

City of Compton – Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center

Transit-Oriented Development

Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Program

June 2011

ULI Los Angeles Mission Statement

At the Urban Land Institute, our mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI Los Angeles, a district council of the Urban Land Institute, carries forth that mission as the preeminent regional real estate organization providing inclusive and trusted leadership influencing public policy and practice.

About the ULI Los Angeles Technical Assistance Panels

In keeping with the Urban Land Institute mission, Technical Assistance Panels are convened to provide pro-bono planning and development assistance to public officials and local stakeholders of communities and nonprofit organizations who have requested assistance in addressing their land use challenges.

A group of diverse professionals representing the full spectrum of land use and real estate disciplines typically spend one day visiting and analyzing the built environments, identifying specific planning and development issues, and formulating realistic and actionable recommendations to move initiatives forward in a fashion consistent with the applicant's goals and objectives.

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Executive Summary

Despite the recent economic downturn, a tremendous amount of planning and development has occurred in downtown Compton over the past five years. To maintain this momentum, the TAP panel's recommendation was to focus on enhancing the City of Compton's existing efforts and provide a safe, vibrant, efficient and pedestrian-friendly multi-modal district in the North Downtown area. To do this, the panel recommends Compton focus on recreating "Main and Main" at the Compton and Willowbrook intersection, making the area the focal point of the city's downtown core. This plan will promote sustainable land use while making the overall quality of life better for the people of Compton by creating a sense of place for the city.

The keys to creating a true center for Compton starts with developing a safe, attractive, pedestrian framework that unifies the district's complementary assets—the Civic Center, shopping complexes, housing developments and MLK Transit Center. The Transit Center, which is already being completed, will connect Compton residents, shoppers and employees to the region via light rail, bus and bicycle. Stronger essential connections in this area are necessary and depend on resolving a number of weaknesses and threats and taking advantage of the strengths and opportunities in the "Main and Main" district.



The provision of safe, comfortable linkages through the design of great streets and public space will encourage people to walk, bike and connect to transit in a meaningful way. Urban linkages are fundamental to improve mobility as well as create an urban framework that provides opportunities for development to enhance place making and improve the environment.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center (MLK) will increase amenities for riders, and create a gateway to the City of Compton for individuals traveling on the Blue Line, but also it is a tangible symbol of the new Compton. It will be highly visible from the Blue Line trains, projecting a new image and identity for the city. Capitalizing on Compton's current initiatives is vital, as there is tremendous excitement surrounding the city's future. However, to maintain this momentum, the city must share a unified vision for its North Downtown district, with strong connections and linkages between existing assets and future projects. The city's ability to leverage these assets and create proper connections is a key component of transforming its downtown core into a safe, vibrant, pedestrian-friendly environment. The city will need an active and involved city council, community and champion to make the dream a reality.



A Long Beach bound Blue Line train arrives at the Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center in Compton.

Assignment & Process

Key Issues

The North Downtown Compton Master Plan project is an excellent example of urbanized transit-oriented and multi-modal development based upon smart growth principles. The project successfully demonstrates that transit-oriented development is critical in revitalizing urbanized communities into thriving urban centers. The vision for this area is to:

- Create a North Downtown destination point for both the city and the region, providing a sense of place with pedestrian-focused community activities and a thriving retail environment.
- Recreate a unified district that is centered upon multi-modal options for travel, not limited to but including: pedestrian, bike, light rail, smart cars and local, regional and national bus systems.
- Assertively capitalize on the abundance of transit options.
- Increase opportunities for higher-paying employment opportunities and cultivate local small businesses.
- Focus initial efforts on high-impact projects that will spur growth and more economic development opportunities in the future.

Key Questions/Considerations

The Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Compton requested the ULI panel to review the city's existing planning efforts and provide feedback and further direction to achieve the city's goal of creating a pedestrian-friendly urban environment for the North Downtown District and Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center. The issues that were addressed during this effort include the following:

1. What feasible infrastructure and design improvements can be implemented to encourage multi-modal transit use and mitigate safety concerns at the large at-grade intersection of the train tracks, Blue Line tracks, Willowbrook Avenue and Compton Boulevard?
2. What types of land use can be encouraged in the North Downtown region to improve community connectivity, boost economic development, and encourage business and real estate investment, thus capitalizing on the high volume of daytime foot traffic in the area?
3. What are the potential delivery methods for implementation to achieve the concepts and strategies in 1 and 2 above?

Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Process

ULI panelists met with representatives from the City of Compton and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) to determine the scope of the TAP assignment. The panel members were selected based upon their ability to address the stated objectives for the program provided by the City of Compton. Prior to the day-long program, panel members reviewed background materials prepared by the City of Compton and met with city officials to get a better understanding of the scope of the project.

The TAP process is a day-long event. In the morning panel members tour the study area with representatives of the CRA and later meet with key stakeholders, work through an intensive analysis on the specified issues and then present their findings to the general public and program sponsors.



The TAP begins with a detailed tour of the study area.



Panelists tour new construction in the Compton study area.



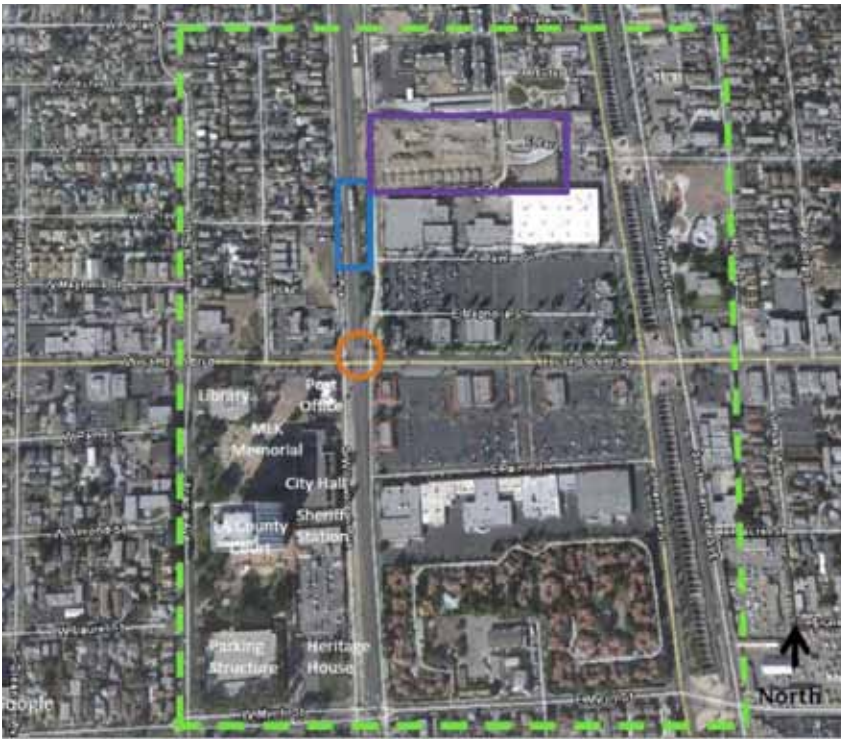
Mia Lehrer, Jon Chew, and Andréa White-Kjoss interview Sunday Simms, Fire Captain, City of Compton Fire Department.

