next door to animal farm and farm food exhibit.
5	Slauson Super Mall	Los Angeles	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	No	-	-	-	Open Daily	-
6	The (San Jose) Flea Market, Inc.	San Jose	Outdoor	Semi-Integrated	Isolated	Yes	Yes	120	6,000	77,000 (4 million / yr)	Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday	Quarter-mile long farmers' market. The book <i>Kite Runner</i> reference's authors experience here.
7	Washington Square Discount Mall	Los Angeles	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	-	-	Open Daily	-

Data Collection for Case Studies

The on-site research required qualitative data collection. The majority of the information was primarily gathered by taking extensive hand-written notes, still photographs, or audio from participant observation. On various occasions I drove to the different swap meet sites and paid an entrance fee (only at outdoor markets) to walk inside the property. Once inside the premises, I walked around and discreetly observed or talked informally (often in Spanish) with vendors and patrons who were at the swap meet, trying to learn key information and insights about the place. If possible, I reached out to staff (including security guards, concession stand employees, and managers) that might be able to provide information on site-specific details. I took notes in an inconspicuous manner (to the extent possible), making sure to write down anything that looked significant or worth further inquiry. Often times, it was necessary to pretend that I was doing “normal” things such as having lunch or going to the restroom in order to avoid attracting too much attention. Sometimes, I just decided to go somewhere that was less susceptible to foot traffic (i.e. further away from the main entrance or outside the premises to my car).

When taking pictures or recording audio, it was crucial not to not stand out in the crowd and to prevent the inquisitive gazes by the crowds or possible questions from security guards and staff about the purpose of the devices –such suspicious could jeopardize my study⁶. Depending on what activity I was doing (e.g. eating a concession

⁶ While at DUSP, I participated in a photography class in which I traveled into a heavily Latino immigrant community in Boston. I was required to photograph different aspects of the neighborhood for assignments pertaining to the physical landscape. Inadvertently,

stand snack versus walking in aisles), I would try to remain discreet by placing my camera on a table or holding it close to my chest and not looking into the view finder, yet having my finger on the shutter release button ready to take pictures. If I saw anything interesting worth visually documenting, I would snap a few quick shots and carry on with my observations so as not to raise suspicion from anyone on the premises. I would check the images later when I got into my car or back home.

I used my cell phone as both a prop and a recording device to take audible notes and capture the ambient sounds. I would pretend to have conversations while simultaneously recording my data orally into a voicemail account. However, despite taking care to remain covert I was flexible and at times revealed more information if necessary. On a few occasions I approached on-site staff or managers to ask about non-vending events or operations in the swap meet. I let these individuals know about my role as graduate student and the purpose of the study. Yet, it was quite difficult to get formal interviews from managers because of scheduling constraints between the two of us and bureaucratic procedures (such as getting corporate approval to do interviews). I also made the effort to reach out via emails to contact information on company websites (if available) and successfully received replies on a couple of occasions from staff at a couple of swap meets. I did manage to speak informally with a few individuals and I use some of the information gathered from these conversations in

the camera also raised suspicions and distrust from some community members— notably the immigrants who had no legal standing in the country. They thought I was an undercover immigration official, trying to deport people. It made assignments more difficult and thus I tried to avoid the same problem of attracting negative attention at swap meets that often attracts many immigrant vendors and customers.

this research, particularly in the case study section. However, in order to protect the anonymity of my sources, I use general categories such “manager” or “staff member” so that their title and personal information remains secure and unidentifiable.

Site Layout

Each swap meet is unique in the way it is set up spatially. For that reason, I created simple diagrams for each swap meet using vendor directories and maps provided by swap meet websites (when available), as well as my field notes and photographs. The diagrams are not scaled to proportion; their purpose is to give the reader a visual understanding of where certain activities occur and to see any important trends associated with them (e.g. non-vending activities locating near concession stands). Only two of the swap meets visited have electronic or paper maps that illustrate where the vendors are located and where other important points of interest are (for example, concession stands). The other sites either had large display boards with maps on the premises or none at all. An example of such a map is provided in Figure 3.2. I will also discuss the layout of the swap meets in the case studies.

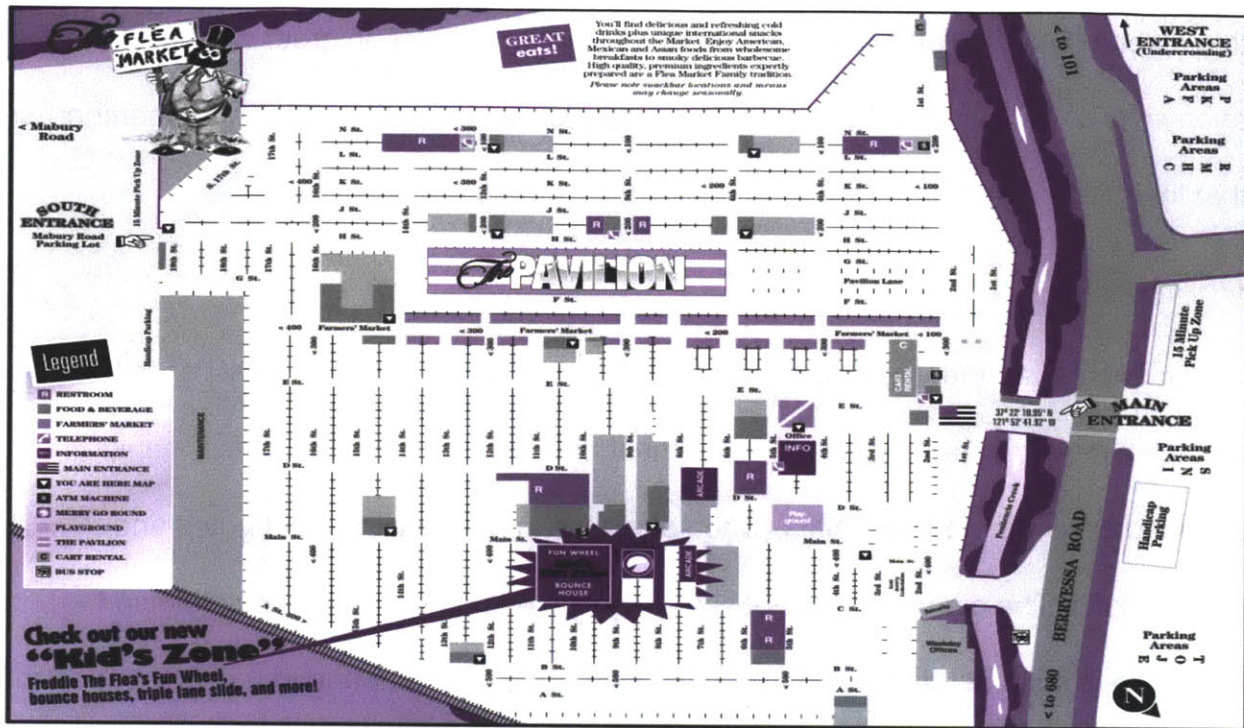


Figure 3.2: Map of San Jose Flea Market (Source: San Jose Flea Market)

Summary

The methods, tables, figures, and diagrams described in this chapter were developed to collect the data needed for answering the research questions of whether there are swap meets that offer community service or information to the participants that visit the site and also find out what factors contribute to this activity. The next two chapters take a closer look at the seven sites I visited and the findings that isolate the data that can help to better understand ways of answering the central questions in the introduction.



Chapter 4:

Case Studies

This chapter investigates the seven swap meets I visited during the course of this research in greater detail to find out if and how swap meets participate in non-vending programming that incorporate community service and information sharing components. A goal of this research is to study the factors that explain this behavior by swap meets and help planners and other interested leaders learn about possible benefits of expanding these types of programming across similar swap meets. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the seven swap meets I traveled to on my site visits. The second part analyzes the findings and gives explanations for why these sites are either successful models in non-vending activities or why they come up short. Figure 4.1 shows a map of where each swap meet is located geographically.

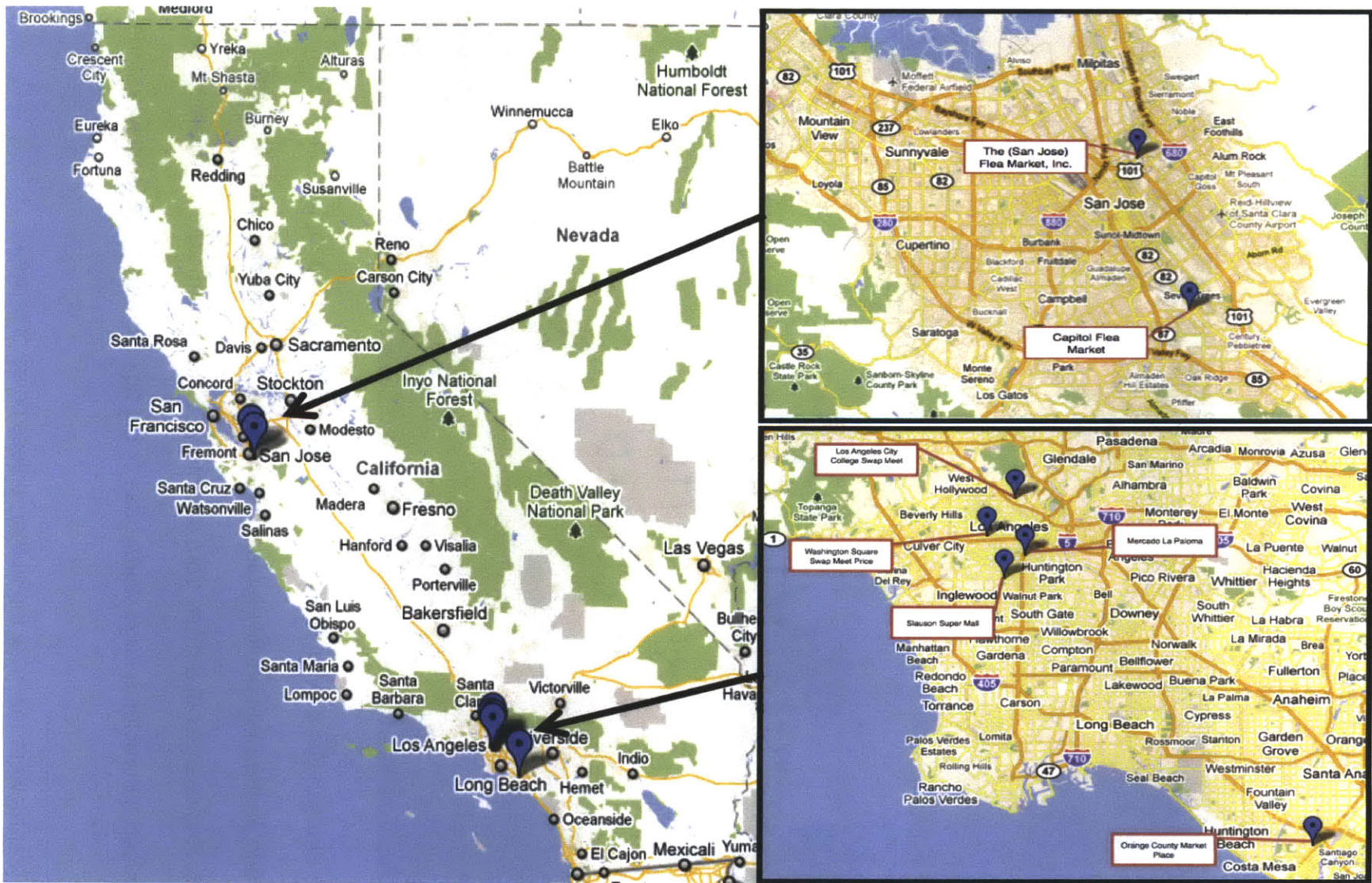


Figure 4.1: Case Study Sites in California (source: Google Maps).

Part 1: Case Studies

Site 1: Slauson Super Mall



Image 4.1: Entrance into the Slauson Super Mall.⁷

The Slauson Super Mall (SSM), commonly referred to by people in the neighborhood as the Slauson Swap Meet, is an indoor swap meet located in South Central Los Angeles, about 8 miles from downtown L.A. The structure in which the swap meet is housed resembles a large warehouse or big box store rising at least two stories

⁷ All photographs were taken by the author, unless noted otherwise.

high and taking up about a half block of space. The other half block serves as a parking lot for the patrons and contains some small auxiliary stores selling car-related merchandise and services (see Figure 4.2 below). The SSM is in a mixed-use commercial and residential area surrounded by other businesses (including a Big Lots less than a block away and a shopping center that features a supermarket and fast food restaurants across the street) at two nearby boulevards and adjacent to single-family housing on its backside.

This area is designated as both an “Employment and Economic Incentive Program Area (EZ)”, or State Enterprise Zone, as well as a “Western/Slauson Redevelopment Project.” EZs are “Federal, State, and City [government] ...economic incentives to stimulate local investment and employment through tax and regulation relief and improvement of public services” (Los Angeles City Planning Department).⁸ The Community Redevelopment Authority of Los Angeles (CRA/LA) oversees the redevelopment of the area. CRA’s goal is to rehabilitate existing buildings, create new jobs, and expand the commercial and industrial businesses in the area. The 1992 Los Angeles uprisings that followed the Rodney King verdict heavily impacted this community. The result: various businesses burned to the ground by looters and individuals furious at longstanding systemic police discrimination directed toward people of color and the poor. Thus, the community where the Slauson Swap Meet is located is in transition and in need of economic and community development opportunities.

