Willowbrook Monuments

USC Masters Program in Landscape Architecture + Urbanism with LA Commons and Willowbrook Inclusion Network (WIN) (funded by USC Arts in Action)

For more information, see USC Landscape Justice Initiative website: [https://sites.usc.edu/landscape-justice-initiative/](https://sites.usc.edu/landscape-justice-initiative/)
REMEMBERING WILLOWBROOK
FIVE-PART STRATEGY

1. COMMUNITY ARCHIVE
   A digital infrastructure in partnership with the Willowbrook Library that actively collects and archives oral stories and histories from the Willowbrook Community.

2. CREATIVE COMMUNITY CORRIDOR
   An identifiable, art-forward corridor that follows 120th Street, directing both residents and visitors from the Rosa Parks Metro Station to “Magic” Johnson Park.

3. WILLOWBROOK MONUMENTS ALONG THE CORRIDOR
   Monuments constructed by and with community artists that celebrate the practice of assemblage art specific to this area will integrate artifacts evocative of community stories and memories of Willowbrook; these monuments will dually serve as shade structures at key locations including bus stops.

4. AUGMENTED REALITY MONUMENTS
   Physical monuments will be enhanced through augmented reality (AR) and mixed media (XR) experiences that bring the dynamic and evolving community archive into the physical fabric.

5. ART PROGRAMMING
   Proposed art programming like the Art Hop in Willowbrook that activates spaces along the creative community corridor and in “Magic” Johnson Park.
"We’re a gateway to greater Los Angeles. Willowbrook is a gateway from the Imperial light to the El Segundo light which is like a mile...from light to light..... A lot of people pass through our neighborhood. And there is a lot of relationships between the city of Compton, Watts, and Los Angeles. All our surrounding communities is really, really tight because so many people pass through us, and so many people’s families originated in the Watts-Willowbrook neighborhood...”

- Reginald Johnson, Willowbrook Community Members Story Circle, 2021
WILLOWBROOK HISTORIES

Located in the historic floodplain of the Los Angeles basin, the region was the homeland of the Gabrieleno Tongva People. Fed by a willow next Compton Creek, the land was flat and marshy.

EARLY 1800’S

1843
When California came under Spanish and later Mexican territorial claims and many of the Gabrieleno were forcibly removed from their homeland, the land became a part of Don Anastacio Avila’s vast 4,500 acre Rancho Tajuya. The historic willow brook was the known boundary and all of present day Willowbrook sits within these 4,500 acres.

1890’S

1903
The first subdivisions were built in Willowbrook. These subdivisions were rather large compared to other parts of the country and were broken up by fields, which gave residents ample room to grow their own produce.

1940’S

1949
Subdivisions and suburban development increased rapidly after World War II. Willowbrook, however, suffered from a lack of public investment as white residents moved away and the region became predominantly Black and Latino communities.

1949
Paul R. Williams and Varma Grant designed and built 250 affordable single family homes intended for African Americans in the area.

1965
In response to a lack of public investment and the 1965 Watts riots, numerous organizations were founded by local residents such as Parents of Watts and the Watts Labor Community Action Committee to provide the financial and social support residents needed to improve their quality of life, community’s safety, and economic and educational opportunities.

1965
The Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital, a 131-bed public community hospital opened in 1965 in a new $200 million building.

2020
LA county completed an $63 million renovation to "Magic" Johnson Park.

TODAY

A new community Masterplan is underway. Some longtime residents are excited about the new developments, but other residents fear their history and heritage will be lost among the many changes.

1909
The Willowbrook Mercantile Store

1913
The First Library at Willowbrook's First Library

1929
The Exterior of Willowbrook's First County Library

1965
Interior of the Damaged Willowbrook County library after the 1965 Riot

1986
The Watts Willowbrook Peace

1986
Photos: County of Los Angeles Public Library (1909, 1913, 1929, 1965), James Ruebmann (1986)

Martin Luther King Jr. Multi-Service Ambulatory Care Center closed in 2007 due to a negotiation of federal funding after the hospital failed a comprehensive review. This left the region without a hospital.

Supervisors ordered Ujima Village to close and for residents to be relocated after tests showed potentially dangerous soils and water contamination.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital, a 131-bed public community hospital opened in 1965 in a new $200 million building.

In response to a lack of public investment and the 1965 Watts riots, numerous organizations were founded by local residents such as Parents of Watts and the Watts Labor Community Action Committee to provide the financial and social support residents needed to improve their quality of life, community’s safety, and economic and educational opportunities.

