

# TORRANCE COMMUNITY PROFILE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

2014



Torrance Community Profile and Environmental Scan | 2014



# TORRANCE COMMUNITY PROFILE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN



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## PURPOSE

The Torrance Community Profile and Environmental Scan is a description and analysis of Torrance—its residents, environment, and community. It provides a framework for understanding the city, its attributes, and relevant issues in planning its future, as well as the context of the broader region of which it is a part. Those who call Torrance home choose to live here for its great schools, low crime, proximity to major employment opportunities, and access to natural resources. These qualities distinguish Torrance from other cities in the South Bay and contribute to its reputation as a great place to live and raise a family.

The City of Torrance is undertaking an update to its Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is expected to address a variety of topics, including community design, communication and civic involvement, economic development, education diversity and enrichment, infrastructure, fiscal sustainability, responsive and accountable cost-effective government, community safety, environmental stewardship, and mobility. The Torrance Strategic Plan identifies and defines strategic priorities, and includes corresponding goals and subgoals to direct future actions by the City government and the community to achieve the vision of the plan.

This Community Profile and Environmental Scan provides a framework for understanding Torrance. The first four chapters—Our Community, Our Place, Our Environment, and Our Economy—focus on where Torrance stands today, how it has changed over time, and how it compares to the region. For the purposes of this Profile, the “region” is defined as the South Bay Beach Cities (South Bay Cities Census County Division) and the South Bay Inland Cities (Compton Census County Division). The final chapter—Environmental Scan—explores where Torrance is headed and future challenges that may impact Torrance’s Strategic Planning Process.

Our hope is that this Community Profile and Environmental Scan can provide a common understanding of local planning and community issues and encourage residents, City staff, and elected and appointed officials to continue engaging in a strategic discussion about the future of Torrance.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Community Profile and Environmental Scan makes numerous findings; readers are encouraged to thoroughly read the entire document. Nevertheless, three key findings encompass many of the topics, as summarized below.

### **CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS**

The aging and retirement of the baby boom generation fuels much of the external change that faces Torrance. The outlook for the next 5 years is good; as the population ages, households will continue to gain income. Baby boomers are now at the age where they have seniority in their companies and years of experience to add value to their work. Many baby boomers lost savings in the Great Recession, so they may work longer to recover those savings before they retire. No one knows how long the baby boomer generation will continue to work for, but when they decide to stop working, there will be problems. In 2011, the first baby boomers reached retirement age. As people live longer due to advances in the healthcare industry, retirees are going to become a more prominent section of society. This is a problem for the housing industry because as people age and work less, they will want to sell their houses to downsize or move elsewhere. Retired people are less likely to afford to buy a house. With a large segment of the population out of the housing market, who will buy the homes the baby boomers have? Torrance must position itself to capture market demand or else housing prices will fall, hurting those people who already have houses. What can Torrance do to be an attractive city to live for those households looking to buy or rent single family homes?

### **FUTURE HOUSING DESIRES**

While for now rental housing and multifamily housing are less demanded, this may change. Real wages have not increased for decades but housing prices have increased. This on top of the fact that more young people have large amounts of student debt mean that less people are going to be able to afford to buy houses. This could mean that in the long run, more people will want to rent or buy cheaper homes. The Millennials, people born between 1980 and 2000, also have a different culture from the prior generations. Buying a house and living in the suburbs is not as attractive to the younger generation as it was to the Baby Boomers. More people prefer to live in urban, denser areas where they can walk and be near to the shops, schools, and workplaces they frequent. Walkable and transit-oriented communities are becoming more desirable as gas prices rise and traffic becomes more burdensome. This means that multifamily housing could become more highly demanded.

### **IMPACTS OF INTERNET SALES GROWTH**

An important dimension of increasing retail sales tax is understanding and responding to the share of household consumer spending through Internet commerce versus spending at shops physically located in the city. E-commerce will continue growing for the foreseeable future. In the absence of new legislation, an increasing amount of residents' consumer spending will evade the tax collector. When looking 20 years in the future, the question is how much local retail spending will take place on the Internet?

There is a clear role for the city to play in expanding retail sales through the expansion, creation, and attraction of retail businesses, but the city's role in minimizing the increasing shift to online purchasing is less direct. The two avenues through which public policy can minimize the shift is reducing barriers to bricks-and-mortar purchasing and creating more districts for experience-oriented shopping. Many online purchases are driven by cost and convenience. The city has few if any tools available to affect the consumer's cost. But the city can apply its planning and development authority to minimize potential roadblocks to purchasing needed goods locally rather than online. The City's Strategic Plan should reinforce the land use plan's intent to provide convenience goods and services throughout the city in proximity to where people live and to provide comparison goods in fewer locations, near intersections of major corridors.

No one can be certain about what the retail landscape will look like in ten years, let alone 30 years from now. Which big box national retail chains will be around and which ones will be gone? What the Internet is less likely to change is the provision of services, experience-oriented shopping, and dining. City policies should promote development and revitalized resulting in unique pedestrian-oriented retail districts characterized by independent businesses, restaurants, entertainment, and places where people socialize. Such experience-oriented shopping is less about satisfying an immediate material need and more about the pleasure of shopping and socializing with friends and family. These places are less likely to be disrupted by increases in Internet sales than are conventional strip centers and big box retailers.





# Our Community

In this chapter:

PEOPLE

EDUCATION

LIFESTYLE

## PEOPLE

People from all walks of life have sought Torrance for its quality of life, for its access to natural resources, to start and raise a family, and to live close to employment opportunities. This section examines key socioeconomic characteristics of Torrance’s residents. Who are they? What opportunities do they have in their community? What challenges do they face? And how will today’s population influence the next generation?

### POPULATION

With a population of 145,443 in 2012, Torrance is the 8th most populous of Los Angeles County’s 141 cities and census-designated places (CDP). From 2000 to 2010, the City’s population increased by 5.4 percent—a more significant increase than the Beach or Inland cities and the county experienced. Given that Torrance and its neighboring communities are largely built out, they have experienced essentially no population growth in the past few years. This trend reinforces the population projection established in the City’s General Plan, which estimated the City’s buildout population to be approximately 147,000 persons (a growth of just 1.5 percent from 2012).

**TABLE 01. Population Change, Torrance and the Region, 2000–2012**

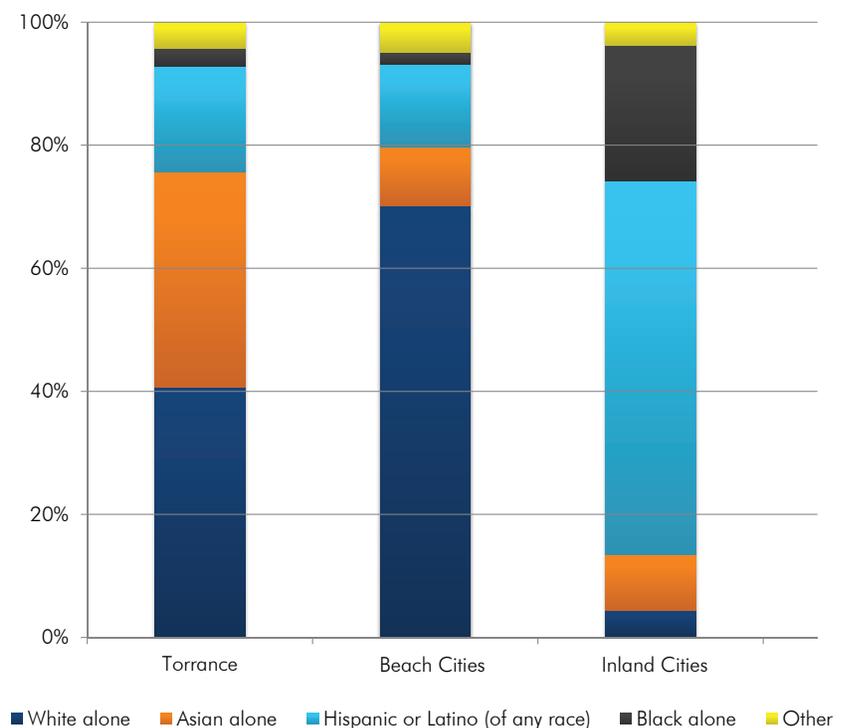
Location	2000	2012	% Change (2000–2012)
Torrance	137,946	145,443	5.4%
Beach Cities	131,712	138,239	5.0%
Inland Cities	332,821	338,647	1.8%
Los Angeles County	9,519,330	9,840,024	3.4%

Source: US Census, 2000-2012

## RACE AND ETHNICITY

Torrance is a racially diverse, minority-majority city. In 2012, approximately 40 percent of Torrance residents identified as non-Hispanic white. In Torrance, Asian (35 percent of the total population) and Hispanic (17 percent) communities are particularly well represented. The City’s ethnic makeup generally reflects the profile of the Beach cities, but is not as diverse as the Inland cities. In particular, Torrance continues to have a relatively high proportion of non-Hispanic white residents, and neighboring jurisdictions have seen this constituency decrease more significantly since 2000. Torrance’s diverse population base suggests a multicultural future for the City that is enriched by varied ethnic and racial communities and traditions.

**FIGURE 01. Ethnic Diversity, Torrance and the Region, 2012**



Source: US Census, 2012

## AGE DISTRIBUTION

Age composition is an important factor in determining demand for types of housing, health care, and community facilities. Torrance, like most of the country, is an aging community. As birth rates decline and the baby boomer generation moves into retirement, median ages nationwide are increasing.

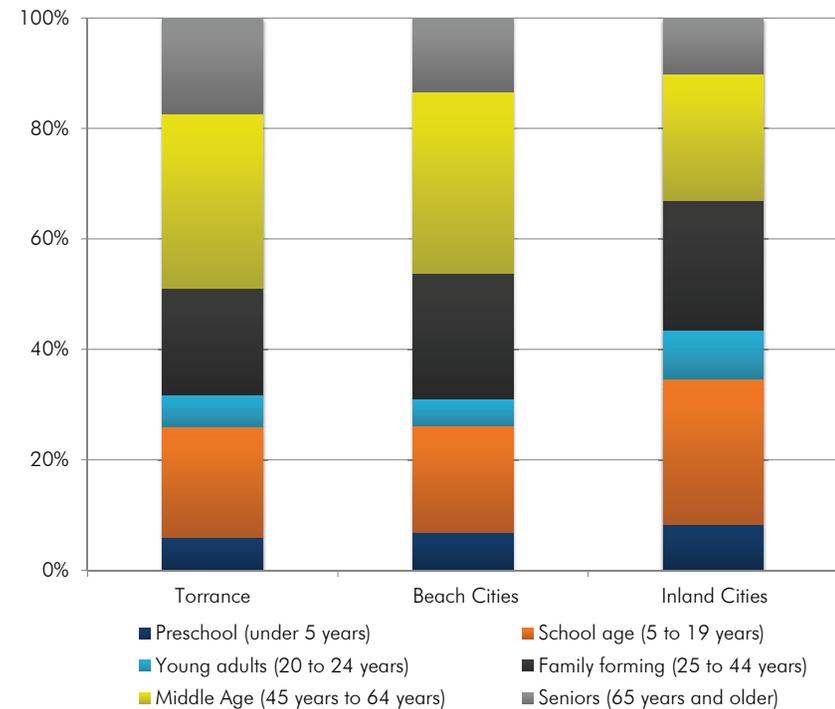
Torrance saw a major shift in the age of its population between 2000 and 2005, when the median age increased from 34 to 41 years old. Since 2005, Torrance’s median age has increased only slightly—to 41.7 years old. Torrance residents are slightly older than Beach city residents (39.8 years) and a decade older than Inland residents (31.1 years). Torrance and its Beach city neighbors are older than Los Angeles County as a whole, which has a median age of 34.8 years.

Torrance’s older median age demonstrates its larger percentage of middle-aged residents (45–64 years old) and seniors (age 65 years or older) compared to its neighbors. Approximately 45 percent of Torrance’s residents are 45 years or older, versus 40 percent of Beach city residents and only 32 percent of Inland city residents. Conversely, Torrance has a smaller proportion of the younger demographic groups. In particular, although 25 percent of Inland city residents are school aged (5–19 years old), only 18 percent of Torrance’s residents belong to that age group.

### Child Care

With 7,754 persons under the age of 5 living within the City, child care is an important issue for Torrance. The city has 120 licensed child care locations that care for infants through school-aged children. There are 5,416 licensed child care spaces available in the City. The 48 primary child care centers provide 3,197 spots, 59 percent of the total. Large-family child care homes provide 558 spots (10 percent), school-age child care centers provide 1,461 spots (27 percent), infant centers provide 187 spots (3 percent), and the city’s only mildly ill child care center provides 13 spots (0.2 percent).

**FIGURE 02. Age Distribution, Torrance and the Region, 2012**



Source: US Census, 2012



Photo Above: Torrance institutions cater to children of all ages.

## HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

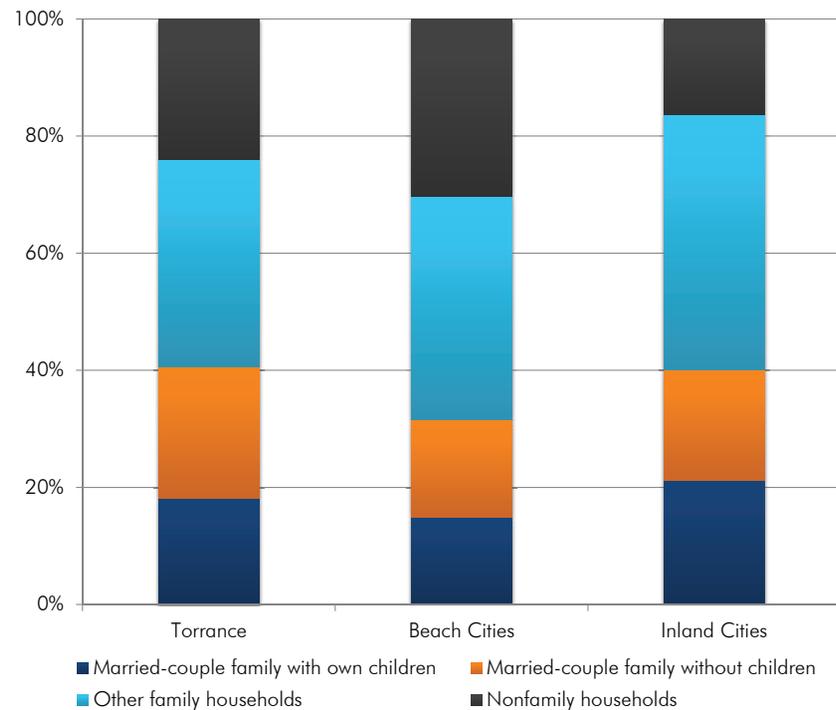
The relationship of household members contributes to the types of housing and services needed. For example, single-person and nonfamily households create demand for adult education and recreation programs and may be well served by rental housing, whereas family households with minor children create demand for K–12 school facilities and playgrounds and may increase demand for single-family homes.

Though the period between 2000 and 2005 showed a decline in married-couple families (with and without children), Torrance continues to be a community dominated by family households. By 2012, the percentage of residents that were married increased back to the level seen in 2000. Conversely, the percentage of nonfamily households decreased to roughly the same percentage as 2000. In retrospect, it's clear that 2005 was near the peak of the housing market, when rents and home prices were at their all-time highs, and individuals were more likely to live together to share high living costs.

Today, nearly 55 percent of the City's residents are married, but over half of those married couples do not have children living at home. This is a shift from 2000 and 2005, when more than half of the City's married couples had children at home. This trend indicates that Torrance's residents may be aging in place, and that children who were living with their parents in 2000 and 2005 have since moved out, leaving their parents to live alone.

The community's average household size further reflects household composition trends. The average household size is expected to be lower in communities where a higher percentage of households are married couples without children living at home and/or other types of households. The average household size in Torrance in 2012 was 2.61, compared to 2.33 for Beach city households and 3.88 for Inland city households. If present trends continue, the City of Torrance should expect a higher percentage of households without children living at home, and therefore, smaller household sizes.

**FIGURE 03. Household Composition, Torrance and the Region, 2012**



Source: US Census, 2012

## HOMELESSNESS

Homeless persons and families lack a fixed and adequate residence. The homeless typically have a primary nighttime residence in a refuge not designed for human habitation or in a supervised temporary living environment such as emergency shelter, welfare hotel, or transitional housing facility for those with special needs (drug and alcohol rehabilitation, mental health treatment, childcare, etc.). The City of Torrance's 2014 Housing Element estimates that approximately 88 persons are unsheltered in the City (based on a 2013 street count), which includes homeless people found outside either residing in a vehicle, tent, or encampment dwelling. However, the informal homeless sector is much less visible than this; people who stay with friends or relatives, in motels and other informal housing arrangements are difficult to count. Therefore, it is difficult to estimate the exact number of individuals considered homeless. The City's 2014-2021 Housing Element describes special facilities in city of Torrance and the surrounding cities that help homeless persons find shelter and services. This topic is explored in greater detail in Chapter 5.

## EDUCATION

Education and job training are foundational elements of a healthy city and region. Our educational institutions establish critical thinking skills, social accountability, and the means for financial independence, and lifelong learning and training opportunities ensure that our workforce can succeed and adapt to changes in the economy.

### SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Torrance residents are served by the Torrance Unified School District (TUSD). The district presently comprises 17 elementary schools, 8 middle schools, and 5 high schools (one of which is a continuation school). The City is also home to nearly two dozen private schools for students ranging from K–12.