⁸For more information visit: <http://zimas.lacity.org/documents/zoneinfo/ZI112374.pdf>

Inside the Swap Meet

The Slauson Swap Meet is open everyday. Admission and parking for the venue are free. Inside, vendors sell merchandise from individual stalls (see Image 4.2). During my field visit I observed that the majority of vendors appeared to be of Asian origin or descent. Somewhat surprisingly, there are a few African Americans or Latinas/os selling at the SSM. According to the 2000 Census, the neighborhood is composed mostly of these two groups with 73% African Americans and 24% Latinas/os. By contrast, Asians make up half of a percent (0.5) of the neighborhood.⁹ However, while the vendors were not from these backgrounds, the customers who shop there are primarily African Americans and Latinas/os.

Similar to other indoor markets, vendors who rent space at the SSM leave their merchandise at their stalls overnight rather than pack them up at the end of the day to take back home. Note, outdoor swap meets generally do not allow vendors to leave their products on-site overnight because there is no storage space provided (however, a few places are now including storage containers which is addressing this limitation). Merchandise sold at the SSM includes low-priced products such as shoes, clothing, wigs, toys jewelry, hats, and electronics. Also offered are services like manicures, jewelry repair, and even tattooing. However, despite the warehouse appearance of the swap meet and plethora of merchandise offered, not many customers could be seen shopping inside.

⁹ For more information please see American Fact Finder for data on ZIP code 90047. <http://factfinder.census.gov>

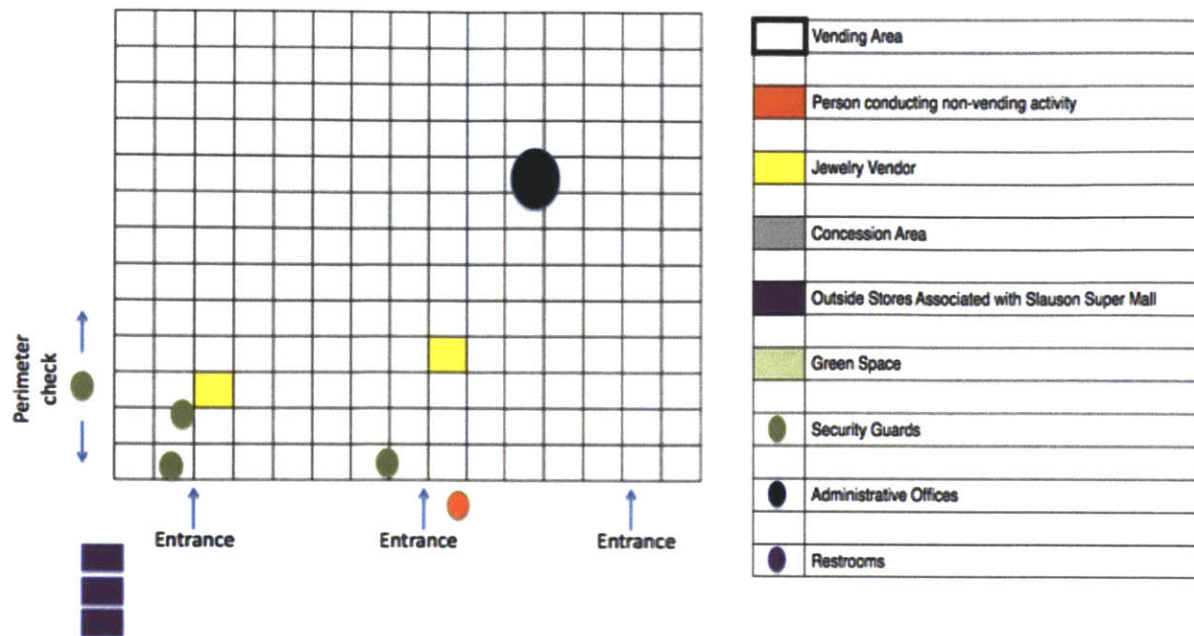


Figure 4.2: Site Layout of the Slauson Super Mall.

The site seemed rather empty at the time of the field visit consisting of only about 15 to 20 patrons walking inside on a weekday afternoon. Granted, this may be due to the time of the visit (3 P.M. on a Thursday in January) or some unaccounted variable (perhaps the proximity of stores nearby).

Lack of Non-vending Activities

There was no overwhelmingly explicit evidence of community development groups using the space inside the SSM for outreach or provision of services to the participants or neighborhood. Nor were there examples of extracurricular, recreational, or special occasion events for the public to enjoy (e.g. Christmas toy drive). A small flyer on a bulletin board highlighted a Halloween costume contest three months earlier, but nothing indicated upcoming events. One member from the Nation of Islam stood outside the entrance selling newspapers and bean pies to passing patrons trying to

raise funds for the organization. However, this Nation member informed me that he was not allowed to conduct business inside the building. In addition, he warned me about how the security inside the building was very strict and that staff would not allow cameras to photograph the swap meet (I was able to take a few pictures despite his warning).

Characteristics

As for the surroundings inside the Slauson Swap Meet, the place is somewhat dull, uninviting, and arguably aesthetically unappealing. The characteristic green color of the walls (inside and outside of the building) matches the lime-colored linoleum tiles on the ground and accentuates the bland fluorescent lighting above. The structure has limited windows resulting in a severe lack of sufficient natural light coming in and consequently giving the place a sense of confinement and stuffiness (Image 4.2 below).

The vendors, due to a lack of patrons, sit at their stalls and read newspapers or watch television to stay occupied, waiting for an interested customer. Numerous security guards walk around the facility making sure the premises are safe and are more noticeable than at outdoor markets. These guards watch over areas selling valuable merchandise such as jewelry. During my visit, there were three guards near a jewelry stand and another patrolling the entrance nearby. Their presence, especially since there were not many customers, somewhat increases false senses of imminent danger or confinement as they walk around with handguns strapped to their hips. A security guard asked me to put my camera away to ensure that I would not take any pictures of the inside—this was never a problem at other swap meets. I could not successfully contact

management at the site, even after a security guard assisted in calling them through a walkie-talkie.

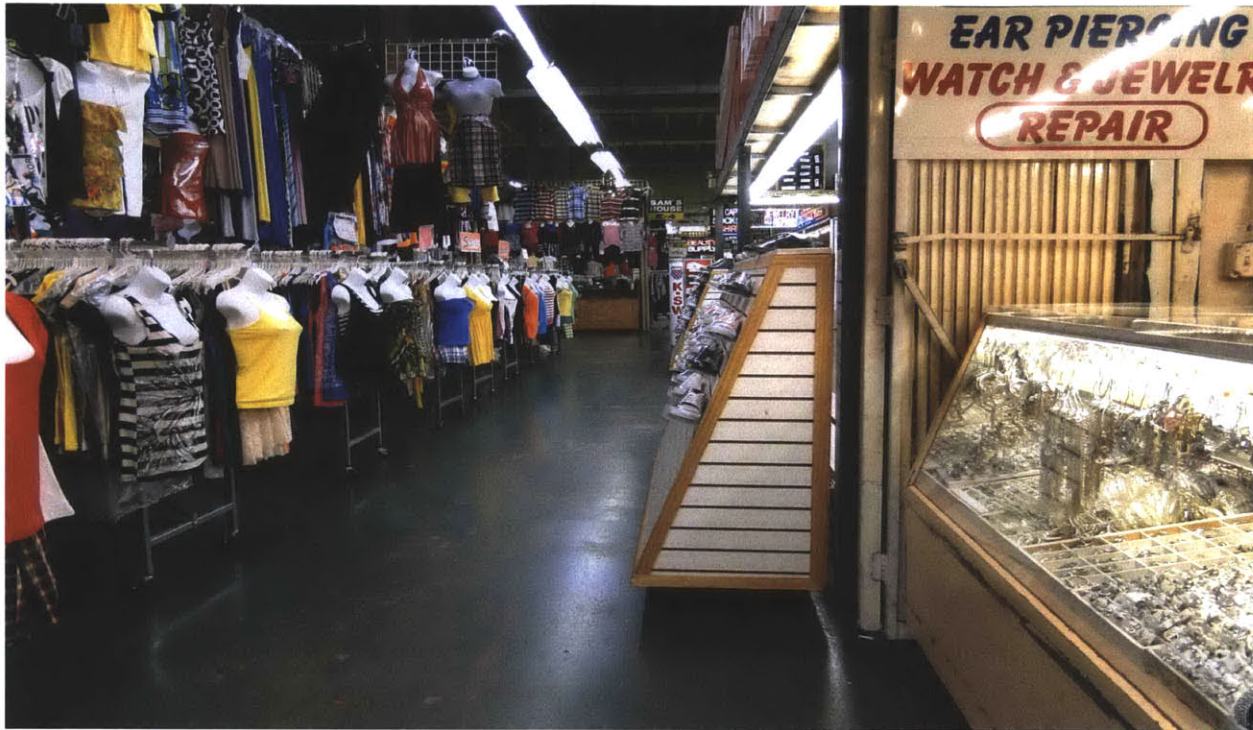


Image 4.2: Interior of the Slauson Swap Meet. The colors inside are rather dull and there is little to no natural light making its way inside. Note the range in merchandise, from affordable clothing, to expensive jewelry, and name brand shoes (center). Also notice that there are not many patrons at the site.

Site 2: Swap Meet Price



Image 4.3: View of Swap Meet Price from the parking lot of the Washington Square Shopping Center.

Swap Meet Price (SMP) is an indoor swap meet located in a shopping center in Mid-City, a district of Los Angeles on the Westside, about 8 miles from downtown. Entrance to the swap meet and parking is free to customers and the venue is open daily. The shopping center includes a post office, an independent supermarket, restaurants, and other smaller businesses. SMP, like the Slauson Swap Meet, is part of an inner-city community severely affected by the 1992 civil uprising. On a personal note, as a child, I remember seeing many of the properties along the boulevard surrounding SMP go up in flames and people running out of stores with arms full of various products stolen from inside the building. The area surrounding SMP is mostly residential with some other commercial businesses nearby. Near the swap meet are the preschool/ kindergarten and parochial elementary school I attended as a youth. There is also a

bank across the street. There are also some other businesses, including a small shopping center, a main intersection two blocks away.

The spatial layout of the swap meet is somewhat unique (see Figure 4.3). It includes vendors that sell in stalls inside the building itself, much like at other indoor swap meets. However, it also has storefronts facing the parking lot of the shopping center. Here, storefronts operate more like traditional businesses in which patrons can enter and shop. Some of the stores have access into the swap meet, meaning that patrons can enter the swap meet through their store instead of using the two main entrances.

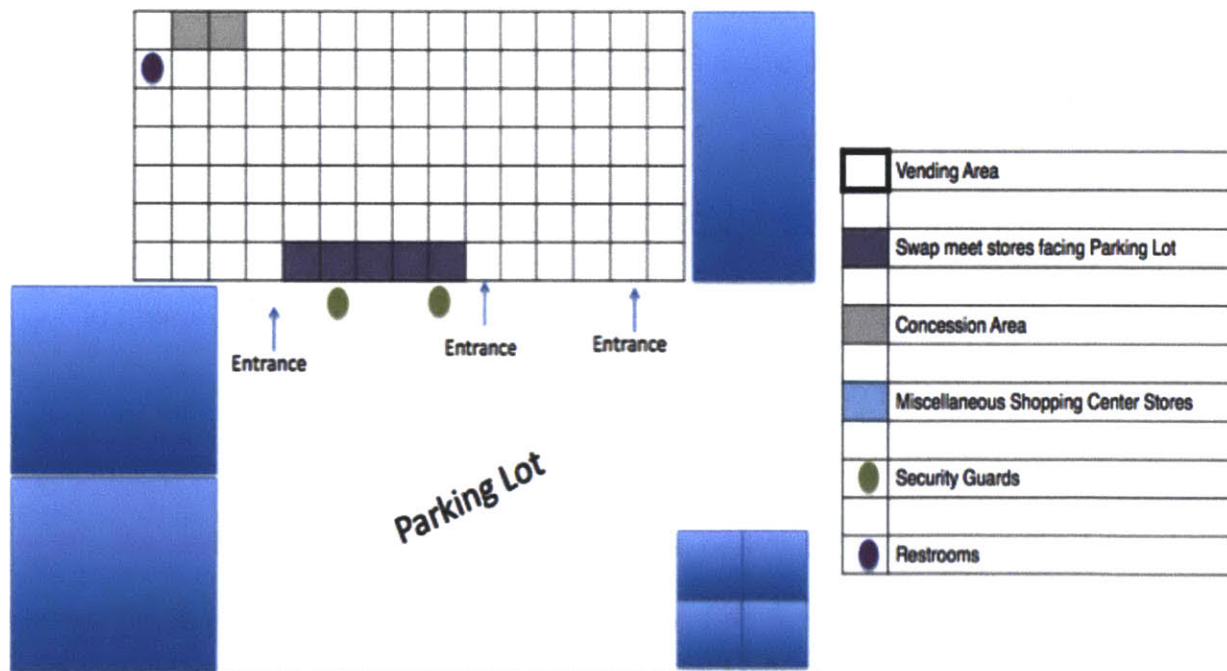


Figure 4.3: Layout of Washington Square Mall Swap Meet.

Inside the swap meet there are various types of businesses selling different merchandise. The vendors are primarily Asian, however there are some Latina/o vendors as well. Yet, once again, neighborhood demographics are not fairly represented

at this swap meet. According to the 2000 Census, this area is made up of 32% African American, 44% Latinas/os, and 14% Asians.¹⁰ The majority of the customers at this swap meet are Latino and African American and the community for the most part is lower to middle class with a median income about \$31,500. Not many customers were present during the field visit and many of the merchants sat and waited for patrons to stop by, often while reading or watching television (similar to Slauson Swap Meet). However, because it was a smaller venue and the atmosphere was livelier, it felt less intimidating than the SSM. I visited the site on a weekday afternoon, which (like Slauson) may account for the lag in patron representation.

