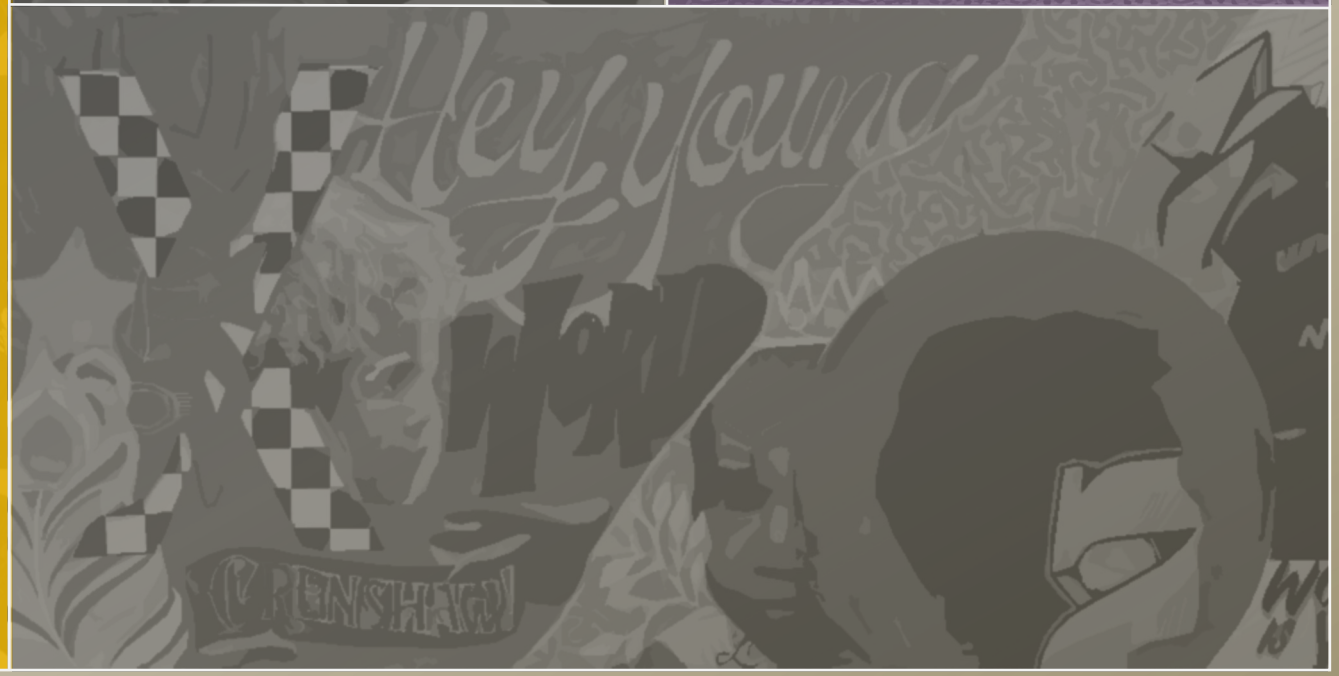
DESTINATION CRENSHAW REPORT OVERVIEW

# CULTURAL TOURISM AND COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR ACTIVATION

JUNE 12, 2025




CVL ECONOMICS

# THE NEED: **THE ROLE OF THE CREATIVE ECONOMY**

- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Creative businesses and workers generate cascading economic benefits through high-wage jobs, supply chain impacts, city differentiation, and talent attraction, ultimately building more resilient local economies.

- **COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE:** Creative industries transform urban real estate by pioneering revitalization of underutilized properties, increasing surrounding values, and creating vibrant mixed-use neighborhoods with extended activity beyond traditional business hours.

- **INNOVATION:** Creative sectors foster innovation through cross-pollination, create community gathering spaces, enhance cultural vibrancy, and build stronger local identity and pride, improving overall quality of life.

- **TOURISM:** Creative and cultural destinations drive tourism by offering authentic, shareable experiences that extend visitor stays, increase spending, support ancillary businesses, and create distinctive place identity that transforms ordinary areas into must-visit attractions.

# THE NEED: **LOCAL DEMAND FOR A MORE ROBUST CREATIVE ECONOMY**

The creative [economy] is a strong driver of our economy not just because of what it is but because of what it does; it speaks a universal language that many other industries don't. People can understand, communicate, and create along those pathways, both interculturally and intergenerationally.