School performance can be measured through API scoring, a measurement unique to California, which is reported on a numeric index from 200 to 1,000, with high numbers indicating better performance. The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires all schools to achieve an API score of 800 or better by 2014. In Torrance, all 8 middle schools and 4 high schools have earned scores above 800 by

2012. Torrance middle schools' API scores range from 827 to 936, with Bert M. Lynn school achieving the highest score. Torrance high schools range from 815 to 876, with South High School achieving the highest score. Scores for all schools vary when looking at specific populations, such as socioeconomically disadvantaged students (774–899), English language learners (720–895), and students with disabilities (541–818).

Statewide ranks show how each school's API score ranks in comparison to all other statewide schools of the same grade level. Similar school rank compares each school's rank to the API of 100 other schools of the same grade level that have similar opportunities and challenges. For both of these two categories, there are 10 categories ranking performance—10 being the highest and 1 the lowest. A ranking of 5 or 6 is considered average, with anything below that being less than average and anything above being higher than average. In Torrance, all middle schools and high schools rank above average in the Statewide API Rank. For Similar School API Rank, Calle Mayor is the middle school that ranks above average, with all others falling at average or a little below.

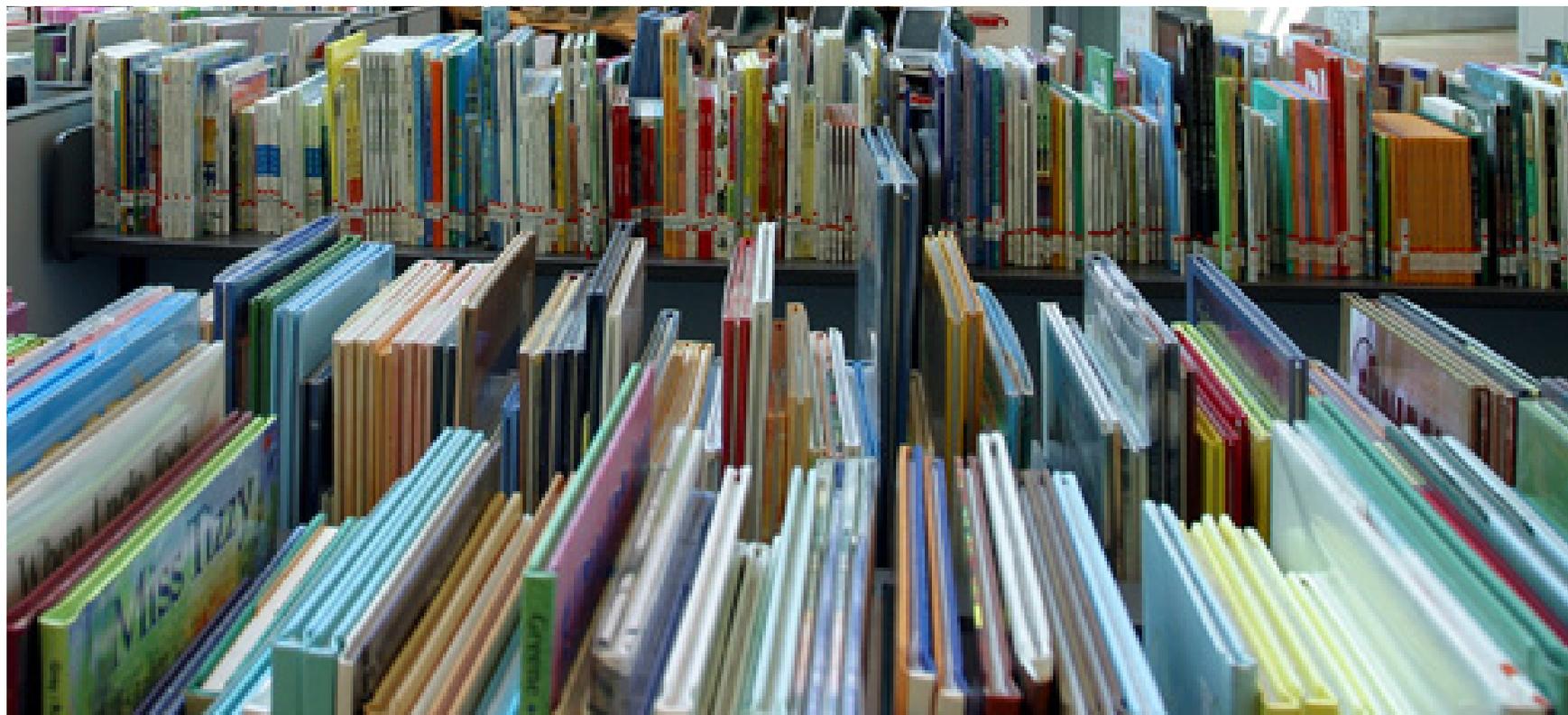


Photo Above: Students of Torrance schools enjoy access to a wide range of books and resources.

## ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education helps people improve their quality of life. Torrance Adult School has three locations: Griffith Center, Hamilton Center, and Hull Center. The majority of students enroll in courses supported by the California Department of Education (adult basic and secondary education, adults with disabilities, career technical education, English as a second language, home economics, health and safety, older adults, and parenting classes). The Torrance Adult School also manages a Community Education division, entirely supported by student fees, which includes personal interest courses ranging from arts and crafts to financial and business opportunities.

The Torrance Adult School offers 300 classes per term and serves between 20,000 and 25,000 adults per year (down 5,000 students over the past 10 years). The majority of students are seniors (55 and up). English as a second language (ESL) courses have traditionally been the most popular. However, as property values in the area have increased, enrollment in ESL classes has declined. Instead, residents are enrolling more heavily in home improvement and financial management courses.

## HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Torrance is served by El Camino College (ECC), one of California's 112 community colleges, which gives 31,000 students enrolled at its two campuses the chance to earn an associate degree, transfer to a four-year college, or gain technical skills for the workforce. El Camino College has two locations—the main campus is partially in unincorporated LA County and partially in Torrance, and the second location is in the City of Compton.

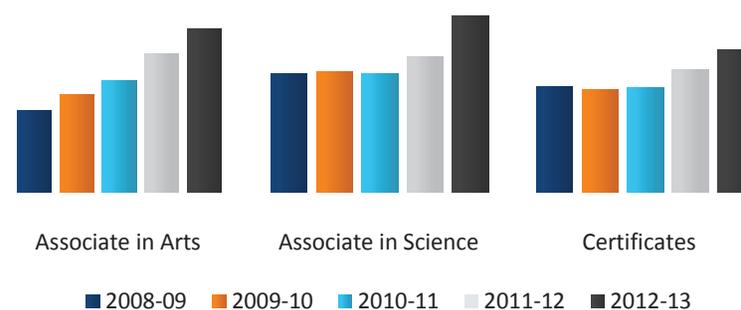
ECC has 9 academic divisions that comprise over 75 academic programs, each offering a comprehensive transfer, degree, or certificate program. It also offers study abroad opportunities and transfer majors, and is ranked in the top 10 in the state for transferring students to UC and CSU universities. ECC is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges. It is particularly well known for its English as a second language (ESL) and forensic programs.

Besides the City of Torrance, ECC also serves the Beach and Inland cities. ECC prepares and distributes an annual fact book containing trend data about students, student outcomes, and instructional programs and services. Since 2008, ECC has seen a larger percentage of its students coming from out of the district. Torrance residents make

up the larger proportion of ECC students (18 percent), followed by Los Angeles (12 percent), Hawthorne (10 percent), and Gardena (9 percent); Los Angeles and Gardena are both outside of the district. In 2008–2009 ECC had a total college enrollment (Torrance and Compton) of 41,700. Since that time, enrollment has steadily declined every year and reached a low in 2012–2013 of 31,713 students. Though student enrollment is declining, the percentage of students receiving financial aid is increasing, up from 25 percent in 2008–2009 to 50 percent in 2012–2013. To back-fill funding shortages, many community colleges have looked for opportunities to attract international students, who often pay higher tuition costs than local students (both in and out of the district). However, since the 2008–2009 school year, the number of international students at ECC has declined from 880 to 780 students. This trend could indicate a need for ECC to explore additional funding sources and recruitment strategies.

In 2012–13, approximately 2,000 degrees and 600 certificates were awarded at ECC. The distribution of degree type in 2012–2013 has shifted since 2008–2009. Five years ago, 56 percent of degrees awarded were associate of arts (AA) degrees and 44 percent were associate of science (AS) degrees. In 2012–2013, 65 percent of degrees awarded were AA and only 36 percent were AS.

**FIGURE 04. Degrees and Certificates Awarded, El Camino Community College, 2008-2013**



Source: *El Camino College Annual Factbook, 2013*

**Right Photo:** Torrance is served by El Camino College (ECC), where students have hundreds of interdisciplinary courses to choose from.





**Above Photos:** Torrance has easy access to three excellent hospitals and continues to prioritize health.

## LIFESTYLE

Torrance's lifestyle is defined by a strong commitment to community events, including special programming for youth and adults, celebrations of the City's multicultural profile, and recognition of its historical resources. These core lifestyle opportunities are key reasons why the City is such a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Inspiring resident health and wellness is a growing priority for many cities. Torrance residents have access to world-class medical service at Torrance Memorial Medical Center and the Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Center, both in the City of Torrance, and Los Angeles County Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, which is just outside the City's boundaries.

Torrance Memorial Medical Center was the first hospital in the Los Angeles South Bay region, founded in 1925. It has been at its current site since 1971 and includes staff of over 1,000 physicians and nearly 900 members of the volunteer corps. Torrance Memorial, a 401-bed, nonprofit medical center provides programs, services, and support groups to help community members take proactive steps to boost their health and stay well. Little Company of Mary Medical Center is a Catholic-sponsored healthcare ministry serving the South Bay since 1960. The hospital has 2,088 employees, 900 active medical staff members, and 442 licensed beds. Harbor-UCLA Medical Center has been serving over 700,000 residents in the South Bay since 1946 and has 300 full-time faculty and 450 part-time and voluntary professional staff. The hospital is home to one of the largest independent, not-for-profit biomedical research institutions in the country (LA BioMed) and is a major training site for UCLA and Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science medical students.

The Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce has a special Health and Wellness Committee composed of businesses dedicated to providing services and products for the community's health and well-being. The goal of the Health and Wellness Committee is to promote greater health awareness by providing information, activities, and services designed to support healthy lifestyle choices.

## YOUTH PROGRAMMING

Torrance offers a variety of recreational programs to entertain, educate, and enrich youth, including organized programs in aquatics, basketball, cheerleading, dodgeball, flag football, volleyball, and wrestling (among others). The City of Torrance also supports young adults at The Attic, a teen center for 14–18 year olds living in the City and/or attending Torrance High School. Seasonal activities like day camps, the Rose Float Association, family special events, boutiques, and bazaars are organized throughout the year to bring together Torrance’s youth and other community members.

Torrance also has a Youth Council that advises the City Council on matters pertaining to youth in Torrance. The council has been active in the City of Torrance for over 30 years and boasts more than 400 representatives who have participated on the council since its inception.

## ADULT PROGRAMING

Torrance’s adults are active in sports, fitness, and social activities. The City has organized adult sports programs for basketball, roller hockey, softball, and volleyball. The Bartlett Center provides an array of senior programs to Torrance residents, and additional programs are provided at the Herma Tillim Center, Ken Miller Recreation Center, and Walteria Park. Seniors can participate in special-interest classes, weekday hot lunches, fitness classes, games, and singing groups. The centers often feature speakers on a variety of topics. Information on legal and financial issues, social services (including Medicare, Medi-Cal, and Social Security), transportation, and other needs are also available. For a nominal charge, residents can join the “5-0 and on the Go!” Association and receive a monthly newsletter of association activities. Other specialty senior activities include a Seniors Discussion Group, South Bay Strummers Ukulele Group, Sea Aire Golf Club, shuffleboard, and ceramics workshops.

## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Civil society refers to the sphere of voluntary associations and informal networks of a community in which individuals and groups participate. Churches, neighborhood organizations, cooperatives, charities, unions, clubs, and social movements are all components of a strong civil society. There are two types of club organizations in Torrance: charter clubs that are affiliated with the City and clubs managed by private individuals or groups. Torrance has eight charter clubs in the areas of Aikido, fine arts, arts and crafts, dog obedience, fencing, Judo, Kendo, and Naginata. There is also a strong network of independent groups managed by city residents and 119 nonprofit organizations in Torrance.

## LIBRARY BRANCHES AND HOLDINGS

Torrance is served by quality libraries and an extensive network of digital resources. The Torrance Public Library has five branches and provides a variety of reading programs for children, teens, and adults as well as book discussion groups, live homework help, and services for people with disabilities. Total holdings for Torrance Public Library decreased from 2011 to 2013, but total circulation increased by 1.2 percent. As libraries around the country move toward limiting investment in hard-copy products and increasing access to digital material, this trend is expected to continue.



3031

CITY OF TORRANCE  
FEATURE USES RECYCLED WATER

TORRANCE



# Our Place

In this chapter:

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

TRANSIT AND MOBILITY

CULTURE AND RECREATION



## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### EXISTING LAND USE

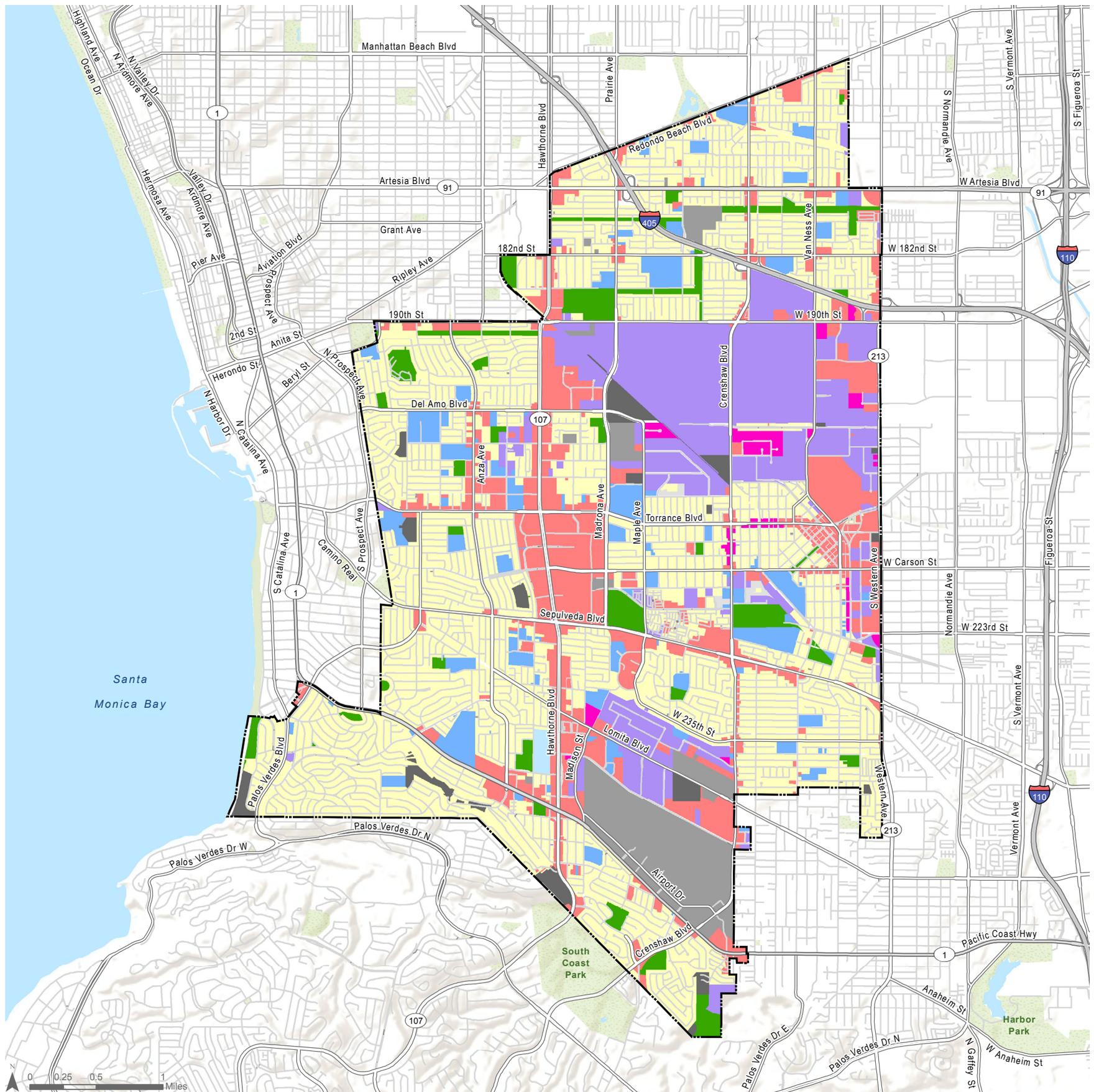
Torrance's 10,902 acres are distributed among a variety of complementary land uses; residential uses account for nearly half of the City (46 percent), commercial uses and industrial uses each make up approximately 32 percent, and all other uses (mixed-use, public, open space, water, and other) make up the remaining 22 percent.

Vacant land in the City of Torrance is diminishing. In 2012 the City's vacant land use inventory identified 96 acres (82 parcels) of vacant land citywide, and by 2013 that number was reduced to 73 acres (68 parcels)—only 0.05 percent of the City's total acreage. Vacant property is attractive to developers because there are no tear-down costs associated with new development, but most of the City's remaining vacant parcels are very small (less than one-half acre), and none are adjacent, making them very difficult to develop. Of the 73 vacant acres in the City, over half are currently zoned A1-Light Agriculture. Only three acres (16 parcels) of vacant land are zoned for other residential uses, four acres (21 parcels) are zoned for commercial uses, and 24 acres (7 parcels) are zoned for manufacturing uses.