TAP Panel of Experts

ULI convened a panel of professionals who represented a variety of disciplines connected with land use and real estate development, such as architecture and design, real estate development, economic analysis, real estate law, pedestrian mobility and development financing methods. Members were selected with the intent of convening a robust array of professional expertise relevant to the city's objectives for the study and who had local working knowledge of the sub-region where the study area was located. All panel members were volunteers and were not compensated for their time.



TAP panelists convene to discuss their understanding of the study area and propose initial recommendations.



The study area and surrounding context for the MLK Station Blue Line station in Compton.



Construction is nearing completion at the Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center adjacent to the Metro Blue Line Compton Station

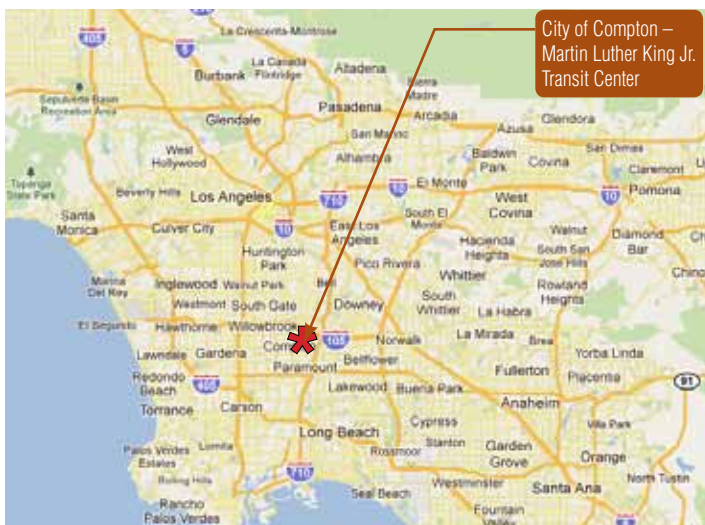


An artistic treatment helps safely separate cars from the tracks along Willowbrook Avenue.

Background

Overview

The multi-modal vision for Compton's downtown area is already underway, with a number of in-progress developments near the Blue Line station. Some of these projects are still in the planning stages while others are nearing completion. Each development is generally designed around transit-oriented development and smart growth concepts. The vision, under general direction from the North Downtown Master Plan being implemented or carried out by the redevelopment agency, aims to provide the city with a safe, vibrant, efficient and pedestrian-friendly district. Parkways



Regional location of Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Station study area.

and parks will be utilized to tie the village together, both visually and physically, with landscaped spaces providing alternate routes for easy access and minimal vehicle interaction. The North Downtown Master Plan promotes sustainable land use while making the overall quality of life better for the people of Compton and creating a sense of place for the city.

Current developments

The North Downtown Specific Plan: The CRA created the North Downtown Specific Plan, which seeks to establish a direct connection between the City of Compton's General Plan and revitalization opportunities within North Downtown Compton. The overall goal is to orderly develop North Downtown Compton with a method consistent to the General Plan, and the community vision developed during the public outreach program.

Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center: In June 2009, the City of Compton began reconstruction of the Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Transit Center, a 10,000 square foot facility that will house Metro's Regional Bus Transit System; Dial-A-Ride Service; Dial-A-Taxi Service; park and ride; and local bus layover facilities. A number of ancillary facilities will also be constructed, including a diesel fuel and natural gas station, an electric vehicle recharging station, a bus wash facility, a parts

storage facility, and bicycle areas. MLK transit center is designed in accordance with the North Downtown Master Plan, which seeks to make efficient use of space that will accommodate a variety of uses.

Parking Structure: Along with the transit center, the City of Compton is planning to construct a multi-modal parking structure to support the Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center, Senior Activity Center and Downtown Compton business and housing developments. The design and approach of the structure will focus on promoting a healthy and safe environment, and it will incorporate green building elements and natural sun light.

Compton Senior Activity Center: The Compton Senior Activity Center plan encompasses 30,000 square-feet on a 40,000 square-foot site. The facility will include assembly rooms, a family room, kitchen, activity facilities, computer and entertainment rooms, among other amenities. The additional space may also be used for a community meeting room.

Willow Walk: The Willow Walk homes project, located at the corner of Willowbrook Avenue and Elm Street is currently completing its final development phase. The development offers 124 spacious, family-friendly townhomes in the heart of downtown. It is situated just north of the Metro Blue Line rail stop, and immediately adjacent to the new Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center.



Metro Bus and rail connects Compton to Greater Los Angeles



The key circulation routes in the City of Compton

Analysis

Overview

The City of Compton is approximately 10.2 square miles, with a population of nearly 100,000 people. Personified as the “Hub City,” due to its central location, Compton is traversed by freeways connecting the Southern California region (e.g. 91, 110, 710, 405 and 105 Freeways). Compton is located in the center of South Los Angeles County, directly north of the region’s major international industrial trade centers, Port of Los Angeles, Port of Long Beach and the Alameda Corridor, which accounts for 25% of US Waterborne trade).

The Compton Community Redevelopment Agency (Agency) is diligently working to ensure that the city thrives and becomes a sustainable community, focused on improving the quality of life through facilitating development opportunities that promote a balance of significant economic generators, quality housing stock, community assets and recreational amenities. These efforts have included implementing a Smart Growth policy, Urban Design Guidelines, various housing development projects, major infrastructure improvements and street enhancements.

Zoning in Compton

The majority of the city’s land uses are predominately single-family residential, with some general commercial land uses concentrated along major arterials such as Compton Boulevard, Willowbrook Avenue and along the 91 Freeway. The city’s Walnut Industrial Park, along with the majority of its industrial activity is concentrated in the southern quadrant of the city, located immediately north of the 91 Freeway Corridor. The Walnut Industrial Park is home to large national companies such as Ralph’s Grocery, Nissan and Aveda.

A unique aspect to Compton’s land use is its agricultural area, which offers residents the ability to live in an urban setting while having the option to live a country lifestyle.

The city is currently undergoing a General Plan Update, which will encourage positive changes in the current land use pattern, by increasing the amount of mixed-use developments along Compton Boulevard and Long Beach Boulevard. The agency has implemented a Smart Growth policy that will encourage increased infill in the downtown region, specifically down Compton Boulevard, working to supplement design guidelines and streetscape improvements on the boulevard.

Socio-economic issues in Compton

Compton has many complex socio-economic issues, characterized by low educational attainment, a low income majority and disproportionately higher unemployment rates in comparison to the county and state averages. As of January 2011, the unemployment rate was exceptionally high, with 21.9% in comparison to the LA County rate of 13.1%. Only 59.9% of Compton residents are high school graduates, while only 7.8% of individuals possess a Bachelors Degree or higher. Approximately 9.9% of families in Compton live below the poverty line and the city has a per capita income of \$13,382, substantially below the LA County average of \$26,983.