Although the SMP is smaller than the SSM, it is more visually appealing. The lighting inside is brighter and there is music coming from several of the vendors' stalls, which gives it a better ambiance.

Lack of Evidence for Non-Vending Activities

This swap meet displays no explicit evidence of community involvement or participation from outside groups. There are no announcements of upcoming or past community events at the site, nor brochures or signage to indicate this. Physical space inside the facility seems rather limited and the vendors occupy most of the space. It is adjacent to a major boulevard on one side and has multi-unit apartments along two side streets adjacent to it. The boulevard has several varieties of businesses along adjacent

¹⁰ For more information on this neighborhood with ZIP code 90016 see American Fact Finder: www.factfinder.census.gov.

Site 3: Los Angeles City College Swap Meet



Image 4.4: View of the Los Angeles City College (LACC) Swap Meet from the top of a nearby parking structure. It is located on the parking lot of the LACC student parking lot that is not used on weekends.

blocks including a café, pizza shop, restaurant, laundry mat, and fast food chains.

Behind the swap meet is a towering three-story parking garage used for patrons to park for their cars for free. The market is open on weekends and the admission fee into the site is one dollar.

A six-foot high fence encloses the swap meet. On the outside of the venue and on other nearby blocks, street vendors sell merchandise. Some sell food and drinks and others make a living selling movies and music. Vendors inside the swap meet rent stalls that are roughly the length of a medium-size vehicle. Most merchants rent a single stall, while a few others with more merchandise, and who can afford to pay for more space, rent two stalls. Figure 4.4 shows the site layout.

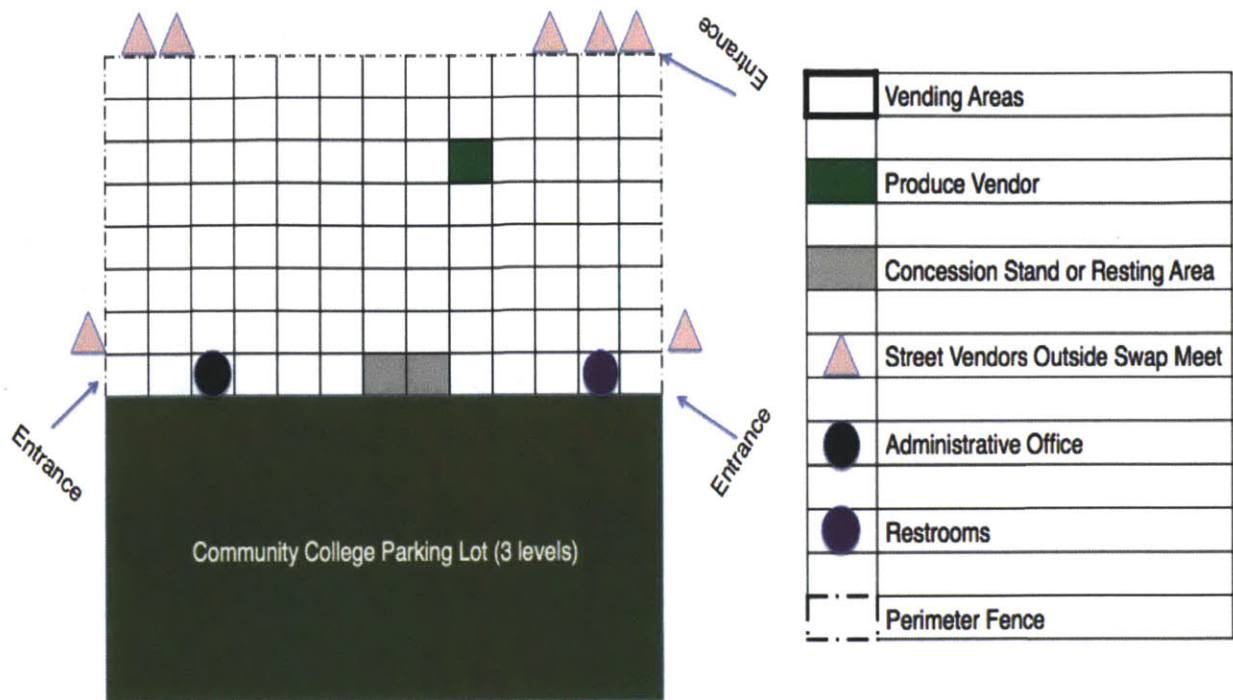


Figure 4.4: Layout of Los Angeles City College Swap Meet.

LACC Swap Meet is one of the busier swap meets visited during the study. The site is very much reliant on strong social networks and cultural connectedness. Many of the vendors are Latinas/os although there are also a few noticeable Asian and Middle-Eastern vendors. The 2000 Census characterizes the area as 60% whites, 32% Latino/a, and 11% Asian.¹¹ The median household income is about \$47,493 annually. This area is home to a large amount of immigrants, many from Central American and Mexico. I personally became familiar with the area while attending LACC as a student several years ago.

The majority of the products offered at the swap meet were low-priced items, such as used hardware supplies, toys, clothing, used video games, used computer equipment accessories, dollar-merchandise and toiletries, and baseball caps (see

¹¹ For more Census Information on the areas in which the LACC Swap Meet is located (ZIP code 90029) visit the American Fact Finder website: www.factfinder.census.gov.

Image 4.5). One vendor even sold vitamins and supplements from her home country of Guatemala. As for the customers, the overwhelming majority of people walking in the aisles were Latinos. Vendors tried to connect with patrons in Spanish by yelling out phrases like ‘¡Pasele! ¡Todo barato!’(Come by here!—everything’s affordable!) or ‘¿Con qué le ayudamos?’ (How can I assist you?). Many shoppers, even if they were not interested in buying something, would still respond with a polite verbal refusal or halt for a second to converse about the day, cultural or ethnic issues, or other personal matters. This made the overall environment feel more intimate compared to other places I visited during the study. The smaller physical dimensions of the swap meet also created narrower, closer aisles. This resulted in closer contact between customers and vendors compared to other swap meets. The larger concentration of a single dominant group using the space could also be a factor, since both patrons and vendors were mostly of Latino origin, and most likely from the same country. It was very reminiscent of the tianguises or mercados (outdoor food markets) found in many Latin American countries.

A manager at the LACC swap meet mentioned that the site is owned and operated by a private company that runs four other swap meets in California and one in Nevada. The manager could not think of any specific involvement with outside organizations or community groups that were allowed to come in and fundraise or offer services (or other resources) to neighborhood residents or swap meet participants. Interestingly, when asked what kinds of non-vending community related activities LACC Swap Meet does, his response was that it allows nearby apartment residents to park their cars for free in the three-story garage. Additionally, this manager mentioned that

the swap meet gives discounts to individual vendors whose children are affiliated with the community college.



Image 4.5: The merchandise at LACC swap meet can be classified as heavily used goods. The aisles were very narrow. Most of the vendors were Latinos (including immigrants).

When asked if there could be a space for community organizations on the site, the manager replied that he needed corporate headquarter approval before answering that type of question. However, the swap meet already seemed very confined in terms of space. While it does have an area along the periphery facing the front of the venue (near the busy boulevard) that could be a great location for outside community groups to use, the reality is that the site is rather small. It would be hard to imagine how the ownership would sacrifice some of its vendors and the profits they generate for the entire site in order to accommodate non-profit groups.

Site 4: Mercado La Paloma



Figure 4.6: Mural on the exterior of the Mercado La Paloma in South Central Los Angeles. This is the view from the DMV and 110 Freeway on the west side of the building (Source: Flickr).

Mercado La Paloma (MPL), which translates to “The Dove Market Place”, is a fairly small indoor shopping market in South Central Los Angeles, about four miles from downtown L.A. Admission into the structure is free and there is both limited parking on-site and on the street. The swap meet is open daily.

The market was created by an organization called the Esperanza Community Housing Corporation (ECHC) with the goal of trying to help revitalize and bring economic, health, social, and cultural resources to the area. According to the 2000 Census, this area is about 60% Latina/o (a mixture of first generation immigrants, their

children, and other Latina/o groups that have been here for decades), 32% white¹², and 12% African American. The median household income was \$17,644.¹³ This indoor market is less than a mile away from the University of Southern California (USC) and the community is an interesting contrast of blighted areas mixed with top-notch architecture and landscape, as well as disparity between a diverse college student population and working-class residents of color.

ECHC redeveloped a vacant two-story warehouse into a market where artisans, vendors, restaurateurs, and non-profits conduct business. It is between a major freeway and a Department of Motor Vehicles, therefore it is fairly visible from each of these locations. Additionally, there is a view of a two-story mural showing images of a typical Latin American marketplace scene with the name “Mercado La Paloma” painted above it which makes it more visible and indicates the activity that takes place inside the building (see Image 4.6 above).¹⁴ The freeway isolates it from the side facing west towards USC and the denser neighborhoods along the busier commercial Figueroa Corridor. While there are close residences in the area, it is also somewhat separated from them because of its location in the middle of a block with large commercial warehouse-like businesses surrounding it.

¹² There may be some overlap between the Census self-classification categories of white and Hispanic. It is common for individuals of Mexican and Central American origin or decent to identify as “white” rather than as Hispanic.

¹³ For more information of the neighborhood (ZIP code 90007) visit American Fact Finder.

¹⁴ James Rojas wrote his thesis on Latino Urbanism and explains how Latinas/os use symbols and images like murals to inform folks who don’t speak the dominant language or who cannot read or write to convey information such as what a business sells. This could be the case for why the mural is up at Mercado La Paloma, aside from the aesthetic value.

This marketplace is small (see Image 4.7). Compared to the other swap meets visited, there are not a lot of vendors selling inside the MLP. A majority of the small family-owned establishments are restaurants that sell cuisines such as American, Oaxacan, and Thai food. Non-food vendors include artisan crafts, computer repair, and a tailor.

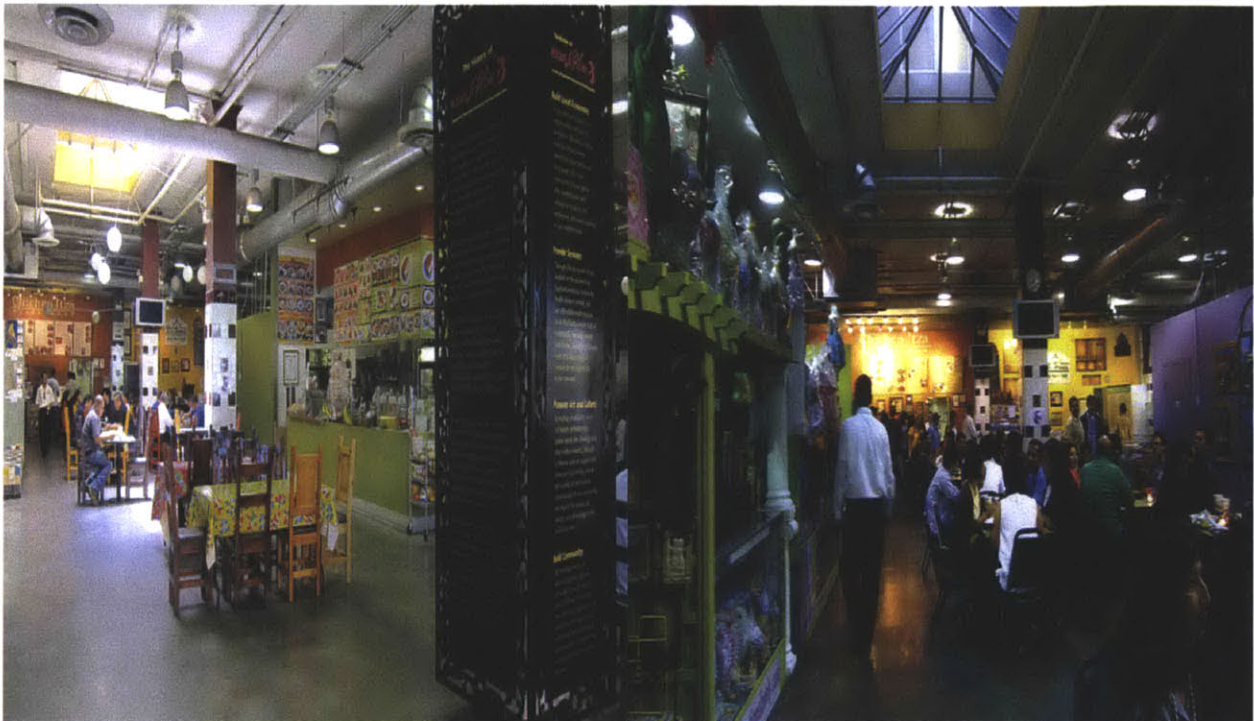


Image 4.7: Interior of Mercado La Paloma. The left image shows one of the many small self-owned food establishments. On the right is a scene where people eat next to a non-food vendor. Note that there is natural light coming into this site unlike the other indoor swap meets. This creates a more relaxing atmosphere (Source: Flickr).

However, despite its small size and rather isolated location, this venue had the most to offer the neighborhood in community development organizations. As soon as patrons enter the market, they can find various leaflets, flyers, and newsletters next to the doors promoting different groups and community engagement events in the area that provide social and community services. On the second floor, community groups use several offices onsite to assist residents who need help in dealing with issues pertaining

to domestic abuse, health services (children’s health in particular), as well as housing. Moreover, there is a community kitchen for street vendors to legally prepare food before going out to sell to the public, and a computer room that holds classes on different subjects for interested residents (Figure 4.5).

