UCLA COMMUNITY SCHOOL

On the site of what was the famous, and infamous, Ambassador Hotel now sits one of Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) newest campuses, the UCLA Community School (Central Los Angeles new Learning Center #1). It will be the educational home for more than 4,000 students, and improve the quality of education in other Central Los Angeles schools by bringing the student-per-classroom ratio closer to the optimum. The scientists, geologists, toxicologists, and engineers at the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) were responsible for making that site suitable for a school setting, and safe for present and future students, faculty, and staff.

The 84-year old, 500-room luxury hotel and host to six Academy Award ceremonies was completely demolished on January 6, 2006. In its glory, it hosted Hollywood legends, Presidents and heads-of-state, and other famous people from around the world. Guests were entertained by Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, and others of the day. Entertainers Barbra Streisand and Marilyn Monroe (as a pool model) got their starts at the Ambassador. Harold Hughes resided there for some time. Most memorably, however, was that the Ambassador was the site at which Presidential Candidate Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated on June 5, 1968.

Designed by architect Myron Hunt, who also designed the Rose Bowl Stadium and CalTech, the Schine family owners closed the Ambassador in 1989. In 2001, after passing through the Donald Trump Organization, the school district purchased the property in 2001 for $76.5 million. The district's preliminary environmental investigation revealed solvent and petroleum products, and lead in the soil, the former coming from underground storage tanks and the latter from a cooling tower. The district also found methane from near an exploratory core hole piercing the earth to 7,400 feet in the search for oil.

After contaminant problems were identified, the LAUSD and the DTSC realized that there would be a greater problem if subsurface vapors from methane and hydrogen sulfide were allowed to collect inside building structures. Because of the timing and other constraints facing the school district, DTSC worked closely with the LAUSD to design a gas mitigation system. The gas mitigation system was designed to prevent these vapors from entering the buildings. Site specific action levels (SSALs) for methane and hydrogen sulfide were established for different components of the system. If methane and hydrogen sulfide is detected in concentrations greater SSALs, a combination of automated and prescribed responses will be taken. The school's gas mitigation system includes gas barriers underlying all buildings and parking structure, sub-slab venting systems, membrane barriers, air sweep systems, enhanced ventilation, detection and alarm system and permanent soil vapor probes.