

## Chapter 2: Urban Design Framework

### 2.1 Introduction and Purpose

This chapter describes the Urban Design Framework for the Compton Station area. The Urban Design Framework translates the community vision and Specific Plan Goals and Actions (Section 1.5) into a physical master plan for the development of the Compton Station area to be executed through public and private real estate development projects, and public infrastructure projects. It represents a vision for Compton Station area in 2040, the planning horizon year for this project.

The contents of this chapter are to be interpreted as strong guidelines for all implementing projects. Some flexibility may be warranted as circumstances and conditions change; however, implementation of the key concepts of this Urban Design Framework is critical to ensuring a cohesive, functional, and vibrant Compton Station area.

### 2.2 Specific Plan Area Planning Districts and Land Use Growth Projections

Figure 2-1 defines the planning districts of the Compton Station Specific Plan area. These districts express the overall structure of the Specific Plan area and represent areas with a common character.

The Civic Center, Commercial Core, and Historic Core districts together make up the historic and future Downtown Compton. The Urban Design Framework for Downtown Compton and its component districts is described in detail in the sections that follow.

Growth projections were created for the purposes of environmental, infrastructure, and transportation analysis. These were determined by consulting the project's market study, recent development trends taking place in the Specific Plan area, and the desire to achieve a critical mass of development that could implement the Urban Design Framework and bring vibrancy and safety to the area. In total (entitled + future entitled projects), growth during the 2022-2040 period is projected to be:

- 2,468 residential units (1,676 market-rate and 792 affordable)
- 137,000 square feet of office/institutional space
- 150 hotel rooms

Total retail space is projected to decline by 25,000 square feet. The projected decline reflects an intended recycling of some large-format, big box stores with mixed-use development and inline stores and restaurants which occupy a much smaller footprint. Despite the square footage decline, the quality, variety, and quantity of retail sales is anticipated to increase markedly.

These growth projections include the development entitled by the 501/601 E. Compton Boulevard Specific Plan, which was adopted in June 2021. As described in Section 2.6, this project is comprised of 290 residential units (232 market-rate and 58 affordable), 14,000 square feet of retail space, and a 40,000 square foot innovation hub office space.

Future entitlement growth projections, analyzed by the environmental analysis accompanying this Specific Plan, are expected to be:

- 2,178 residential units (1,444 market-rate and 734 affordable)
- 97,000 square feet of office/institutional space
- 150 hotel rooms
- -39,000 square feet of retail space

Figure 2-2 and Figure 2-3 describe how this growth is anticipated to be distributed across the Specific Plan area. While it is anticipated that growth during the planning period will be concentrated in the Downtown districts, it is impossible to predict the exact location and extent of growth that will result from the Specific Plan because the majority of land and growth is planned for land which is under private control.