TAP Area Context

The area selected for the TAP is the North Downtown area, a prime location, with many amenities such as the currently under reconstruction Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center – a regional transportation hub, the LACMTA Blue Line Station, parking amenities, Senior Activity Center, Community Center and META Senior Housing. The area surrounding the selected TAP project contains single-family residential units as well as two large townhouse complexes – Willow Walk Homes and Racquet Club Townhomes. Also contained in the immediate vicinity of the project is the Civic Center, which houses the Compton City Hall, Los Angeles County Compton Library, US Post Office, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office and Los Angeles County Courthouse. The Civic Center and surrounding area is a major employment hub, with a workforce of approximately 1,200 individuals.

The area also includes large retailers, such as Superior, Ralphs and Burlington Coat Factory, which experience strong sales. However, disregarding these operators, a large portion of commercial spaces remain vacant, particularly at the Watt Center. Overall, the area lacks the appropriate diversified retail and services necessary to capture the purchasing power of the daytime population and trade area residents. This



Downtown Retail Center Conceptual Development Plan from the Smart Growth Implementation Plan Report, 2009.



Superior Grocers is one of the newest retailers to open new stores in the area.

includes options for sit down restaurants. The Agency owns a significant portion of land in the downtown area, and actively attracts and facilitates development that can provide vital services to both residents and the workforce population. Additionally, the Agency has worked to implement Urban Design Guidelines that infuse Smart Growth principles into planned improvements and development projects throughout the city.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center is the main transportation hub of the city. Public transportation is a heavily-utilized asset in the community as over 7,000 people utilize the transit center daily. The Blue line serves a vital public transportation service, but it also causes a bifurcation of the City of Compton. Despite the many catalytic projects, the area is plagued by issues of limited connectivity between the boulevard due to the large at-grade crossing at Compton Boulevard and Willowbrook Avenue. The grading issues present a major hazard zone for the population accessing the area. It also creates a problem for emergency and commercial vehicle circulation.



There are many existing elements that reflect the character of the community.



Pat Dawe and panel members discuss transit access and linkages during the tour of the study area.



A Metro Blue Line train departs from the Compton Station.

Findings

Findings

During the course of the TAP project, the panelists had the opportunity to tour the site and surrounding community, as well as interview elected officials, city staff, business owners and local residents of the City of Compton. After gathering information, the panel conducted a SWOT analysis to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the City of Compton's North Downtown district and Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center. Strengths and weaknesses explore internal aspects of the project or elements that can be controlled or changed by new development. Opportunities and threats evaluate external influences that can affect the project, but most are beyond the control of those associated with the project, such as factors relating to the economy like interest rates or credit market conditions.

From the site visit, stakeholder interviews and additional site research, the TAP panel determined the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center and surrounding area:

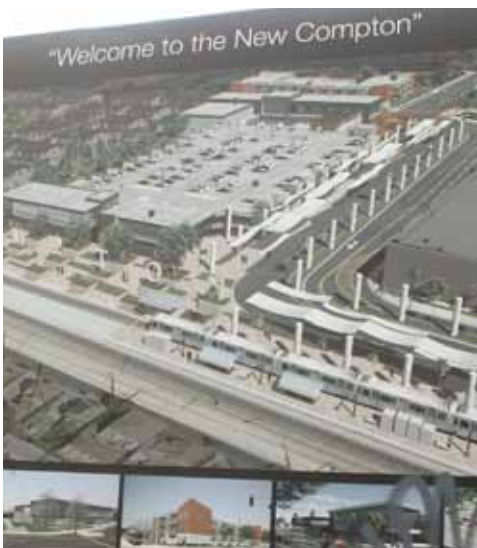
Strengths

The multi-modal vision for Compton's downtown area is already underway, with a number of in-progress developments near the blue line station. Some of these projects are still in the planning stages while others are nearing completion. Each development is generally designed around transit-oriented development and smart growth principles. Most notably, the new Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center will increase amenities for riders, and create a gateway to the City of Compton for individuals traveling on the Blue Line. It is a tangible symbol of the new Compton, and will be highly visible from the Blue Line trains, projecting a new image and identity for the city. Its new bus bays and pedestrian access, along with the reconfiguration of vehicle traffic will make walking to the center and particularly to the Blue Line station and bus bays much easier and safer. New lighting of this facility should improve perceived and actual levels of security for riders.

Despite the Great Recession and economic downturn, a tremendous amount of planning and development has occurred in downtown Compton over the past five



Alex Kalamaros of Metro's Joint Development Department shares his insights on TOD development with the panel.



The new multi-modal station will increase amenities for transit riders and create a gateway for the City.



Adjacent to the Compton station is recently completed housing.

years. There is great excitement surrounding these projects, as each development is seen as a catalyst in the City of Compton's attempt to transition its downtown into a safe, vibrant, efficient and pedestrian-friendly community.

In addition to current projects, significant Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities remain, particularly at Willow Walk, which offers a great opportunity for future redevelopment into a mixed-use property; housing at affordable pricing. Additionally, opportunities exist east of the transit center extending to Alameda Street; at the current site of the Compton bus station south of Willow Walk; and commercial infill sites along Compton Boulevards. The agency has also initiated the process to develop various commercial properties on Compton Boulevard between Alameda Street and Long Beach Boulevard.

Weaknesses

The intersections that cross the Blue Line and the Alameda Corridor are essential to the overall vitality of the area, since these intersections connect the island of land between the two rail corridors with the rest of Compton. Both the Blue Line and the Alameda Corridor involve two closely spaced north-south two-way streets on either side of the rail corridors that intersect with the east-west boulevards at single points. The resulting intersections are complex from the standpoint of traffic control and make for very long pedestrian crossings with little safe harbor between the sidewalks on the outer edges of the intersection area. The recent construction in the Alameda Corridor that depressed some of the rail lines below street grade allowed the intersections with the east-west boulevards to be rebuilt with a substantial amount of pedestrian space in the space that separates the two parallel Alameda Streets.

At the Blue Line, all of the rails are at street grade and pedestrians and vehicles crossing the rails do not have any space between the two parallel Willowbrook avenues to wait while trains cross Compton Boulevard. The physical arrangement of the intersection of Willowbrook Avenue and Compton Boulevard does not provide adequate space for pedestrians to wait, either while waiting to cross the tracks on the far edges of the intersection or in the center while crossing. The railroad gate equipment is located in the middle of the walkway and being controlled by the trains preempts the traffic signal operation such that pedestrians can be stranded in the areas between the two Willowbrook avenues.

As with all grade crossings of light rail transit systems, the high frequency of trains means that the crossing gates will be down for a minute or three every five to ten minutes from early in the morning to late at night, during which times, east-west traffic and pedestrian movement comes to a standstill. The Blue Line was the earliest of the



Street intersections with the Blue Line are complex from the standpoint of traffic control and make for very long pedestrian crossings.