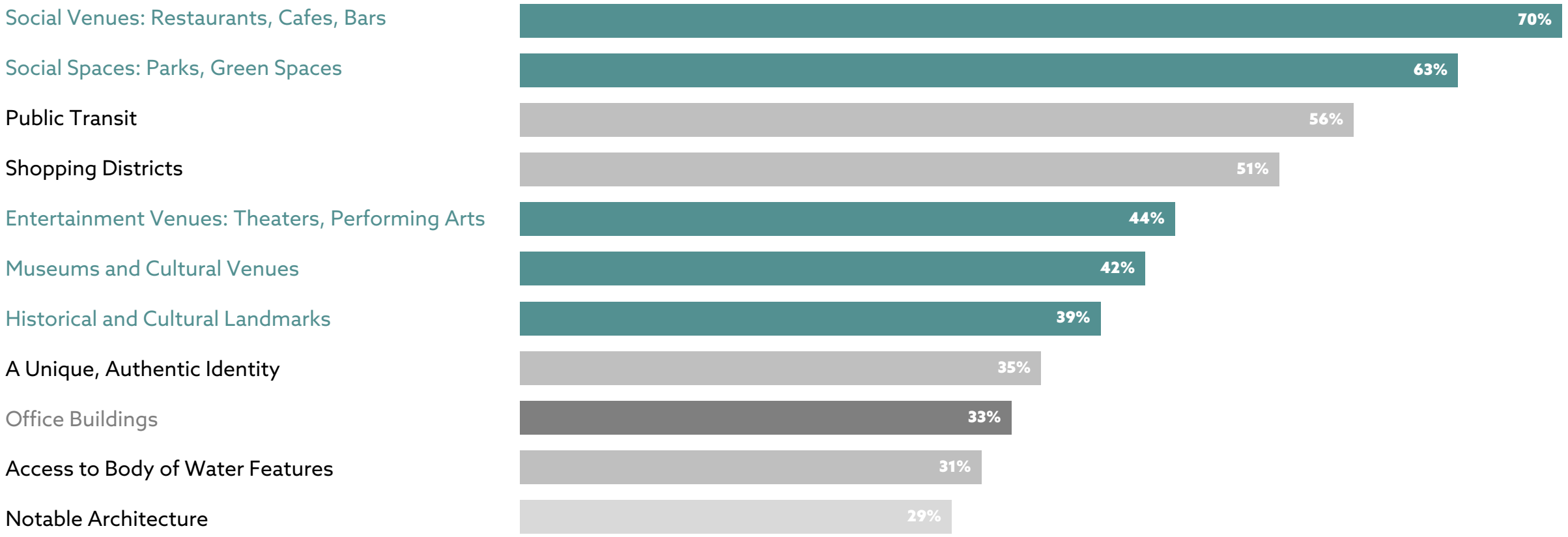
- Crenshaw District Resident

A healthy creative ecosystem encourages innovation, fosters social engagement, and enriches the lived experience, In a survey conducted by CVL Economics, 95% of respondents who either lived or worked in the Crenshaw District felt that a strong arts and culture presence would improve their quality of life, and **87% believed that investing in the arts would yield positive economic benefits.**

"Increasing the profile of the arts in my community and encouraging cultural tourism brings positive economic benefits."

# THE NEED: **A UNIVERSAL DESIRE FOR ARTS AND CULTURE AMENITIES**

PERCENTAGE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHO SAY THAT THE FOLLOWING AMENITIES ARE IMPORTANT TO HAVE IN A GREAT BUSINESS DISTRICT
By 15-City Average | 2021



# THE NEED: **A LACK OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SUPPORT**

"My main problem is I have this huge building for studio space and two storefronts, and we're not able to rent them out because of the neighborhood.

There are no cafes or family restaurants to bring in foot traffic or business—cash—into our neighborhood. There are a lot of people who are interested but don't have the capital to invest, and I don't have the capital to build for them, either."

- Crenshaw District Business Owner

# THE OPPORTUNITY: **THE 2028 OLYMPICS AND PARALYMPICS MARKET**

The 1984 Olympics offers a powerful precedent: Los Angeles welcomed a record 43.2 million visitors—a 9.5% increase over the prior year—who spent the equivalent of $27.2 billion in today's dollars.