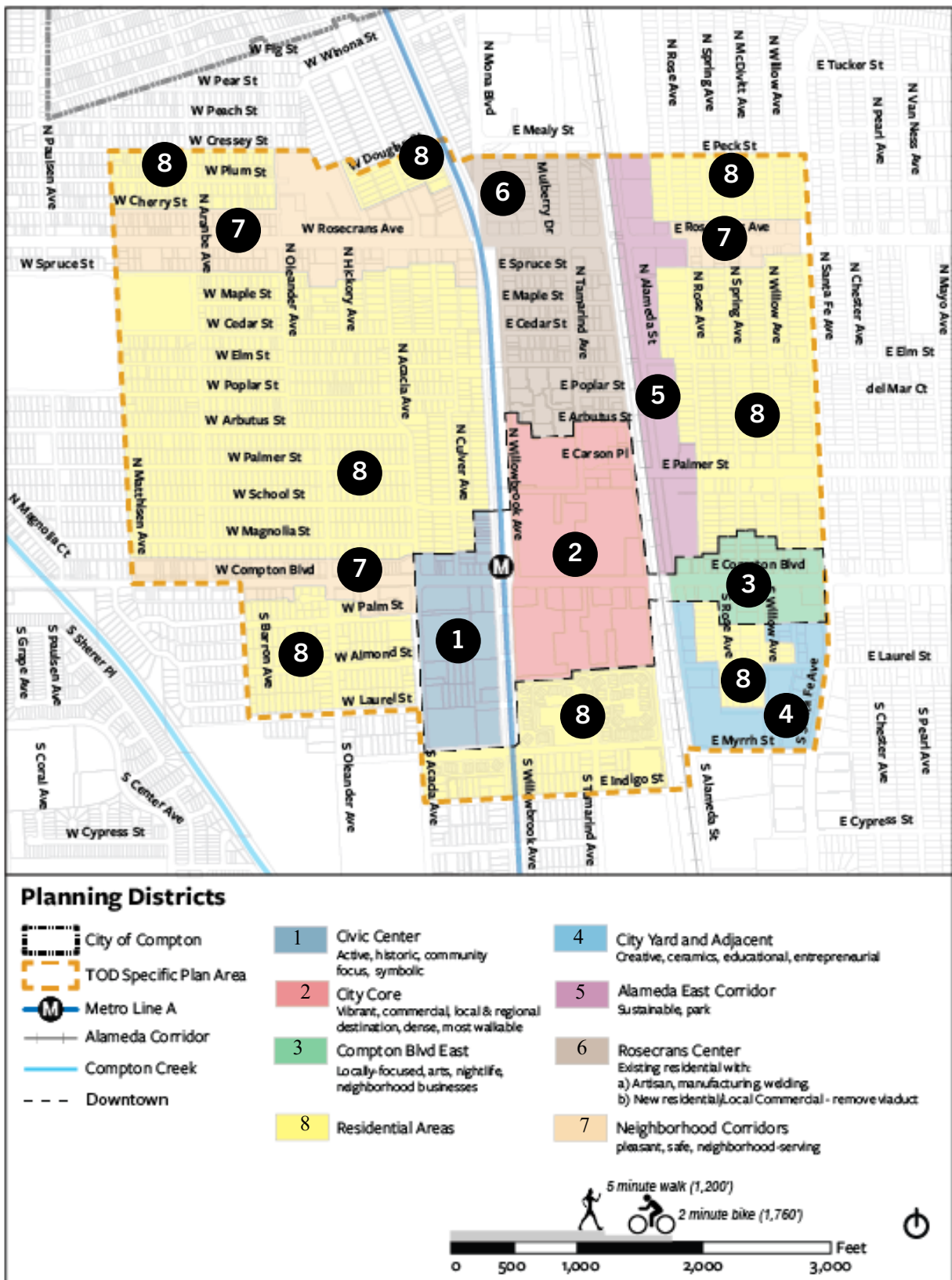


Figure 2-1. Planning Districts.

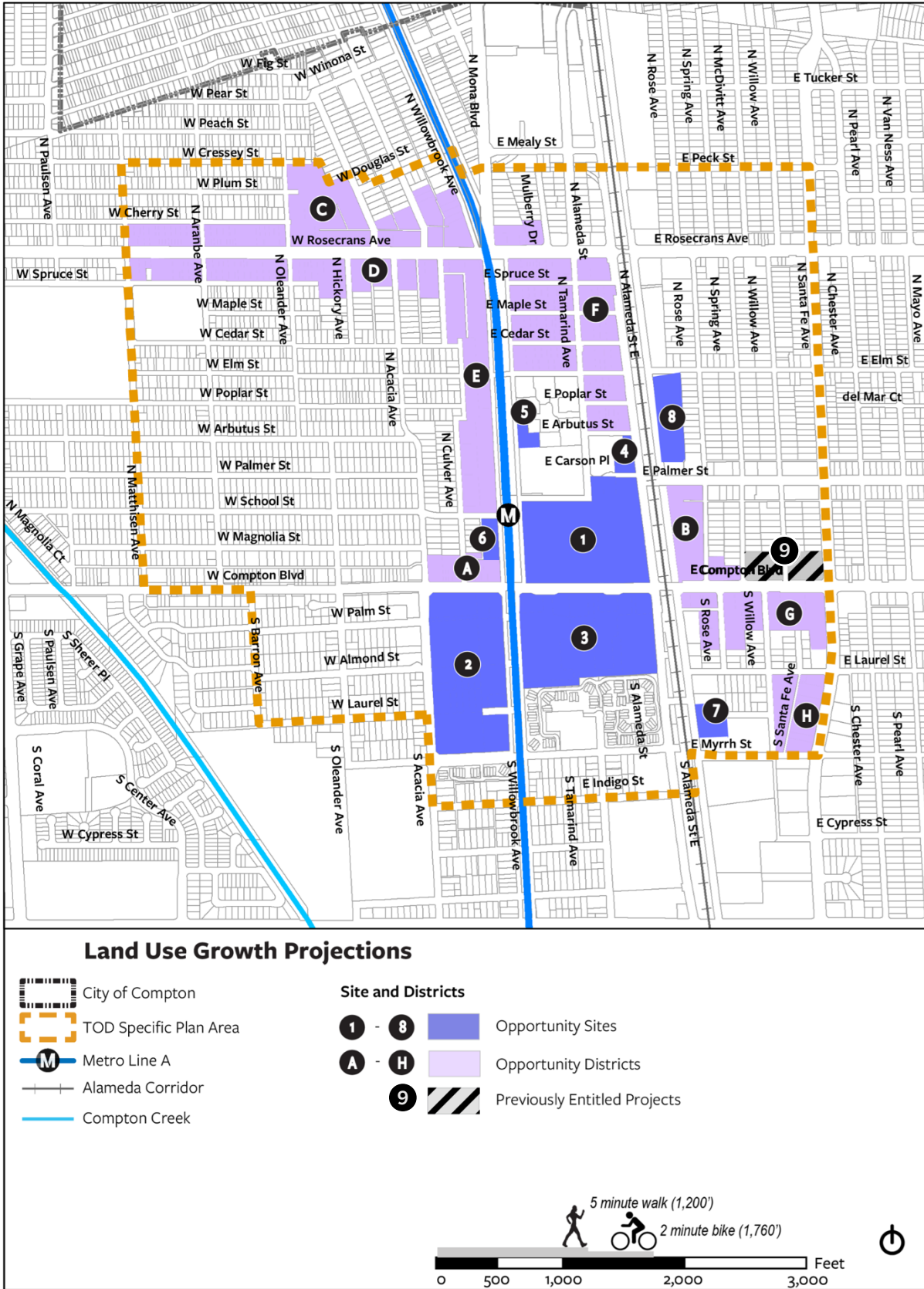


Figure 2-2. Land Use Growth Projections.

Land Use Growth Projections	Change in Land Uses					
	Public/ Institutional	Residential Market Units	Residential Affordable (units)	Retail ('000s) (sf)	Office ('000s) (sf)	Hotel (rooms)
<b>Key Sites</b>						
1. Renaissance Center	N	570	30	(45)	97	
2. Civic Center	Y		150	10		150
3. Towne Center	N	570	30	(18)		
4. 409 N. Alameda St. W	Y		106	4		
5. 398 N. Willowbrook Ave. E	Y		77			
6. 117-215 N. Willowbrook Ave. W	N	26	1			
7. 458 S. Alameda St. E	Y		90			
8. 600 N. Alameda St. E	Y		78			
9. 501/601 E. Compton Bl. (PREVIOUSLY ENTITLED)	N	232	58	14	40	
<b>Total Key Sites</b>		<b>1,398</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>(35)</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Other Opportunity Districts</b>						
A. Compton Bl, north side, Acacia to Willowbrook	N	72	3			
B. Compton Bl, both sides, east of Alameda	N	76	4	10		
C. Rosecrans Av, north side, west of Willowbrook	N	15				
D. Rosecrans Av, south side, west of Willowbrook	Y		80			
E. Willowbrook Av W	N	43	2			
F. Rosecrans Center district	N	43	2			
G. Santa Fe/Laurel, NW corner	N	29	1			
H. Santa Fe, Laurel to Myrrh	Y		80			
<b>Total Opportunity Districts</b>		<b>278</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>10</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,676</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>(25)</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>150</b>

Figure 2-3. Land Use Growth Projections Calculations.