Paul R. Williams and Varma Grant designed and built 250 affordable single family homes intended for African Americans in the area.

Despite the positive movements to improve residents’ lives, employment opportunities were still low in the 1960s. In addition, gangs which had always been active in the communities, suddenly grew and became much more violent as they entered the new, competitive territories of expanded drug trafficking.

1982
The I-105 Freeway was constructed and divided the neighborhood.

1972
A remarkable movement of Black artistic expression arose out of Watts and Willowbrook, which local artists such as Judson Powell, John Outterbridge, and Noah Purifoy carried forward through their work and teaching at the Watts Towers Art Center and the Communicative Arts Academy.

2007
Ujima Village, a complex of mostly government-subsidized apartments, was constructed and opened in 1972. The 34 buildings once housed 600 people.

2008
The Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital, a 131-bed public community hospital opened in 1965 in a new $200 million building.

2015
LA county completed an $63 million renovation to "Magic" Johnson Park.

2020
A new community Masterplan is underway. Some longtime residents are excited about the new developments, but other residents fear their history and heritage will be lost among the many changes.
SELECT PROMINENT FIGURES

VELMA GRANT
REAL ESTATE AGENT, DEVELOPER OF CARVER MANOR NEIGHBORHOOD

Velma Grant was an African-American real estate agent who understood that demand for home would rise after WWII and wanted to provide more housing options locally. She purchased 50 acres and hired Paul R. Williams as architect, and together they developed 250 quality homes for the new neighborhood that she named Carver Manor.

PAUL REVERE WILLIAMS
ARCHITECT

Paul Williams was one of the first African-American architects practicing in the developing Los Angeles area. Among his many remarkable accomplishments, he was commissioned by Velma Grant to design the homes for the neighborhood of Carver Manor with the help of VA loans. Williams sought to create homes that were based on quality craftsmanship and included subtle design details to add charm and character that residents continue to enjoy to this day.

MADAME A C BILBREW
MUSICIAN, POET, EDUCATOR

Madame A. C. Bilbrew was a celebrated musician and poet. She was an educator in the community of Willowbrook founding the Opportunity Workshop in 1963 as a cultural and education institution for residents. She was also a radio personality and became one of the first Black soloists to play on the radio.

JUDSON POWELL
CO-FOUNDER OF THE WATTS TOWERS ART CENTER AND THE COMMUNICATIVE ARTS ACADEMY

Originally a musician by training, Judson Powell became fascinated with the use of art as a tool for education, and co-founded the Watts Towers Art Center and later the Communicative Arts Academy with fellow artists such as John Outterbridge which fostered and inspired the blooming local Black arts movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

WILLOWBROOK MEMORIES

“I remember a time, prior to the ’65 insurrection that the community was altogether different. I remember a Willowbrook that was a beautiful little jewel that connected to Compton, that was a part of South Central and a part of Watts. It was an area where you could freely walk in the streets. I used to walk from my house on 89th Street all the way to Compton where I used to work and was trained in photography. There were certain sounds that I remember: you would walk down the street and hear somebody playing Billie Holiday and the smells of fried chicken and on Sundays, you’d see people going to church. It was a beautiful community, but as things changed and the city evolved, it created issues that deprived people of certain rights after. After ’65, a lot of things changed. To me, when it was predominantly an African American community, it had to survive so it had a strength. You had Black businesses, you had people who would exchange goods and services. After ’65, a lot of that died.”

- George Evans, Willowbrook Community Members Story Circle, 2021

“I think we should also pay respect to our heritage around horticulture and food and land. That’s a part of Willowbrook before other pieces came in... I remember when they came and cut all the trees down so the LAPD could fly their helicopters over and round people versus my earlier years when we had fruit trees. We could pull plums out of people’s yards. It was a beautiful thing.”

- Reginald Johnson, Willowbrook Community Members Story Circle, 2021
Willowbrook was named after its landscape: widespread marshlands and willow thickets attributed to Compton Creek, a major tributary of the LA River. At one time, Compton Creek was a valuable water resource and a focal point of the agricultural settlements during the 1700’s. Willows lined the now concrete clad creek, and the surrounding soil was very fertile. With development, however, the creek was sorely mistreated and the area was often used as a dumping ground. Ryan Millsap, a former professor at USC revealed, "I can state unequivocally [that Compton Creek] was, during the 1950s, the most polluted creek ever to be studied by the U.S. Department of the Interior."