That surge in economic activity generated $145 million in local tax revenue and supported nearly 400,000 tourism-related jobs across the county. The City's new Tourism Master Plan calls for exactly this kind of inclusive growth, prioritizing neighborhood tourism development and celebrating LA's cultural diversity.

Destination Crenshaw aligns perfectly with these goals, offering an immersive cultural experience in South Los Angeles that positions the Crenshaw corridor to join the ranks of LA's signature cultural districts. With its location between LAX and multiple Olympic venue clusters, the corridor is poised to capture a share of Olympic spending while advancing long-term community visibility and economic opportunity.

# THE OPPORTUNITY: **STRATEGIC TRANSIT ACCESS**

As some of the first stations visitors encounter when leaving the airport by rail, these communities will help shape early impressions of Los Angeles. This visibility brings fresh potential to support local businesses, celebrate Black cultural identity, and reinforce the corridor's role as a vibrant gateway to the city.

# THE OPPORTUNITY: **BLACK TOURISM**

The new K Line stops at Leimert Park and Hyde Park bring unprecedented visibility to the Crenshaw commercial corridor, positioning it to tap into the $145 billion U.S. Black travel market—an audience that is growing rapidly and increasingly influential. Word-of-mouth remains a powerful driver of travel decisions, particularly among Boomers, who often serve as trusted voices in family and community networks.

As these stations become key access points into the city, they create new opportunities to attract travelers seeking cultural depth, authenticity, and connection to LA's Black history and creative present. The corridor also becomes more competitive for group events, with Black meeting professionals planning an average of 5.5 events annually, often generating 500–2,000 room nights per meeting.

Millennials, now the largest generation of travelers, are especially drawn to destinations that highlight Black culture and offer meaningful ways to support Black-owned businesses. The Crenshaw corridor—with its unique mix of legacy shops, cultural institutions, and a rising generation of entrepreneurs—offers exactly that.

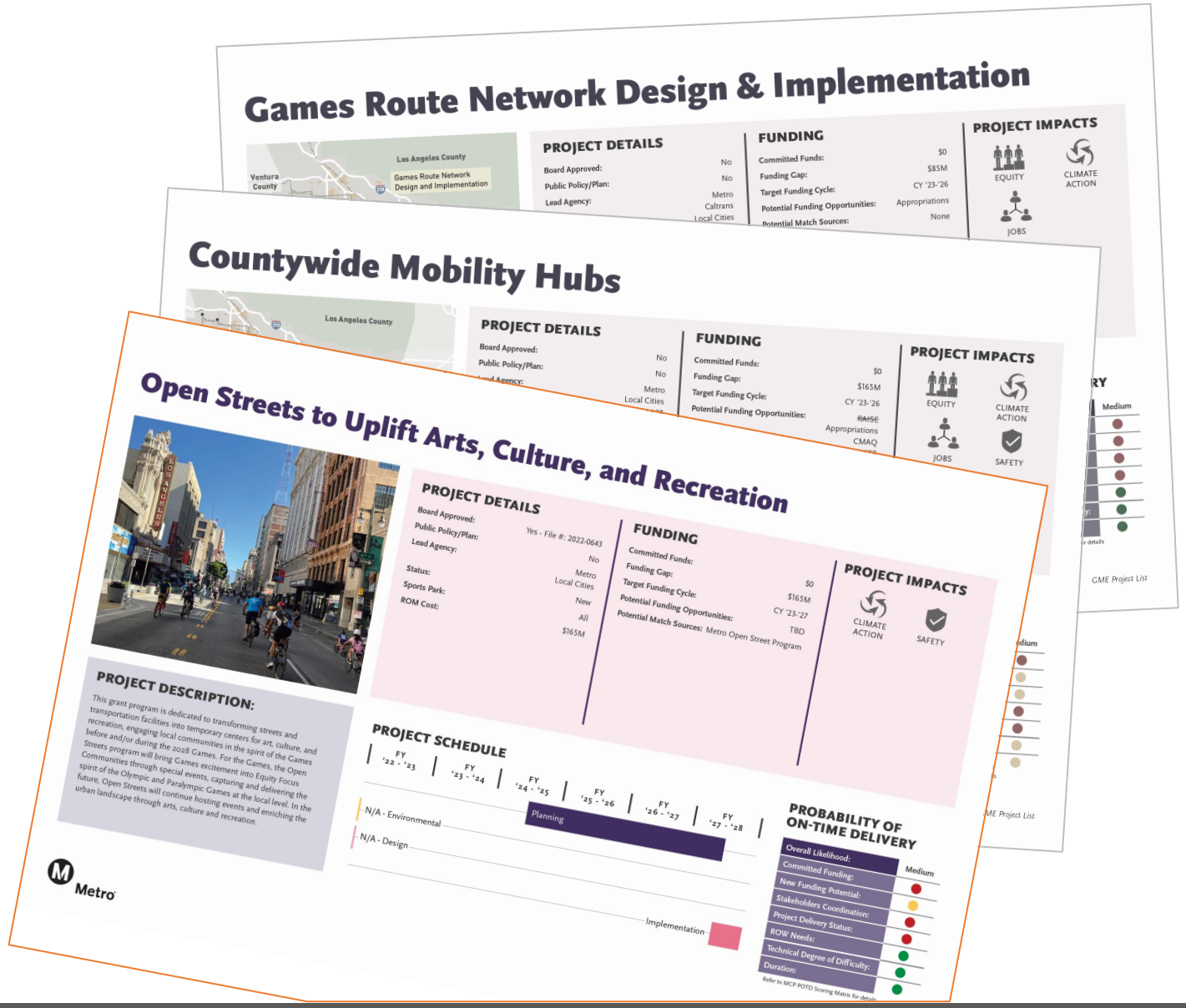
With the average annual spend for Black meetings now exceeding $2 million, and 7% of planners managing budgets over $5 million, Metro's investment opens the door for significant group tourism and conference activity.