**District Descriptions**

**Civic Center**

The Compton Civic Center is the political and symbolic heart of the City, in part because it is a product of and testament to achievements of the African-American community in Compton. Under this Plan, it will be strengthened in those roles as it invites the community and visitors in with new uses such as a hotel/cultural center, small retail, and housing.



**Commercial Core**

The Commercial Core consists of two large shopping centers located in the heart of Downtown Compton and immediately proximate to the Metro station. This area, which was the original center of the city, will again become the most vibrant and active district in the region with improved restaurant, shopping and entertainment options, open space, housing, and offices in a new walkable urban pattern.



### Historic Core

The Historic Core is located along a stretch of Compton Boulevard which retains more of its original built character as a pedestrian-friendly main street. This area is envisioned as a more locally-focused downtown district providing opportunities for entrepreneurs and small businesses, including arts uses.



Right photo credit: Stan Kaady.

### Social Service and Institutional Area

This area features a concentration of educational, community services and religious uses, mostly oriented toward Santa Fe Avenue. The Plan envisions strengthening connections between these uses and new affordable housing and park or community garden uses located at the City Yard at 458 S. Alameda St. E. Large parking lots and vacant land also provide opportunities for community-serving development.



### Alameda East Greenway Corridor

This district, currently occupied mostly by public uses and a wide, underutilized street, is envisioned overtime to become a green residential and educational corridor connected to Downtown Compton by a pedestrian and bicycle greenway replacing Alameda Street East. This district also includes Wilson Park, the only park within the generally park-poor Specific Plan area. This park is well used and includes a skate park, picnic tables, basketball courts, playground, and an indoor recreation center.



### Rosecrans Center

This district is located north of the Commercial Core between Willowbrook Avenue and Alameda Street. Bisected by the Rosecrans Avenue viaduct, it is a mix of residential and industrial uses heavily impacted by industrial pollution, noise, vehicle emissions, pedestrian barriers, and poor infrastructure quality. As Downtown Compton gains strength as a center of cultural production, however, this area could receive additional interest from artisans and artists, small-scale local manufacturing with limited hours of operation, live/work development, and housing. Vacant and underutilized properties along Rosecrans Avenue present nearer-term opportunities for development.





### Neighborhood Corridors

The Plan defines neighborhood corridors along Rosecrans Avenue west of Willowbrook Avenue and east of Alameda Street, and along Compton Boulevard west of Acacia Avenue. These are older strip commercial corridors with residential uses behind the mostly narrow commercial parcels. Occasional residential uses are also interspersed along the corridors. Despite high vacancies, particularly in the western portion of Compton Boulevard and the eastern portion of Rosecrans Avenue, parts of these corridors have good “bones,” with a walkable street pattern and buildings that meet the street.

The neighborhood corridors are envisioned to become pleasant, safe, and walkable corridors, combining local-serving retail with three story multifamily residential uses.



### Residential Areas

The Compton Station Specific Plan’s residential areas are densely populated single- and multi-family neighborhoods. The Specific Plan envisions few changes to these residential areas; however, they will benefit from greatly increased access to services, jobs and destinations present in the Downtown.



### 2.3 Downtown Vision and Urban Design Framework

The vision for the Compton Station Specific Plan is to build a better downtown, transforming it into a world-class destination that the whole Compton community can enjoy. The physical framework for creating this world-class destination was guided by the following principles:

- Increase the density of development in Downtown to enable new investment, provide more customers for businesses, and create an active and vibrant center of the City
- Prioritize access to and convenience of public transit, pedestrian, and bicycling access to accommodate growth in the most sustainable fashion possible
- Activate the public realm, and create new open spaces on privately-owned land in order to enable secure and well-maintained urban environments that are open to the entire community
- Create outdoor public spaces for different kinds of activities and events, including cultural events and large gatherings
- Develop a framework for unique expressions of Compton's culture, history, and creativity.

Figures 2-4 and 2-5 portray the Urban Design Framework for Downtown Compton. The Downtown will consist of three unique districts (Civic Center, Commercial Core and Historic Core) linked to each other and to Metro through the Compton Walk. Each of these districts, and the Compton Walk, are described in detail in the sections that follow.



Land Use Legend	
Yellow	Residential
Orange	Retail
Blue	Institutional/ Office
Purple	Hotel

Figure 2-4. Urban Design Framework Axonometric View.



Figure 2-5. Urban Design Framework Plan View.

## 2.4 Civic Center

The Compton Civic Center was completed in 1977 based on a design by African-American architect Harold L. Williams. Its ten-story Courthouse and large ceremonial plaza with a monument to Martin Luther King, Jr. are iconic in the City and hold great symbolic value in recognition of Compton's role in achievements of the African-American community. Despite this important symbolic value, however, the day-to-day experience in the MLK Plaza and other Civic Center open spaces is isolating due to the extremely small numbers of people who use the spaces on a regular basis.