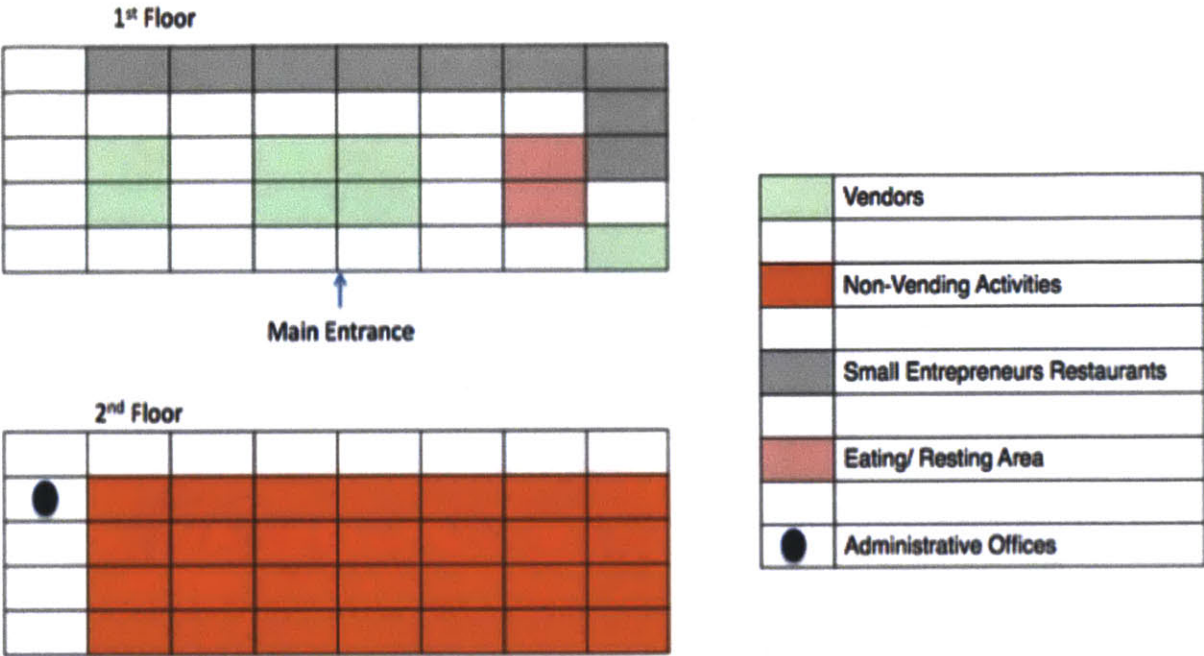


Figure 4.5: Layout of Mercado La Paloma (note: not all parts of the market were observed during the field visit. Some areas may be missing such as restrooms and the community kitchen).

One MLP staff member in charge of operations mentioned that the ECHC organizes events to bring local artists to display their artwork and to sell it to interested buyers. Furthermore, the same person also informed me that some artists hold art classes or workshops for interested community members who want to learn how to do art. Despite offering these great services, MLP has been having a hard time keeping the project financially viable (or “out of the red”) and generating profits.

Site 5: San Jose Flea Market



Image 4.8: Entrance to The San Jose Flea Market.

The San Jose Flea Market (SJFM) is a large outdoor swap meet. This swap meet was one of the largest outdoor markets I visited during the study (the other one was the Orange County Market Place). It is approximately 120 acres in size and located on the outskirts of the city, about three miles from downtown San Jose. The entrance to the swap meet is adjacent to a main road, although it is somewhat isolated from nearby businesses in the area because it is in a mostly industrial area. SJFM sits close to a major freeway in the area, yet it is tricky to find off the exit because the area is so large. It is easy to miss it among the large trees fencing it in on one side of the street and the huge parking lot on the other side. However, large billboards make patrons aware of its presence. It seems that the best way to get to the site is to drive, but the city does have public transportation to assist non-motorists get to the SJFM. Public parking costs five

dollars on weekends and two dollars on weekdays, which covers the entrance fee. Without parking patrons pay two dollars to enter. The swap meet is open five days a week: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The SJFM attracts an estimated two thousand vendors during certain optimal selling days (i.e. Christmas season) and about 50,000 patrons on a typical weekend (about 2 million per year).

Demographics at the swap meet are diverse. There seemed to be no dominant ethnic or racial group regarding the vendors or patrons. It appears that there are an equal number of Latinos, Asians, Blacks, Whites, and Indians selling and buying around the SJFM. Yet according to the 2000 Census, the area is 75% White, 13% Latino/a, and 12% Black, 4% Asian, and 6% some other race¹⁵.

In terms of merchandise, the market has a great variety of products. A site layout is provided in Figure 4.6 It includes a large farmer's market with vendors on both sides of the aisle, which runs down for about a quarter mile (Image 4.9 below).

In addition, there are many concession carts throughout the entire area. These concessions, owned by the SJFM, sell fast food, corn on the cob, Mexican *churros*, pretzels and soft drinks. Near the farmer's market there is an area called the Pavilion, a massive white tent that covers numerous vendor stalls, giving them shade from the sun and heat. The advantage given of being a vendor under the Pavilion tent is that sellers can set out merchandise in the open without having to put up their own tarp—many of them sell out in the open similar to a garage sale (some of these activities are shown in

¹⁵ The overlap in total percent here is perhaps due to individuals within one or more racial group that self-identify as part of another race. For more information on Census data for this ZIP code (95113) visit American Fact finder.

Images 4.10 and 4.11). Among the products sold under the tent are shoes, toys, and clothing. Much like the Orange County Market Place (discussed below), the Pavilion included an anomaly—it had a car dealership selling used cars on-site.

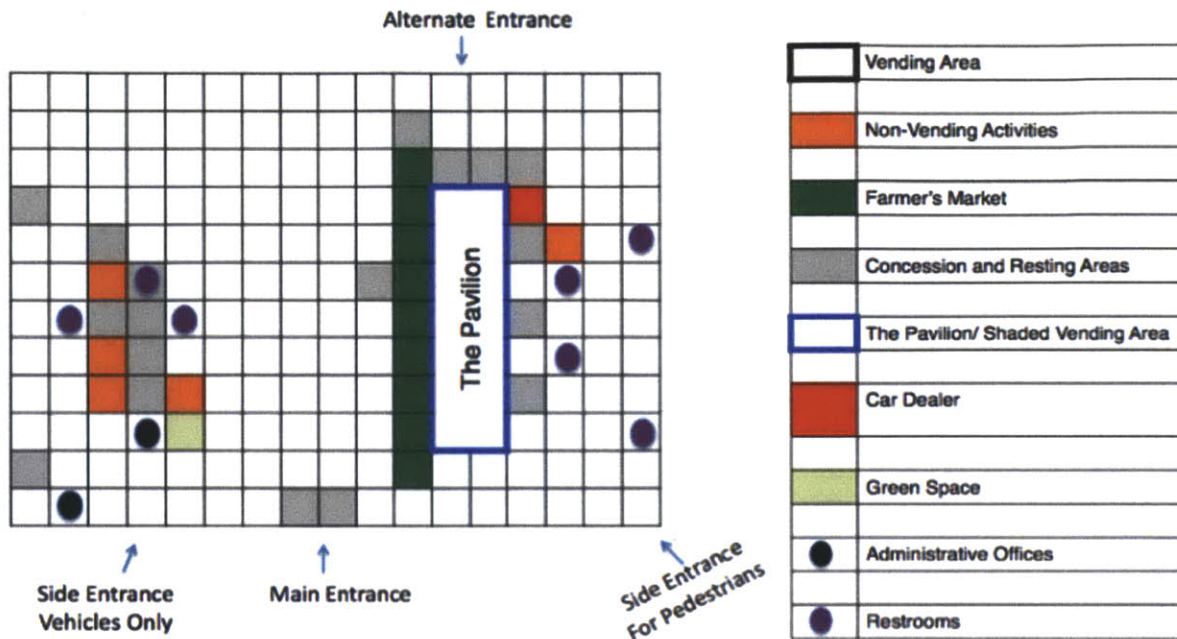


Figure 4.6: Layout of the San Jose Flea Market

Non-Vending Related Activities

The SJFM also included non-vending activities (see figure 4.6). At the center of the swap meet, there was a small stage set up where bands perform in front of audiences sitting on benches facing it. The stage and seating area are shaded from the sun by a large blue canopy. During the site visit, a traditional Mexican Mariachi band covered a variety of classic and contemporary songs from famous artists. The live music provided a festive and enjoyable setting and the people seem to genuinely be engaged with the music; some people were singing along and applauding, while others whistled after each song was done. According to the SJFM website, the organizers of the event

include a variety of performances and genres including acts such as a Beach Boys tribute band. The market attracts a diverse audience to come and listen to the music.



Image 4.9 A family enters the quarter-mile long farmers market at The San Jose Flea Market.

SJFM also has entertainment for the children. The swap meet provides a small area with ponies for the kids to ride in exchange for a small fee. Additionally, older kids can ascend rock-climbing walls, ride a mini-Ferris wheel, or play in the arcades.

Pets are also welcomed at the San Jose Flea Market. Near the music stage, a small grassy section permits pet owners to rest and play with their animals. It is a small, yet pleasant area and includes flowers, some trees, and a canopy to shade owners and animals.



Image 4.10: The Pavilion at The Flea Market. This large tarp provides shade to vendors and patrons. It also protects cars sold by a car dealer on-site. This is an example of both small entrepreneurs and larger outside businesses coming together at a swap meet site.

Community development groups or other types of non-profit organizations did not explicitly use the SJFM space as a venue to promote civic engagement or conduct outreach. However, the SJFM did take a proactive role to initiate their own events and involve the participants at the site. During the field visit, I noticed advertisements on the

back of the swap meet directories (passed out when entering the swap meet) informing patrons about a three-on-three basketball tournament. A third party group organized the tournament, however the event helped bring publicity to the swap meet and invited more people to visit the venue. Besides benefitting the swap meet's interests, the event promotes family fun, a healthy lifestyle, teamwork, and youth participation in the community. Images of some of the non-vending activities are shown below.



Image 4.11: Examples of non-vending activities available at San Jose Flea Market (clockwise from top-left): Children riding ponies provided by the SJFM, three-on-three basketball tournament offered by an outside organization advertised on SJFM vendor directories, a Ferris wheel and rock-climbing wall for older kids to enjoy, and a shaded green space near concessions where participants at the swap meet can relax on benches or hang out with their pets (shown on the insert in the lower left).

Site 6: Capitol Flea Market



Image 4.12: Marquee displaying the presence of the Capitol Flea Market along a busy boulevard.

Capitol Flea Market (CFM) is an outdoor swap meet located in the southeastern part of San Jose, about 7 miles from Downtown. It is located near a busy boulevard and surrounded by a residential area and a few storage facilities. Entrance into the venues costs one dollar and parking is free (much of the parking occupies a lot that formally

belonged to a cinemaplex theatre now closed). The swap meet is open on Thursday through Sunday. In the evenings the flea market doubles as a popular drive-in movie theatre. The area according to the 2000 Census is 56% white, 22% Asian, 18% Latina/o, and 9% some other race.¹⁶In general, the CFM is a lively and festive swap meet (site layout on figure 4.7).

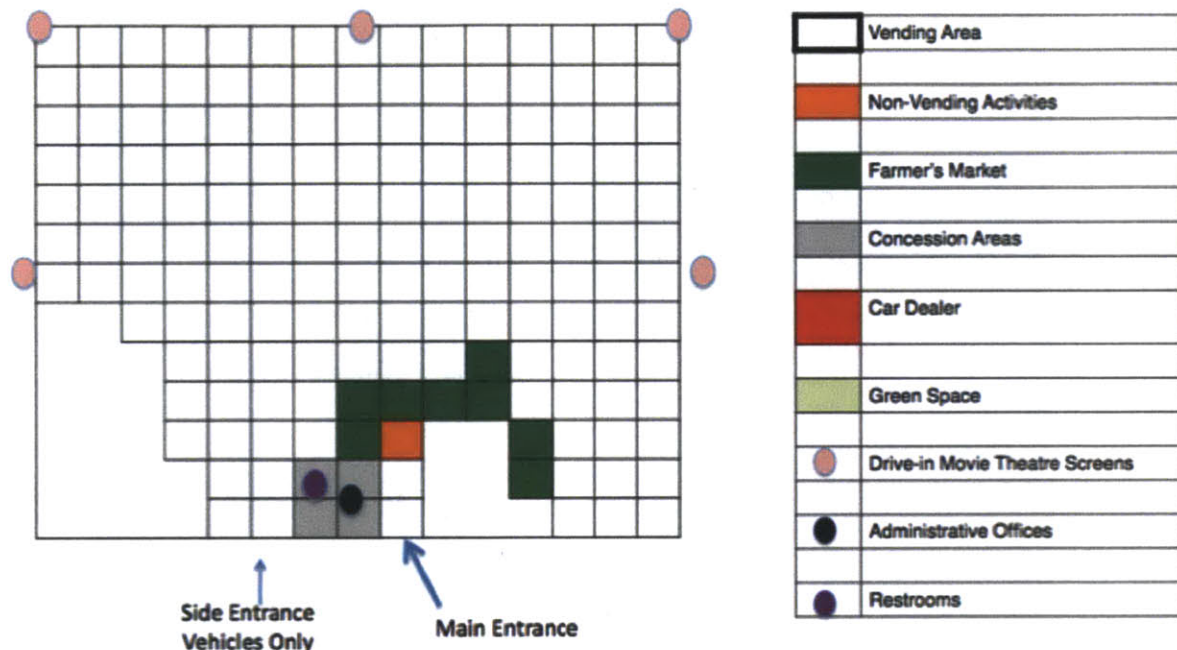


Figure 4.7: Site layout for the Capitol Flea Market

Even before entering the venue, the sound of live music greets visitors who make their way into the main entrance. There is a small stage set up near the snack bar, which is also the main office of the swap meet and the concession for the drive-in theatre (Image 4.13). The stage is next to an aluminum awning structure that serves as a canopy to provide shade to patrons. During my visit, a Mexican band played in a ‘*corrido*’ style before a large crowd of about 25 to 30 people who were sitting and

¹⁶ For more information on Census (ZIP code 95136) visit American Fact Finder.

enjoying the show while eating food or drinking alcoholic beverages from nearby vendors.¹⁷ Near the front of the stage, an older couple danced to the rhythms of the music and people could be heard singing along to the music. The majority of the spectators were Latinas/os.