As new visitors arrive by rail, there's real opportunity to scale cultural tourism, strengthen small business ecosystems, and ensure economic benefits stay local while reinforcing the corridor's identity as a model for inclusive urban development.

# CHALLENGES AND GAPS: **TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE**

With just a few years until the 2028 Olympics, the Crenshaw District faces a narrow window to lay the foundation for a cultural and economic resurgence that reflects its true potential. Yet the city of Los Angeles is facing significant budget deficits and bureaucratic inertia, making it unlikely that meaningful leadership or investment will come from City Hall alone. Metro's ambitious vision—to activate public spaces as cultural hubs during the Games—is a promising piece of the puzzle, but it's running up against structural and funding challenges that may limit its impact.

While Metro can support the corridor through transit access and arts integration, it cannot, on its own, build the vibrant, entertainment-rich ecosystem that both residents and visitors hope to experience. What's needed now is coordinated, community-driven action to expand nightlife, hospitality, and cultural infrastructure, supported by policy reforms and targeted investment. Acting with urgency in the next 12–24 months is critical. If the groundwork is laid now, the Crenshaw District will be ready to welcome the world in 2028 with a nightlife and cultural landscape that matches Los Angeles' global creative reputation—something Metro can complement but not deliver alone.



# CHALLENGES AND GAPS: **A LACK OF ANCHOR ATTRACTIONS**

Despite its cultural richness and strategic location, the Crenshaw commercial corridor faces persistent economic and commercial gaps that hinder its ability to fully thrive. Decades of under-investment have resulted in a limited and uneven business mix, with many storefronts occupied by small, family-run operations but also marked by vacancies and underutilized properties—particularly in segments south of Leimert Park. The corridor's physical environment also reflects this disinvestment, with aging infrastructure and a need for upgrades that match the vibrancy of the community.