In order to activate the Civic Center and strengthen its role as the symbolic heart of Compton, the Specific Plan envisions a mixed-use district focused on an MLK Plaza activated by new uses, including a cultural center and hotel, coffee kiosks and restaurants, and which plays host to large events, such as concerts, demonstrations, and public celebrations. The southern portion of the Civic Center feeds this focal plaza with shared parking, housing units, and neighborhood park space.







Figure 2-6. Civic Center Plan and Key Features.

Key Features:

1. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Plaza programmed and equipped for large events such as concerts, demonstrations, and public celebrations.



Source: *The Heron Downtown* (right).

2. Coffee/restaurant kiosks, authorized vendors, trees, and seating added around the plaza to create a more human-scaled environment that draws people outside at different times of the day.



Source: *Gary Coronado, Chron* (left). *Street Furniture Australia* (right).

3. Potential adaptive reuse of the historic Post Office building into a more active use (such as restaurant) which helps provide a gateway and define an entry plaza into the Civic Center.



4. New library/cultural center/museum with hotel serving as an attraction for local, regional, national, and/or international tourism and a marked gateway to the Compton Walk.



*New hotel, residential and retail development containing the Universal Hip-Hop Museum in South Bronx, NY. Source: L+M Development Partners.*

5. Heritage House relocated to more accessible site.

6. Affordable housing developments constructed on underutilized open spaces in the rear of the Civic Center.

7. Courthouse parking garage converted to shared parking, using excess daytime and nighttime capacity to accommodate the parking needs of housing, hotel, City Hall public meetings, and Dr. Dre Performing Arts Center events.

8. Strengthened neighborhood connections across Acacia Avenue, including improved crossings, narrowing of street and addition of a playground or other park-like amenity in Civic Center.

9. Connection to Compton High School and Dr. Dre Performing Arts Center.

10. Improved streetscape, parking, and bike lanes on Willowbrook Avenue (see section 2.8)

## 2.5 Commercial Core

Located at the Metro station and in the heart of Downtown Compton, the Commercial Core is intended to be the most dense and vibrant area of the City. This 33-acre area, currently occupied by two large shopping centers, Compton Renaissance Plaza and Compton Towne Center, is envisioned to transform over time into an active urban district and unique destination within the South Los Angeles and Gateway Cities area. The Commercial Core would continue to serve the majority of Downtown Compton's retail needs, but would arrange them along Compton Boulevard and a diagonal paseo/pedestrian mall to accentuate walkability and transit orientation and concentrate people for added safety and vibrancy. The retail uses are supplemented by upper-floor and adjacent residential units, which add eyes on the street and create the development feasibility needed to execute the project, as well as open space, structured parking, and office/institutional uses as possible.





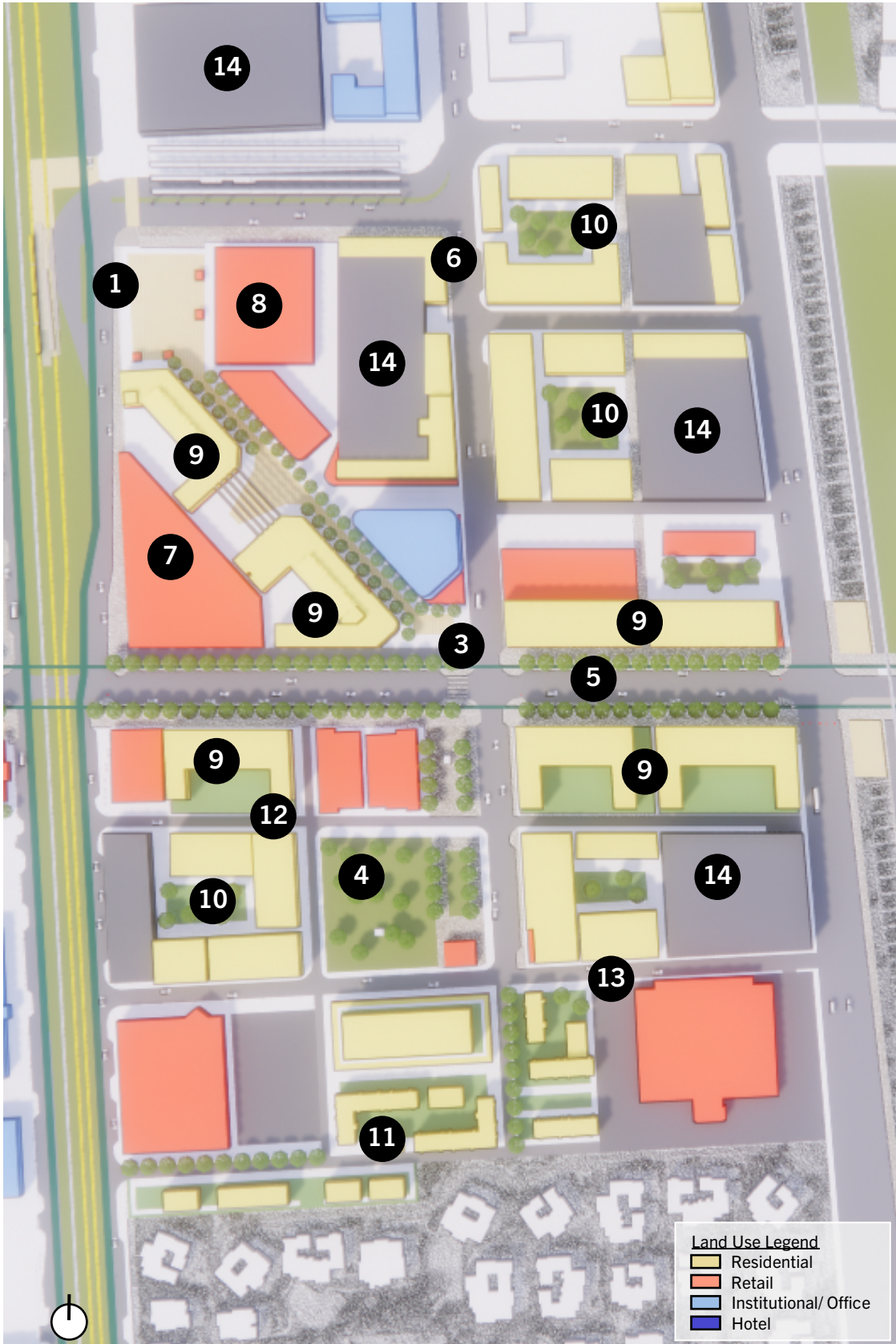


Fig. 2-7. Commercial Core Plan and Key Features.