Image 4.13: (left to right). A small stage is set-up at the Capitol Flea Market where Mexican bands play music to a crowd of spectators (right) as the latter relax from shopping or while enjoying a meal.

To the sides and behind the music stage, facing away from the musicians, there are a about a half dozen or more produce vendors selling fruits and vegetables (Image 4.14). At least one vendor, an older Asian woman, sold fresh fish. Further inside the swap meet, other vendors sold primarily low-cost or used products. While there seemed to be a lot of Latina/o vendors at the flea market, there were also many vendors who were of Asian or Middle-Eastern descent.

¹⁷ Corridos is a musical genre that parallels American folk music in storytelling about social and political issues (as well as violence). It is a style that is popular in many parts of Mexico and the U.S. It incorporates the accordion, guitar, and drums and is heavily influenced by polka from Europe.

Vendors at CFM pack up and take their merchandise home at the end of the day. However, the swap meet does have a limited amount of storage units available for some vendors to rent so that they can leave their goods on-site. However, allocation of this space is limited for drive-in theatre parking in the evening.



Image 4.14: Nearby to the stage, a farmers market sells fresh produce to patrons. Note, this image was shot during the closing hours of the swap meet.

The live music is the only explicit non-vending activity not directly tied to the swap meet vendors. Presumably CFM hires the musicians to play on the stage. The music provides entertainment for shoppers, especially if they are familiar with the type of music or share cultural ties with performers. A young staff member mentioned that the event occurs every weekend and is always in Spanish.

Site 7: Orange County Market Place



Image 4.15: Orange County Market Place (from left, clockwise). Marquee at the entrance of the Orange County Fair grounds where the OC Market Place takes place weekly. (Top-right corner). Entrance into the swap meet. (Bottom-right corner) A diverse amount of patrons visit the OCMP for various needs and for enjoyment.

The Orange County Market Place (OCMP) is an outdoor swap meet in Costa Mesa, CA, about an hour away from downtown Los Angeles. It is a large 20-acre site owned and operated by a company named Tel Phil Enterprises, Inc. It is well-organized, beginning with an informative website and onto a well-designed layout that creates a convenient place to do shopping (or selling) as well as being a fun and friendly environment. Aside from functioning as a weekly swap meet, there are other events that take place at the site, including a weekly farmer's market on weekdays and special events (e.g. car shows) throughout the year.

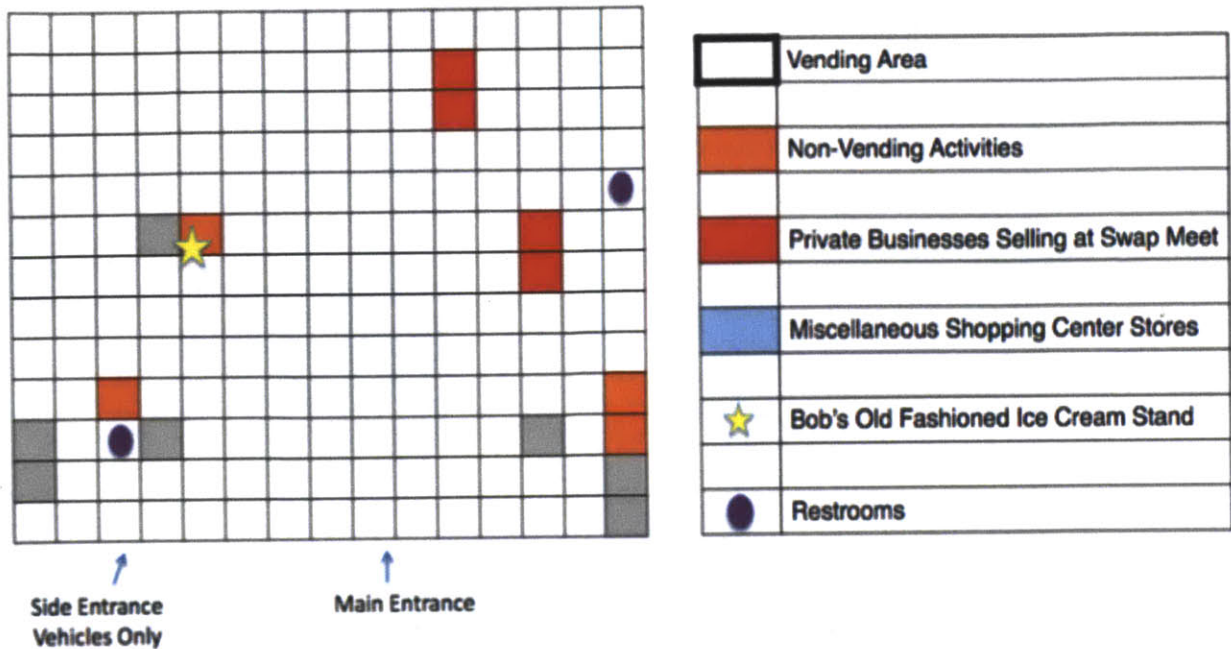


Figure 4.8: Visual Representation of the layout for Orange County Market Place

Spatially, the site is centrally located in the community and sits conveniently on the Orange County Fairgrounds. It is open year-round on the weekends (with the exception of the annual county fair dates in July and August). Furthermore, the market is near several academic institutions including a community college, a private Christian university, a high school, and an elementary school. The site layout is shown in Figure 4.8.

Inside the OCMP, the selling area is divided into approximately one thousand 15' x 27' rectangular stalls that merchants rent to sell their merchandise (with a valid seller's permit). According to its website, there are about four miles of walking aisles at the OCMP. The venue provides concession stands, restrooms, and has a management and operations office on site. Patrons who desire to come into the swap meet must pay an admission price of two dollars and children under 12 are free.

The Orange County Market Place is a very diverse and bustling place in people and environment, respectively. Vendors include both entrepreneurs as well as families that own and operate small businesses. The race and ethnicities of the sellers include white, Asian, Latina/o, and others vendors. Whites appeared to be the largest group of vendors at the OCMP.

The patrons are also diverse. There were more white customers, but not significantly more than other groups. Latino/a shoppers were well represented as well. According to the 2000 Census, Costa Mesa's population is 54% white and 34% Latino.

Regarding the merchandise sold, the majority of the products are affordable goods, new and used, similar to those sold at other swap meets. New and used products include, but are not limited to, music and music-related merchandise, movies, clothing, shoes, power tools, appliances, and baseball caps.

Aside from the typical products offered at other swap meets, the OCMP offers customers a unique opportunity to purchase or get information about products sold outside the swap meet (Image 4.16). For example, one vendor at the market represented a for-profit business specializing in heart examinations (targeted at middle-aged and elder individuals). The actual examinations and consultations are conducted off-site at another location. This vendor was not actually selling a product, but instead marketing his services and making appointments with interested patrons. Another example is a different for-profit business working out of the swap meet to advertise pre-manufactured homes. Similar to the heart exam company, they are not selling the product on-site but using the space to market the product. Interestingly, the company

rents several stalls to display a one-story, fully assembled home on the premises (this includes a living room, bathroom, kitchen, and bedroom all furnished as well as a front yard with grass and even an electric generator to power the appliances). The space is used as an open house-type of scenario where patrons can come inside the home to look around (taking a break from shopping in the nearby stalls) and have company representatives answer any questions. Interestingly, this impressive display (according to a representative of the company) is on a permanent display at the OCMP (even during the county fair season). Unlike other vendors who pack up and leave at the end of the day, this company has an agreement with the swap meet to leave it assembled. It is unclear whether the housing company must pay a higher rent or what other agreements each side has negotiated. A third example highlighting the unique products at the OCMP was the presence of two automobile dealers—one selling used cars and the other RVs (e.g. motor homes) on-site. Unlike the previous two businesses that were located in the interior of the swap meet, these dealers were located at the back of the market. Patrons were allowed to touch and get inside several of the vehicles on display as well as ask questions from the car dealers working there.



Image 4.16 (From top left, clockwise): Assembled display home at the OCMP swap meet. Inside the home is furnished to allow interested shoppers to walk in and experience the home as if it was their own as well as ask questions to company representatives. Lower right, a heart check representative informs vendors about his business and ask if they want to schedule an appointment off-site (no actual services offered at OCMP). A car dealership showcases cars that shoppers can get in. There are also representatives there to help answer questions.

Evidence of Non-Vending Activities

The concession stands at the OCMP were some of the busier areas at the swap meet. These concession areas were also strategic zones for non-vending activities. The swap meets owned and operated four areas designated for selling food. Two of the concession areas were located on opposite corners, near the entrance and flanking the peripheries of the swap meet. On the south side, the concession stand was located next to a “fun zone” staffed by OCMP (shown in Image 4.17). Staff at the fun zone charged a

small admission fee, which allowed children to enter an area that included a number of inflatable jumping slides and castles.¹⁸

On the north side, there was a hot dog stand and a nearby concession stand that was paired with an “imagination zone.” The imagination zone was a small area for much younger children to play with Legos or in a sandbox monitored by OCMP staff. A fourth larger concession stand, referred to as the “original snack bar,” was located near the center of the OCMP. This particular area was the busiest section of the entire swap meet, mainly because it had access to everything—merchants, food, and entertainment. This is also where “Bob’s Old Fashioned Ice Cream” stand and a performance stage are located (discussed below).

¹⁸ In general, the staff members working at the entrances, selling food, and in charge of the recreational activities were relatively young, maybe high school students.



Image 4.17: OCMP's "fun zone" play area for children of swap meet participants to play. OCMP charges a small fee for kids to use the inflatable delights. This site is located near a corner concession stand.

Evidence of Community Development Groups and Non-Vending Activities

"Bob's Old Fashioned Ice Cream" is a small ice cream stand located near the center of the OCMP, next to a performance area and a DJ stage (Image 4.18). The stand is inconspicuous in size compared to the adjacent and much larger 'original' snack bar. Despite its small size, it stands as a symbol of the swap meet's commitment to community engagement and development within its premises. Bob's is loaned out for free to just about any community-related organizations to raise funds for their specific needs. Comprehending how Bob's Old Fashioned Ice Cream program works is straightforward. Community development organizations (i.e. non-profit groups, charities, religious organizations, and others) submit an application to OCMP describing who they are, the intent and date of their fundraising event, and how they plan to publicize the

event to their members. In return, OCMP takes care of supplying the ice cream, the freezers, the equipment, and even the staff needed to prepare the product (a vanilla ice cream bar dipped in chocolate with optional almonds or peanuts). The organizations must provide certain resources once they are at the site such as volunteers, company banners (for patrons to see as they walk by the stand), and handouts (e.g. brochures or leaflets) about the organization. Approval for Bob's stand entitles organizations free use of the space over the two-day weekend and 100% retention of profit from ice cream sales! In addition, the swap meet provides the organizations vouchers to hand out to donors who make a contribution while buying an ice cream (Image 4.19).



Image 4.18: (from top, clockwise): Customer walks out of Bob's Old Fashioned Ice Cream Stand with an ice cream similar to the one shown. The location of the stand is next to a snack bar and a outdoor stage and DJ area (shown on the upper-left). For a \$3 donation a patron can purchase a vanilla ice cream covered with chocolate and almonds or peanuts. On this particular day The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society was occupying the space at the OCMP and selling the ice creams for donations.



Image 4.19: Voucher the community groups provide to customers who buy an ice or who donate to its cause.

These vouchers permit the donors to gain a free entry on their next visit to OCMP, thus adding more incentive for public participation and demonstrating collective effort from both parties (swap meet and non-profit).

The OCMP created the endeavor in 2002, a few months after the September 11th terrorists' attacks, in an effort to promote goodwill in the community. However, this effort is part of a longstanding commitment to improve the neighborhood dating back to when the swap meet opened its doors in 1969.¹⁹ The project is well known amongst various non-profit groups in the area. According to the OCMP website, in 2009, there were 44 non-profit and charity organizations that utilized Bob's to raise approximately \$50,000 in contributions. Since the project began nine years ago, over a half a million dollars (\$523,000) has been accumulated by various organizations that have used the venue.

¹⁹For more information see the Orange County Market Place website: www.ocmarketplace.com

Bob's Ice Cream gives organizations an opportunity to come in contact with a high volume of people (between 45,000 to 50,000 patrons per weekend). During my site visit an organization called *The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society: Team in Training* was using Bob's Ice Cream to raise money for their cause.²⁰ The project manager for the organization employed couple of volunteers to help her collect money from sales or donated by customers. They also provided information to myself and other patrons about their particular campaign.