COMPTON CREEK THROUGH THE YEARS

Photos and Maps: Combrook. USC, County of Los Angeles Public Library, USC's.pmc Online Archive

West Compton Blvd and Compton Creek, 1947
Compton Creek, 1947: still zoned for agriculture within Willowbrook.
Avalon Boulevard Compton Creek Bridge, 1947
Compton Creek, today: many revitalization plans are currently underway.
AND ITS AGRICULTURAL LEGACY

In the 1890's, the first subdivisions were built in Willowbrook. These subdivisions were rather large compared to other parts of the county and were broken up by expansive fields, which provided residents plenty of space to grow their own food. Much of land around these subdivisions remained undeveloped until after World War II. Many of the large 300-foot lots remain; some residents still have horses, cows, roosters, and chickens. In the last decade, residents have turned some of the remaining open fields into community gardens, continuing Willowbrook's long agricultural legacy.

WILLOWBROOK COMMUNITY GARDENS

Rose Pickney at the Willowbrook Community Garden, which opened in October, 2014. This garden, among others in the area, are situated along the overhead power line corridor

The Fellowship Garden of Love at Holmes on 1738th and Holmes in Willowbrook opened in 2015

Photos: Online Archive of California; usc.edu/la
UNEVEN GEOGRAPHIES AND THE LASTING IMPLICATIONS

Redlining originated in color coded maps created by the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1937 that defined property value of a given neighborhood. The maps were graded using four colors; red areas were deemed as “Hazardous.” Following, lenders, government entities, and other services systematically used HOLC maps and definitions to decide lending, policies, and access in the practice known as redlining, which in many ways institutionalized racism through the denial of loans to people living in predominantly Black communities. The maps were based on assumptions about the community and were not accurate assessments of an individual’s or household’s ability to satisfy standard lending criteria. Since Black people were unwelcome in white neighborhoods, which frequently instituted racial restrictive covenants to keep them out, this policy effectively meant that Black people could not secure mortgage loans at all. At various times, this practice also affected other ethnic groups, including Latinos, Asians, and Jews. The assumptions in redlining resulted in a large increase in residential racial segregation and urban decay in the United States. Evident in the map below, which illustrates current pollution burdens experienced throughout Los Angeles, the lasting effects of redlining are rather significant; many designated red areas are overwhelmed with environmental burdens and the long term effects of systematic disinvestment. Communities including Willowbrook are burdened by this legacy.

1939 HOLC “Redlining” Map of Los Angeles; in 1939, much of land within and surrounding Willowbrook was zoned for agriculture

The Pollution Burden experienced within the greater Los Angeles area and within Willowbrook; areas that were “redlined” are now some of the heaviest polluted areas in the city.
SIGNIFICANT SITES AND ASSETS IN WILLOWBROOK

1. Willowbrook Library
2. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital
3. Rosa Parks Metro Station
4. "Magic" Johnson Park
5. AC Blythe Library
6. Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science
7. Kennett Hahn Plaza
8. George Washington Carver Park
9. Watts-Willoorbrook Boys & Girls Club
10. Willowbrook Community Garden
11. Faith and Hope Park
12. More Park

PLUS MANY MORE
SELECT WILLOWBROOK CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

CHARLES DICKSON
ARTIST
"There are places you can go for fame and what have you that aren’t necessarily that healthy for one’s personality. And I’ve always understood, for some reason, that is O.K. to have an ego but it’s not too healthy to prop yourself in a position of greatness and grandeur where you forget who you are or where your gift comes from. So I try to share what I have."

GEORGE EVANS
ARTIST, EDUCATOR
Committed to cultivating the next generation of young artists, George Evans formed the Youth Art Team in South L.A. in the 1990s and taught at Los Angeles Trade Technical College for two decades as a dedicated educator. The artist drew upon his decades of experience as a professor to conduct a series of arts workshops... with local high school students.”

-Heidi Zeller

CECIL FERGUSON
ARTIST, ART CURATOR, TRADITION BEARER
Over many years Ferguson rose through the ranks to become a highly influential art curator at LACMA effectively promoting the inclusion of African American history and arts. He co-founded the Black Arts Council, worked on several exhibits that highlighted African American works of art that traveled the world, and supported the work of local black artists.

JOHN OUTTERBRIDGE
ARTIST
"Art has the audacity to be anything it needs to be at any given time."