Key Features:

1. Metro Plaza serving as an arrival gateway to downtown, sized for events such as farmers' markets, and connected to Metro station through raised crossings.



*Metro Plaza (left) and raised crossing example (right).*

2. Pedestrian Mall connecting the Metro station to the City Focal Intersection and flanked by active retail uses.



3. City Focal Intersection at the confluence of Compton Boulevard, Tamarind Avenue and the Pedestrian Mall with entry plaza, high visibility crosswalk, and potential location for unique tower architecture.

4. Compton Central Park providing flexible, passive space for residents and the general public.



5. New, widened streetscape along Compton Boulevard with street-fronting retail, improved lighting, outdoor dining, etc.

6. Extension of Tamarind Avenue south from realigned Carson Place/Palmer Street to new Almond Street (#13).

7. Entertainment anchor such as live or movie theater, music venue or nightclub with forecourt plaza.

8. Grocery or Big Box anchor connected to Parking Structure.



*At-grade and above-grade connections from parking structures to big-box stores. Source: Google Maps.*

9. Mixed-use buildings (residential or office over retail) along Compton Boulevard and key retail frontages.



10. Urban residential blocks with open space and concentrated parking.

11. Medium-density residential typologies adjacent to lower-density Country Club Drive community.

12. Alleys and new streets creating a finer-grained network of blocks.

13. New Almond Street located at front of current Compton Towne Center retail buildings, allowing for some retail buildings to be retained, with surface parking if needed.

14. District Parking Network with shared structures for retail customer/employee parking and residential parking if necessary. Structures sited and oriented to facilitate ingress and egress onto Alameda Street.

## 2.6 Historic Core

Located east of Alameda Street, the Historic Core is the only portion of Compton Boulevard within Downtown Compton which retains more of its early- and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century character as the main street of the community. This area is envisioned to be a more locally-focused downtown district, where creative and entrepreneurial Compton residents can find a home. The previously entitled Compton Innovation Hub, located at the east end of this district, will serve to strengthen this emphasis on creativity and entrepreneurship.