**TABLE 02. Existing Land Use, Torrance, 2013**

LAND USE	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ACREAGE
Residential	45.9%
Commercial	16.5%
Industrial	16.0%
Public Institution	6.4%
Open Space/Parks	6.4%
Transportation/Utilities	5.5%
Vacant/Right of Way/Other	1.9%
Mixed Use	1.0%
Under Construction	0.2%
Water	0.2%

**Left:** Torrance's tree-lined residential streets make the city a very pleasant home for its residents.



## NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

Torrance is a diverse city, and the characteristics of each neighborhood are various and distinct; however, all neighborhoods place a high value on parks, trees, green space, safety, and security. Residents value the relatively low scale of most neighborhoods and express concern about more intense development. Nevertheless, each neighborhood has an identity unique to itself.

### North Torrance

The north end of Torrance is notable for its proximity to the Mobil Oil Refinery and 405 freeway. The mix of residential types includes single-family homes, multifamily apartments, and condominiums. Residents in North Torrance indicate that they are less impacted by traffic issues than other areas of the City due to ease of access to I-405 and the well-defined street grid in their neighborhoods. Availability of parkland and freeway access are the most favored characteristics in the area.

### Old Torrance

Notable for its historic structures, narrower streets, small and narrow lots, and pedestrian-friendly character, Old Torrance includes the original Torrance Tract and the former Downtown redevelopment area. Residents of Old Torrance prize the historic homes, abundant trees, and walkability, and advocate for vigorous historic preservation of their neighborhood.

### Central Torrance

Central Torrance contains a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses such as the former Industrial Redevelopment Project Area, Honda headquarters, the Torrance Civic Center, and the Madrona Marsh Nature Center. Central Torrance's Pueblo neighborhood is notable for its age and its long-term and multi-generational residents. Torrance Gardens, another subdivision, is well known for its low-scale, 1950s and 1960s single-family residences.

### West Torrance

West Torrance encompasses the Del Amo Fashion Center and financial center and the Hawthorne Boulevard commercial corridor. In this district, one can find pockets of multifamily developments and, predominantly, detached homes. Residents of West Torrance appreciate the separation between commercial and residential uses, but want to ensure that viable businesses remain and that all commercial buildings maintain a neat and professional appearance.

### South Torrance

Focal points of South Torrance include the Torrance Airport and the Torrance Memorial Hospital. The Hawthorne Boulevard commercial corridor traverses the area with concentrations of commercial uses. Most residential neighborhoods in South Torrance are single family with pockets of multifamily developments. Defining and desirable qualities include the parks, open space, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, and single-family residences.

### The Hillside

Notable for its less urban feel; narrower, tree-lined winding streets; hillsides; and views, the Hillside neighborhood consists almost exclusively of single-family homes, with scenic qualities and larger residential lots. Residents feel a strong sense of community in the Hillside. The Seaside Ranchos area is renowned for its Christmas light display, and the Riveria neighborhood is well known for its dramatic ocean and city views and its distinctive architecture.

In summary, whether it is the history of Old Torrance or the destination shopping in West Torrance, each area offers a distinct character and lifestyle for Torrance residents. Respecting and preserving the quality of established neighborhoods continues to be an important priority for the community.

## HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

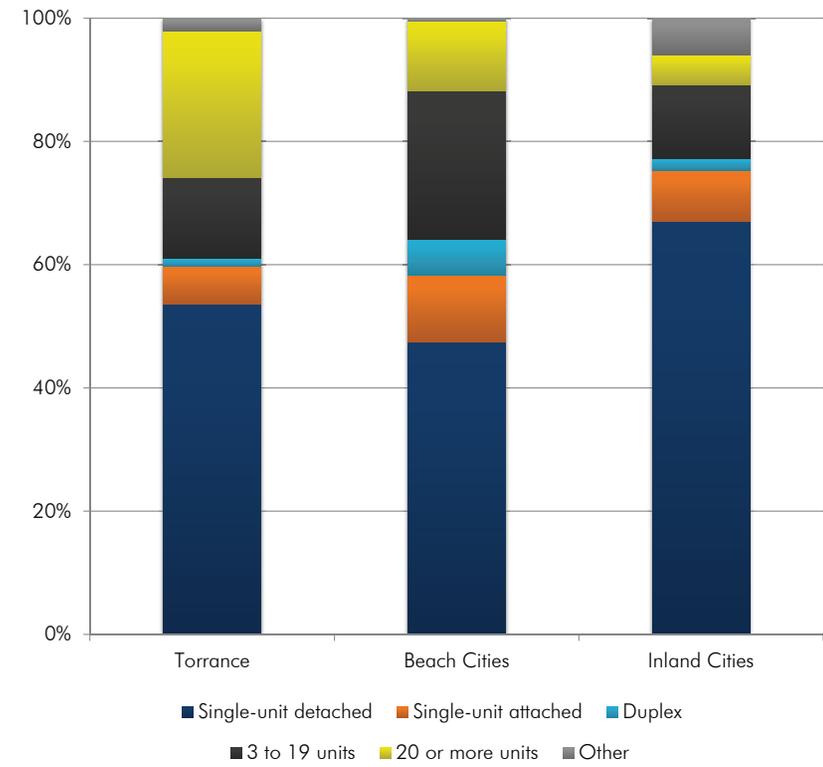
Torrance’s housing stock is characterized by established residential neighborhoods dating back to the 1920s. Given that Torrance has limited opportunities for new development, it’s especially important to recognize the profile and quality of the City’s existing housing stock and evaluate how it influences the community’s future. What types of houses are available? Who will be attracted to buying or renting a home in Torrance given the existing housing choices? If new residential development is possible, what types of home choices should the City consider?

### Housing Types

A mixture of housing types typically provides a range of amenities, responsibilities, and housing costs that serve a variety of incomes and lifestyles. The City of Torrance has approximately 58,500 housing units as of 2012. Because Torrance is largely built out, only 1,000 new housing units have been built since 2007. Compared to the region, Torrance has a more diverse selection of housing types. Approximately 54 percent of Torrance’s housing units are single-family detached, more than the Beach cities but less than the Inland cities. Torrance especially stands out from its peers when comparing the percentage of its housing units that are in structures of 20 units or more—25 percent of Torrance’s units are in structures with 20 or more units, compared to only 11 percent in Beach cities and 5 percent in Inland cities.



**FIGURE 05. Housing Types, Torrance and the Region, 2012**



Source: US Census, 2012



**Photos Above:** Many different housing types are made available in Torrance, giving residents different choices when deciding the best accommodations for their needs.

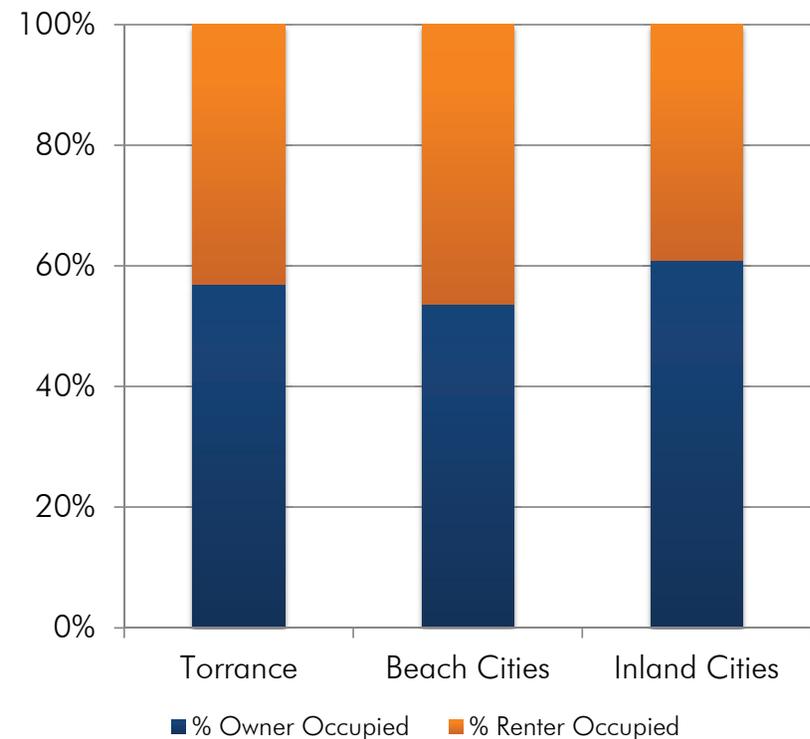
## Homeownership

Torrance experiences a relatively consistent rate of homeownership when compared to its peers, with 57 percent of its units owner occupied. Approximately 43 percent of the units in Torrance are renter occupied; rental units provide housing for new households not ready for homeownership, lower income households, newly relocated households, households uninterested in or unable to maintain a home, and households with credit difficulties that impede obtaining a mortgage. The homeownership rate in Torrance has increased by 2 percent since the mid-2000s. Affordable homes selling in the mid-\$400,000 to \$500,000 are available throughout Torrance, especially in the North and Central neighborhoods. The average home price in 2012 was approximately \$625,000, twice that of the Inland cities (average home price of \$300,000) but less than the Beach cities (average home price of over \$800,000). Torrance homes closest to Torrance Beach and Palos Verdes Estates and Rolling Hills Estate—generally referred to as the Hollywood Riviera and South Torrance neighborhoods—can easily sell for upwards of \$1 million.

## Residential Vacancy Rates

The housing vacancy rate measures how the supply of available housing meets the demand for different types of housing. Housing policy analyses usually consider reasonable vacancy rates to be 5 to 6 percent for rental units and 1.5 to 2 percent for ownership housing. These vacancy rates offer a variety of choices for residents, incentive for developers, and adequate price options for consumers. Like the surrounding area, Torrance's housing vacancy rate is very low, averaging 3.2 percent for rental vacancy and 1.3 percent for homeowner vacancy.

**FIGURE 06. Homeownership and Renter Rates, Torrance and the Region, 2012**



Source: US Census, 2012



**Photo Above:** Homeownership remains high in Torrance, with several beautiful and well populated neighborhoods in the city.

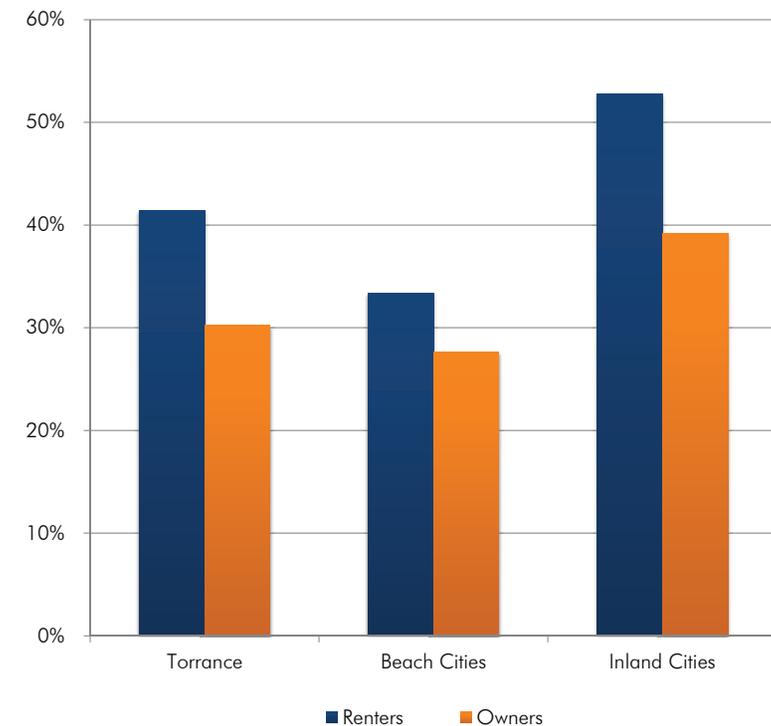
## Affordability

Overpayment refers to renters and homeowners who must pay more than 30 percent of their gross income for housing—30 to 49 percent is considered moderate overpayment, and 50 percent or more is severe overpayment. Housing costs for homeowners include mortgage payments, utilities, insurance, property taxes, and home association fees. Housing costs for renters include rent and utilities. From 2005 to 2012, the portion of Torrance homeowners overpaying decreased by 2.8 percent. The portion of renters overpaying in Torrance from 2005 to 2012 decreased by 3.6 percent. When comparing Torrance to surrounding cities in 2012, it's evident that the proportion of residents overpaying in Torrance is a bigger problem than in Beach cities but less of a problem than in Inland cities. Renters in all locations are more likely to overpay than homeowners.

## Age of Existing Housing Stock

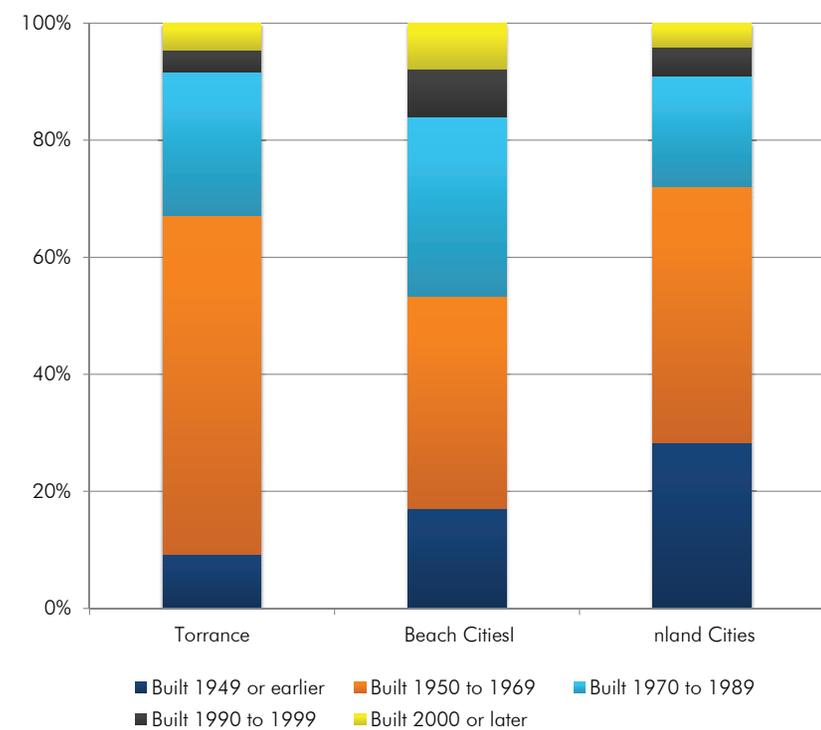
Well-maintained housing is a critical part of safe and healthy neighborhoods. Housing conditions also influence property values and the City's image. Homes generally begin to show age after 30 years and can require more significant maintenance and even extensive rehabilitation. Generally, homes built 50 or more years ago (unless well maintained) are more likely to require substantial repairs to meet current building codes. Torrance homes are generally older, with the majority of homes having been built between 1950 and 1969, and the fewest number of homes were built after 1990. Beach cities have more new homes than Torrance, and Inland cities have more older housing stock—homes built in 1949 or earlier.

**FIGURE 07. Overpayment, Torrance and the Region, 2012**



Source: US Census, 2012

**FIGURE 08. Age of Housing Units, Torrance and the Region, 2012**



Source: US Census, 2012



**Photo Above:** Pedestrian access is a large focus in Torrance's Hawthorne Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan.

## SPECIFIC PLANS

While a community's General Plan examines the entire City, specific plans provide customized direction for specific areas beyond what would ordinarily be permitted in the General Plan and municipal code. Customized road widths and parkway design, land use densities and intensities, landscape concepts, and amenities programs are all examples of topics that may receive special regulatory or design guidance in a specific plan.

Torrance adopted the Hawthorne Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan in 1996. The plan sought to maintain Hawthorne Boulevard as a regionally significant transportation and commercial corridor. The plan foresaw challenges in maintaining mobility while providing for growth, that is, sustaining and expanding the area's historic retail market in the face of a rapidly changing, competitive retail environment.

The plan focused on solutions to these challenges, including a greater reliance on public transportation and pedestrian activity, changes in building and site design, new street trees, median landscaping, public signage, and undergrounding of overhead utility lines. A financial strategy for funding these public improvements was also incorporated into the plan, with the intention of spurring private investment and promoting new development to enhance the appeal of Hawthorne Boulevard. Private property improvements were guided by regulations such as new zoning, land use and development standards, and design guidelines.

## TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

The availability and affordability of transportation options shape the way people navigate not only the physical environment, but the natural environment as well. Providing alternative modes of transportation can reduce the amount of traffic congestion and air pollution, encourage people to walk and bicycle, and improve the fitness and health of residents.

### HIGHWAYS

Torrance is directly linked to the greater Southern California region via I-405, which cuts diagonally across the northwest portion of the City and has interchanges at Western Avenue, Crenshaw Boulevard, and Artesia Boulevard. According to the Federal Highway Administration, the Los Angeles–Long Beach–Santa Ana section of I-405 had the highest average annual daily traffic (374,000) of all urban highways in the country in 2013. Highways 1 (Pacific Coast), 91 (Artesia Boulevard), and 213 (Western Avenue) also travel through Torrance and connect the community to destinations outside its borders.

### CORRIDORS

Torrance’s circulation system was established by land use decisions made in the early 1900s and shaped by the landscape design of Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. Over the years, the City’s gridlike street system became more permanent, and as a result, roadways are a dominant feature of the community. Currently, rights-of-way constitute the second largest land use in the City—17 percent or about 2,200 acres.

Torrance, like many established communities in the Los Angeles region, has become completely built out over the years, with few vacant properties remaining to accommodate new development. As a result, Torrance must look for opportunities to accommodate a greater mixture of uses in more compact locations. Corridors often provide these opportunities. Corridors are very accessible to the City’s transit and have the potential to accommodate new uses, serve adjacent single-family neighborhoods, and create demand for increased transit service. The revitalization of corridors through the appropriate introduction of uses can ultimately lead to a reduction in vehicle miles traveled.

