

Dr. Dre to give \$10 million to Compton schools

Rapper pledges to help build Compton High performing arts center

By ANNE ARTLEY
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COMPTON — Music mogul and former N.W.A. member Dr. Dre wants to give back to the city he once called home.

He has pledged \$10 million to help build a performing arts complex at the new Compton High School campus. Construction is slated to begin in 2020.

“This will not only close the achievement gap, but also the opportunity gap,” said Satra Zurita,



Dr. Dre



Satra Zurita

president of Compton Unified School District’s Board of Education. “Many of our kids end up

“The new complex] will be the gateway to Hollywood for the students, either in front of or behind the scenes.”

— Satra Zurita

The complex will include a 1,200-seat theatre, a recording studio and the latest technology to benefit programs in dance, film production, band, choir and art. Frank Gehry, the architect who designed the Walt Disney

Concert Hall, is behind the project as well.

The complex will also serve as a resource to the Compton community at large, Zurita said.

“Compton Unified School District is the most stable organization in the city,” she said. “We have many corporate and community partnerships.”

One of those partnerships is with talent agency William Morris, which will likely grow stronger with the expansion of resources.

“[The new complex] will be the gateway to Hollywood for the students, either in front of or behind the scenes,” Zurita said.

So far, the district has

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received the commitment for the funds and attorneys for Dr. Dre and the district are negotiating the details of the transfer, according to school Superintendent Darin Brawley.

Although Dr. Dre is an alumnus of Compton’s Centennial High School, he chose to give to Compton High since the school is already building a new campus and performing arts center, Zurita said.

He has also committed to help raise the remaining funds to complete the project.

The performing arts complex is one of many improvements Compton High School students can expect at their new campus, scheduled to begin construction next year. The \$220-million investment will include an Olympic-sized swimming pool, a tennis complex and classrooms modeled after the open-floor plan of the offices at Google.

“I always say that our kids excel when given the tools to succeed, and Dr. Dre is proof of that,” Zurita said. “Once we have an Olympic-sized pool, give us three years and we’ll have a kid in the Olympics.”

Brawley describes Dr. Dre as “a quiet individual” and an observer.

This is not his first time engaging with Compton students. Last year, he visited Jefferson Elementary School after students received new iPads through an initiative of President Barack Obama and Apple to increase technology in underserved schools. Apple is the parent company of Beats By Dre, Dr. Dre’s line of speakers, headphones and earphones.

He also attended this year’s graduation ceremony at Compton High School with his wife, an appearance City Councilwoman Janna Zurita described as “thrilling” and “chilling.”

“My 11-year-old daughter will be attending Compton High School, so they’ve got to get busy,” Janna Zurita said.

Dr. Dre joins a line of celebrities investing in Compton’s artistic development. Actress Rosario Dawson and Hilary Swank and former professional boxer Laila Ali (daughter of Muhammad Ali) plan to serve as advisory board members for HubCity Live, another proposed cultural and technological development in Compton.