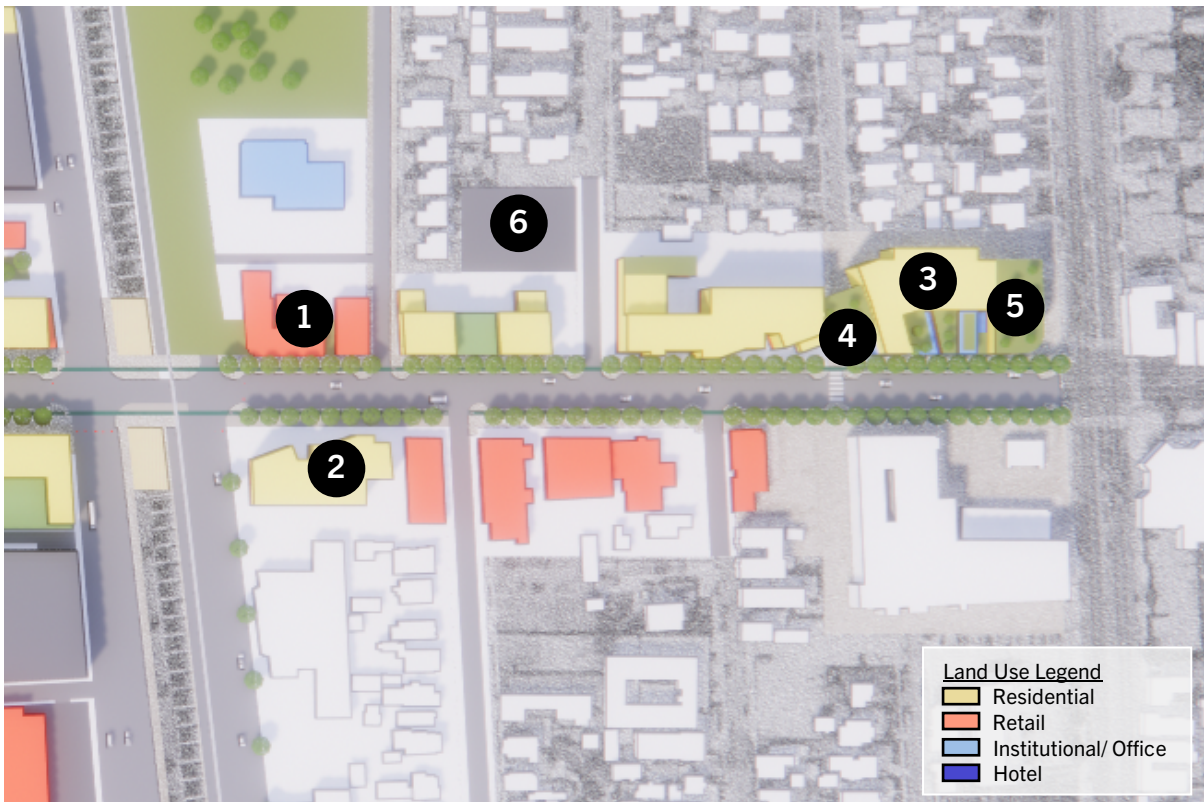
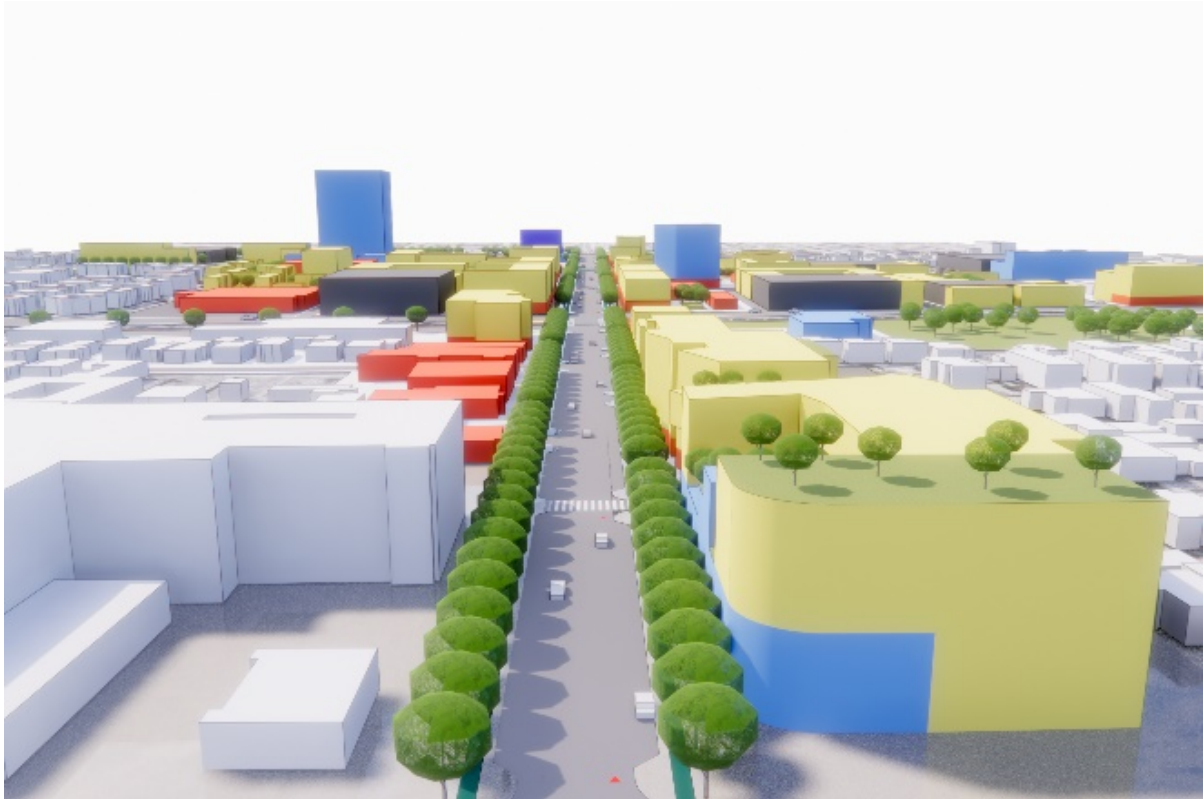


Figure 2-8. Historic Core Plan and Key Features.

Key Features:

1. Support for local businesses which contribute to the vitality of Downtown.



2. New mixed-use (residential or office over retail) development.



3. Compton Innovation Hub seven-story mixed-use project, with a large innovation hub for Compton's cultural producers.



Source: GGLO Architects



4. Willow Plaza created through closure of Willow Avenue at Compton Boulevard.



Source: GGLO Architects

5. Usable and sustainable open space created on roofs of buildings due to the small or shallow nature of many sites.

6. Public parking facilities created as opportunities arise.

## 2.7 The Compton Walk

This specific plan proposes that Compton Boulevard become the centerpiece of a new downtown Compton, linking the Civic Center, Commercial Core, and Historic Core districts with the Metro station through a pedestrian-friendly, activated streetscape that will take residents and visitors on a journey of discovery through cultural Compton's past, present, and future. A narrowing of Compton Boulevard's roadbed will help establish the street as a place to be, not to drive through, and free up space for additional pedestrian and active transportation uses along the corridor. The mobility concept is further described in Section 5.3.

As a nod to Compton's inspiring musical history, The Compton Walk will include a base streetscape patterning and design intended to resemble a blank musical 'score sheet', upon which the local community will be encouraged to compose and share their own unique 'songs' and expressions about Compton. The experiences along the Walk will be created, maintained, and updated over time by local artists and business owners, expressing the City of Compton's contributions to music, sports, politics, theater, visual arts, and fields yet undefined. It will serve as a major attraction to those who wish to come to appreciate and explore the City's culture.

Figure 2-9 illustrates diagrammatically how a range of programming and activities can be composed to generate a unique and evolving range of experiences, similar to how notes can be combined to make a song. Punctuating this primary pathway of experiences will be a rhythm of streetscape 'Places' associated with adjacent private development and other civic open spaces that will seek to promote additional moments of connection, discovery, learning, history, cultural expression, and entertainment.

Figure 2-10 shows the overall extents and routing of the Compton Walk. Key districts and civic spaces will be connected and a regular placement and hierarchy of programming and space types will promote exploration and discovery.