Torrance has freeway interchanges at Crenshaw and Artesia Boulevards that provide regional access to the northern portion of the City and the community’s major employers. Torrance’s corridors offer an

opportunity to improve economic vitality, enhance the local sense of place, revitalize underutilized areas, increase safety and mobility, better serve community needs, and make key connections within corridors and to adjacent neighborhoods.

### GETTING AROUND TOWN

Torrance, like many communities in Southern California, is dependent on auto travel. Approximately 88 percent of Torrance’s working residents commute between home and work via automobile, including 8 percent who carpool. Because Torrance is a business-friendly city with diverse industries and numerous employers, a significant proportion of people who live in Torrance and in neighboring cities work in Torrance.

#### Torrance Transit

Torrance Transit, a regional transit service provider, provides local and regional bus service to people who live, work, and visit the City. With stops at major destinations—such as Del Amo Fashion Center, Torrance Civic Center, Madrona Marsh Preserve, and Downtown Torrance—Torrance Transit is a popular option for people who don’t have a car or want to leave their car at home. Three Torrance Transit routes provide local service within the City, and five routes provide Torrance residents and workers with regional connections to Los Angeles, Long Beach, the Metro Blue Line Artesia Station, and the Los Angeles International Airport. In addition to operating throughout the work week, most of these routes offer Saturday service and limited Sunday service.

According to the 2003 Los Angeles County Short Range Transit Plan, which focuses on the phasing of transportation improvements, recent improvements to Torrance Transit include service coordination improvements, facility modifications, ITS enhancements, and a universal fare system. The agency also plans on adding new bus technology, such as automated locators utilizing GPS technology, ETA service, rapid routes, new fare boxes, and SMART cards. By using new bus technology, Torrance Transit can provide residents with more efficient and convenient bus service.

Torrance Transit also offers specialized transit service for South Bay residents. The Torrance Community Transit Program provides taxi service to senior and disabled residents (Senior Taxi and Dial-A-Taxi), which conveniently picks up and takes them to locations throughout Torrance. This important service for senior and disabled residents has operated as an on-demand taxi service since October of 2004.



**Top Photos:** Public transportation gives residents in Torrance and its surrounding areas plenty of opportunities and options for mobile circulation.

### **Fixed-Route Regional Bus Service**

Metro offers a half-dozen local or limited-service fixed bus routes that connect Torrance to the greater Los Angeles region. In addition, two of Metro’s Rapid Lines (Routes 710 and 740) provide quick and efficient connections between Torrance and communities to the north. Beginning in Redondo Beach, Route 710 travels through Torrance along Redondo Boulevard, turns north on Crenshaw Boulevard, and continues north until Wilshire Avenue, where it turns east and terminates at Western Avenue. Route 740 begins in Torrance, travels north along Hawthorne Boulevard through Florence, Inglewood, and Crenshaw, where it meets up with the Metro Expo Line.

### **Commuter Rail and Light Rail**

Although Torrance is not currently served directly by intercity passenger rail or light rail, Torrance Transit does provide service to Union Station in Downtown Los Angeles, several Metro Green Line stations (the nearest station is at Marine Avenue in Redondo Beach), and the Harbor Gateway Transit Center. Metro’s long-range plans include two substantial light rail service expansions into the South Bay. In 2009, Metro began the process of conducting further environmental study of a proposed Green Line Extension from its current terminus in Redondo Beach to Torrance. Metro also approved a \$1.7 billion, 8.5-mile extension of the Crenshaw Line that connects the Exposition Line at Crenshaw and Exposition Boulevards to the Green Line at Aviation Boulevard. As part of the Crenshaw extension, Metro is projecting a Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) proposed “people mover” tram service to connect the Crenshaw line to Los Angeles International Airport terminals. If the future planned extension of the Green Line into Torrance, the Crenshaw Line expansion, and LAWA airport connection service are realized as planned, Torrance residents will be able to reach Los Angeles International Airport via light rail service.

## Active Transportation

The City of Torrance spans approximately 20 miles. Though the community is largely dependent on motorized transportation, the City continually looks for ways to improve opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle transportation.

Torrance's circulation plan prioritizes walkability, access, and connections between destinations. The City has developed sidewalks and paths that connect residential neighborhoods to public facilities, parks, schools, and major commercial areas in order to increase walkability and lessen reliance on the automobile. Torrance continues to make improvements to pedestrian corridors by improving lighting, safety, connections to transit, and the inclusion of facilities for disability access.

Bicycle travel is also greatly supported in Torrance because it is more cost-effective than driving and helps air quality. Biking in Torrance is a year-round activity because the City's weather and topography are very conducive to cycling. The City's Bicycle Master Plan establishes three bikeway classifications in Torrance:

- Class I Bikeway: Off-road routes along multiuse trails or obsolete rail lines, separate from streets.
- Class II Bike Lanes: On road routes along arterial roadways and delineated by painted stripes and other features.
- Class III Bike Routes: On-road routes that share use with pedestrian and motor vehicle traffic, with signs but no stripes.

The City is continually evaluating the implementation of all three bikeway classes and continues to seek funding for augmenting bikeway facilities and promoting commuting. Additionally, Metro has published a comprehensive guide for bicycle commuters and recreational bikers detailing 1,252 miles of bike paths, on-street bike lanes, and designated bike routes in Los Angeles County. In cooperation with the City's efforts to promote bicycle commuting, all Torrance Transit buses are equipped with bicycle racks.

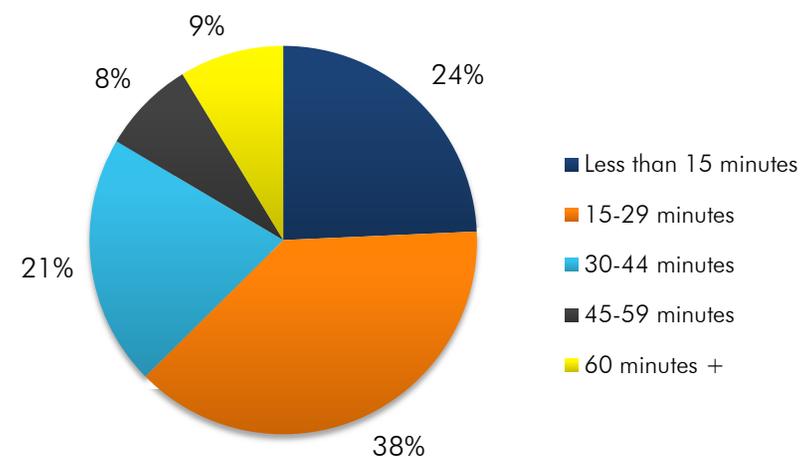
Throughout Torrance, the City has developed sidewalks and paths that connect residential neighborhoods to public facilities, parks, schools, and major commercial areas. The City will continue to develop and encourage facilities that enhance pedestrian access through and around the more congested areas of the City.

## COMMUTE TIMES

Travel time to work affects quality of life. Long commutes detract from the time one can spend with family and friends and can be unproductive time, especially for those commuting by single-occupancy vehicle. In 2012, most Torrance residents not working from home commuted between 15 and 29 minutes to work. A significant amount of the population, 24 percent, commuted less than 15 minutes. Luckily, only 9 percent of the working population commutes for more than 60 minutes.

In 2011, the highest proportion of people working in Torrance (21.5%) commute from the City of Los Angeles. However, significantly, 20% of the jobs in Torrance are held by Torrance residents. The next most popular places for Torrance workers to live are El Segundo (6.5%), Redondo Beach (3.9%), and Long Beach (3.7%). Similarly, Torrance residents are most likely to work in Los Angeles (18%) or Torrance (13%), followed by Long Beach (6%), Carson (4%), or Redondo Beach (3%). The figures on the following pages illustrate the commute pattern of people who work and live in Torrance.

**FIGURE 09. Average Commute Time, Torrance, 2012**

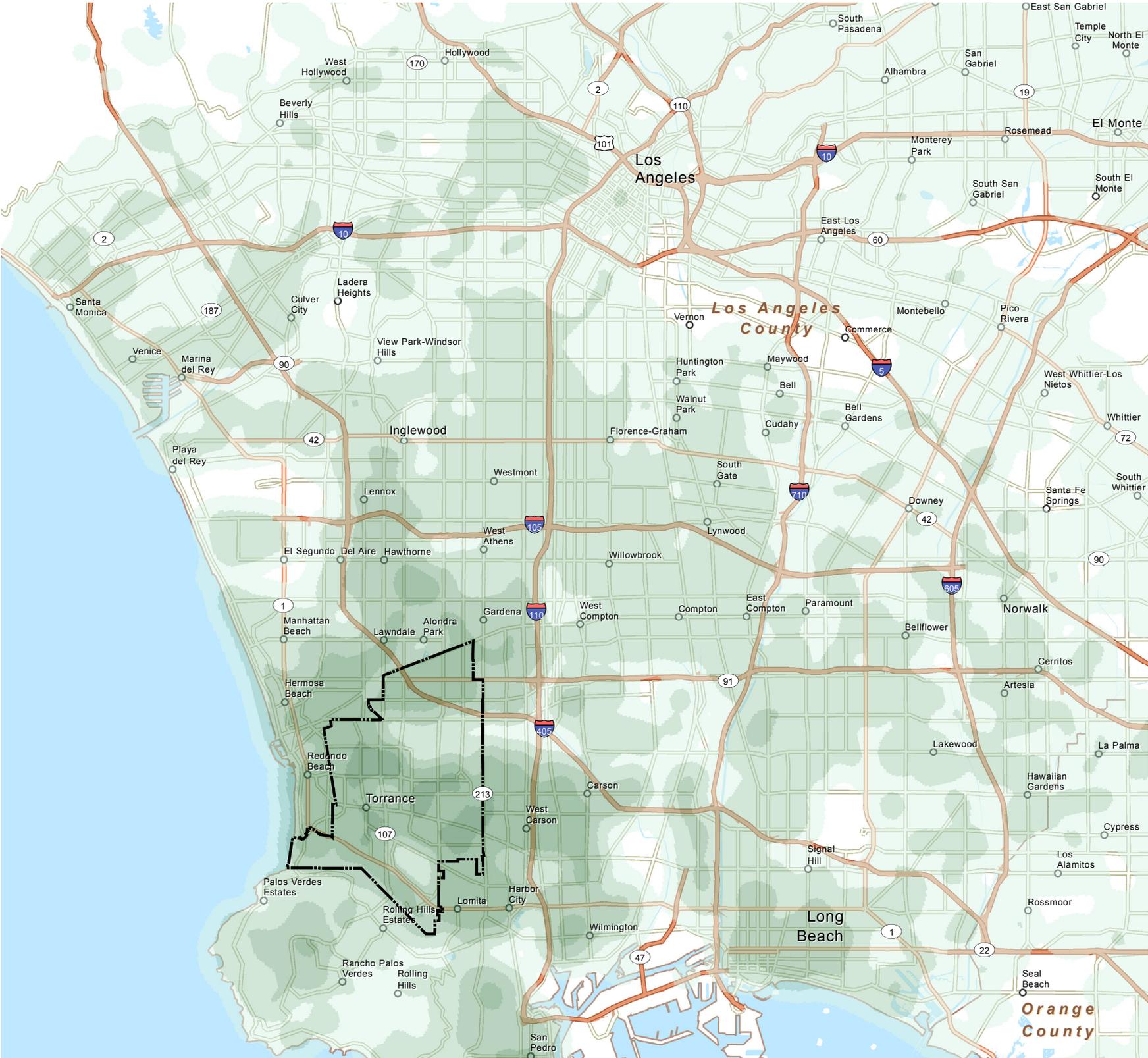


Source: US Census, 2012

## AIRPORTS

Torrance is home to a Zamperini Field, a two-runway, 500-acre general purpose aviation facility in the southern part of the City. Torrance's airport is used primarily for private aircraft, but it also has a variety of fixed base operators available for flight instruction, aircraft repair, and charter flights. The City has determined that the airport will not expand its services into commercial operations, but will continue its general aviation status. For commercial airline travel, Torrance residents can easily access Los Angeles International Airport, only 11 miles to the north, and Long Beach Airport, only 15 miles to the south.

FIGURE 10. Where Torrance Workers Live, 2011





# CULTURE AND RECREATION

## CULTURAL FACILITIES

Torrance is devoted to strengthening itself as a unique center for cultural programs, arts, and arts education. Torrance has two primary cultural facilities: The Torrance Cultural Arts Center (TCAC) and the Torrance Art Museum (TAM). The 85,000-square-foot (including outdoor plazas) TCAC houses meetings and banquet rooms, visual and performing arts studios, a 502-seat theatre, two spacious outdoor plazas, and a Japanese garden. General Services estimates 30,000 people use TCAC yearly. TAM is 9,000 square feet with 4,000 square feet of exhibition space. There are three separate galleries that change every two months for five exhibit cycles per year. The main exhibit hall showcases group shows, and Gallery 2 is used primarily for installation exhibits. The third gallery provides space exclusively for South Bay artists.

These facilities are housed under Torrance's Cultural Services Division, which also programs the Torrance Theater Company and sponsors the Torrance Civic Chorale. The division also provides hundreds of art classes, the Early Childhood Education Program, and special events like the Cherry Blossom Cultural Festival.

Torrance residents are also well positioned to access regional cultural facilities. The City of Los Angeles, with its innumerable cultural centers, theaters, concert halls, cinemas, community centers, and entertainment venues, is a short 20 miles away. Also nearby are the cultural facilities of Long Beach, Hawthorne, Carson, and Compton, among others.

**Right Photo:** Cultural facilities keep the arts celebrated in Torrance.





GEORGE NAKANO  
THEATRE

ORRANCE CULTURAL ARTS CENTER  
3330

## RECREATION FACILITIES

The City of Torrance has over 40 distinct parks and recreation facilities, ranging from small miniparks of less than an acre to regional parks like Columbia Park at 52 acres.

The City has six miniparks that serve the needs of the residents living immediately around the facility. Typically, these parks are less than an acre and have amenities like barbecues, picnic areas, or children’s play equipment. These miniparks are supported by 14 neighborhood parks, which are typically less than 10 acres and offer additional amenities, such as sports courts. Community parks meet the City’s recreation needs for more formal and highly programmed activities. Amenities include lighted sports fields, gymnasiums, art venues, and community meeting facilities. Torrance has nine community parks that cover 70 acres, including El Nido Park, McMaster Park, and Walteria Park.

Regional parks serve a larger area than their immediate neighborhood and are usually more than 40 acres. Amenities at regional parks can be similar to those at community parks, but at a larger scale that typically attracts users from a wider area. Torrance has two significant regional parks—Columbia Park and Charles H. Wilson Park.

Columbia Park provides 52 acres of active recreation and open space to residents of Torrance and the region and is Torrance’s largest public park. In addition to its four lighted soccer fields used regularly by AYSO and a youth baseball field used by North

Torrance Little League, the park has Bocce Ball courts, children’s play equipment, an amphitheater with small stage, and wide open grass areas for gatherings and recreation. Columbia Park is also home to a community garden with 125 individual plots, where residents can grow food and decorative plants; a sculpture titled “Fujimahara”; a 1955 Mack Ladder Fire Engine Truck; and a cherry grove of 110 trees planted between 2001 and 2009. These cherry trees provide the backdrop of the City’s annual Cherry Blossom Festival.

Charles H. Wilson Park, at 44 acres, is Torrance’s second largest public recreation area. The facility features picnic areas, barbecues, an outdoor amphitheater, a universally accessible treehouse, and a one-mile fitness course. It’s also home to a variety of sports facilities, including softball diamonds; basketball, volleyball, tennis, and horseshoe courts; a roller hockey rink; batting cages; and an indoor sports center. The Torrance Certified Farmers Market (held twice a week), the Halloween Carnival, and Arts and Crafts Boutiques are held at Charles H. Wilson Park.

Torrance also has a variety of special use areas that provide specific recreation facilities, such as tennis courts and pools. Torrance has nine special use areas that cover a total of 84 acres, ranging from small public squares like the John F. Kennedy and Keller Memorial Squares, to the Las Canchas Tennis Facility, Madrona Marsh Nature Center and Preserve, Sea-Aire Park and Golf Course, and Torrance Beach.



Top and Right Photos: Recreational facilities are put to good use by all ages.



CITY OF TORRANCE  
COLUMBIA PARK  
4045 190 TH STREET

## JOINT-USE FACILITIES

Public school facilities in the City offer additional places where residents can enjoy outdoor recreation. The City of Torrance and the Torrance Unified School District (TUSD) have a reciprocal agreement that allows the City to use TUSD facilities for community recreation and allows TUSD to use City facilities that may not be available on school campuses. School grounds in the City encompass over 250 acres of recreational land.

## MADRONA MARSH NATURE CENTER AND PRESERVE

The 44-acre Madrona Marsh is a remnant of the last natural vernal wetland in Los Angeles County. The marsh itself houses over 110 species of plants, over 65 families of insects, 2 amphibian species, 3 species of reptiles, 4 mammal species, and 160 types of birds. The City owns and operates the 8,000-square-foot Madrona Marsh Nature Center, which hosts educational, art, and science programs.

## TORRANCE BEACH

Torrance Beach occupies one mile of coastline between the Palos Verdes Peninsula and Redondo Beach on the Santa Monica Bay. It is managed by the Los Angeles County Department of Beaches and Harbors and provides 20 acres of recreation open space. Beach area improvements include five public access paths (including handicapped), public restrooms, a snack bar, sand volleyball courts, and bike paths. Lifeguards are on the beach during daylight hours year-round.