-John Outterbridge

"In high school, even before high school, people told me that I was an artist, and that's something that I never questioned."

- John Outterbridge

ROXIE HOOKS
ARTIST, DIRECTOR OF WATTS TOWERS ART CENTER
"I think she has a real understanding of art and community art in all of its different facets... She understands and is sensitive to the needs of the community. She’s also sensitive to the artists’ needs. She’s able to navigate different circles and somehow make it all work."

-Rogelio Acevedo

DOMINIQUE MOODY
ARTIST
“When I assemble this eclectic mix into multi-layered constructions, I make visible my dreams, memories and visions. In conjunction to my introspective muse, my works also reflect the social challenges of our times.”

- Dominique Moody
AND WILLOWBROOK COMMUNITY LEADERS

ALICE ‘SWEET ALICE’ HARRIS  
COMMUNITY ORGANIZER, FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PARENTS OF WATTS  
Sweet Alice, as she is widely known, founded the organization Parents of Watts out of her own home in response to the pain and violence of the Watts Riots of 1965. Today the organization is run out of 8 different local residences providing resources, guidance, and training to help her fellow community members and particularly children and young adults access a better education, jobs, and an overall better quality of life.

PASTOR DELORES GLASS  
ACTIVIST, PASTOR OF FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH  
Pastor Glass has been providing much valued spiritual support for the community as well as providing aid to the community through the Concerned Citizens of Willowbrook who provide support and a food drive to citizens through the church. Pastor Glass has also acted as a strong advocate and activist for her neighbors to ensure that their concerns are voiced around how their community is changed.

REGINALD JOHNSON  
FOUNDER OF THE WILLOWBROOK INCLUSION NETWORK  
Reginald Johnson founded the Willowbrook Inclusion Network in 2017 to help provide the resources residents needed, particularly men and boys of color, to improve their access to economic and educational opportunities, and to steer the community towards a more sustainable future. A major goal behind WIN is to ensure residents have a say over how their community is shaped.

ARTURO YBARRA  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE WATTS CENTURY LATINO ORGANIZATION  
In co-founding and directing the Watts Century Latino Organization, Arturo has worked hard to empower the local Latino community and to bridge the gap between the Latino and African American communities. In collaboration with the Watts Labor Community Action Committee they host the annual Cinco de Mayo celebration.

RANDY HUGHES  
PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF THE FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION  
Randy Hughes has dedicated many years of his life serving and directing the Friends and Neighbors Community Association (FNCA). FNCA provides financial resources and services to residents, has helped to stem gang violence and disputes, engaged in public safety and beautification projects, fostered public events, among many other things.

MINISTER SINETTA FARLEY  
FOUNDER OF RESTORATION DIVERSION SERVICES  
Minister Sinetta Farley founded the Restoration Diversion Services in 2009 to help victims of sex trafficking in Compton find the help, support, and resources they need to escape the streets and build a new life.

PLUS MANY MORE PAST AND PRESENT...
Willowbrook Youth Artist Team (2021): Stephanie Owojori, Jade Sanchez, Celia Ochoa-Paredes, Jasmine Perry, Maria Lopez, Betzabe Vega, Ariadna Mancilla, Asha Kent, Jeydaliss Garcia, Aisha Cooper, Rosario Sarita, Ayma Vidal, Chelsie Barrios
Augmented Reality components
Proposal One

Community Canvas
Willowbrook needs a Canvas

There is an abundant creative energy and a tradition of art in this community, but negative stereotypes have been internalized by some of the community members.

We want to empower local artists and all community members to share positive stories of Willowbrook on a Community Canvas.
How can we tell better stories in the Willowbrook Community?

Physical Canvas  Augmented Reality Canvas  Story Corridor
Community Canvas

There will be two physical canvases:
1. Willowbrook/Rosa Parks Metro Station
2. ‘Magic’ Johnson Park
Community Canvas
Community Canvas
Community Canvas
Digital Canvas: Augmented Reality
A digital extension to the physical canvas
Non-Fungible Monument

- Digital artwork can be sold on NFT marketplaces
- Community designers can generate returns on their designs
- This can boost the economic value of Willowbrook

How does it work?