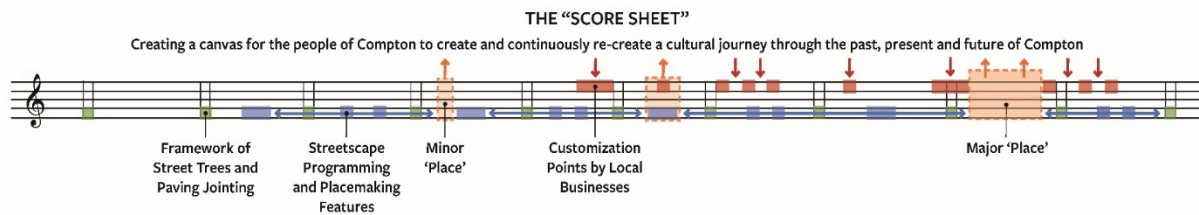


Figure 2-9. Streetscape 'Score Sheet' Programming Concept.

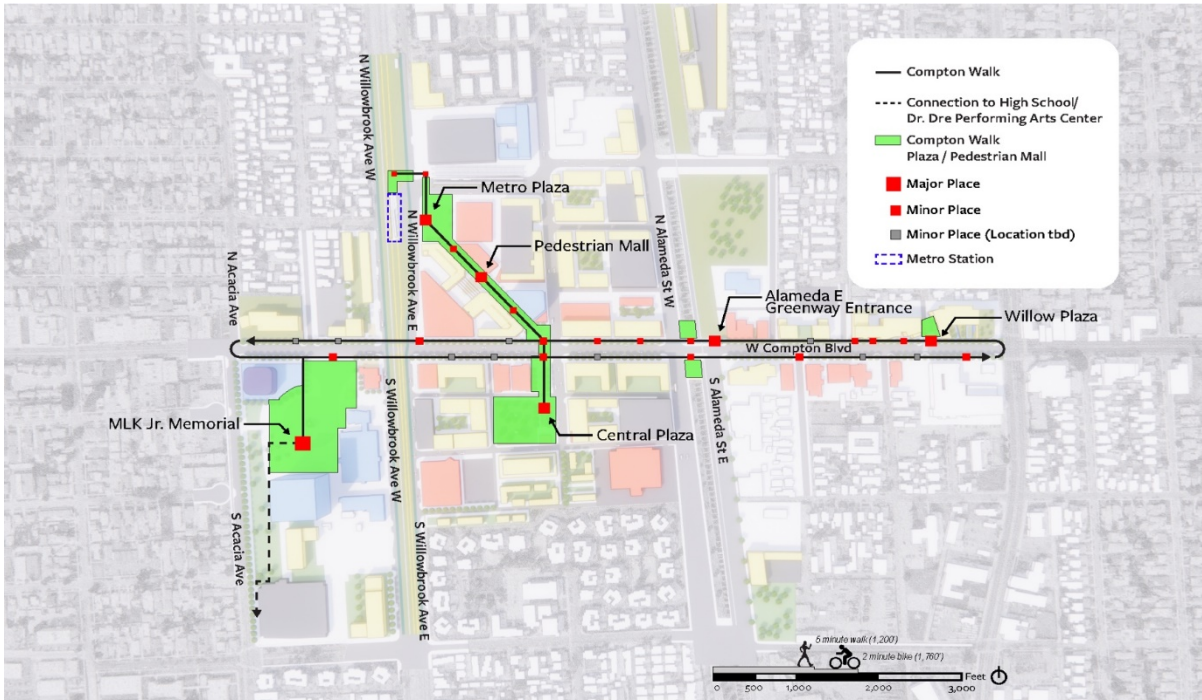


Figure 2-10. Overall Compton Walk Routing and 'Places' Concept.

### **Base Streetscape Improvements.**

These improvements are to be implemented as a condition of development in keeping with the Specific Plan standards, reference Section 5.3.

These improvements would include hardscape upgrades to the sidewalks, the planting of street trees, and the selection and placement of essential street furniture. The goal of these improvements will be to harmonize the streetscape to a consistent base look and feel and provide the streetscape components needed to create a more usable and comfortable physical space. They would create a solid base streetscape condition that could be easily implemented and that a later, more extensive design process could build on with further visioning and locally crafted expression. **Section 5.3** provides initial standards for the build-out of the base streetscape improvements.

### **Streetscape Customization: Historic, Art and Placemaking Features.**

These improvements are to be implemented by the City, or by the Developer, through a design review process as described in **Section 3.10**. Reference Sections 4.14 and 4.15 for proposed placemaking and private development interfacing guidelines.

These streetscape improvements would include, but not be limited to, the addition of a range of new expressive art and cultural elements such as sidewalk art, sculptural art elements, decorative hardscape paving, a range of lighting and multimedia effects, historical markers, a hierarchy of signage including information signage, streetscape structures, a district branding approach and elements, and other features TBD. The goal of this stage will be to undertake a design process that will enable Compton stakeholders to explore and add their own storytelling

layers to a Compton Walk experience. Substantive engagement with the local community, particularly the arts and historic communities, will ensure that the Walk is expressive of what the voices of Compton want to say. Involvement with a range of design specialists and creative professionals during the visioning process will play an important role in crafting a vision and experience that is nuanced and full of discovery.

Building on the base 'Score Sheet' streetscape improvements, the Compton community will be encouraged to compose its own melody of artistic, historical, and interactive elements which will be the focus of this journey through cultural Compton. The process to choose and develop the elements of the streetscape will need to be inclusive, weaving different elements and layers together to create a cohesive song of experiences.



Figure 2-11. Compton Walk Concept

## 2.8 Willowbrook Avenue

Willowbrook Avenue (actually two streets: Willowbrook Avenue West and Willowbrook Avenue East) is the major access pathway to the Metro station; yet today it functions as a barrier in the urban environment which is confusing to new users and unsafe for pedestrians, especially at intersections. The preferred solution is to convert it into a couplet of one-way streets, with bicycle facilities on both sides helping residents on both sides of the tracks access the station. The COMPTON Letters Plaza will be removed to re-establish vehicular access. Additional greenery will also be added to the couplet. See Section 5.4 for further detail regarding the redesign of Willowbrook Avenue.