## HISTORIC RESOURCES

Torrance is fortunate to have residents with a keen interest in documenting and preserving the City's history. In 2009, a Cultural and Historical Resources Report for the City of Torrance was prepared by McKenna et al. for the City's General Plan Update/Environmental Impact Report effort. The report describes Torrance as a relatively new city within Southern California, incorporated in 1921 as Los Angeles County's 36th city. Some of its neighbors were already incorporated by that time (for example, Compton in 1888, Redondo Beach in 1892, and Hermosa Beach in 1907); others followed Torrance's lead (Hawthorne in 1922, and Carson not until 1968). The earliest development in Torrance centered in the area bounded by Crenshaw Boulevard, Western Avenue, 190th Street, and Sepulveda Boulevard, and around the Hollywood Riviera area.

Structures in Torrance listed on the National Register of Historic Places include Torrance High School, the Southern Pacific Railroad Bridge, and Fern Avenue School. Furthermore, since 1983, the Torrance Historical Society Landmark Plaque Program has been placing bronze plaques on Torrance landmarks that merit recognition; 14 plaques have been placed to date.

The City continues to encourage historic preservation efforts and public interest in Torrance's history and architectural heritage. For example, Torrance is creating a voluntary historic preservation ordinance that takes advantage of the Mills Act property tax abatement program. The Mills Act program allows the property owner of a qualified historic property to receive property tax relief as long as they maintain and/or restore their property in a manner prescribed by the City.

**Left Photo:** Torrance enjoys the California coast line with 1 mile of beach within city boundaries.







# Our Environment

In this chapter:

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

INFRASTRUCTURE

## NATURAL RESOURCES

The City of Torrance rests in the southwest portion of Los Angeles County, known as the South Bay. Consisting of 12,312 acres of mostly built-out and urbanized land, Torrance is the largest city in the South Bay and is bordered by Gardena and Lawndale to the north, Rolling Hills Estates and Palos Verdes Estates to the south, Carson to the east, and Redondo Beach to the west. A small portion of Torrance borders the Pacific Ocean creating a municipal beach.

According to the City's General Plan Update in 2009, nearly 88 percent of the City is built-out, with 12 percent (or 1,254 acres) of land for Open Space, which also includes land for public schools, parks, government, police and fire stations, libraries, and water treatment facilities. Despite its urbanized character, the City regards its natural environment as a vital infrastructure for promoting a sustainable community identify with a high quality of life. As such, the City maintains a 20-acre municipal beach, well-maintained recreational parks and passive open spaces, a vast number mature trees along road network and major corridors, and remaining vernal wetlands that are synonymous with the Los Angeles County region. This chapter explores the individual natural elements found in the City including wildlife habitats, hillsides and natural vistas, water and air quality resources, and the integrated conservation and waste management systems that protect and balance the historical and ecological character of Torrance.

### FARMLAND

Today, the City of Torrance is largely built-out with no farmlands remaining, but historically, farmlands were a central function of the land from the late 1700s to the early 1900s, when modern-day Torrance was part of Rancho San Pedro. When the City was founded by Jared Sydney Torrance in 1912, it was deemed an industrial city in a burgeoning Los Angeles region, and by the 1950s, farmland uses ceased as Torrance developed into an urbanized suburb. In 2009, the City's General Plan Update and Environmental Impact Report confirmed this finding, stating future development would have no significant impact on farmlands.

### WILDLIFE HABITAT

Due to Torrance's level of urbanization, there are significantly fewer remnants of wildlife habitat in the city as compared to surrounding regions. Nonetheless, Torrance is home to the Madrona Marsh Preserve, 44 acres of wetlands, and an 8,000 square-foot Nature Center. According to the 2009 Environmental Impact Report, the City of Torrance has 110 species of plants, 64 families of insects, 2 amphibian species, 3 species of reptiles, over 4 mammal species, and 160 types of birds. However, in recent studies by T. Drake (2005) and Cooper Ecological Monitoring/BioVeyda (2010), ecologist re-examined all plant species in the Madrona Marsh Preserve and found over 180 different species, of which 66 were found to be "new" for the site. Additionally, ecologist determined many irregular and vagrant species, especially birds, increase the numbers found above. Species are also increased through the introduction new species, including the release of several adult western toads in December 2010, 3 species of lizards from 2006 to 2008, and new confirmation of various fox and mouse species.

Madrona Marsh includes four habitat associations: vernal marsh, vernal pool, alkaline margin, and back dune system. The Marsh hosts educational, art and science programs for residents and visitors of all ages, and has been The Audubon Society's site for the annual bird census since 1967.

Several partnerships are facilitated in Torrance to support wildlife, with organizations and agencies such as: the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Metropolitan Water District, Torrance Unified School District, El Camino College, Exxon/Mobil, Los Angeles County Natural History Museum, California Native Plant Society, and Friends of Madrona Marsh.

### HILLSIDES

The City of Torrance is almost entirely flat with few hillsides; however, small hillsides along the City's western and southern edge provide scenic vistas over the City's flat topography. On a clear day, visitors have viewpoints to the San Gabriel Mountains, approximately 30 miles to the north. Additionally, western-facing slopes in the City's Hollywood Rivera neighborhood provide panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean.

**Right Photo:** While the majority of Torrance is built out, open space is still appreciated in the city.



## AIR QUALITY

Historically, the Los Angeles region is regarded as one of the largest metropolitan areas with poor air quality and greenhouse gas emission levels. This is due to Los Angeles' growing urbanized population, increasing automobile use, and as the largest industrial and manufacturing region in the US. Despite, poorer air quality in the majority of Los Angeles County cities, the City of Torrance experiences cleaner air quality based on its location, coastal winds and overall flat topography.

The City of Torrance is located in the South Coast Air Basin (SoCAB), and managed by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCQMD), which has the authority to evaluate and enforce pollution controls and legislation to lower direct and indirect emissions and achieve air quality standards at the state and federal level. Critical to SCQMD's power is California Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), the Global Warming Solutions Act, passed on August 31, 2006, to reduce the levels of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020, and by 80 percent of 1990 levels by year 2050.

The following greenhouse gases are prioritized for reductions in the City's General Plan:

- Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), a colorless gas with a sharp odor, is a highly reactive form of oxygen. High concentrations of O<sub>3</sub> exist naturally in the stratosphere and help filter out potentially damaging ultraviolet radiation. While beneficial in the stratosphere, O<sub>3</sub> can adversely impact plant and animal life through its reaction with organic materials.
- Nitrous Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), a reddish-brown gas with a bleach-like odor, gives polluted urban air its brownish color. NO<sub>2</sub> is a respiratory irritant which, when exposed to sunlight, reacts to form nitric oxide (NO). Through a series of other chemical reactions, the remaining oxygen atom can create ozone.
- Particulate Matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>) consists of small particles, 10 and 2.5 microns or less, respectively, suspended in the air. Formed by chemical reactions, soil erosion, abrasion, or by fuel combustion, these particles can accumulate in the respiratory system and contribute directly to asthma, bronchitis, and other lung diseases.
- Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, relatively inert gas. Produced by both natural and human activities, CO is directly emitted into the air, not formed in the atmosphere by chemical reactions. In urban areas, the combustion of carbon based fuels such as gasoline represents the major source of CO. SCAQMD calculated that mobile sources generated 98% of CO emissions into the basin's atmosphere in 2000.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

### RECYCLED WATER

To reduce its reliance on imported water supplies and guard against Metropolitan's projected rate increases, the City's 2010 Urban Water Management Plan outlines Ordinance 3392 to use locally recycled water for nonpotable purposes. The city retails recycled water produced at the West Basin Water Recycling Plant in El Segundo, which is owned and managed by the West Basin Municipal Water District (WBMWD). The WBMWD Master Plan was updated in 2009, and it owns, operates, and maintains all the recycled water mains and laterals in Torrance.

Recycled water comprises approximately 23% of the water supply for the City of Torrance, with Exxon/Mobil and Toyota as the City's largest users. Recognizing the need for greater recycled water efforts in 2004 and 2005, the WBMWD expanded its Edward C. Little Water Recycling Facility to provide more than 8 billion gallons of recycled water to the South Bay region. The project was awarded the Water Reuse Association's Project of the Year award in 2005 and increased its recycled capacity by more than 10 million gallons per day. Today, WBMWD has three facilities that process five levels of recycled water including: 1) Disinfected Tertiary Water, 2) Nitrified Water, 3) Softened Reverse Osmosis Water, 4) Pure Reverse Osmosis, and 5) Ultra-Pure Reverse Osmosis Water.

In 2007, the WBMWD constructed the Madrona Lateral, a \$9 million project consisting of 20,000 feet of transmission pipeline to provide recycled water throughout sites in Torrance, including Charles Wilson Park, Madrona Middle School, and terminating at the American Honda Campus. The project is part of the larger Harbor/South Bay Water Recycling Project campaign.

Other sources include groundwater and desalinated groundwater. Torrance's water supply is largely provided by the Metropolitan Water District and is sourced by the Colorado River Basin, the Los Angeles Basin, and Bay Delta. In recent years, a judicial order to protect the endangered Delta smelt restricted one-third the amount of water removed from the state's two largest water delivery systems, which may have significant implications for consumers in Torrance. Torrance Municipal Water (TMW) serves approximately 110,000 residents and business customers, delivering over 9.8 billion gallons of potable and recycled water supplies each year.

## DESALINATION

Desalination refers to the process in which salt and other minerals are removed from water, therefore providing water suitable for human consumption or irrigation. In Torrance, the majority desalinated water is processed at the Robert W. Goldsworthy Groundwater Desalter, owned by the Water Replenishment District of Southern California (WRD). Once purchased, desalinated water management and supply is operated by TMW. Altogether, the Goldsworthy facility provides up to 10 percent of Torrance's water supply (2.5 million gallons), with room for expansion.

Supplementing the Goldsworthy supply, Torrance sources desalinated water from the West Basin Municipal Water District (WBMWD), which receives secondary effluent, treated to Title 22 standards, from the City of Los Angeles Hyperion Wastewater Treatment Plant. Lastly, a small portion of Torrance's oceanfront properties are serviced by the California Water Service Company (CWS); because of land use restrictions and other community priorities, Torrance is unable to build an oceanfront facility within its City boundaries.

Currently, the WBMWD facility is a temporary ocean-water desalination facility located in Redondo Beach. WBMWD anticipates building a full-scale facility with the capacity to produce 20 million gallons per day for 40,000 South Bay households. This facility will be supplemented by a TMWD business plan to address water resource and infrastructure needs in Torrance over the next 20 years, and is expecting to increase its amount of groundwater obtained from wells throughout year 2030 with the use of additional wells in North Torrance. The plan aims to reduce current dependence on imported water supplies, hoping to reduce imported water supplies from 70% of total demand to less than 40% over the next 5 years. In order to do so, Torrance will be constructing more groundwater wells, increasing the use of recycled water, and expanding a groundwater desalination facility.

## WASTEWATER

In Torrance, there are a few public agencies responsible for wastewater management. Torrance's Public Works Department maintains local sewer and storm drainage systems, and the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County (LACSD) collects and treats wastewater for the county. Torrance is in Sanitation Districts No. 5 and 30, with the Joint Water Pollution Control Plant (JWPCP) being the nearest wastewater treatment facility in Carson. This 220-acre JWPCP is one of the largest wastewater treatment facilities in the world, and provides primary and secondary treatment for about 320 million gallons of wastewater per day (MGD), with a capacity up to 385 MGD, and peak flow of 540 MGD. The wastewater is treated and discharged approximately 200 feet below sea level and two miles offshore from White Point on the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

About five million gallons of this water is reused for irrigation purposes, and the remainder is disinfected and discharged into the Pacific Ocean. The Public Works Department of the City of Torrance maintains 340 miles of wastewater lines and 9 sewer lift stations, and is responsible for cleaning all its City-owned sewers annually. Torrance also implements a sewer spill procedure, which contains and recovers spills and therefore reduces environmental impacts of spills.

## CONSERVATION

The City of Torrance makes a valiant effort in conserving its resources and preserving the natural environment. The City hosts a robust and consumer-friendly recycling program targeting household waste, used oil, green waste, stormwater pollution and pharmaceuticals. TMW also offers programs to provide residents with rebates for the installation of ultra-low-flow toilets and free low-flow showerheads.

The City of Torrance also runs an urban street tree system, which has maintained approximately 100,000 trees since the early 1990s – including approximately 140 landscaped medians. Torrance also passed a street tree policy in 2001 which designates areas for conservation. In addition, the City continues to train its maintenance crew members under the Water Replenishment District's Eco Pro 20 x 2020 Program, a four-course gardening and landscaping program targeted to meet the State's AB 1881 Water Efficient Model Landscape Ordinance.

Recently, in March 2014, the Torrance City Council responded to the growing draught in Southern California by approving restrictions that ban daytime outdoor watering, approximately 40 percent of all residential water uses in Torrance. This is the first ban since 2009.

On a regional level, Torrance is home to the South Bay Energy Savings Center (SBESC), a joint powers authority of 16 South Bay cities and the County of Los Angeles focusing on conservation efforts that promote a higher quality of life. Together the cities partner to improve energy efficiency, water conservation and environmental information, delivering workshops, materials and outreach programs and projects for our cities, school districts and other public agencies. Specific to Torrance, in recent years SBESC's South Bay Energy Rewards program paid over \$165,000 in rebates for 51 buildings in Torrance, with a projected savings of over \$200,000.



## SOLID WASTE

Since 1989, California law requires all cities and counties create or contract out solid waste diversion and recycling programs (AB 939) in order to decrease dependence on landfills and to provide more environmentally and costs effects solid waste disposal methods. As such, the City of Torrance provides the collection and proper disposal for the majority of City residents under its General Plan (43.2.2, amended by O-1437; O-3527). However, the City lacks the capacity to provide all businesses, industries and some residences with municipal waste collection and disposal; therefore, a list of private contractors and vendors is provided to those parties. In total, 51,000 tons of solid waste is collected by the City, and approximately 199,000 tons are picked up by private haulers

The City of Torrance is a member of the Los Angeles Regional Agency (LARA), with the mission of diverting as much solid waste as possible to recycling facilities. In 2008, LARA members collectively diverted an approximate 67 percent of their solid waste to recycling facilities. The city provides recycling efforts at residential curbsides for single-family and duplex homes, elementary and middle schools, and by providing recycling containers at city parks and special events. Moreover, a green waste recycling program was started in June 2007, to prevent green waste from entering landfills. The City maintains plans to continue expanding this program as possible.

**Top Right Photo:** Torrance holds preservation as a top priority.

## ELECTRICITY

Southern California Edison (SCE) provides all electrical services and maintenance in Torrance. In recent 2009, SCE's peak demand has grown by 6% annually to approximately 3.1 million gigawatt hours (Gwh) per year, resulting in 5% annual rate increases to residents. At this pace the City anticipates an 8.0 million Gwh per year increase in demand. To meet the projected demand, SCE initiated a five-year, \$17.3 billion capital improvement program to expand its infrastructure and replace older facilities with more efficient systems. In 2012, responding to complaints of the rate increases, Southern California Edison agreed to a 3-year \$655,000 reduction in the operations and maintenance cost of street lighting; in turn, the savings will be used to replace obsolete lights and improve the electrical infrastructure of the City. At the state level, investor-owned utilities like SCE were required to generate a minimum of 20% of their total electricity from renewable energy sources by 2010.

In order to achieve higher electrical efficiency, several organizations have formed in partnership with the City of Torrance including: 1) Small Business Energy Alliance, a collection of business leaders dedicated to implementing office-centric strategies to reduce energy consumption, and 2) South Bay Energy Leader Partnership, a branch of the Statewide Energy Efficiency Collaborative providing free education, resources and networking to improve electrical efficiency. Some of the City's recent efforts include installing electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, and private solar companies can also be found operating in the City.



Photo Above: Sustainability is increased in Torrance with the practice of green buildings.

## NATURAL GAS

The Southern California Gas Company (SCGC) is a public entity under the jurisdiction of the Public Utilities Commission and provides natural gas service to Torrance's citizens and businesses based on availability of gas services and regulatory policies. Projected growth in the General Plan will likely require additional natural gas services and facilities in the City over the next twenty years. Future facilities are not yet planned.

## GREEN BUILDING

Green buildings are one example of how the impacts of climate change can be mitigated. Green building, also known as green construction or sustainable building, involves creating structures and using processes that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a building's life-cycle: from siting to design, construction, operation, maintenance, renovation, and deconstruction. Green buildings are generally designed to reduce the overall impact of the built environment on the natural environment by efficiently using energy, water, and other resources; protecting occupant health and improving productivity; and reducing waste, pollution and environmental degradation.

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) is a non-profit trade organization that promotes sustainability in how buildings are designed, built and operated. The USGBC manages the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building certification system, the leading program for rating the design, construction and operation of green buildings.

Torrance is home to 14 LEED certified projects, designated by the U.S. Green Building Council. These projects include:

- Kohl's Torrance
- Torrance Crossroads
- Partner Engineering Offices
- Pacific Audi, California Cartage – PUMA Torrance Building
- Xebec Commerce Center
- Torrance Toyota
- Wells Fargo PCH & Anza
- Scott Robinson Honda New Showroom
- PLCOM – Medical Office Building, Sansei Center
- Xebec Commerce Center
- Miyako Hybrid Hotel
- American Honda's Acura Design Studio at 100 Torrance Blvd





# Our Economy

In this chapter:

STRUCTURE OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

LABOR FORCE

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE



Left Photos: Torrance holds jobs creation as a top priority.