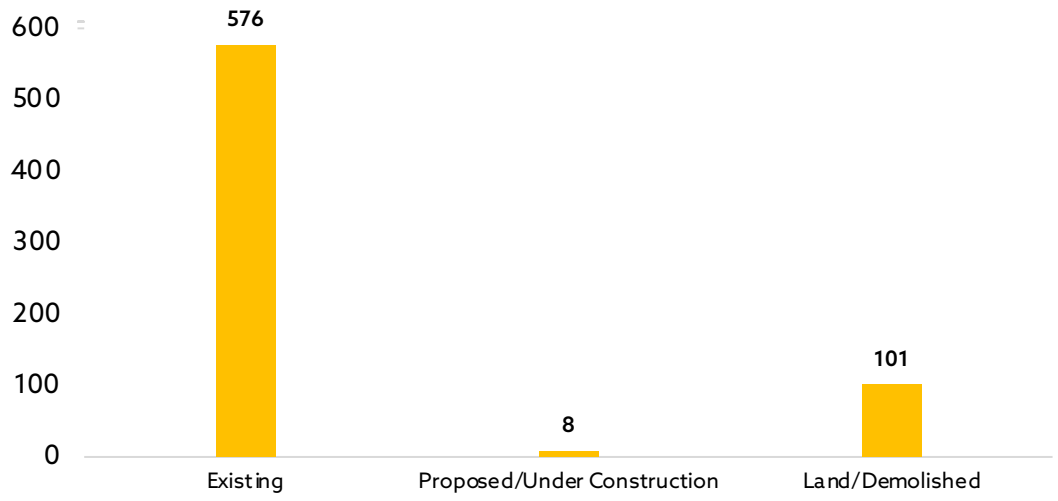
One of the most pressing challenges is the absence of anchor businesses or attractions that generate steady foot traffic throughout the day and into the evening. There are few full-service restaurants or nightlife venues, and retail options are sparse, leading many residents to spend their dollars elsewhere. Even as the corridor begins to draw more visitors, existing small businesses often lack the capacity to scale. Without access to technical assistance, capital, or improvements like updated facades and expanded services, these businesses risk being left behind just as new opportunities emerge.

# CHALLENGES AND GAPS: **LEGACY INFRASTRUCTURE**

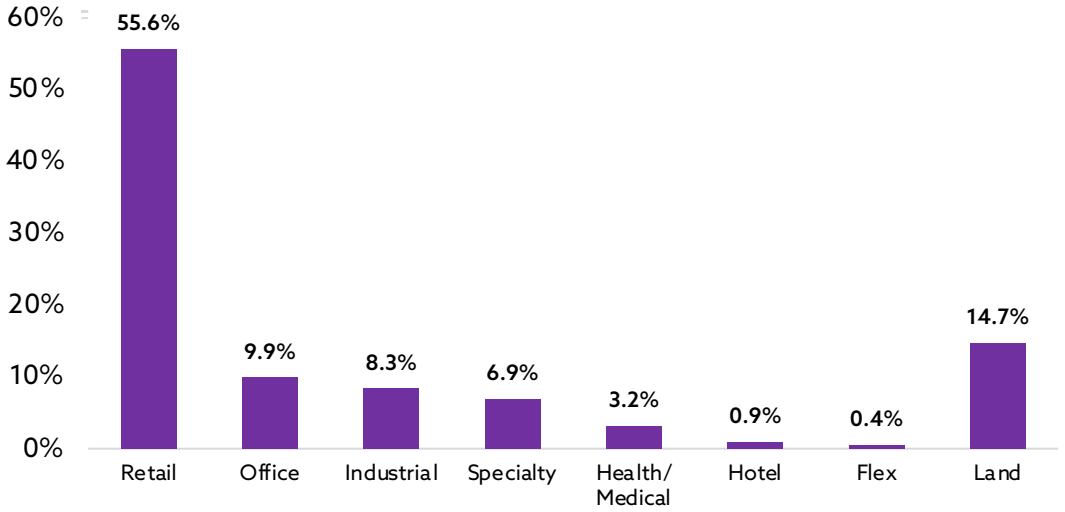
The Crenshaw District's commercial real estate footprint is dominated by existing buildings, with 576 properties in use and 101 parcels either vacant or demolished—signaling room for reinvestment. Over 55% of commercial properties are retail, while other uses like office, industrial, and health care make up much smaller shares. This reflects a legacy retail-oriented infrastructure built for a storefront economy.

In contrast, business activity along the Crenshaw corridor is largely non-retail. Of 385 business licenses, only 17 are for specialty retail, while most fall under personal services, real estate, and health and social services. Today's businesses are driven by service providers and low-footprint uses—but due to a lack of modern, flexible commercial space, many are upsizing into traditional retail properties that don't fit their operational needs.