Table 4.1 lists the types of programs that participated in the Orange County Market Place (OCMP) through Bob's Old Fashioned Ice Cream stand in 2009 (it is the most up to date list of participants). It is evident that there is wide range of community development organizations, non-profit organizations, neighborhood groups, and other miscellaneous associations expressing interest in using the swap meet to carry out their activities. According to the table at least 46 organizations entered and used the space for its own agenda or campaign and also to offer its resources and information to the public. The varied interest these organizations focus on includes the following: women's issues, health and fitness, cancer awareness, mental disabilities, financial assistance, animal rights advocacy, religious services, educational information, youth activities, environmental advocacy, public services (such as firefighters), senior citizen help, victims' rights, employment assistance, and volunteer services. As is evident by the information in this table, the opportunity created by the OCMP opens possibilities to many types of community development groups in the area, whether local or national,

²⁰ For more information on The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society visit its website: www.teamintraining.org

thus helping to narrow the spatial gap mentioned in Chapter 1 in which resources and information are isolated from the people who need them.

Aside from providing opportunities to outside groups, OCMP includes a couple of areas inside where aspiring musicians and artists can showcase their talents (Image 4.20) For example, during my visit there was a live musical performance by a guitar singer who sang near a concession stand as patrons purchased food near a canopied resting area. The swap meet contracts musicians and actors from a talent agency and gives the performers a chance to perform at the market.²¹ During my visit the guitarists' music created a soothing atmosphere that made both shopping and relaxing enjoyable. At the end of a musical set, the artist promoted or sold personal CDs to interested swap meet patrons. Simultaneously, another live event occurred in a different section of the venue. Closer to Bob's Ice Cream, a designated area included a public performance stage, where a privately hired disc jockey (DJ) played music for the audience. Surrounding the DJ, approximately 25 to 30 people gathered to watch an eccentric entertainer who gave impersonations of pop-culture icons, lip-synched American Idol performances, and imitated famous movie scenes.

²¹ For more information please see: <http://www.animalcrackersent.com/>

	Name	Focus
1	Ability First	Physical and Mental Disabilities
2	American First Credit Union	Banking/ Financial
3	Animal Assistance League of Orange County	Animal Protection
4	Avon Walk for Breast Cancer	Health/ Cancer Education and Fundraising
5	Calvary Christian Fellowship	Religious
6	Casa Teresa	Women's Services
7	Corona Del Mar H.S. Girls Basketball Team	Youth Sports/ High School
8	Costa Mesa Chamber of Commerce	Business
9	Costa Mesa Firefighters Association	Firefighters
10	Costa Mesa High School P.T.S.A.	High School
11	Costa Mesa Library Foundation	Library
12	Costa Mesa Senior Center	Senior Citizens (independent non-profit)
13	Crime Survivors	Victims Rights
14	Edison High School Hockey/ Volleyball	Youth Sports/ High School
15	Estancia A.S.B.	High School
16	Estancia Football/Softball	Youth Sports/ High School
17	Exchange Club of Corona del Mar	Various Community Service Activities and Fundraising
19	Foothill High School Grad Night/ PTO	High School
20	Friends of Lake Forest	Parks and Recreation
21	Girl Scouts (several troops)	Girls, Youth Development
22	Harbor Mesa Lions Club	Community Service
23	Jailhouse Rockers of California	Music
24	Kiwanis Club of Costa Mesa	Community Service and Development
25	Ladera Angels	N/A
26	Laguna Hills High School Music Boosters	Music/ High School
27	Leadership Tomorrow	Leadership Training/ Education
28	Little People of America	Little People
29	Los Amigos High School	High School
30	Millennium Exchange Club of Orange County	Community Service and Development
31	MOMS Club Costa Mesa North	Women's Services
32	Motherless Daughters of Orange County	Women's Services
33	Mothers Against Drunk Driving	Victims Rights
34	Ocean View High School Cheer	High School
35	Parents of Murdered Children	Victims Rights
36	PEO Sisterhood, Chapter PL	N/A
37	Pet Rescue Center	Animal Protection
38	Relay for Life	Health/ Cancer Education and Fundraising
39	Savanna High School Football/Cheer	Youth Sports/ High School
40	St. Bonaventure Elementary School	Education
41	The Gary Center	Child and Family Services
42	Tustin H.S. Boy's Soccer/ Girl's Volleyball	Youth Sports/ High School
43	Tustin High School Girls Soccer Program	Youth Sports/ High School
44	Tustin Soccer Club Inc.	Youth Sports/ Non-Profit
45	VFW-Fountain Valley	Armed Service Veterans
46	Wilson Street Learning Center	Youth Education
47	Youth Employment Service-Harbor Area	Youth Employment

Table 4.1: Bob's Old Fashioned Ice Cream-2009 Participants and each respective group's area of focus.

The Orange County Market Place is not only a venue where participants can buy or sell merchandise, but also a venue where each can be entertained or engaged in the immediate environment. These forms of entertainment and engagement opportunities are assets and resources, which might not exist in the area or hard to locate. This makes it possible for different audiences to enjoy activities or events they might not

have considered doing under normal circumstances and benefits community development groups who want to reach a larger audience.



Image 4.20 (Top to bottom): An actor/ impersonator finishes his performance in front of swap meet participants. Behind him is Bob's Old Fashioned Ice-Cream stand, a snack bar, and a live DJ. (Below) A musician plays to a crowd of people (not pictured) who are eating food from a different concession in the swap meet.

Part 2: Assessment of Case Studies

The case studies detailed in this chapter are meant to give a broader, more in-depth, perspective about how swap meets are diverse and also to find evidence of non-vending activities incorporated at each site. This section takes clues from the qualitative data gathered in the field and also uses the information in Table 3.2 from Chapter 3 to help spark the interest of planners to view swap meets as places for better community engagement. Each swap meet in the cases utilizes its spatial layout in different ways.

Size and Location of Swap Meets

The outdoor swap meets generally were larger than the indoor swap meets and also had higher attendance of patrons. The two largest ones, Orange County Market Place and San Jose Flea Market (SJFM), were located in areas that were in less densely populated neighborhoods and also provided space for community development groups because of their physical size (OCMP is 20 acres and SJFM is an impressive 120 acres). Both of these sites attract a large amount of visitors every week with OCMP drawing 1,100 patrons weekly (approximately 2 million a year) while SJFM getting 6,000 patrons a week (approximately 4 million a year). The medium-sized outdoor swap meets, Los Angeles City College Swap Meet (LACC) and Capitol Flea Market (CMF) were more integrated into neighborhoods, typically in denser residential area. Physical space of the entire site was therefore more limited. Neither swap meet had community development groups on-site but CFM did provide a venue where local musicians perform. All open-air swap meets, with the exception of the SJFM had other secondary

uses—whether it be a county fair (OCMP), a drive-in movie theater (CFM), or a school parking lot (LACC).

In regards to the indoor swap meets, these venues were more integrated into residential areas, but also had the lowest attendance. They blended in with other brick and mortar businesses. Only one of the swap meets, Mercado La Paloma, offered community development groups some space to provide resources or information to swap meet participants. In fact, it did the best out of all the surveyed swap meets in providing access to resources. However it did not have as strong of a customer base as the large open-air swap meets. This was perhaps one of the biggest surprises of the entire study because I expected a site with valuable resources and information (e.g. health clinic) to be embraced much more within the neighborhood by the local area. Yet, MLP is having trouble staying afloat financially. There are many possible reasons for this but some obvious factors could be that it is rather isolated from the housing by other large manufacturing buildings, a DMV, limited parking (although it has its own parking lot) and a freeway. It could also be that there are very few vendors inside the building and lacks a balance between vending and community service, thus coming up short in attracting people who want to shop and use the services (the restaurant-centered model it operates under may not draw in enough people).

Ownership

Although not stated explicitly, one very important factor that contributes to the success of swap meets providing access to community development services and information is the ownership of the site. The OCMP, SJFM, MLP, and CFM each differ

in the amount and type of community programming it offers yet they are managed by owners or companies that understand the importance of providing a space for such public use. I realized from walking in these four places that they were not only about providing the neighborhood or entrepreneurs with an opportunity to sell affordable goods. They were also about bringing in non-profits or performance groups to generate valuable information or create a fun environment, which benefits the swap meet community (not to be confused with the wider area surrounding the swap meet but instead only what is happening in the venue). In effect, these markets strive to build better public relations within the neighborhood and with the city (all of the site, with the exception of the CFM, publicize their good deeds online). Hence, there is no doubt that the owners have found value in putting these kinds of activities on their property and that they expect such efforts to pay off in attracting more customers (and vendors) as well as receiving positive recognition in other parts of the city.²²

Motives for Providing Services

Somewhat related to owner leadership are the circumstances that explain why swap meets want inclusion of community development organizations or non-vending events inside the premises. In the case of the OCMP, the desire to work with community groups resulted from a response to an infamous event. The September 11th terrorists attacks led to with a desire on behalf of the OCMP to work with outside organizations and help in the process of building positive relationships in the area.

²² There is evidence of other swap meets aside from the case studies that provide certain community services or donate charitable contributions to the local area. See the references by Michael Moran Alterio in the bibliography.

Non-vending activities were also promoted at MLP. The website for MLP states that the establishment of a small business incubator and non-profit community service program was established by the Esperanza Community Housing Corporation for the purpose of having a “strategy to revitalize our neighborhood, bringing together new economic, health, social, and cultural resources under one roof.”²³ Much of South Central Los Angeles (which is where MLP is located) was severally affected by the 1992 civil uprisings when many businesses were burned to the ground or looted during the three-day event. Even today a significant amount of racial tension and resentment towards police authority remains in the community. Moreover, this part of Los Angeles can be characterized a burgeoning young and immigrant Latino/a population as well as a longstanding African American population in the surrounding area. Access to quality resources is scattered and often very hard to secure (due to various constraints including financial means, transportation to where the resources are, or even a lack of schedule flexibility). Mercado La Paloma is trying to streamline that process by creating a site that addresses many of the common issues in the community such as health, violence against women, and education by putting it together under one roof along with vending opportunities. Yet, although the MLP is an ideal swap meet that has invested the most in terms of permanent social services in a particular neighborhood, they are also struggling. The MLP example serves as a lesson of how merely centralizing services in a place might not be enough to guarantee success of a swap meet. The

²³ See Mercado La Paloma website: <http://www.mercadolapaloma.com/project.html>

larger swap meets have an advantage here because they have more space and can include entertainment in addition to non-profit or community-oriented activities.



Chapter 5: Findings

In this chapter, the goal is to begin putting together pieces from all the information included in Table 3.1 from Chapter 3, the information gathered on the case studies, the relevant literature, and personal experience. I will analyze the available data, both qualitative and quantitative, and highlight as well as evaluate important trends, ideas, observations, and other relevant findings that do not fit neatly in any of the other chapters. The purpose is to take all of the information compiled and find answers for the thesis question in Chapter 1. The question involves finding out if swap meets in California offer participants non-vending activities and, if so, do the activities incorporate elements of community service or information sharing? Furthermore, “What factors contribute to making community engagement (i.e. non-vending) activities possible?” As mentioned in Chapter 1, the research question is part of a larger exploration on how to expand non-vending programs that focus on social services and information capacity to neighborhoods around swap meets, especially those in underserved or socially and economically disadvantaged areas, so that community development organizations reach the people they are designed to help. Table 3.1 is reprinted here.

Table 3.2: Swap Meets Throughout California

	Name	City	Type (Indoor or Outdoor)	Proximity to Residential Areas	Proximity to Other Businesses	Evidence of Non-Vending Related Activities	Opportunities for Non-Profits or Outside Groups Available	Size (In acres, if available)	# Of estimated Vendors per week	# Of estimated Patrons per week (and year)	Operating Schedule	Additional Information
1	Antelope Valley Swap Meet	Palmdale	Outdoor	Isolated	Isolated	-	-	-	-	-	Saturday and Sunday	-
2	Bear Valley Indoor Swap Meet	Victorville	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	-	-	Open everyday (except Tuesday)	-
3	Capitol Flea Market %	San Jose	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	-	-	300-600	-	Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday	Drive-in movie theatre in the evenings.
4	College of the Desert Street Fair	Palm Desert	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	100-340	15,000-20,000 (78,000 - 1 million / yr)	Saturday and Sunday	Located on college property. Operated by Alumni Association. The Street Fair patronage enables the Alumni Association to continually support College of the Desert.
5	Cypress College Swap Meet	Cypress	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	-	500	-	Saturday	Located on college property and part of the "Cypress Puente Program".
6	Denios Roseville Farmers Market & Swap Meet	Roseville	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	-	-	-	Friday (Farmer's Market Only); Swap Meet on Saturday and Sunday	-
7	Fontana Indoor Swap Meet	Fontana	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	No	-	70	-	Open everyday (except Tuesday)	-
8	Fox Indoor Swap Meet	Venice	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	-	-	Open Daily	-
9	Integrated	Huntington Beach	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	No	-	-	-	Saturday and Sunday	Located on college property.
10	High Desert Indoor Swap Meet	Victorville	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	-	-	N/A	-
11	Kobey's Swap Meet At The Sports Arena	San Diego	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	-	1,000	25,000 (1.3 million / yr)	Friday, Saturday, and Sunday	-

	Name	City	Type (Indoor or Outdoor)	Proximity to Residential Areas	Proximity to Other Businesses	Evidence of Non-Vending Related Activities	Opportunities for Non-Profits or Outside Groups Available	Size (In acres, if available)	# Of estimated Vendors per week	# Of estimated Patrons per week (and year)	Operating Schedule	Additional Information
12	Long Beach Antique Market	Long Beach	Outdoor	Integrated	Isolated	-	-	20	800	-	Sundays (once a month)	-
13	Los Angeles City College Swap Meet %	Los Angeles	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	No	-	150-200	-	Saturday and Sunday	Located on college property.
14	Los Angeles Harbor College Swap Meet	Wilmington	Outdoor	Isolated	Isolated	No	-	-	40	-	Sundays	Located on college property.
15	Maclin Markets – Victorville	Victorville	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	-	-	-	-	Saturday and Sunday (except during annual county fair)	Located on San Bernardino County Fair grounds.
16	Maclin Markets-Indio	Indio	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	-	-	400	-	Wednesday and Saturday	-
17	Maclin Markets-Ontario	Ontario	Outdoor	Isolated	Isolated	Yes	-	40	500	-	Tuesday, Saturday, and Sunday	Located next to auction barn (livestock) open to the public
18	Mercado La Paloma %	Los Angeles	Indoor	Isolated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	34,000 sq ft + 1/2 acre	11+7 full-time community non-profits	-	Open Daily	Includes seven in-house non-profit organizations, a community kitchen, financial help, and arts-related activities; and a conference room
19	Merced Flea Market	Merced	Outdoor	Integrated	Isolated	No	-	-	-	-	Saturday	Located on Merced County Fair grounds.
20	Orange Coast College Swap Meet	Costa Mesa	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	-	-	-	-	Saturday and Sunday	Located on college property.
21	Orange County Market Place %	Costa Mesa	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	20	1,100	50,000 (2 million / yr)	Saturday and Sunday	Located on Orange County Fair Grounds. Next door to animal farm and farm food exhibit.
22	Pacific-Foothill Swap Meet	Glendora	Outdoor	Integrated	Isolated	No	-	-	530	6,000 (312,000 / yr)	Sundays	Located on college property.
23	Pacific-San Fernando Swap Meet	San Fernando	Outdoor	Integrated	Isolated	Yes	-	36	1,000	26,000 (1.4 million / yr)	Open everyday (except Monday and Wednesdays)	Property recently sold to school district and retail developer.