## STRUCTURE OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

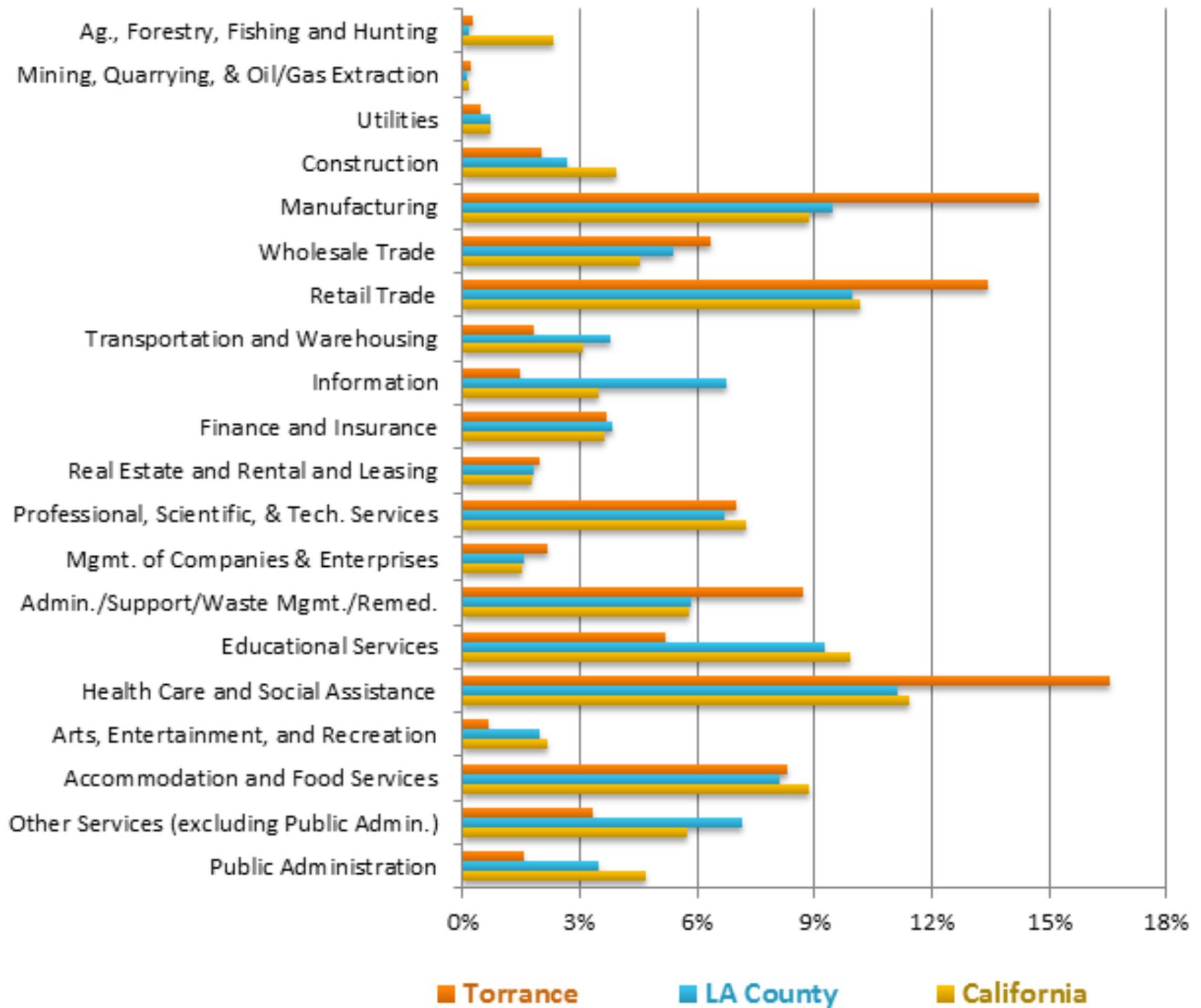
This section explores the local economy in Torrance. The term “local economy,” however, is a bit of a misnomer. The term actually refers to Torrance’s share of and position in the regional economy. There is no local economy functioning separately from the regional economy.

Nevertheless, local policies shape the environment that helps determine what parts of the regional economy Torrance captures and how well it competes for investment within the region. Therefore, the chapter analyzes various measures that indicate how well Torrance competes and identifies ways the local economy could work better for the community.

To understand the structure of a local economy, economists most often look at the number of jobs in each of the major economic sectors. Comparing the structure of the local economy to that of the region, state, or nation shows where the local economy specializes and exports and where it needs to import. Figure 12 shows each economic sector’s share of total employment in Torrance, Los Angeles County, and California. The data are averages for 2009 to 2011, the most recent years for which data are available.

As the chart makes clear, in several of the region’s most important economic sectors, Torrance has an even higher proportion of regional jobs. These sectors include: manufacturing; retail sales; and health and social services. In other important regional sectors, however, Torrance has lower percentages of its jobs. These sectors include: educational services; other services; and information (which includes publishing, music and movies, software, and the Internet). The remainder of this section looks at major groups of economic sectors to provide a more detailed view.

**FIGURE 12. Employment by Economic Sector as a Share of Total Employment, Torrance, LA County, and California, Average for 2009 to 2011**

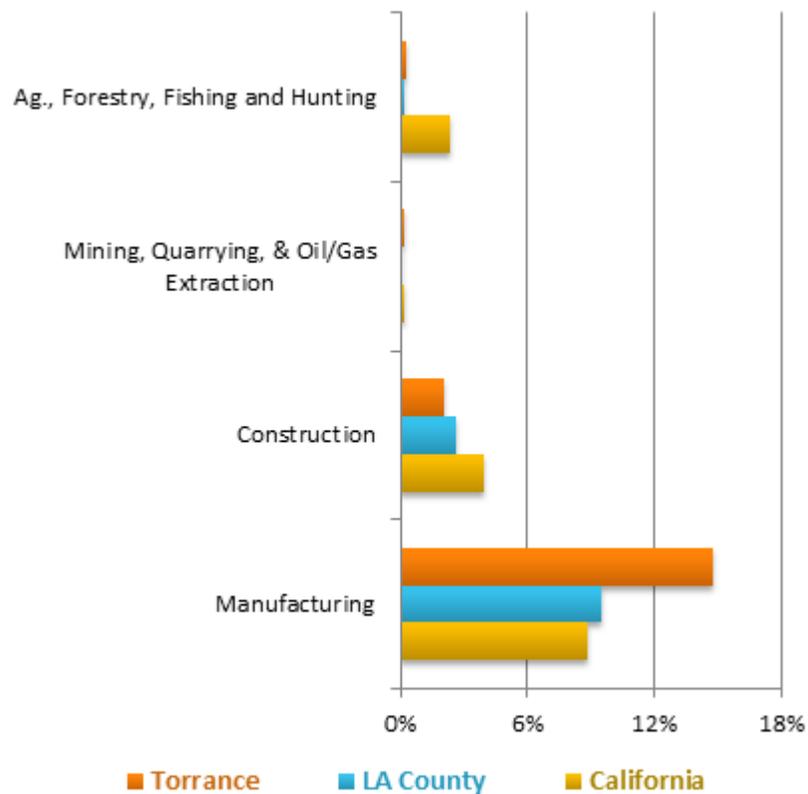


Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the US Census Bureau's Local Employment Dynamics Program

## GOODS-PRODUCING SECTORS

This group of sectors produces goods from the commodity stage through finished product. The group includes: agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction; construction; and manufacturing. These sectors account for a higher percentage of total jobs in Torrance (17.3 percent) than they do in the county (12.4 percent) and the state (15.3 percent). Though the City has a slightly lower percentage of jobs in the construction sector, it has a significantly higher share of jobs in the manufacturing sector (14.7 percent) than do the county (9.5 percent) and the state (8.9 percent). This is significant because the Los Angeles metropolitan area (LA and Orange counties) has the highest number of manufacturing jobs in the United States and produces the highest value of manufactured goods of any metro area. Torrance is a major player in this important part of the regional economy.

**FIGURE 13. Employment in Goods-Producing Sectors as a Share of Total Employment, Torrance, LA County, and California, Average for 2009 to 2011**



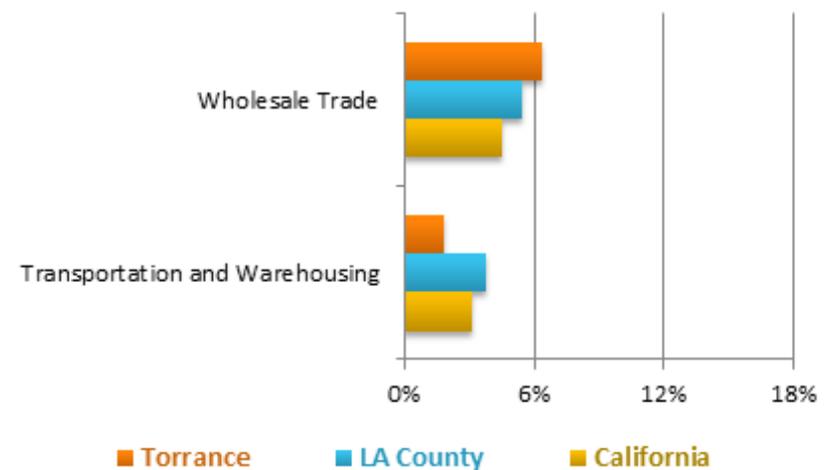
Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the US Census Bureau's Local Employment Dynamics Program.

## TRANSPORTATION AND DISTRIBUTION SECTORS

This group of sectors focuses primarily on moving commodities and manufactured goods through the manufacturing process, distributing them across the country, and delivering them to the final point of sale or delivery to customers. The group includes: transportation and warehousing; and wholesale trade. With the largest port complex in the nation, LA County has a higher percentage of jobs in this group of sectors (9.2 percent) than does Torrance (8.2 percent) and the state as a whole (7.6 percent).

Although Torrance is close to the ports, warehousing and distribution is less important in the city than in the region, mostly because warehousing has moved to larger and larger facilities, especially in the Inland Empire. Torrance does, however, fill a particular niche, with more jobs in wholesale trade. Wholesale trade is typically the final stage in the distribution process, and many goods get transported from Torrance to stores throughout Southern California.

**FIGURE 14. Employment in Transportation and Distribution Sectors as a Share of Total Employment, Torrance, LA County, and California, Average for 2009 to 2011**



Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the US Census Bureau's Local Employment Dynamics Program.

## KNOWLEDGE-BASED SECTORS

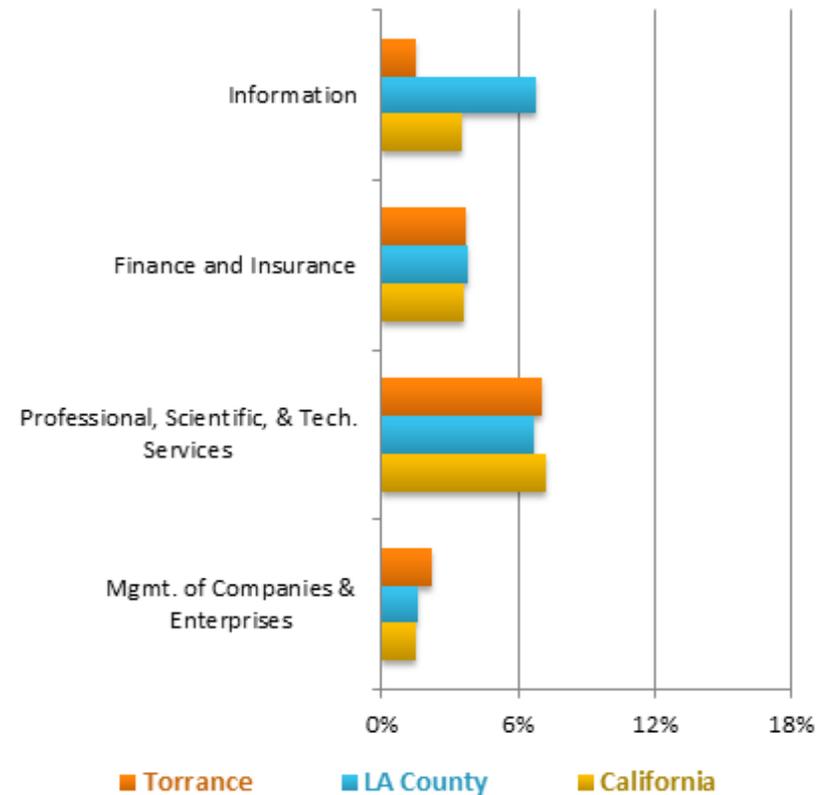
This group of sectors predominantly provides services to businesses and many of the jobs require college degrees—more often than in other sectors. The group includes: information; finance and insurance; professional, scientific, and technical services; and management of companies and enterprises. Because the information sector includes the production of movies and music (as well as software and the Internet) it is more important in the regional economy, providing 18.8 percent of the total jobs. It is important, but not quite as important, in Torrance (14.4 percent of jobs) and in the state (15.9 percent of the jobs). With the exception of the information sector, Torrance has roughly the same proportion of jobs in these sectors as the county and state.

One should note that the classification of jobs is based on the primary activity at each facility, such as an office building or factory, rather than the primary product the business produces. Thus, the higher percentage of Torrance jobs in management of companies reflects, in part, the corporate activities of Honda and Toyota in the city. With Toyota moving much of its Torrance workforce to Texas, the percentage of jobs in the management of companies sector may well decline to below the percentages for the county and state.

## EDUCATIONAL AND MEDICAL SERVICES

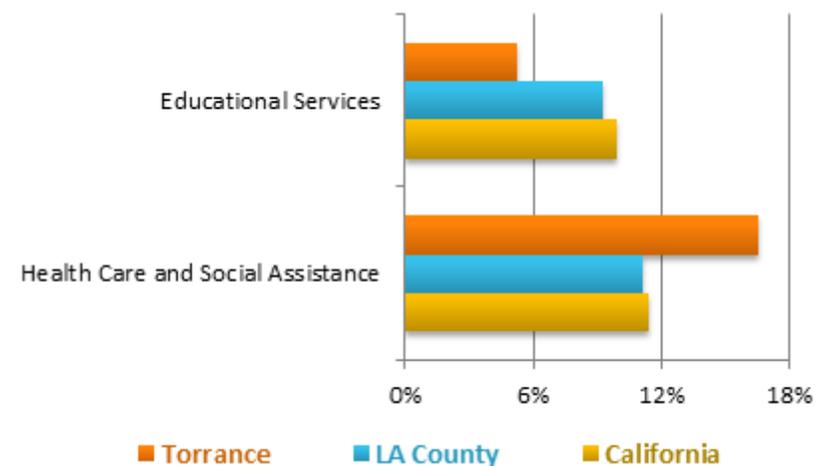
This group of sectors includes the educational services sector (public and private) and the health and social services sector. Generally, this group is about as important in Torrance, providing 21.9 percent of all jobs, as it is in the county (20.4 percent of jobs) and the state (21.3 percent of jobs). But as shown in Figure 16, the health care side is a much larger part of the local economy than is the education side. Indeed, health care and social services is the largest sector in the Torrance economy, accounting for 16.6 percent, or 1 out of every 6 jobs in the City.

**FIGURE 15. Employment in Knowledge-Based Sectors as a Share of Total Employment, Torrance, LA County, and California, Average for 2009 to 2011**



Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the US Census Bureau's Local Employment Dynamics Program.

**FIGURE 16. Employment in Educational and Medical Services Sectors as a Share of Total Employment, Torrance, LA County, and California, Average for 2009 to 2011**



Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the US Census Bureau's Local Employment Dynamics Program.

## LOCAL-SERVING SECTORS

The local serving sectors primarily sell goods and services to those living or working in the same community. The group includes: retail trade; real estate and rental and leasing; arts, entertainment, and recreation; accommodation and food services; and other services, excluding public administration. These sectors provide about the same share of total jobs in Torrance (27.7 percent) as in the county (29.1 percent) and the state (28.8 percent).

Retail trade, however, is the third largest sector in the local economy, providing about one-third more jobs locally than at the county and state levels. And it provides about twice as many jobs per households in Torrance (0.24 retail jobs per household) as in the county (0.13 jobs per household) and the state (0.12 jobs per household). Torrance provides a full spectrum of retail businesses and attracts consumers and consumer spending from neighboring cities. Retail sales is further explored in a subsequent section.

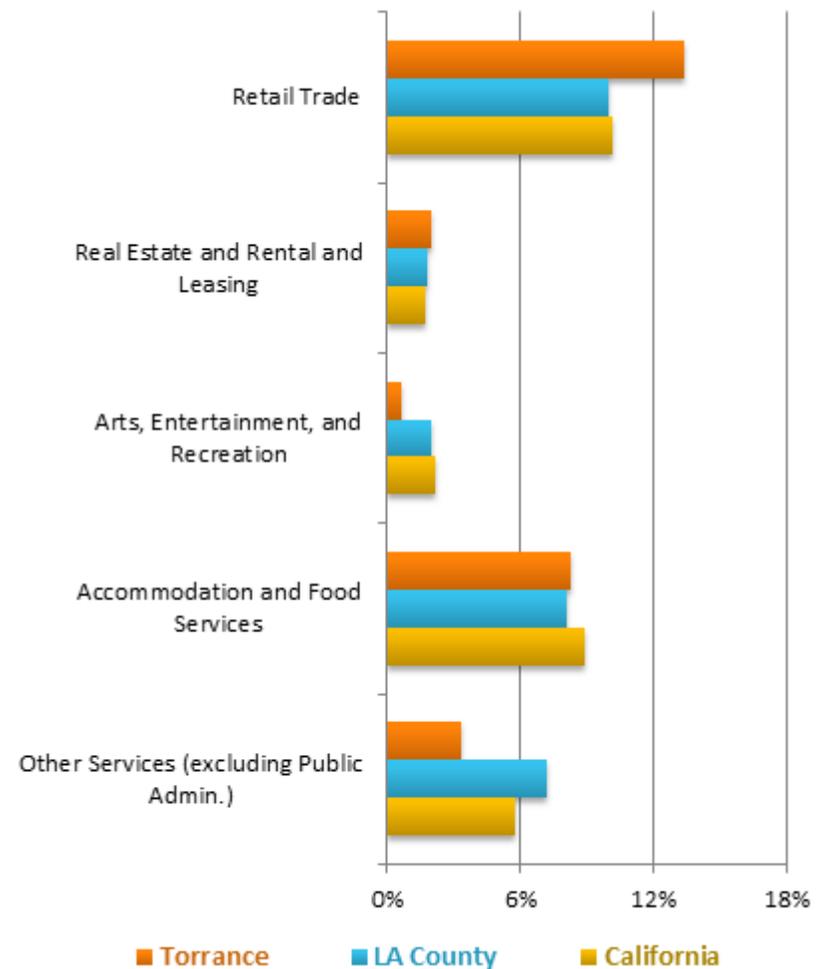
In contrast, Torrance has a smaller share of its total jobs in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector and in the other services sector than the county and state economies have. It's not exactly clear why Torrance should have a smaller share of jobs in art, entertainment, and recreation. Its share is also smaller than in the beach cities, but larger than in the inland cities. A similar patterns emerges for other services, although this sector includes the employment of household domestic service.