Ciara Contreras, Ben Feldmann, Fred Dock, Andréa White-Kjoss, and Pat Dawe develop strategies for better pedestrian access and linkages around the transit station.

modern rail transit systems that Metro implemented and the grade crossings are best characterized as first generation. Improvements in the operation of grade crossings have been made on later portions of the rail transit system that should be considered for Compton.

In addition to poor linkages, some of the area's large-scale commercial properties are owned by custodial operators who are not willing to make the necessary investments to improve the properties. This is highlighted by high vacancy rates at the Watt Center, where ownership is unwilling to invest in the property to remedy the impact of outdated design and bad layout. Another weakness is the underutilized public space at the Civic Center; however, this weakness could easily be remedied through programming, such as concerts, farmers markets and fairs.

Opportunities

Despite some weaknesses, the area has an abundance of assets that the city can capitalize on to revitalize its North Downtown district. First, thousands of Blue Line riders pass through Compton every day. Development in this district needs to project the visual impact of a city on the move, with new projects, construction activity, housing etc. The more that can be done within view of Blue Line riders, the better, resulting in positive advertisement for the city.

The area is already undergoing a tremendous amount of redevelopment, so it is important for the city to capitalize on these efforts. Notably, the city should improve connections between new developments and existing assets. The illustrative diagram shows a pedestrian framework that conveniently and safely

connects the district. This framework partially exists, but additional connections need to be made before the area is transformed into a true pedestrian-friendly district. These include the following:

- Improve the Compton and Willowbrook intersection through curb reconfigurations, grade changes and signal updates. This will make the area safer, convenient and pedestrian-friendly.
- Create a shadeway from Compton Boulevard to the Transit Center, and activate the area with small retail opportunities.
- Re-purpose the Civic Center plaza for special events, as the space's design, surrounding buildings, gates and fences provide a securable environment for music and other activities. Connect this area with a walkway to the Compton-Willowbrook intersection, and create a major gateway structure west of the Post Office that acts as the main entrance into the area.
- Connect the transit center through the Bakewell shopping center by a north-south walkway at the gap between the existing buildings at the shopping plaza. This will enable transit riders to directly access the buses while bringing them closer to the retail storefronts.
- Re-configure the street east of the new bus bays so that a larger development parcel is created north of the street, along with the park, the META housing site and the land already acquired by the City along Alameda Street. This should be a safe and attractive pedestrian environment for access to the Transit Center from the east.
- Investigate the feasibility and design requirements for a pedestrian bridge over the rail tracks to the Blue Line station from the west side of Willowbrook Avenue. This bridge would make it much easier for people from that neighborhood to directly access the station. Some City-owned land at the northwest corner of Compton and Willowbrook Avenue could be used, with easements acquired from owners of the vacant parcel and related properties. This corner could then become a strong retail opportunity on the north side of Compton Boulevard.



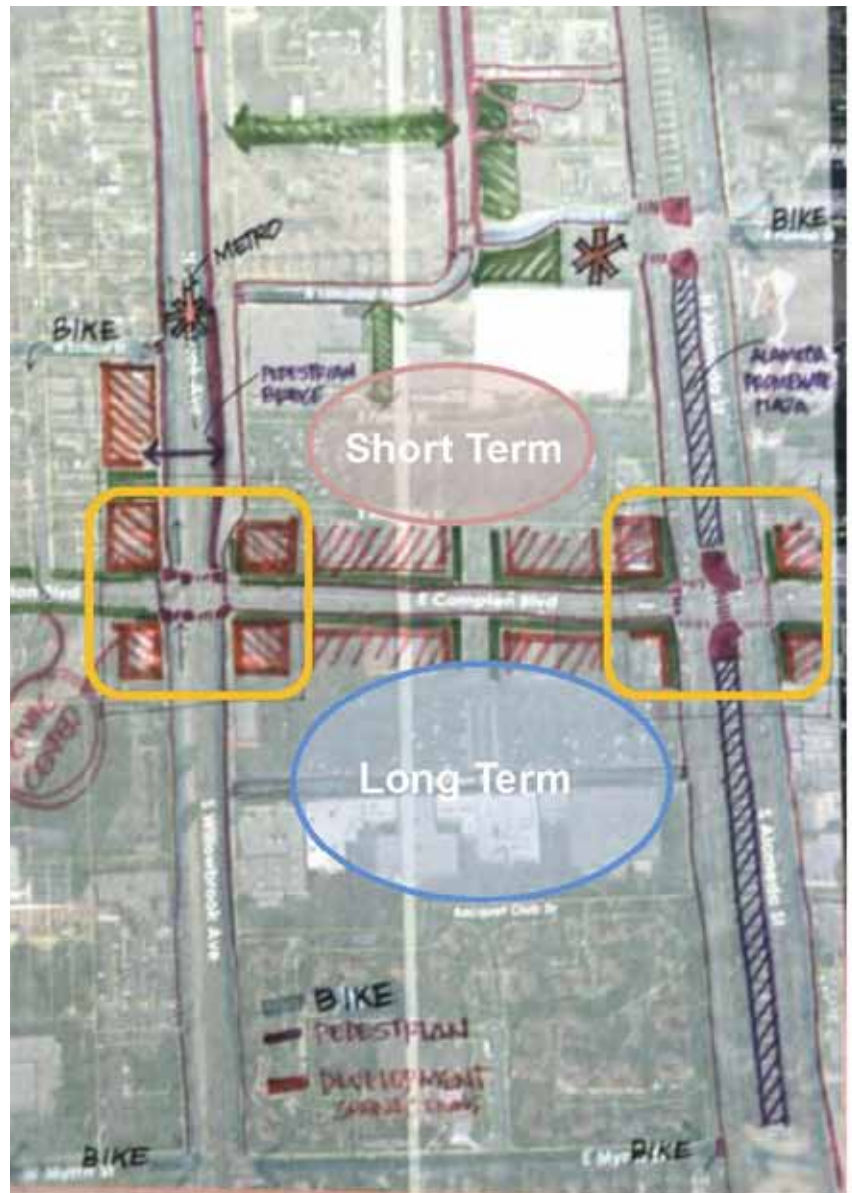
The panel sketch of the emerging key themes for the study area.

- Along with some redevelopment of the older shopping center on the south side of Compton, new housing could be connected strongly to the Blue Line station, to shopping opportunities, the library and other attractions through strategic location of entrances into the development on its east, north and west sides.
- Parking lots at the shopping centers should have more landscaping where pedestrians will be circulating, especially on the paths to the retail storefronts, and along Compton Boulevard. Internal design standards should be established to upgrade these lots as any new retail or other development occurs on these sites.