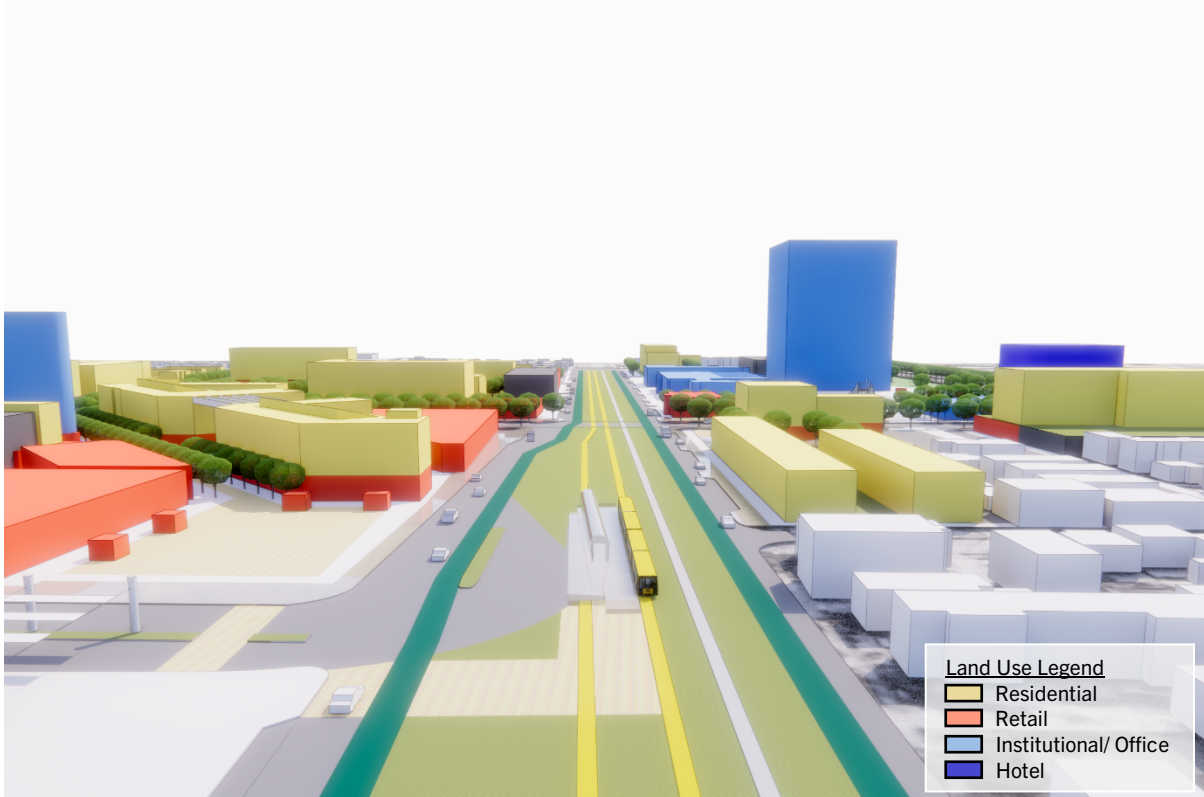




Figure 2-12. Willowbrook Avenue Plan and Key Features.



Key Features:

1. Simplified circulation pattern with Willowbrook Avenue West restricted to one-way traffic northbound and Willowbrook Avenue East to one-way traffic southbound.
2. Martin Luther King, Jr. bus station preserved, with minimal effect on bus access and operation.
3. Willowbrook Avenue East reconnected through the COMPTON Letters Plaza to enable direct access from Rosecrans Avenue to the Commercial Core.
4. New low-stress north-south bicycle facilities and connections to regional systems.
5. Raised crossings connecting Metro station entrance to the Metro plaza on the southeast corner of Willowbrook Avenue East and Palmer Street.
6. Street tree bulbs added to improve pedestrian comfort along the street.
7. Simplified and safer Compton Boulevard and Willowbrook Avenue intersection.
8. Rear exit through Courthouse driveway for Sheriff's Department vehicles exiting to the South.
9. Additional parking opportunities provided along Compton Boulevard and Acacia Avenue which can provide convenient access for those negatively affected by the elimination of southbound travel lanes along Willowbrook Avenue West.

## 2.9 Alameda East

Alameda East between Rosecrans Avenue and Compton Boulevard is a little-used roadway which is intended to convert into a greenway, as described in Section 2.2. The greenway can provide much-needed green space, provide safe bicycle and pedestrian access from nearby neighborhoods to Wilson Park and Downtown Compton, and create a suitable environment for new residential uses to be built along its east side. Above all, the greenway would create a sorely lacking recreational amenity for the central Compton population and improve public health.

The Alameda East Greenway would close Alameda Street East as a vehicular roadway at the City's discretion. This would need to be done in conjunction with the extension of the Rosecrans Avenue frontage roads across the Alameda Corridor in order to ensure access between Rosecrans Avenue and Alameda Street, and only at the pace that redevelopment proceeds along the street so that vehicular access to properties is not affected. See Section 5.5 for further detail regarding the redesign of Alameda East, and for alternative designs should the roadway not be able to be closed.

### Key Features:

1. Greenway and road closure designed as linear park, with paved path for cyclists and skateboarders, decomposed granite for joggers, exercise stations, shade, and stormwater treatment elements.



2. Wilson Park (playground, basketball courts, skate park, rec center, etc.)

3. Extension of narrowed greenway, with narrowed street, or sidewalk greening south of Compton Boulevard with tree wells in parking lane.

4. Community garden and path termination built with affordable housing development on Corporate Yard.



Figure 2-13. Alameda East Greenway Plan and Key Features