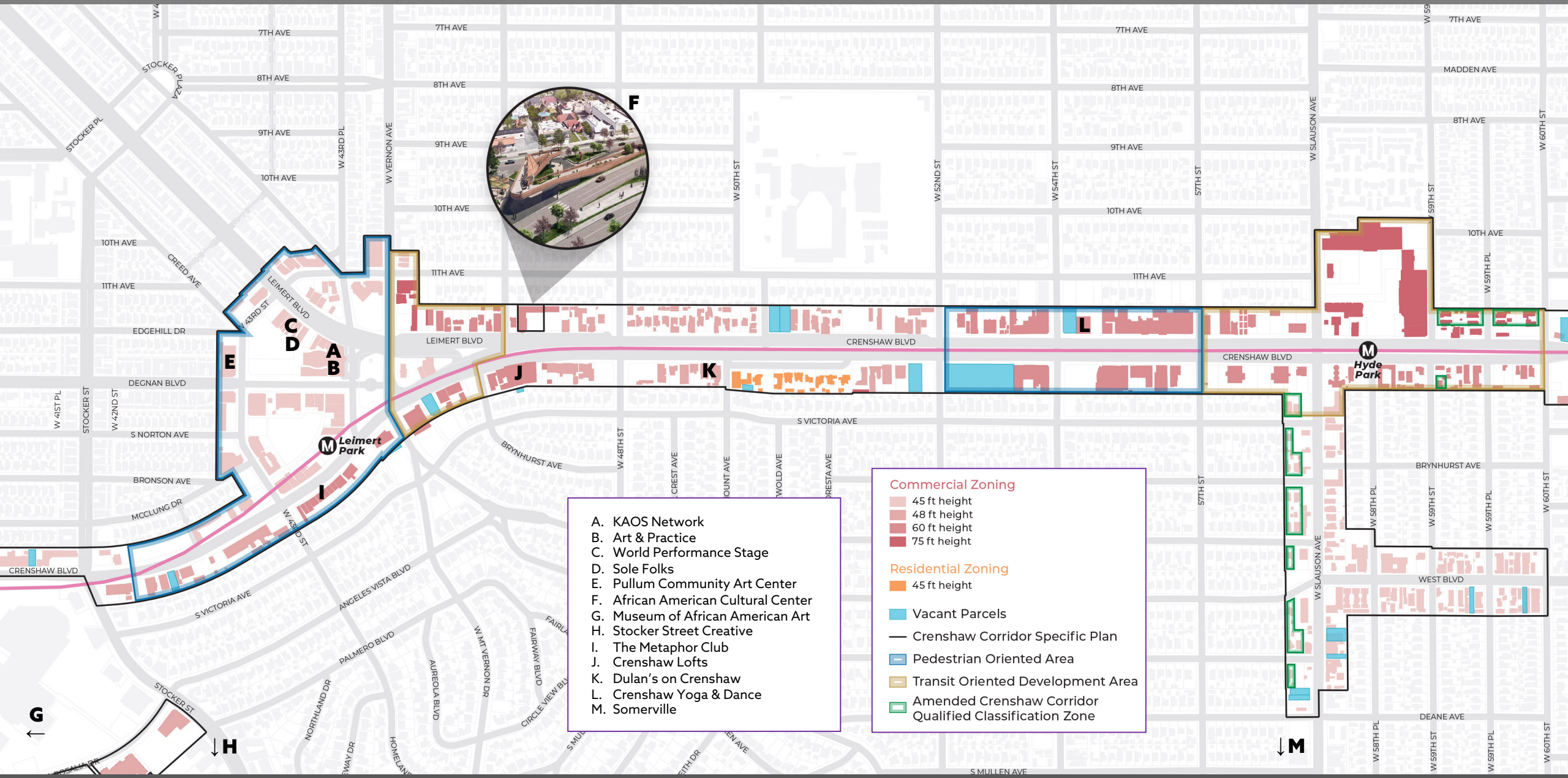
NUMBER OF COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES BY CONSTRUCTION STATUS
Crenshaw District | March 2025




SHARE OF COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES BY TYPE
Crenshaw District | March 2025



# CHALLENGES AND GAPS: **EXISTING ZONING DESIGNATIONS AND SELECT ASSETS**




A. KAOS Network
B. Art & Practice
C. World Performance Stage
D. Sole Folks
E. Pullum Community Art Center
F. African American Cultural Center
G. Museum of African American Art
H. Stocker Street Creative
I. The Metaphor Club
J. Crenshaw Lofts
K. Dulan's on Crenshaw
L. Crenshaw Yoga & Dance
M. Somerville

**Commercial Zoning**
- 45 ft height
- 48 ft height
- 60 ft height
- 75 ft height

**Residential Zoning**
- 45 ft height

- Vacant Parcels
- Crenshaw Corridor Specific Plan
- Pedestrian Oriented Area
- Transit Oriented Development Area
- Amended Crenshaw Corridor Qualified Classification Zone

# CHALLENGES AND GAPS: **TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE**

INDEPENDENT

## How to spend a day in Crenshaw, LA's modern hub of art and creativity

The unveiling of Destination Crenshaw, a $100m outdoor exhibit showcasing Black artists, is positioning the area and neighbouring Leimert Park as the west coast's new finger-on-the-pulse cultural corridor – **Zoey Goto** discovers how to make a day of it in this historic south Los Angeles hub

"This open-air exhibit looks set to revitalize the historically underserved but culturally rich neighborhoods of Crenshaw and adjoining Leimert Park, which for decades have been at the beating heart of LA's Black community."