Threats

Pedestrian safety is the bedrock requirement for a vibrant transit-oriented development. On Compton Boulevard, speed, noise and traffic create an intimidating environment for pedestrians, especially since there is no buffer between the sidewalks and traffic. The area is also separated by the Blue Line, which runs down the middle of Willowbrook Avenue. At the Compton-Willowbrook intersection, a confusing combination of multiple vehicle lanes, staggered left turns across minimum pedestrian refuges, the Blue Line with its crossing arms and signals that are not coordinated with the city's signalization, make pedestrian connections difficult and dangerous. Blue Line riders walking to the station from West of Willowbrook lack direct access to the Blue Line station except from Compton Boulevard. This effectively cuts the station's service area down to a half circle on the east side of the station.

In addition to layout issues, the panel detected significant coordination and communication issues between the various city agencies, limiting the city's ability to create a clear plan for its future. Additionally, there seems to be some resistance to change among public officials, commercial property owners and town residents. There is also a possibility that redevelopment agencies will be reduced or eliminated by Governor Brown in the near future, as state officials try to balance through budget cuts and reorganization initiatives.



The panel recommends several key themes for the Compton station including creating "A There, There", emphasizing the pedestrian realm, looking at short and long term development strategies and emphasizing safety and activation.

Recommendations

Vision & Goals

The TAP panel's vision aims to provide the City of Compton with a safe, vibrant, efficient and pedestrian-friendly district in the North Downtown area. To do this, the panel recommends Compton focus on recreating "Main and Main" at the Compton Boulevard and Willowbrook Avenue intersection, making the area the focal point of the city's downtown core. This plan will promote sustainable land use while making the overall quality of life better for the people of Compton by creating a sense of place for the city.

The keys to creating a true center for Compton start with creating better internal connections and a safe, attractive pedestrian framework within the district to unify its many complementary uses—the Civic Center, shopping, housing and the MLK Transit Center. Stronger essential connections in this area depend on resolving a number of weaknesses and threats and taking advantage of the strengths and opportunities in the "Main and Main" district. The provision of safe, comfortable linkages through the design of great streets and public space will encourage people to walk, bike and connect to transit in a meaningful way. Urban linkages are fundamental to improve mobility as well as create an urban framework that provides opportunities for development to enhance place making and improve the environment.

Vision Strategies

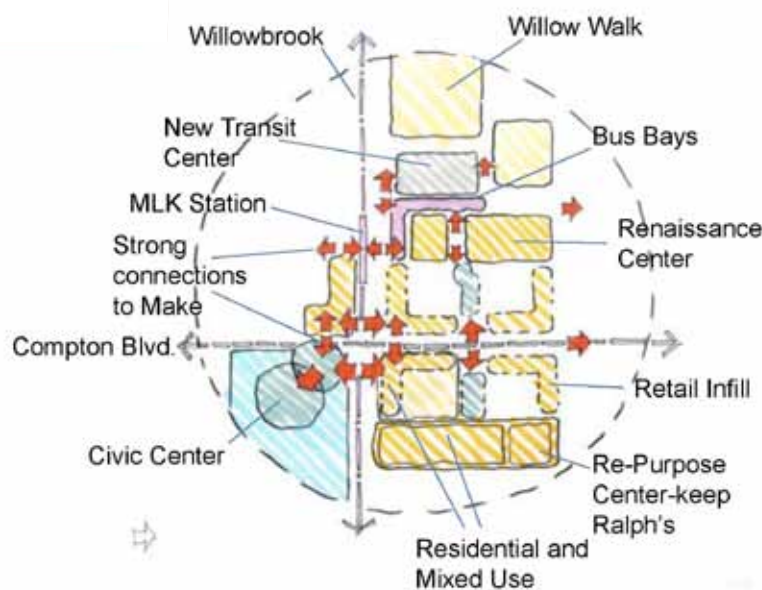
The panel distilled its findings into four overarching recommendations. The first is to increase the connectivity within the "Main & Main" intersection of Compton Boulevard and Willowbrook Avenue, and throughout the adjacent retail and transit hubs. The second is the redevelopment of the two community retail centers on the east side of the Metro tracks and the increase in the Civic Center's programming schedule to promote

greater community activity. Finally, the panel provided general suggestions of public and private partners to help with the financing, implementation and continuing maintenance of the proposed improvements.

Dubbed "Main & Main," the Compton and Willowbrook intersection is situated in the heart of the community. Within a one block radius of this intersection is the Compton Metro station, the Martin Luther King transit station (currently under renovation), two community retail centers, and the Compton Civic Center. The goal of the increased connectivity is to both promote a more pedestrian-friendly experience, but also to increase safety. A few weeks before we toured the site, a pedestrian had been killed by a speeding car. Currently, limited barriers exist between the pedestrians and the cars and trucks on Willowbrook and Compton, and the metro train.

The panel's second recommendation is to revitalize and update the existing retail centers and to add to the existing programming schedule at the Civic Center. A part of this plan would be to create more open and pedestrian-friendly linkages between the Bakewell Center and the adjacent Metro station and the MLK transit Center area. For the Watt Center, on the opposite side of Compton Boulevard, the panel would like to see greater density and the conversion of some of the existing retail to residential units and/or open space. Both centers will need to be modernized to create street facing retail activity. Currently, the Civic Center has limited programs and events for the community. The Panel recommends that in parallel to the revitalization of the retail centers, the Civic Center should add programs and a variety of events that will create a gathering place for the community.

Lastly, the panel suggests tapping into the unused grant money that the City of Compton and its various agencies have secured. Also, to help finance the proposed projects, it would be beneficial for Compton to partner with non-profit organizations such as Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI) and/or other non-profits, and to create a Business Improvement District (BID). Other potential funding partners, including "healthy communities" agencies, are listed later in the report.



Central to the panel's recommendation is to increase the connectivity within the "Main & Main" intersection of Compton Boulevard and Willowbrook Avenue.

Willowbrook Avenue & Compton Boulevard Intersection

The goals for improving the Willowbrook Avenue and Compton Boulevard intersection are to create more refuge space for pedestrians in the intersection area,

simplify the vehicle movements to reduce driver error and update the train/traffic control system to be more efficient and to provide more advance warning. While it would be possible to update the train/traffic control as a short term measure, the effectiveness of such a change would be limited by the physical layout of the intersection. Accordingly, longer-term the panel recommends the city implement a more expensive mid-term change at the intersection, as this will be more effective overall.

The primary element of this change is to remove one direction of travel from each of the two parallel Willowbrook avenues, at a minimum for one block either side of Compton Boulevard. By making the western side of Willowbrook one-way northbound and the eastern side of Willowbrook southbound at Compton Boulevard, the roadway width dedicated to the other direction of travel could be used to create space for pedestrians, bicycles and on-street parking. This recovered space should be used to add curb extensions for pedestrians on both sides of the two Willowbrook avenues to provide more refuge space for pedestrians in and adjacent to the intersection. The approach on the northeastern side of the Blue Line is already planned as a two-lane egress (one-way southbound) from the under-construction MLK Transit Center. The recommended approach would expand this to the other three legs of Willowbrook and make them one-way single lane streets, which could be striped for a parking lane, a travel lane and a

bike lane. Removing one direction of travel on the two Willowbrook avenues would cause a redistribution of some of the traffic now using Willowbrook, which would need to be studied. The grid of streets adjacent to Willowbrook should be able to absorb the added traffic with little impact.