## MISCELLANEOUS SECTORS

In the other, miscellaneous sectors, Torrance has about the same share of its total jobs as do the county and state. The city does have a higher percentage of jobs in the administration and support, and waste management and remediation sector, but this is common in areas with high manufacturing employment. This sector includes temporary employment, and the jobs are counted where the agency is located, not where the individual worker happens to work from week to week. Manufacturing typically uses more temporary employees than other sectors.

At the same time, Torrance has a lower percentage of jobs in public administration. This is not uncommon in cities, especially those that do not house county administration and federal courthouses.

**FIGURE 17. Employment in Local-Serving Sectors as a Share of Total Employment, Torrance, LA County, and California, Average for 2009 to 2011**



Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the US Census Bureau's Local Employment Dynamics Program.

## LABOR FORCE

As discussed in more detail in the final chapter, the single most important issue in economic development over the next 10 years is the aging and retirement of the baby boom generation. Over the next ten years, the national, state, and regional economies will face a structural labor shortage, especially among skilled and educated workers. Over this period, proximity to a qualified labor force will become the key driver of business location decisions.

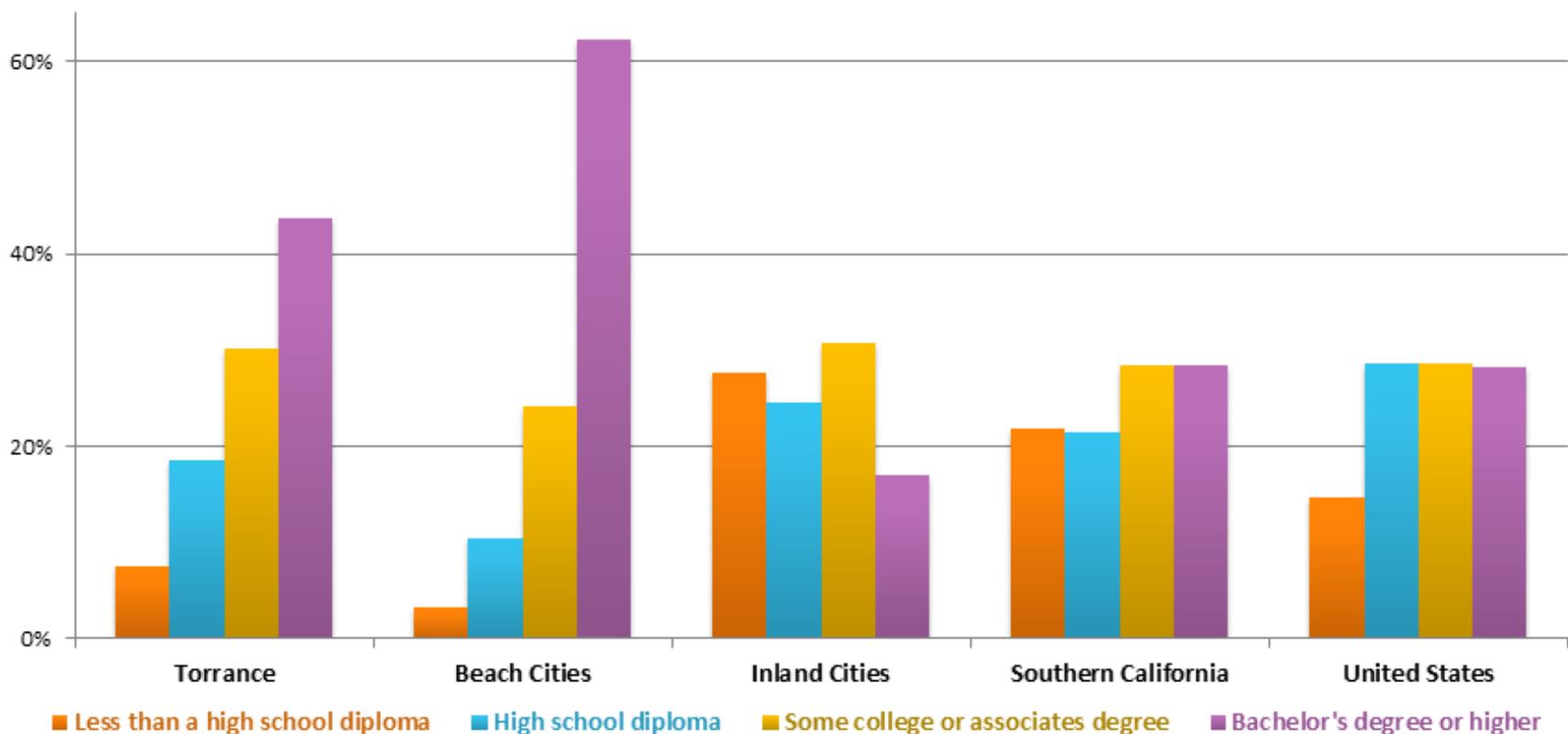
## RESIDENT EDUCATION LEVELS

The residents of Torrance are relatively well educated. Figure 18 shows the education level of the population age 25 and older in Torrance, surrounding areas, Southern California and the United States. Torrance has a higher percentage of residents with a college degree (43.7 percent) and a lower percentage without a high school diploma (7.5

percent) than the population across Southern California (28.4 and 21.8 percent) and across the nation (28.2 and 14.6 percent). This suggests that Torrance is well positioned to compete in the regional and national economies. Within the South Bay, the beach cities tend to have relatively higher levels of education, with 62.2 percent of the population age 25 and older holding a bachelor's degree or more education.

In contrast, the inland cities have an even higher percentage of residents without a high school diploma (27.7 percent) than Southern California, which itself has a higher percentage than the nation as a whole. Over the next ten years, the region faces a substantial challenge in providing employment opportunities for those with low levels of education. The inland areas adjacent to Torrance will face an even larger challenge.

**FIGURE 18. Education Level of the Population Age 25 and Older, Torrance, Surrounding Areas, Southern California, and United States, 2012**



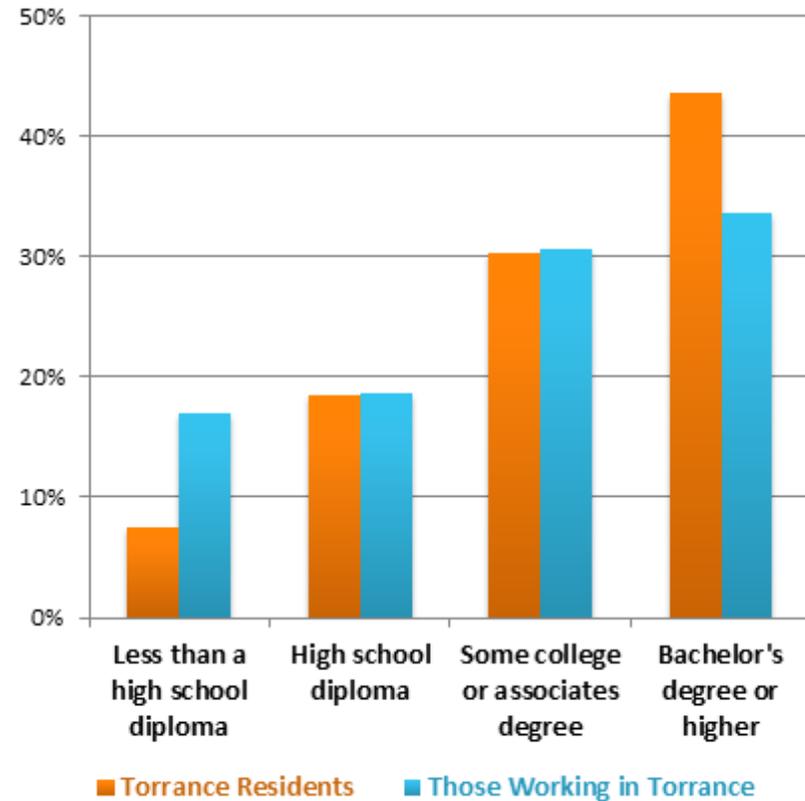
Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the US Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates.

## WORKER EDUCATION LEVELS

Even though a higher percentage of Torrance residents have college degrees, a lower percentage of the jobs in Torrance employ people with college degrees. Figure 19 compares the level of education of Torrance's residents to the level of education of those working in Torrance.

The city imports workers without a high school diploma and exports residents with a college degree to work elsewhere. In part, the higher percentage of retail jobs probably explains some of this difference. Nevertheless, over the next 10 years, as businesses increasingly seek out locations closer to more highly educated and more highly skilled workers, Torrance may well see a shift to more jobs employing more college graduates.

**FIGURE 19. Education Level of Those Aged 25 and Older, Living or Working in Torrance, 2012**



Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the US Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates.

## ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

### VACANCY RATES

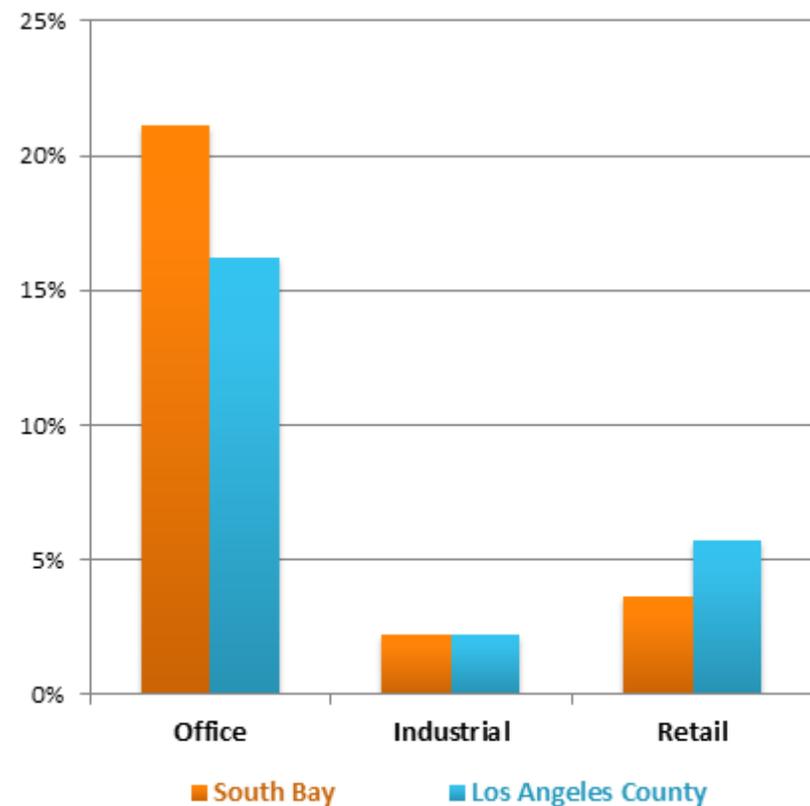
Reflecting the lingering effects of the recession, the South Bay office vacancy rate stood at 21.1 percent in the first quarter of 2014, a marked increase from the 13.6 percent rate in 2007, when the last Community Profile and Environmental Scan was completed. The previous report noted, however, that the office vacancy rate at that time had been steadily falling from a 20 percent high in 2004. Thus, the current South Bay office vacancy rate, while high and indicative of a depressed real estate market, is not unprecedented. The countywide office vacancy rate, while still too high, has been declining slightly for over a year and is down from the recession high.

Complicating matters for Torrance, however, is the future relocation of Toyota's headquarters to Texas. This move will eventually put a million square feet of office space on the market. Across the South Bay, one million square feet represents over 3 percent of the existing office building stock. Thus, office vacancy rates will probably rise over the next few years as Toyota makes its move.

In contrast, industrial vacancy rates in the South Bay were only 2.7 percent in the first quarter of 2014, an increase from the 0.5 percent rate in the third quarter of 2006, when the last community profile was prepared. The South Bay's industrial vacancy rate is about the same as the rate throughout the county, and it reflects the generally tight real estate market for industrial building space in the coastal basin areas of Los Angeles and Orange counties. The long-term market demand for industrial space in the coastal areas suggests that vacancy rates will remain low. The real question for the industrial real estate market is whether or not industrial businesses will be able to afford the rents necessary to keep industrial land from redeveloping for other uses.

South Bay's retail vacancy rate was 3.6 percent in the first quarter of 2014. This is a relatively low vacancy rate and suggests that the retail real estate market is healthy. Countywide, the retail vacancy rate has hovered around 6 percent since the recession, generally considered a healthy rate, even though the county has seen new retail built and absorbed over the last two years.

**FIGURE 20. Non-residential Vacancy Rates, South Bay and Los Angeles County, First Quarter, 2014**



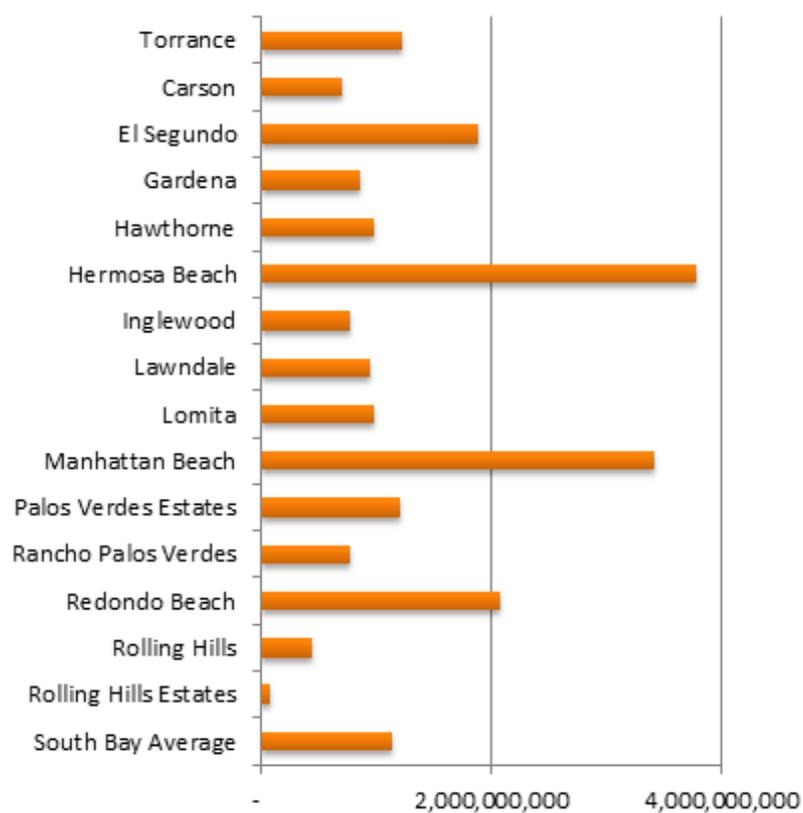
Source: Data from CB Richard Ellis's MarketView reports, 2014.

## PROPERTY VALUES

Based on the value estimated for building permits, property owners invested about \$102 million in their buildings in Torrance in 2013. Over the past five years, the average annual investment has been about \$82 million, about half of the investment in the mid-2000s. Nevertheless, the last two years have been well above the five-year average.

The last community profile and environmental scan indicated that the total assessed property value in Torrance in 2007 was \$1,080,000,000 per square mile. In 2013, the value had increased to \$1,224,000,000 per square mile. Even after adjusting for inflation, the 2013 value was an increase over the 2007 value. But whereas Torrance had the second highest value per square mile in 2007, it now stands fourth in the South Bay.

**FIGURE 21. Total Assessed Property Value per Square Mile, South Bay Cities, 2013**



Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using property value data from the LA County Assessor and jurisdiction land area data from the US Census Bureau.

## RETAIL SALES

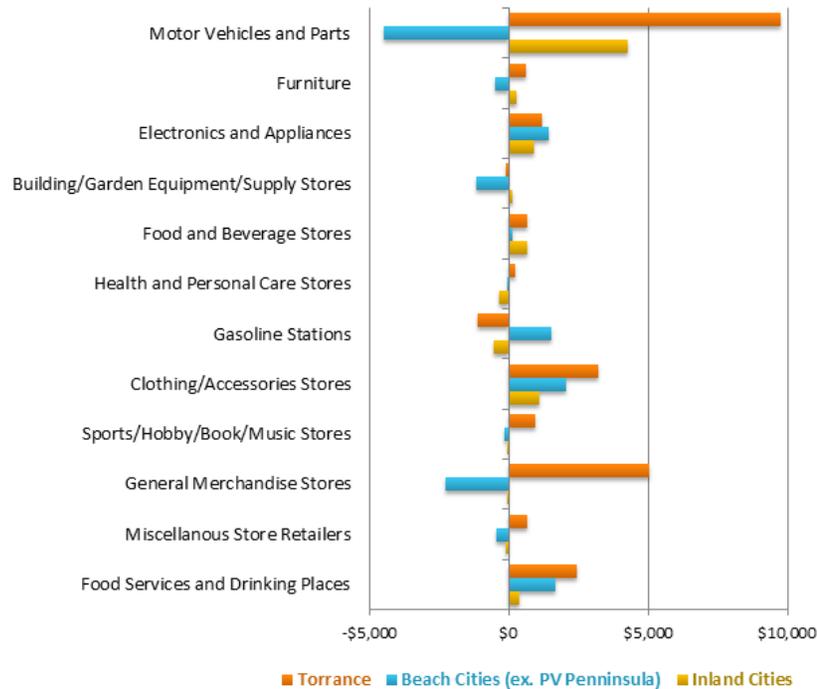
Sales tax provides a large discretionary portion of most cities' revenues. Thus, most cities try to maximize the taxable sales within their boundaries. Cities with a high level of retail leakage (when residents purchase goods outside of the city they live in, thus sending their sales tax dollars to support public facilities and services elsewhere) try to capture more of their residents' spending. Cities that already have a relatively high share of their residents' own spending pursue strategies to attract consumers from other cities.