"Hotels in Crenshaw remain slim pickings, but the boutique Alsace Hotel is well worth travelling a couple of blocks into the artsy neighbouring West Adams district for."

One critical gap that remains largely overlooked in conversations about revitalization is the complete lack of lodging options along the Crenshaw commercial corridor.

Despite its strategic location between LAX, major Olympic venues, and cultural landmarks like Leimert Park, the district currently offers no hotels or short-term accommodations to capture overnight stays. This absence limits the corridor's ability to benefit from tourism, group travel, and cultural events that could otherwise generate sustained economic activity.

It also reduces the likelihood that visitors—whether coming for Destination Crenshaw, the 2028 Olympics, or local arts programming—will extend their stay and engage more deeply with the area. Introducing lodging would not only fill a critical infrastructure gap but also serve as a catalyst for surrounding businesses, helping to activate the corridor beyond daytime hours and build a more complete, self-sustaining destination.

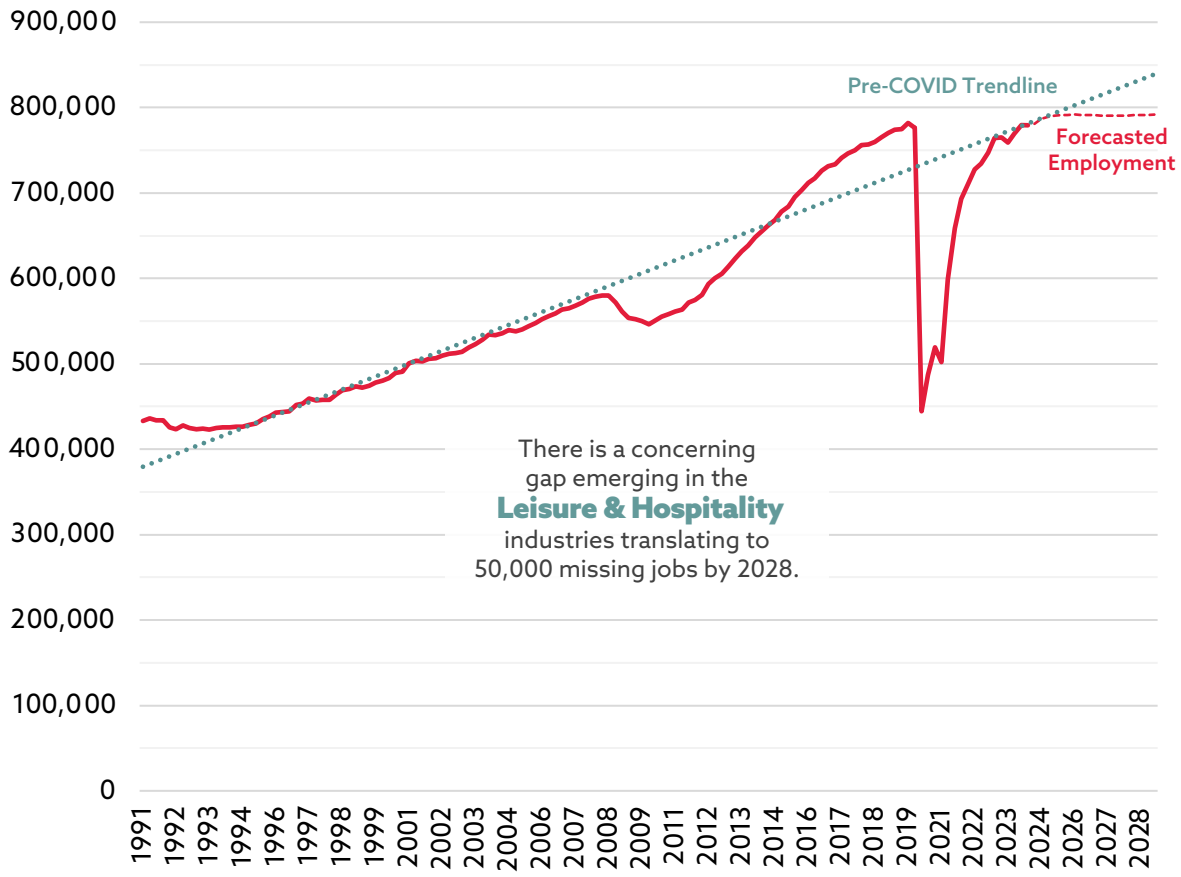
# CHALLENGES AND GAPS: **LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY**