	Name	City	Type (Indoor or Outdoor)	Proximity to Residential Areas	Proximity to Other Businesses	Evidence of Non-Vending Related Activities	Opportunities for Non- Profits or Outside Groups Available	Size (In acres, if available)	# Of estimated Vendors per week	# Of estimated Patrons per week (and year)	Operating Schedule	Additional Information
24	Pacific-Vineland Swap Meet	City of Industry	Outdoor	Integrated	Isolated	Yes	-	-	600	25,000 (1.3 million / yr)	Open Daily	Drive-in movie theatre.
25	Paramount Swap Meet	Paramount	Outdoor	Semi-Integrated	Isolated	Yes	-	46	823	48,000 (2.5 million / yr)	Open Daily	-
26	Pico Rivera Indoor Swap Meet	Pico Rivera	Indoor	Semi-Integrated	Isolated	-	-	-	-	-	Open everyday (except Tuesday)	-
27	Roadium Open Air Market	Torrance	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	-	15	500	40,000 (2 million / yr)	Open Daily	-
28	San Bernardino Indoor Swap Meet	San Bernardino	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	-	-	N/A	-
29	Santa Fe Springs Open Air Market Place	Santa Fe Springs	Outdoor	Isolated	Isolated	Yes	No	-	-	-	Open everyday (except Monday)	Stage where bands perform
30	Santa Maria Hiway Drive In Theatre And Swap Meet	Santa Maria	Outdoor	Integrated	Isolated	-	-	-	-	-	Sundays	-
31	Saugus Swap Meet	Santa Clarita	Outdoor	Isolated	Isolated	Yes	-	-	-	-	Tuesday, Saturday, and Sunday	-
32	Slauson Super Mall %	Los Angeles	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	No	-	-	-	Open Daily	-
33	The (San Jose) Flea Market, Inc. %	San Jose	Outdoor	Semi-Integrated	Isolated	Yes	Yes	120	6,000	77,000 (4 million / yr)	Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday	Quarter-mile long farmers' market. The book <i>Kite Runner</i> reference's authors experience here.
34	Treasure Island Flea	San Francisco	Outdoor	Isolated	Isolated	Yes	No	-	-	-	Saturday and Sunday (last weekend of the month)	-
35	Valley Indoor Swap Meet – Panorama City	Panorama City	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	No	-	300	"millions" (according to its website)	Open everyday (except Tuesday)	-
36	Valley Indoor Swap Meet – Pomona	Pomona	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	-	550	"millions" (according to its website)	Open everyday (except Tuesday)	-

	Name	City	Type (Indoor or Outdoor)	Proximity to Residential Areas	Proximity to Other Businesses	Evidence of Non-Vending Related Activities	Opportunities for Non- Profits or Outside Groups Available	Size (In acres, if available)	# Of estimated Vendors per week	# Of estimated Patrons per week (and year)	Operating Schedule	Additional Information
37	Visalia Sales Yard	Visalia	Outdoor	Isolated	Integrated	-	-	-	350	-	Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday	-
38	Washington Square Discount Mall %	Los Angeles	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	-	-	Open Daily	-
N=38												
* Represents swap meets that were found through online searches and through field visits. It is not an exhaustive list.												
% Represents Swap Meets Visited for Case Studies												

Interpreting the Table

The first two columns, “Name” and “City”, were both interesting. As already discussed public and private markets can use different names to describe the same type of—in the case of a swap meet, it’s providing opportunity for small entrepreneurs to sell affordable goods that are either new or used such as clothing, produce, hardware, and children’s items. The names of the markets reflect the diversity by which the same (or similar) activity is recognized as by owners. The monikers include flea market, rummage sale, super mall, and sales yard. As for the city in which they locate, we see that swap meets are found throughout the state in both dense urban environments and less populated area. Thus there is no environment which swap meets, indoor or outdoors, are confined to for supplying a neighborhood with jobs or affordable goods.

According to the category “Type”, there are more outdoor swap meets than indoor swaps. Indoor swap meets accounted for 11 out of the 38 total markets while outdoors were 27. However, Chapter 3 mentioned that the smaller amount of indoor markets may be due to various factors including a lack of presence on web listing which is were many of the markets in this study were found. For example, I know of at least two markets not listed online but which I have visited within the past year and therefore it would be misleading to conclude that there are more outdoor swap meets. Yet, it is safe to say that the outdoor public markets identified in the table demonstrate a better presence, or at least a more significant one, in formal business listings and on Internet websites. This makes it easier for computer savvy patrons to find these types of venues.

The Column “Proximity to Residential Areas” shows that 25 swap meets are ‘integrated’ into the neighborhoods (65%), meaning residences surround all four sides of the market. There are also 3 swap meets that are ‘semi-integrated’, which means that these markets are also surrounded by residences but may have one or two sides that abut any number of different land uses including vacant land, another commercial or industrial property, or a freeway. “Proximity to Other Businesses” in Table 3.1 shows that 20 (53%) of swap meets are near to other retail locations. Almost all of the swap meets I visited were integrated with other retail businesses in the area, taking advantage of the customers that visit those businesses while bringing patrons to them as well. Not all the markets that met both of these conditions offered non-vending activity. The two that did have musical entertainment and other non-commercial events were the San Jose Flea Market and Orange County Market Place, they each were near freeways and along major roads with access via public transportation. They were also close to residential areas.

As a side note, and although not shown in the table, the estimated distance from the center of the city was determined for each of the case studies in order to figure out if this variable has a significant impact on community services or information capacity. All the sites were within approximately 8 miles from the respective downtowns. Results were inconclusive about whether distance from the urban center correlates to a higher propensity in non-vending services offered or if more people attend the swap meets if they are closer. Notably, the three indoor swap meets are at least four and half miles away from the downtown area but were not as busy as the outdoor markets which

tended to be further away. The Indoor swap meets were usually in dense urban environments surrounded by residential housing. There are several possible explanations as to why these sites were not as popular as the outdoor markets. One could be the fact that they are open daily and have operating hours. They also have the same vendors day-in and day-out. Hence patrons from the area may know what to expect from the limited amount of vendors that are there. Another possibility is that the indoor markets resemble any other typical retail store and usually compete with them from clientele so there is not much distinction between the two types of businesses. For example, the Slauson Super Mall is next to a Big Lots discount chain and a shopping center (that includes a super market, several eateries, and clothing stores). Moreover, the Washington Square Swap Meet is located in a shopping center and close to a couple of restaurants nearby. Mercado La Paloma is in an isolated area blocked off from neighborhoods by large warehouse-sized businesses.

In contrast, outdoor swap meets, for the most part, are in relatively less dense areas and away from other businesses (except for the medium size Los Angeles City College which is in a very populated part of town). They are open only a few times a week and attract people who typically come to shop on their day off. Outdoor swap meets (while they may have a staple of vendors who have sold there for long periods of time) do have a diverse offering of new merchants from week to week which increases the variety in products sold and new personalities at the site. Also, the four outdoor swap meets in the case studies included farmers markets or produce vendors, which

might explain why some people go there—to buy fresh produce. These sites attract people who might not typically visit a swap meet.

Returning to the table, “Evidence of Non-Vending Related Activities” refers to swap meets that show signs of non-vending activities that the markets hosts (i.e. no outside organizations coming in). Activities include entertainment events such as musical performances, disc jockeys (DJ), kids’ play areas, talent shows, or even charity fundraisers (e.g. Christmas toy giveaway). A total of 15 swap meets show ‘yes’ for this category, indicating that approximately forty percent have markets do non-vending activities for their patrons. Almost all of them (13) were outdoor public markets. There are some fields left blank (also in found in other columns) which means that there is no information about non-vending activities provided by swap meets.

“Opportunities for Non-Profits or Outside Groups Available”, refers to evidence that the swap meet invites outside groups or organizations to host events, outreach, and offer free services not normally found at the market. Activities include fundraisers, tournaments (e.g. 3-on-3 basketball contest), education and skill-building workshops, or other events related to the community development groups. According to the data, 7 of the 38 swap meets demonstrate evidence of community groups entering onto the premises to reach participants. Four of these venues are open-air markets. Once again, the table highlights how outdoor markets are more likely to allow outside groups to enter the site and interact with the public either to entertain or to raise funds.

The column “Size” indicates how large the plots of land are where the swap meets located (including parking spaces). Only 7 swap meets that had any information

available on their size, so it is difficult to conclude anything. The size range for the available swap meets (all open-air markets) is from 15 acres to 120 acres.

The middle two columns “# of Estimated Vendors” and “# of Estimated Patrons” is very interesting because it details roughly how many people visit these sites. Markets less than 15 acres are not found in the table. Swap meets that are approximately 15 to 20 acres have a range of 70 to 800 vendors and anywhere from 6,000 to 40,000 patrons per weekend. Furthermore, swap meets provide any kind of non-vending activities (either hosting them or inviting outside community development groups) are approximately 20 to 120 acres in size. They range from 500 to 6,000 vendors and have anywhere from 25,000 to 77,000 patrons per weekend (or about 1.3 million to 4 million a year).²⁴ It is worth noting that the medium to large outdoor swap meets (those at least 20 acres) publicize their information including what programs are offered (if any) via the Internet and in particular on their websites.

For “Operating Schedule”, the swap meet hours of operation, a majority of the swap meets have schedules that are very predictable. The table shows that sixteen sites are open daily, while twenty-two of them are open weekly. With the exception of a few outdoor markets and all indoor markets, most swap meets are open just a few days out of the week. Most open-air swap meets open two to three times a week, usually from Friday through Sunday. Indoor swap meets are open everyday or at least six days a week. For outdoor swap meets, their operations depend heavily on the weather and season. When it rains vendors can’t set up their stalls and merchandise because they

²⁴ I calculated these totals by taking weekly patron information provided by the swap meets and multiplying that number by 52 weeks, which equals the yearly amount.

risk damaging or ruining the supplies. Furthermore, vendors of open-air markets typically arrive at the site at least an hour before it opens to unload the supplies from their vehicles, and they beginning packing and loading before sunset (which is when swap meets usually close). Indoor swap meets are more predictable because vendors leave their merchandise at the site and open up or close at more stable business hours.

Lastly, the “Additional Information” column shows the unique attributes of each site, this field helps give a better understanding of how where these venues can operate. There are two swap meets on property used as evening drive-in movie theatres. One swap meet is on an auction lot. Another site is operated by a non-profit organization (Mercado La Paloma). Three swap meets were on county fair grounds that have large plots of land (e.g. The Orange County Fair). Surprisingly, this category also highlights several community colleges that allow swap meets to operate on their property (8 total), including one (College of the Desert Swap Meet) that was organized by an alumni association. This implies a recognized value for swap meets and similarly an appreciation for alternative uses of land from these schools and their officials.

Case Study Findings

The remaining sections detail the findings from the case studies data. Table 3.2 is reprinted on the next page. The table will supplement the observations collected during the field visits.

A Clear Vision

Swap meets that are successful are those that explicitly or implicitly have a common purpose (aside from just economic) in their existence. The San Jose Flea

Market was by far the site with the clearest vision in regards to its role in the neighborhood. This vision includes creating a “destination” that is “fun-filled” and “for the family”.²⁵ It has accomplished this goal for over fifty years and its website is a testament to how much it want to involve the community. SJFM constantly posts up various events that will take place on its premises and it invites members of all communities to come in and enjoy the environment it offers (e.g. the musical stage and the kids entertainment). The Orange County Market Place does a great job of marketing to the world via the Internet or through commercials and news articles. Patrons who go there know to expect more than just shopping. The Capitol Flea Market is a less organized in this respect because it does not have a website, but as one staff member mentioned, it continuously offers live music every weekend and therefore there is an expectation from visitors that this form of entertainment will be offered more than once. Other swap meets (in particular indoor swap meets) do not have this vision. They are generally more predictable and rather undistinguishable from nearby retail shops. Mercado La Paloma was the sole exception.