At the intersection with Compton Boulevard, left turns from Compton Boulevard would continue to occur upstream of the rails, but fewer vehicles would cross Compton Boulevard on Willowbrook under the one-way recommendation. The reduced number of crossing vehicles would improve operations. In connection with this physical change, the traffic signal system should be updated to reflect the modified turning movements and a change to the train preemption that provides for more pre-train clearance activity at the intersection should be considered for implementation. Grade crossings on the Gold Line in Pasadena are set up for two way communication between the gate controllers and the traffic signal to provide for more efficient gate and traffic signal operation. Consideration should be given to implementing similar communications on the Blue Line crossings in Compton. Doing so would provide for more efficient traffic operations during gate down times and improve advance warning for pedestrians prior to the gates coming down

Bike Infrastructure

In addition to improving the pedestrian experience of these connections, the city must also improve the bicycle connections (i.e., installing new bike lanes to connect to existing infrastructure) in order to enhance the bicycling experience for those who already ride and to attract a wider pool of potential riders. Within the study area there are few amenities to make it safe and convenient to bicycle. Since a relatively large number of people access the City of Compton via Metro on bicycle, there is great opportunity to develop facilities and systems that encourage and enable bicycling. The Metro Non-Motorized Access plan studied access to the



This diagram illustrates panel's recommendation for Infrastructure as armature for ecology through green boulevards and bike boulevards.

rail station specifically, and called for various improvements to on-street access, particularly bike lanes and signal/intersection improvements. The Compton TAP team broadened the perspective to ask the questions:

1. Given new and expected development in the Study Area, what facilities will encourage the use of bicycles?
2. Is there latent demand for bicycling in the Study Area?
3. How can the City make this option as attractive as possible?

Broadly speaking, Willowbrook Avenue in its current configuration is a significant barrier to bicyclists and pedestrians. Therefore, it has enormous potential for positive impact on the number, convenience, and safety of bicyclists and pedestrians. In addition to the Willowbrook improvements, which would be a major north-south bicycle access route, several secondary streets were examined for continuous east-west access, particularly because of the proximity to the new and planned developments near the transit station and Compton Creek and Los Angeles River bicycle trails. Two east-west streets: East Palmer Street and West School Street were particularly attractive because they were both continuous, slower auto speeds, lower volumes of traffic, and not inconsequentially, a pleasant, tree-lined streetscape.

Finally, the team examined bicycle facilities at the station. As noted in the Metro Non-Motorized Access report, there are only a few, unsecured outdoor racks and unsurprisingly they are not well-utilized despite the relatively large number of cyclists using the station. Improving security for longer term bicycle parking is important to both existing, and importantly new, cyclists from the study area TOD plan. This security can also be provided in conjunction with other services to cyclists as well, including restrooms, bicycle repair and retail, bicycling and transit information and classes, and more. The team conceptually held space for a bicycle center at the new Transit Center as the most logical location.

Narrow the streets

Streets in the study area are unnecessarily wide and characterized by physical and psychological barriers (particularly on the west side of Willowbrook). Many of the streets, including Willowbrook, carry negligible traffic and are not designated truck routes, making them excellent candidates for bikeway improvements. An exclusive, protected bike path on Willowbrook and other streets in the study area will help knit together the civic center, surrounding residential neighborhoods, the retail centers and the new Transit Center (which will provide bike lockers and



The panel emphasizes a focus on safe and accessible paths of travel for all.

other new bicycle infrastructure). Safe and inviting new bike paths can also link the downtown with the 3.5 mile bike path along the east side of Compton Creek (only one mile from the Compton Station) and with the LA River bike path. These new connections will go a long way toward encouraging increased bicycle activity in Compton's downtown.

A design team is currently evaluating similar street and connection issues along the Figueroa Corridor between Downtown LA and Exposition Park, and has proposed a bicycle solution that could yield significant benefits for Compton, particularly along Willowbrook Avenue. The concept is to create an exclusive, protected bike path of 4-6 feet in width, between the curb and the parking lane. This creates an extremely safe and comfortable place for bicyclists while also reducing the road width both physically and psychologically. Landscaped and hardscape buffers can also be included to reduce surface drainage requirements, provide locations for bike parking, prevent car doors from opening onto the bike path and to create a dedicated area for bus passengers to get on and off buses without encroaching on the bike path.

The bike path can be engineered to incline as it approaches bus stops. This allows the bus stops to be slightly elevated for more comfortable bus boarding and pedestrian movement, while preventing bus stops from encroaching on the bike path. The use of strategically placed bollards can also help to prevent vehicles from encroaching onto the bike path and to eliminate the car door problem.

Improve linkages to Compton Creek and Los Angeles River Building off Compton's previous planning efforts, including the Compton Creek Master Plan and Smart Growth Implementation Report, the ULI TAP panel recommends utilizing the east-west traversing streets to connect the study area to both the Compton Creek and Los Angeles River. The major avenues should be designed to incorporate wider sidewalks and more robust planting of canopy trees to provide a comfortable, shaded space to walk and bike. The opportunity exists to identify certain secondary streets to be designated as bicycle boulevards, promoting safe routes to and from home, work, school and play.



Improving bicycle connections would make the station and study area more accessible.



TAP Panel Chair Renata Simril presents recommendations for the Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center.

In concert with improved streetscapes, encouraging buildings to have street frontages with active uses along Compton Avenue and associated intersections will create a safer, more visible environment. Additionally, the street design should also account for best management practices for storm water filtration, conveyance and groundwater recharge. To ensure safe access to connect to Metro and shopping areas, the opportunity exists to create an elevated crossing(s) over the rail and Metro tracks near to the Compton Blue Line Station. This crossing would work best if combined with future development opportunities to ensure safety and security, day and night.

Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center

The Martin Luther King Jr. Transit Center will increase amenities for riders, and create a gateway to the City of Compton for individuals traveling on the Blue Line. Its new bus bays and pedestrian access, along with the reconfiguration of vehicle traffic will make walking to the center and particularly to the Compton Blue Line Station and bus bays much easier and safer. New lighting of this facility should improve perceived and actual levels of security for riders.

To further enhance the transit center development, parking and other ancillary facilities related to the station, such as vehicle maintenance or repair and the parking structure, should be wrapped with residential units or other uses to activate the perimeter streets. This is especially important on the east and north sides of the center, where residential uses face the center. The strip of land on the north side should be used for housing which would wrap the parking structure and provide a new pedestrian access between Willowbrook and Tamarind.