The broader ecosystem of leisure, hospitality, accommodation, and food service across Los Angeles has also been strained by recent economic shocks. Local entrepreneurs in Crenshaw often face high operating costs and complex permitting processes that deter new ventures.

Persistent unemployment and underemployment in South Los Angeles, combined with **limited access to capital for small businesses**, further constrain inclusive growth. This contributes to the statistic often cited that a dollar circulates in the Black community for only hours versus weeks in other communities, reflecting how quickly money leaves due to lack of local channels for reinvestment.

Bridging this gap through targeted financing tools and partnerships is essential to seed new businesses (e.g. bookstores, art galleries, creative startups, specialty retail) that align with the corridor's cultural identity and meet market needs.

LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY JOBS FORECAST FOR LOS ANGELES COUNTY
1990 to 2028



By the year 2028, when Los Angeles hosts the Olympic and Paralympic Games, Destination Crenshaw and the Crenshaw Corridor will be a thriving, internationally renowned center of Black culture and commerce, seamlessly integrated into the Olympic experience of visitors and Angelenos alike.

## CRENSHAW ARTS AND CULTURE DISTRICT ECOSYSTEM

### Existing Place-Based Plans & Initiatives

- West Adam–Baldwin Hills–Leimert Community Plan (2016)
- Crenshaw Corridor Specific Plan (2017)
- Historic South LA Black Cultural District (2025)
  STATE DESIGNATION

### Recommended Place-Based Initiatives

- Crenshaw Corridor Specific Plan Update
- Crenshaw District Entertainment Zone
- Crenshaw Corridor Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD)
- Crenshaw Corridor Sign District

### Recommended People-Based Initiatives

- Crenshaw District 2028 Olympics and Paralympics Working Group
- Crenshaw District Business Association
- Culinary Incubation

**SPATIAL PLANNING**

**ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING**

Public Art Project

DESTINATION CRENSHAW

Backbone Organization

**KEY STAKEHOLDERS**

### Emerging Anchor Institutions

- Inner City Kitchen
- Creators @ The Laboratory
- Leimert Park Community Labs

### Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA METRO)

### Neighborhood Organizations:

- Empowerment Congress West Area Neighborhood Development Council (ECWA-NDC)
- Leimert Park Village Merchants Association
- Crenshaw Chamber of Commerce
- Leimert Park Cultural Hub Network
- Greater Leimert Park Village-Crenshaw Corridor Business Improvement District (BID)

### Elected Officials

- Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson Council District 8, President of City Council
- Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell 2nd Supervisorial District, Los Angeles County
- State Senator Lola Smallwood-Cuevas
- Assemblymember Issac G. Bryan

# IMPLEMENTATION: **DEVELOPING KEY COMMERCIAL SECTORS**

To ensure the long-term economic success of Destination Crenshaw, developing key commercial sectors is essential.

These sectors align with the corridor's cultural identity and present strong opportunities to create local jobs, attract diverse revenue streams, and build a visitor economy that benefits both residents and business owners.

Given current limitations in public and philanthropic funding, the private sector must play a leading role in driving investment. Clear branding, coordinated messaging, and visible alignment among corridor stakeholders are critical to giving private and impact investors the confidence to engage.

# IMPLEMENTATION: **DEVELOPING MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS**

For legacy businesses, emerging entrepreneurs, and local creatives, commercial activation is a rare chance to shape their own economic future.

But this opportunity is threatened by a fragmented and often burdensome regulatory environment that adds cost and delay at every stage—from permitting to operations. For private sector development to flourish in a way that includes local ownership and workforce participation, and to overcome these regulatory challenges, entrepreneurs must feel they have powerful partners standing with them.

Only then can Crenshaw become a destination that generates lasting prosperity.