Location of Swap Meets and Non-Vending Services

Swap meets best able to provide non-vending programs (especially non-entertainment programs that incorporate more community service or information capacity) are those with a better geographical location. They need areas that are easily accessible to both locals but also to participants coming in to visit from outside the area

²⁵ For more information visit The San Jose Flea Market website: <http://www.sjfm.com/>

(including vendors). This includes swap meets at busy intersections or freeways, generally areas where high volumes of people live or pass through.

Each swap meet has a distinctive spatial attribute that makes it unique and highlights the diversity of these markets and how they use the location. Capitol Flea Market functions as both a swap meet in the day and a drive-in movie theater in the evenings. Los Angeles City College Swap Meet utilizes the parking lot of the school on weekends when students are off campus. The San Jose Flea Market is used solely as a vending site. Mercado La Paloma is inside a rehabilitated building in the inner city and operated by a non-profit housing group. The Orange County Market Place is operated on county fairgrounds. Washington Square Discount Mall shares space with other businesses in a shopping center. Lastly, the Slauson Super Mall is inside a large warehouse-like building deep in South Central Los Angeles.

Size of the Swap Meet

Overall, the outdoor swap meets were noticeably larger than the indoor swap meets. The only exception was the Los Angeles City College Swap Meet, which was a medium-sized market with about 150-200 vendors. The indoor swap meets generally had about 100 vendors (Mercado La Paloma having about 10 businesses and functioning more an incubator than an actual swap meet). The only swap meets that host non-vending programs (not to be confused with inviting community groups inside the venue) are the three biggest ones (San Jose Flea Market, Orange County Market Place, and the Capitol Flea Market). Of these three, only OCMP has a non-entertainment (e.g. community service) space allowing non-profits or charity groups to come in and use the

venue to fundraise and outreach to visitors. Similarly, Mercado La Paloma is the only indoor small swap meet to have community-focused services. MLP was actually the best model of all the cases because it incorporates vending activities with organizations focusing on housing issues, medical assistance, community space, artist space, and economic assistance for entrepreneurs, and child advocacy. It was also the only site operated by a non-profit organization (Esperanza Community Housing Corporation). All the others market were privately owned by family businesses or for-profit companies. However, as mentioned in the case study, MPL was one of the puzzling examples because despite offering a great amount of resources and information to the public, it is not attracting enough people to keep itself financially viable.

There is not enough information in terms of the acreage of all the swap meets in the case studies. The OCMP is 20 acres in size, while SJFM is 120 acres (including parking).

Presumably, these larger swap meets are more financially viable because they have more vendors than both smaller outdoor and indoor swap meets. They also attract a greater amount of patrons. Table 3.2 shows that swap meet that are larger typically get tens of thousands of people weekly and over the course of the year the numbers add up to millions (for example, SJFM gets 77,000 patrons plus 6,000 vendors weekly, or approximately 83,000 total, which translates to over 4 million people each year). Hence, they may be able to take more risks in order to provide non-vending activities inside the swap meet.

Table 3.3: Swap Meets Visited for Case Studies

	Name	City	Type (Indoor or Outdoor)	Proximity to Residential Areas	Proximity to Other Businesses	Evidence of Non-Vending Related Activities	Opportunities for Non-Profits or Outside Groups Available	Size (In acres, if available)	# Of estimated Vendors per week	# Of estimated Patrons per week (and year)	Operating Schedule	Additional Information
1	Capitol Flea Market	San Jose	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	-	-	300-600	-	Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday	Drive-in movie theatre in the evenings.
2	Los Angeles City College Swap Meet	Los Angeles	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	No	-	150-200	-	Saturday and Sunday	Located on college property.
3	Mercado La Paloma	Los Angeles	Indoor	Isolated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	34,000 sq ft + 1/2 acre	11+7 full-time community non-profits	-	Open Daily	Includes seven in-house non-profit organizations, a community kitchen, financial help, and arts-related activities; and a conference room
4	Orange County Market Place	Costa Mesa	Outdoor	Integrated	Integrated	Yes	Yes	20	1,100	50,000 (2 million / yr)	Saturday and Sunday	Located on Orange County Fair Grounds. Next door to animal farm and farm food exhibit.
5	Slauson Super Mall	Los Angeles	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	No	No	-	-	-	Open Daily	-
6	The (San Jose) Flea Market, Inc.	San Jose	Outdoor	Semi-Integrated	Isolated	Yes	Yes	120	6,000	77,000 (4 million / yr)	Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday	Quarter-mile long farmers' market. The book <i>Kite Runner</i> reference's authors experience here.
7	Washington Square Discount Mall	Los Angeles	Indoor	Integrated	Integrated	-	-	-	-	-	Open Daily	-

Location of the Non-Vending Activities inside the Swap Meet

For swap meets that have non-vending activities, the programs usually take place in one of four areas. One popular area is the front entrance or near the entrance. This allows the visitor to come in contact with the program early on and it ensures that everyone who comes into the market is aware of the activity. Another prominent location is near the center of the swap meet, usually close to the concession stands. This allows people buying food and drinks, or resting on benches near shaded areas, to pay attention to the non-vending activities while they take a break from walking or while passing through that area. Some examples I witnessed at these sites included live musical group ensembles and comedic performers amusing the crowd near the snack bars.

The two other locations where non-vending activities occur are next to the restrooms and at the corners of the swap meet. These spots are high foot traffic areas with a high degree of visibility and potential for interaction with guests. Patrons go into the swap meet through the front entrance and typically walk straight into the aisle that is directly in line with it, leading to the center of the market (where restrooms are), or instead they scatter along the peripheries leading to the corners or outer aisles that are close to restrooms.

Organizing Non-Vending Activities at Swap Meets

For swap meets that provide their own non-vending activities, ownership takes the lead in organizing the event. A few swap meets are implementing some non-vending programs in order to attract customers to come and buy at the swap meet. OCMP

includes attractions where children can play. It also includes hosting live performances where actors pander to large crowds. OCMP and two other swap meets also include other forms of entertainment such as musical acts, individual musicians or group ensembles (e.g. Mexican mariachi bands) that serenade the crowd as they shop or grab a bite to eat. OCMP, CFM, and SJFM hire the talent either directly or through a talent agency. It is worth noting that most of the emphasis is on entertainment and family fun (as was revealed in the literature review in Chapter 5). Swap meet owners appeal to individuals and families who don't have a lot of money to spend but still want to have a good time. The underlying purpose is to attract people to come for enjoyment and stay to spend on merchandise and concessions.

In regards to outside groups, three out of the five swap meets include non-vending activities involving community development groups. These two swap meets have marketing or "special events" coordinators that work with community development groups or non-profit organizations interested in hosting an event on the swap meet grounds. OCMP has an application process for groups to use the space. SJFM permits community groups to come into the swap meet; it allocates a free space for them to use for the weekend. In order to take advantage of the space, the group must submit tax information proving that it is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. In short, the manner in which outside groups come into the market to provide resources depends on the system set up by the owners and management, yet it is not too complicated.

Review

This chapter analyzed the two tables from Chapter 3 as well as the case studies from Chapter 4. What is evident is that the swap meets in California are quite distinct from each other even when they display similar characteristics (indoors vs. open-air). Open-air markets tend to be larger in size and also more likely to offer non-vending activities to its participants compared to indoor swap meet. In addition, the outdoor swap meets are interesting because they make use of sites that serve other functions such as county fairs or drive-in theaters. As for the case studies, it is interesting that most of the non-vending activities hinge on entertaining the public. Only the OCMP incorporates a weekly community service component via Bob's ice cream stand. Similarly, Mercado La Paloma demonstrates itself to be a perfect example of how vending sites can meld with non-profit organizations to serve the local area with affordable goods, jobs, and viable resources or information. Yet, it was also a struggling enterprise that warrants more research on why the model is not thriving. The last chapter offers reflections on next steps in this field of research.



Chapter 6: Conclusion

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, I am the product of the swap meet environment. For twenty years of my life I traveled with my parents to different sites selling women's underwear to save up and invest in things that made life worthwhile (a home, my education, supporting family in El Salvador). What else could be more indicative of the American Dream?

My underlying objective in conducting this research is to address a spatial gap I see as an insider: how can the people (especially those living in poor communities) benefit from the resources and information provided by community development groups already in the area and that are able to help meet those needs. The challenge here has been to reframe, or better yet re-imagine, the role that swap meets occupy in neighborhoods in order to add more value to this already important asset.

This thesis began with a two-part thesis question :

Are there currently any swap meets in California that offer non-vending activities?

In particular, do any of the venues have community service or information components to them that could be valuable to participants?

The answer is “yes” for these questions as demonstrated by the research and case studies. There is evidence of indoor and outdoor swap meets providing non-vending activities to the neighborhoods they serve. There was another question that asked:

What possible factors are contributing towards making it possible to incorporate these kind of activities in swap meets?

Different variables were examined in order to answer this question such as the location of the swap meet, size of the venue, number of vendors, number of patrons, and alternative uses for the site. The data was limited, especially for indoor swap meets so it is hard to make general conclusion about how these variables influence the markets.

Yet, what was surprising is how Mercado La Paloma exemplifies everything that an ideal swap meet should be (embracing a strategy of having vending and non-vending programs) but yet it is struggling to bring in customers.

I have attempted to emphasize throughout this study how swap meets need to be appreciated not just as economic assets but also as community hubs. Swap meets attract a diverse group of people, from tens of thousands on a weekend, to millions in a year. Currently, swap meets offering non-vending activities involve programs focused on entertaining visitors while they shop. The activities and events are prepared under the idea that swap meets should serve the community as destinations where shoppers go to have fun and be entertained while they walk around aisles trying to find a bargain. This is a great start because it at least attempts to capture a wider audience of people that might not otherwise visit the market. However, the next step is to create opportunities for non-profit groups in the area to complement the entertainment aspect of the services and help address the problems or concerns in the local area. This would indeed make swap meets into true public spaces or destinations that can be fun and valuable resources that would no doubt attract more people.

Further Research

There are several areas that could benefit from future studies. One area is the role of owners in relation to the level of non-vending programs mentioned in Chapter 5. It is worth delving a bit deeper into this subject to find out how relationship-building with owners and directors of community development groups could benefit both sides (and consequently the neighborhood).

Another area that would be worth looking into is the role of local governments and elected officials. Here the question that needs to be asked is “how can swap meets be treated as assets by municipalities? Moreover, how can these vending sites be incorporated into public welfare agendas or campaigns that would help legitimize the venues more among local constituents or in the realm of public opinion?” It would be interesting to find out whether council members, elected boards, or even mayors would be open towards working with owners at swap meets to bring things like educational workshops or services such as health or job fairs. Could the sites be places to hold public forums like election campaigns or public meetings? These are especially important questions worth consideration because there needs to be more creative ways of bringing together owners, city leaders, in addition to non-profits and even other businesses, to figure out how to harness the idea of creating a true public space in areas that need help. This approach involves developing broad coalitions in the area with allies and unlikely sources such as schools, universities, churches, clinics, armed forces veterans, seniors, and other groups who could benefit from providing help at the swap meet.

It is also worth researching “what other types of public market models exists that are similar to swap meets and how do they incorporate non-vending activities at their sites?” An earlier stage in of this thesis was influenced by the farmers’ markets model that often uses public streets and are run by non-profit organizations that promote specific agendas such as access to fresh food. Although I did not pursue this route, it can definitely add valuable insights on the coordination of non-vending activities with

marketplace vending from another context. It would also contribute towards finding out ways to expand non-vending programming at swap meets.

Lastly, further research should be done on cases involving non-profits or other community groups paying to rent stalls at swap meets. Is this already happening? What are the benefits or challenges that such a strategy entails? In the OCMP and SJFM there was evidence that private businesses do this (e.g. car dealers), are community organizations trying this approach as well?

These are just some of the issues that came up while putting this work together, Yet, readers may have conceived of other important questions after reading this study.

Envisioning Ideal Types of Non-Vending Programs

Before concluding, I would like to share some ideas about what the community service and information programs swap meets should consider incorporating. As the OCMP case study demonstrated through the Bob's Old Fashioned Ice Cream stand program, it is not unimaginable nor impossible to find community organizations willing to come onto the site and participate in supplementing entertainment events with social services that can help participants at the swap meet. Thus, the kinds of community development programs and events that swap meets might want to include are:

- educational/ vocational programs: English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, community college and university outreach and recruitment, tutoring services, and computer literacy classes.
- medical/ health assistance: health screenings, blood-drives, dental check-ups, and nutritional/fitness classes.
- social or financial services: job fairs, financial/ banking advice, tax filing, local and state representative booths, housing advocacy information, and entrepreneurship or business start-up help.

- cultural or diversity programs: music, film, and performance arts programs; Latino/a, Black, Asian, or other ethnic and racial pride organizations.
- legal services: pro bono immigration or family counseling, and paralegal help.
- youth advocacy: employment opportunities, extracurricular activities, mentorship programs, music, arts, and performance programs, and gang prevention programs

Of course these are but a few of the activities that that are possible. It may depend on the context of the community as to which ones are worth emphasizing. As this research has shown, there are some swap meets moving in this direction and this is an opportunity to begin thinking about what other kinds of assets can be incorporated to benefit the participants that make up the venue.

For now, it appears that only a few swap meets are moving in a direction that bridges business with community development. Hopefully more planners—especially those interested in economic and community development—continue research on this important topic and continue spreading the word on the value that these places have within communities. With some luck more owners and local leaders in areas with swap meets will begin to see the full benefit of including non-vending programs at their site or in their community. In particular, swap meets in areas with disadvantaged residents should be at the forefront of this endeavor.

I hope that the work I've carried out sparks more in-depth and comprehensive studies to transform swap meets into true community hubs. I will continue on in this endeavor but it is also up to future students in urban planning as well as community leaders to make this vision a reality.

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