Implementation

A Road Map for Success

Introduction - Phasing Strategy

Phase 1: Years 0-3

Create a farmers market program at the Watt Center: A farmers market would increase pedestrian traffic in the area, increasing the vibrancy of downtown. The panel learned that there are some provisions in the existing retail leases that might prevent this. However, the city and redevelopment agency are urged to review the legal language carefully with counsel and approach affected merchants to see if there are concerns that can be alleviated to permit this to go forward.

Animate the retail edges of the Bakewell Center: The Bakewell Center's edges could be improved through landscaping, retail kiosks or both, along the west side, which faces the transit staging area and the north side, which is at the rear of the center. To do this, the city is urged to reconsider an ordinance against sidewalk retail, particularly as it applies to transit-oriented development. Amendments to this ordinance should encourage retail development where it is needed, such as at transit stops, without permitting it generally throughout the city.

Investigate near-term adaptive reuse for vacant spaces in the Watt Center: These uses could include medical offices, nonprofit or educational organizations. The objective here might be to augment the limited rent that tenants could pay with public funds or loans. Doing so is critical to beginning dialogue with the center tenants and owners. In doing so, it will help determine the best way to motivate tenants to cooperate with the adaptive reuse efforts by understanding how lowering rents to cover operating expenses can be structured to retain existing retail tenants.

Retain a retail resource consultant: A retail consultant can assist individual merchants in improving their marketing, inventory control, tenant improvements and other factors which, by expanding their business, will expand--- or perhaps merely maintain--- their ability to pay rent. This is something that either the redevelopment agency or the economic development department could help to fund. A modest version of this program was recently implemented in the city of Claremont.

Develop programming at the Civic Center: The Civic Center is great site for community activities and programming. Even in an era of restricted resources, some consideration should be given to improving the hardscape and softscape of that location so as to be able to stage community events and other things that would bring more activity to the location and further enhance the retail.



Ben Feldmann presents the panel's recommendations for development phasing.



The Panel's recommendations look to add connectivity to the City of Compton.

Phase II

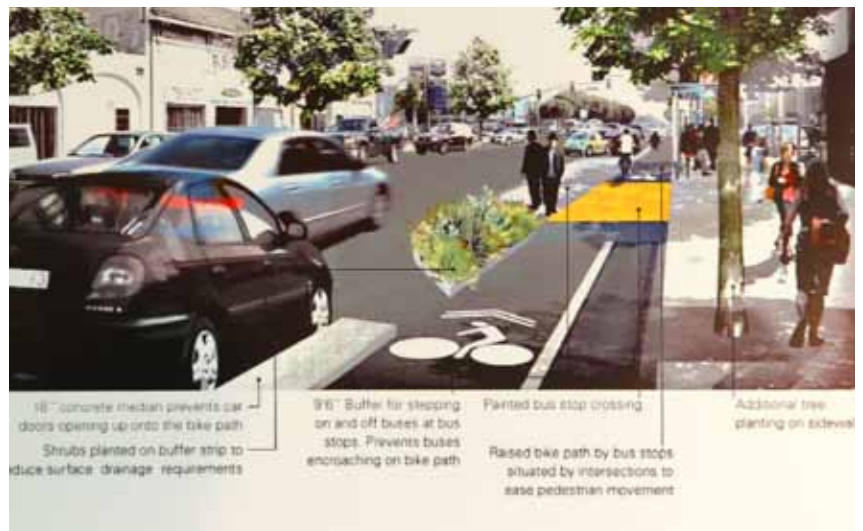
Years 3+

Phase II: Years 3+

New merchant assistance programs: Merchant assistance programs, modeled in part on the successful programs of Santa Monica, Pasadena, and the intermittently successful program in Long Beach, include not merely technical assistance but also loans for tenant improvements, consistent pattern is sought improvements, better organized joint marketing, and an explicit integrate it integration with event programming.

Create a long-term redevelopment plan for the Watt Center site: Over the long term, it may be difficult to sustain continued commercial success for both the Watt Center in the Bakewell Center. It should be possible, however to enhance significantly the transit-oriented development character of this location by developing mixed-use on the Watt Center site. There is no reason that the Ralph's and some refurbished smaller support stores could not be maintained while freeing a significant portion of the site for housing development, quite possibly with retail or other commercial development at the street level. Such a redevelopment would be completely consistent with the best principles of TOD development.

Develop a citywide retail demand strategy: Tying all of this together would be a key objective for a master plan of long-term retail survival and enhancement of mixed-use development for the four corners area. To form this master plan, the panel also recommended a citywide retail demand study strategy. This is particularly important in that there can be real dangers in simultaneous encouragement and promotion of multiple retail centers in an environment in which there is a general contraction of retail development rather than expansion.



A precedent example of bicycle and pedestrian oriented design elements that support the panel's vision.

Funding Sources & Partners



Funding Sources

There are numerous funding sources available to carry out the redevelopment of the City of Compton's North Downtown area. While current economic and political dynamics have put local, state and federal funding sources at risk, options remain, including:

- American Great Outdoors
- Business Improvement District (BID) or a Property-Based Improvement District
- California Coastal Conservancy
- California Community Foundation
- California Endowment
- Car Sharing Companies (Zipcar, Flex Car)
- City General Funds
- Climate Communities Showcase Grant (EPA)
- Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ)

- Employer Contributions
- Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (DOE)
- FTA Section 5307 Urbanized Formula Funds
- FTA Section 5309 Capital Program (Congressional Earmarks)
- Grant Opportunities (e.g. MTA Call for Projects)
- LA County Public Health
- Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiatives
- Metro Call for Projects
- Proposition A & C (Countywide transportation sales tax)
- Public Transportation Modernization, Improvement and Service Enhancement Account (PTMISEA)
- Public/Private Partnerships
- Retail and Merchant Contributions
- Safe Routes to School (SR2S) Grant Funding Program
- SCAG the Overall Work Program (OWP) Funds
- South Coast Air Quality Management District
- TIGER (Recovery Act)
- Transportation Development Act (TDA) Articles 4 and 8 (1/2 cent sales tax)
- Transportation Impact Fee

Taken together, a blending of a carefully selected array of these and other sources promise financial viability for future redevelopment activities.

Acknowledgements

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- Craig Keis, Senior Economic Development Specialist, City of Compton
- Jeannee Primm, North Downtown Resident, daily Blue Line commuter
- Chris Anyanwu, City of Compton, daily Metro Blue Line commuter
- Sky Hitt, City of Compton
- Olga Ruano, City of Compton
- Ruby Sandher, City of Compton
- Sunday Simms, Fire Captain, City of Compton
- Lorrain Cervantes, Liaison, Downtown Compton Advisory Committee, Compton Community College Board of Trustee
- John Plantada, Community Activist, long-time resident
- Antone Curtis, North Downtown resident, Stakeholder of Faith Inspirational Church
- Alexander Kalamaros, Joint Development Program, Metro

Acknowledgements



Stakeholders provide critical perspectives for the panel during the day's interview sessions.