- Personal Devices
- QR Code
- NFT App
Story Corridor
Bus Stops + Community Rest Stops
Story Corridor Enhanced by AR
Community Mural Sidewalks
Story Corridor Map

- Rosa Parks Metro Station
- Compton Creek
- Magic Johnson Park
- Community Canvas Monument
- Bus Stop
- Compton Creek
- Rest Stop
Phasing: Expanding Safe Streets
Materials

- **Framing:**
  - Cumulative Volume = 1026.879444 ({\(+/-\) 5.5e-05}) cubic feet

- **Bricks:**
  - Cumulative Volume = 3495.09583 ({\(+/-\) 0.00021}) cubic feet

- **Wood Slabs:**
  - Volume = 13055.5742 ({\(+/-\) 1e-05}) cubic feet
Materials

- Ferrocement
- Wood Slats
- Brick
- Sidewalk Paint
Community Partnerships

The Watts Towers Arts Center

LA commons
creating cultural connections

LACMA

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
CALIFORNIA

Metro
Proposal Two

Communi-tree Monuments
General Site Map
Community Art Work

- "Art Rise," Dominique Moody (with Other Artists)
- "Art Rise," Dominique Moody (with Other Artists)
- "Sea Dream," Dakota Warren
- "Pieces Together," Lawrence Argent
- "Ocean Journey," Matt Doolin and Paul Doolin
- Watt Tower
Community Art Work
Concept
Concept
Plum Tree Monument
Site 1: Urban Orchard near Willowbrook Community Garden
Plum Plans
Site 1: Urban Orchard near Willowbrook Community Garden
Plum Monument Section

Site 1: Urban Orchard near Willowbrook Community Garden
Plum Render Night
Willow Monument
Site 2: Carver Elementary and near Willowbrook Boys & Girls Club
Willow Plan
Site 2: Carver Elementary and near Willowbrook Boys & Girls Club
Willow Monument Section
Site 2: Carver Elementary and near Willowbrook Boys & Girls Club
Willow Render Day
Willow Render Night
Witnessing Tree Monument
Site 3 Precedent: Willowbrook - Rosa Parks Transit Station
Witnessing Plan
Site 3: Willowbrook - Rosa Parks Transit Station
Witness Monument Section
Site 3: Willowbrook - Rosa Parks Transit Station

Adjacent to Willowbrook - Rosa Parks Station
Site 3: Witness
Witnessing Render Day
Witnessing Render Night
Agencies Collaboration

Los Angeles Dept of Transportation
Los Angeles County Dept of Public Health
LA METRO

Engagement

Willowbrook Inclusion Network
Willowbrook Community Garden
LA Commons
Youth in Action
Cosecha Colectiva
Food Forward
Fallen Fruit Collective
Interference Archives
Materials Analysis

Rebar

Concrete

Seed Banks

Integrated Color Concrete

ACP - multicolor

Olive Green ACP

Forest Green ACP

Playaide Rubber Mulch

Toe Kick Lighting

Tree Branch Lighting

Tree Branch Lighting

Ingrado Recessed Up Lighting

Flag Pole
# Cost Analysis

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**Site 1: Plum**

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**Site 2: Willow**

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**Site 3: Witness**

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**Total Cost**

- **$168,268.56**
3D Model
Proposal Three

Willowbrook in Motion
Site Map

1. COMPTON CREEK BRIDGE

2. RAIL CROSSING @ 119TH / WILMINGTON

3. COMPTON AVE UNDERCROSSING
View in speed

- **Walking**: 2.5 to 4 miles per hour
- **Cycling**: 14 to 18 miles per hour
- **Typical car**: 30 mph speed on residential roads or busy city roads
- **Fast car**: 50-55 mph Vehicle on main road, travelling reasonably fast
Pan-Tribal Lands of Tongva/San Gabriellite, Pre 1800’s

Small farms on large subdivisions, 1890’s

Willowbrook Creek bordered Rancho Tajaauta, 1843

“Redlining” in the late 1930’s sparked lasting impacts

Post Watts Riot/Rebellion, 1960’s

Breaking ground at Earvin “Magic” Johnson Park, 2019
Site Plan
Option 1

Option 2
Fence Panel – Option 1a
Fence Panel – Option 1b
Fence Panel – Option 2a
Fence Panel – Option 2b
# Cost Analysis

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| Project Total         | $89,250  |
ART PIECES TREASURE HUNT  

'Willow & Quest - Find art pieces around you"
Under Development

Composite Proposal

Combining strengths from each of these three proposals into a single scheme with alternatives

Email us!
alisonh@usc.edu
Thank You Team!

For more information, see USC Landscape Justice Initiative website: https://sites.usc.edu/landscape-justice-initiative/

and… GEORGE EVANS, artist!!!