Panel Members

Panel Chair

Renata Simril

Managing Director, Jones Lang LaSalle

Ms. Simril is a Managing Director in Jones Lang LaSalle's Public Institutions practice based in Los Angeles, CA. As the Public Institutions lead in the Southwest Region, she guides the firm's integrated delivery of innovative real estate solutions to local, state, national and international public sector organizations. Bringing 17 years of experience to the position, Ms. Simril provides advisory services to optimize public sector leased and owned portfolios, support large-scale developments through the real estate lifecycle and implement public-private partnerships to revitalize urban areas.

Prior to joining Jones Lang LaSalle in the fall of 2010, Ms. Simril served as Senior Vice President with Forest City Development where she was responsible for managing Southern California staff operations and implementing the strategic vision for various residential and mixed-use developments. She managed all aspects of the development process from acquisition, entitlement and design through construction completion. Among her many contributions, Ms. Simril served as the Project Executive for the adaptive reuse of a \$157 million, mixed-use project with 238 high-end condos and two-story retail space containing 20,000 square feet and 400 parking spaces.

Panel Members

Jane Blumenfeld

Former Acting Deputy Director, City of Los Angeles

Ms. Blumenfeld retired in 2010 after a 32 year career in city planning in Los Angeles. In her most recent position, she was Acting Deputy Director of the Los Angeles Department of City Planning and head of its Citywide Planning Division. In that capacity, she oversaw the development of new infill housing strategies, Transit-Oriented District plans, smart growth ordinances, the preservation of industrial lands, zoning to revitalize the LA River, green building regulations, a new Bicycle Plan, and joint housing and school projects with the LA Unified School District.

During her career, Ms. Blumenfeld was also a planner with a land use law practice and the Principal of her own planning firm. She also served as the Planning Advisor to the late Mayor Tom Bradley and Chief of Staff to former Los Angeles City Councilman Mike Feuer. She received a Masters degree in City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania.

Patric B. Dawe, AIA, AICP, LEED AP

Associate Principal/Director, Urban Design – RNL

Patric B. Dawe is an architect specializing in urban design. He has over 40 years of planning, design and project management experience with public and private sector development, revitalization and transportation projects around the world. His urban design expertise provides leadership in determining the development potential, layout, and form of urban places.

Fred Dock

Director, Department of Transportation, City of Pasadena

Mr. Dock is a traffic engineer and transportation planner with over 35 years of experience. He directs the Department of Transportation for the City of Pasadena, where a staff of 45 plans and operates the City's transit, pedestrian, bicycle, traffic and parking systems. His experience includes leading an urban street design initiative for the Congress for the New Urbanism and developing a national award-winning form-based street design code. He is a contributing author for several books - the Urban Land Institute's Developing Around Transit, the Institute of Transportation Engineers Recommended Practice for Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares, and Sustainable Urbanism, in addition to several ULI Panel Advisory Reports. He attained Bachelor and Master's Degrees in Civil Engineering at the University of California Berkeley, is registered as a Professional Engineer, is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and a fellow of the Institute of Transportation Engineers. He is a member of the LEED-ND Location and Planning Technical Advisory Group and served for nine years on the Livable Communities Advisory Committee for the Metropolitan Council in Minnesota.

Allan D. Kotin

Owner and Principal, Allan D. Kotin & Associates

Allan Kotin has over 40 years of experience in real estate economics with an emphasis on financial planning and redevelopment. He has extensive experience in financial analysis, financial structuring, transaction negotiation, and market research for public agencies, developers, investors, and lenders.

Entering the real estate field in 1960, Mr. Kotin has held key positions with several major real estate consulting and strategic planning firms before founding Kotin, Regan & Mouchly, Inc., in 1980. Allan D. Kotin & Associates is a successor firm. Intervening firm names were Sedway Kotin Mouchly Group, KMG Consulting and PCR Kotin. Allan's management responsibilities have included developer selection, negotiation support, feasibility analysis, development monitoring, and the strategic planning for problem projects.

Andréa White-Kjoss**President and CEO, Mobis Transportation/Bikestation**

Andréa White-Kjoss is president and chief executive officer of Mobis Transportation/ Bikestation, whose vision is the transformation of the American transportation system to include technology-networked and interoperable choices such as transit, bicycles, car-sharing and small electric vehicles in order to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve health and quality of life.

Bikestation is the leading brand of Mobis and creates the only complete operational ecosystem for bicyclists and bicycling at transit, and in developments, universities and colleges, and corporate campuses. Bikestation facilities offer secure bicycle parking and related services to make cyclists' lives easier, including repair services, equipment and accessory sales, restrooms and showers, and transit and bicycling information.

Jonathan Chew**Real Estate Finance Consultant**

Jonathan Chew is a real estate finance consultant whose current engagement is with Westfield in their Operations Finance and Planning group. Previously, he was the inaugural Ross Forest City Fellow in the development group at Forest City. Before Forest City, Jon was an investment banker at Credit Suisse in their Los Angeles office, where he worked on about \$700 million of transactions across Mergers & Acquisitions, Leveraged Finance, Structured Products and Restructurings. Prior to Credit Suisse, he worked as a strategy consultant at Mars & Company, serving Fortune 100 companies and international conglomerates. Jon is an active member of the Urban Land Institute, where he is the Treasurer of the Young Leaders Group. He has also co-authored an article for ULI's newsletter, titled "Pre-Foreclosure Workouts." Jon earned a B.A. with a double major in Economics and Psychology at Cornell University, obtained his M.B.A. from UCLA Anderson School of Management and completed a Certificate in Real Estate Development from the USC Ross Program. He held a Series 7 securities broker license and is a licensed real estate broker in California.

Panel Members



TAP Panelists (left to right) - Ben Feldmann, Allan Kotin, Fred Dock, Jon Chew, Renata Simril, Jane Blumenfeld, Andréa White-Kjoss, and Patric Dawe

Ben Feldmann**Senior Associate, Mia Lehrer + Associates**

Ben Feldmann, a Senior Associate with ML+A, is both landscape architect and urban designer who emphasizes the integration of sustainable methodologies, contextual adaptation, and systems thinking. He brings over 12 years of experience working on projects throughout California and the U.S. as well as abroad including Asia, Central America and Europe. Furthering the aim for resilient communities and urban regeneration, Ben seeks out solutions that greatly enhance living environments, evoking ecological synergies between built, social and natural realms. His design approach looks to provide innovative solutions that build upon the unique qualities to the site's context, climate and character.

At the Urban Land Institute, our mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.



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Established in 1936, ULI is a nonprofit education and research institute with over 40,000 members across the globe —1,500 here in the Greater Los Angeles area. As a nonpartisan organization, the Institute has long been recognized as one of America's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

The membership of ULI Los Angeles represents the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines. They include developers, builders, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, lenders, academics and students. Members of the Urban Land Institute in the counties of Los Angeles, Ventura, Kern, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara are automatically members of ULI Los Angeles.