Figure 22 shows whether or not Torrance leaks or captures retail sales in each of the major retail categories, and it shows the amount of the leakage or capture. To provide some context, the figure also shows the same data for the beach cities and the inland cities. The beach cities data do not include the Palos Verdes peninsula cities because they leak so much retail spending that the results skew the charts.

The data show that Torrance captures a higher amount of spending per household than the beach cities and the inland cities in every category except for electronics and gasoline stations.

The high amount of leaked spending in the Palos Verdes cities as well as the leaked spending and relatively low amount of captured spending in other beach cities and the inland cities suggest that Torrance attracts consumer spending from these other cities. And along with the spending, Torrance captures the additional sales tax revenues.

**FIGURE 22. Estimated Net Capture of Resident Consumer Spending, in Dollars per Household by Major Retail Category, Torrance, Beach Cities, and Inland Cities, 2014**

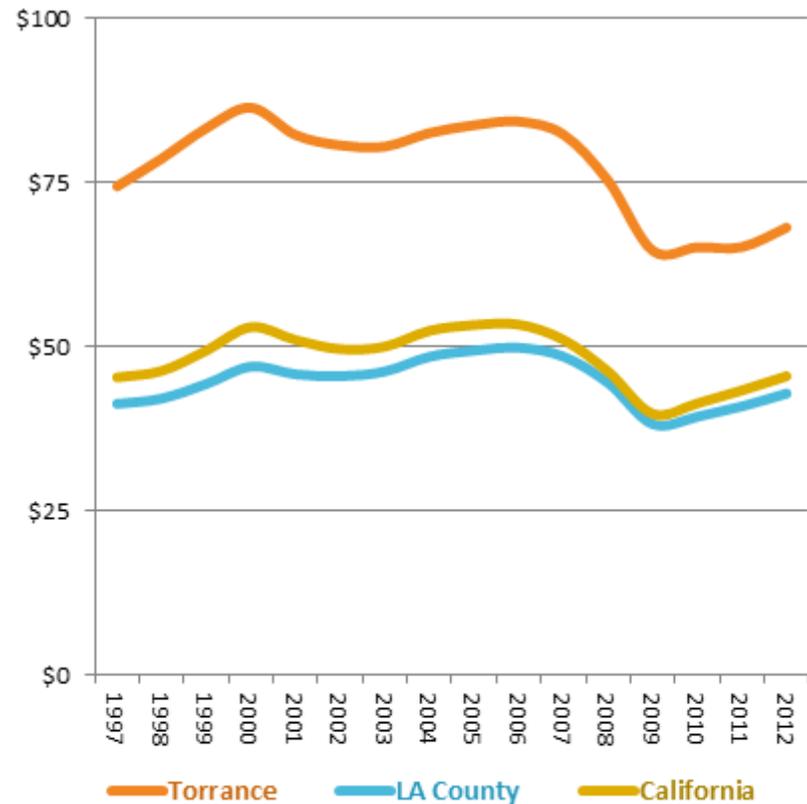


Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using spending and sales data estimates from Esri Business Analyst and number of households data from the CA Department of Finance.

Indeed, the magnitude of Torrance’s capture of retail spending is evidenced by comparisons with the county and state. Figure 23 shows the total amount of taxable retail sales per household, adjusted for inflation, for Torrance, LA County, and California from 1997 through 2012. The data show that Torrance has and has had a relatively high level of taxable retail sales per household. However, the magnitude of the difference between the city and the county or state has lessened over time. Around 1999, Torrance’s taxable retail sales per household were about 88 percent higher than the county’s and about 79 percent higher than the state’s. The gap has decreased since then. In 2012, the city’s taxable retail sales per household were 59 percent higher than the county’s and 50 percent higher than the state’s.

Much of the decline in the difference in taxable retail sales per household happened during the recession. The issue for Torrance is whether or not the decline is cyclical, in which case the city could expect a bounce-back in taxable retail sales, or structural, in which case the current level of taxable retail sales is a new normal.

**FIGURE 23. Real (Inflation-Adjusted) Taxable Retail Sales per Household, Torrance, LA County, and California, 1997 to 2012**



Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using taxable retail sales data from the CA Board of Equalization, number of households data from the CA Department of Finance, and inflation adjustment data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.





# Environmental Scan

**In this chapter:**

**ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN OVERVIEW**

**DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITIONS**

**HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**

**HOMELESSNESS**

**FUTURE ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE**

**ECONOMIC RECOVERY**

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN OVERVIEW

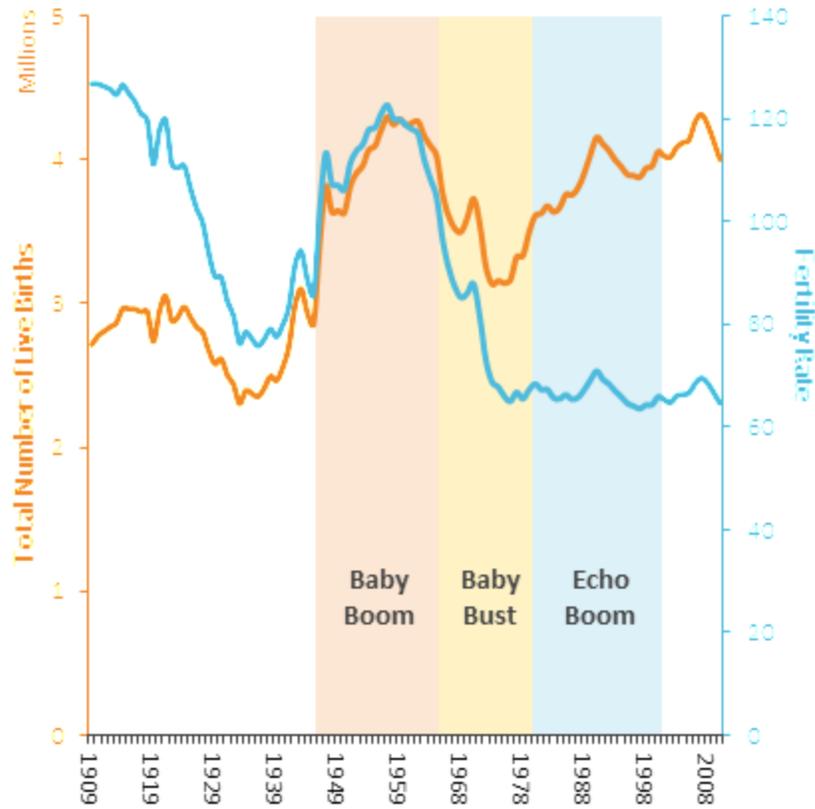
This section explores a range of external trends that likely will change the environment and context in which Torrance operates as a municipal government. As with the previous Community Profile and Environmental Scan, the aging and retirement of the baby boom generation fuels much of the external change that faces Torrance. In addition, the nation's recovery from the last recession and changes in housing finance designed to address the conditions that lead to the recession will create opportunities and constraints for the City. National and state policies reflecting new priorities to link land use and development to community health will create opportunities for the City to implement policies and invest public resources to improve public health and community wellness. Homelessness has grown in Southern California since the beginning of the recession, and providing solutions for homelessness will be a challenge for the community. Finally, Toyota's relocation, announced during the preparation of this document, will take place during the course of the next several years and, thus will affect municipal operations.

## DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITIONS

As discussed in the previous Community Profile, the demographic waves of baby boom, baby bust, and echo boom are set to drive fundamental changes in American society. Figure 24 shows the fertility rate (number of births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 45) and the total number of births for each year from 1909 to 2010. The nation's fertility rate declined during the first third of the twentieth century, bottoming out at about 76 births per thousand women aged 15 to 45 in 1933. Although the fertility rate gradually increased through the Depression and into the war years, it really accelerated after the war. The rate increased from 86 in 1945 to 113 in 1947—the advent of the baby boom. In 1957, the number of births reached a high point of 4.3 million. Over the 20 years of the baby boom, over 80 million babies were born, an average of 4 million per year. In contrast, 2.6 million babies were born, on average, in each of the preceding 20 years, and an average of 3.4 million babies were born in each year of the baby bust period.

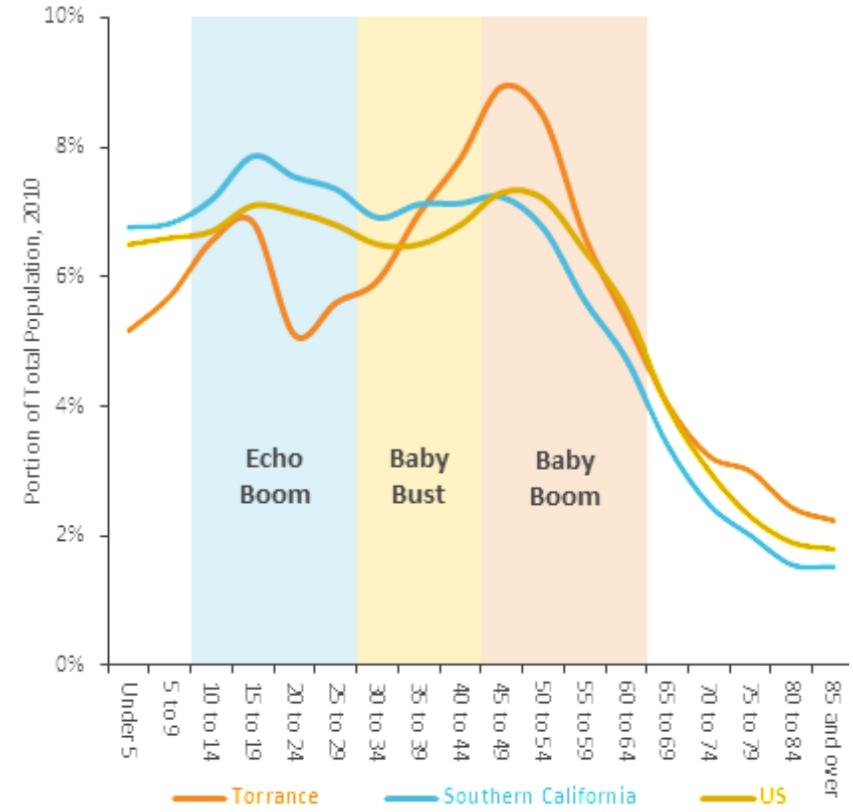
Once the birth control pill was introduced in 1961, the fertility rate began a steep decline. Generally, 1965 is accepted as the beginning of the baby bust. During this period, the fertility rate declined to a then-historical low in 1976 of 65 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 45. Since then, the fertility rate has only climbed above 70 once, to 70.9 in 1990. Nevertheless, with the large size of the baby boom generation, the number of births began to increase again, even though the overall fertility rate remained and continues to remain at historical lows. The total number of births began increasing in 1977, but most demographers consider the baby bust period to extend to 1980, mostly to simplify record keeping and analysis.

**FIGURE 24. Fertility Rates, Number of Births, and Generational Definitions, United States, 1909 to 2012**



Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**FIGURE 25. Age Distribution of the Population as a Percentage of Total Population, Torrance, Southern California, and the United States, 2010**



Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the Decennial Census.

## MEDICAL SERVICES

The previous Community Profile discussed the impacts of the aging of the baby boom generation, and not much has changed since then to alter the basic message for Torrance. The baby boomers are moving into the age categories that require the largest expenditures for medical services. Although national policy has changed since the last Community Profile, the nation, as a whole, still does not have an adequately funded mechanism to pay for future medical services. Nationally, we also do not yet have enough doctors, nurses, and medical facilities to handle the coming increase in medical customers.

For Torrance, however, the growth in medical services should be mostly beneficial. Since the last Community Profile, the health care and social services sector has grown from about 13.8 percent of the local economy to 16.6 percent. Over the same time, the sector's share of the county's economy has increased less, from 9.8 percent to 11.1 percent. The Torrance economy is specialized in medical services, and the next 20 years should see continued growth in this sector. A question that the City should discuss with the medical services industry is whether or not there are public policies or public investments that would bolster Torrance's position as a leading destination for medical services.

## THE COMING LABOR SHORTAGE

As discussed in the previous Community Profile, the national economy faces a structural labor shortage as the baby boom generation retires, primarily among skilled and educated workers. Comparing the youngest 15 years of the baby boom generation to the 15 years of the baby bust, there is a 5.3 percent decline in population. Comparing the youngest 10 years of the baby boom to the next 10 years of population in the baby bust, there is an 8.3 percent decline. Southern California does not have the same population bubble. Indeed, there are more people in the age groups following the baby boom than there are in the baby boom. This suggests that Southern California may be one of those regions that businesses move to in order to find enough qualified workers.

For Torrance, however, the baby boom bubble is even larger. Comparing the 10 youngest years of the baby boom to the following 10 years of population in the baby bust, there is a 15 percent decline. This suggests that business in Torrance will face a challenge in attracting skilled and educated workers from other communities as baby boomers retire. However, the biggest impact of this demographic transition for Torrance is still perhaps ten years down the road.

## BOOMERS LEAVING

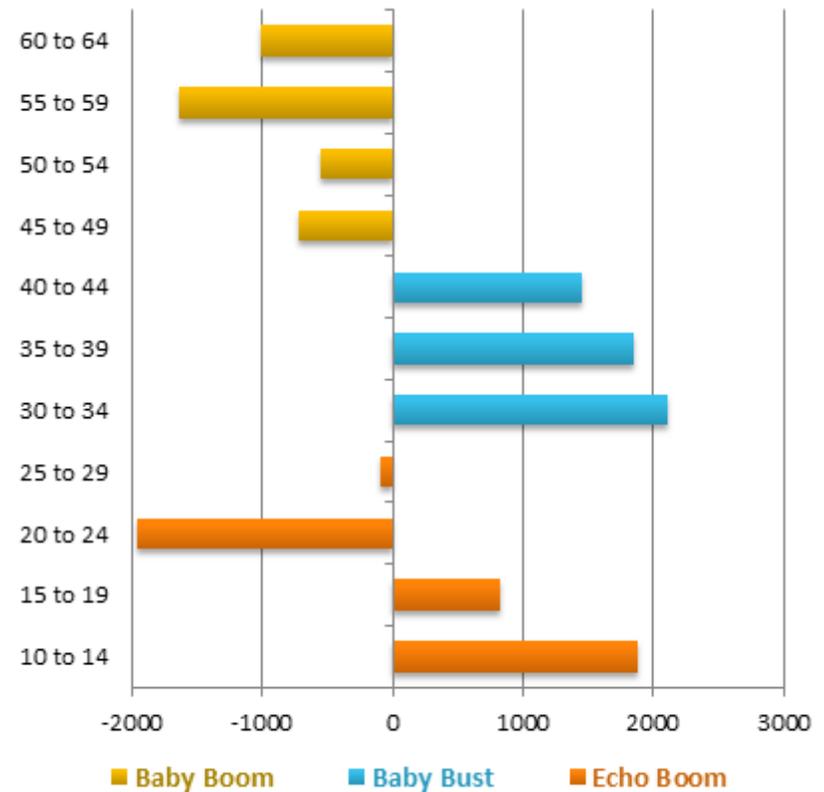
The most intriguing tale from the analysis of the changing age structure of the population is the number of baby boomers leaving Torrance. The baby boom generation accounted for 46,700 residents in 2000 but only 42,700 in 2010, an 8.5 percent decrease. Some of the decline is to be expected because baby boomers are in the age groups for which the mortality rate starts to noticeably increase. Nevertheless, the decline is more than would be expected from deaths; the comparable decline nationwide was 4.2 percent. Baby boomers have been leaving Torrance. In contrast, the number of Torrance residents in the baby bust age categories in 2010 was 5,400 higher than in 2000. This growth rate for baby bust residents over 10 years was 21.8 percent. This suggests that Torrance retains its appeal as a place to raise families. The pertinent question looking forward is the degree to which baby boomers will continue to leave Torrance and the degree to which younger age groups can and will move to Torrance.

## MUNICIPAL WORKFORCE

One of the key issues facing businesses generally is one that Torrance also faces. Many of the City's department heads and senior management are part of the baby boom generation. They too, will begin retiring and will need to be replaced. Torrance may fare better than other cities because it is an employer of choice. People choose to work for Torrance, and it has a stable work force.

Nevertheless, Torrance will face management challenges as much of its institutional knowledge retires. The issue is not so much about picking and grooming successors. Rather, it is about ensuring that common practices and institutional knowledge get recorded and passed down as new department heads are selected and as a new generation moves into senior management. Not all departments are equally prepared for this transition, and now is probably a good time to ensure that all departments are aware of it.

**FIGURE 26. Change in Population Based on Age Generation in 2010, Torrance, Change from 2000 to 2010**



Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the Decennial Census.

## HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

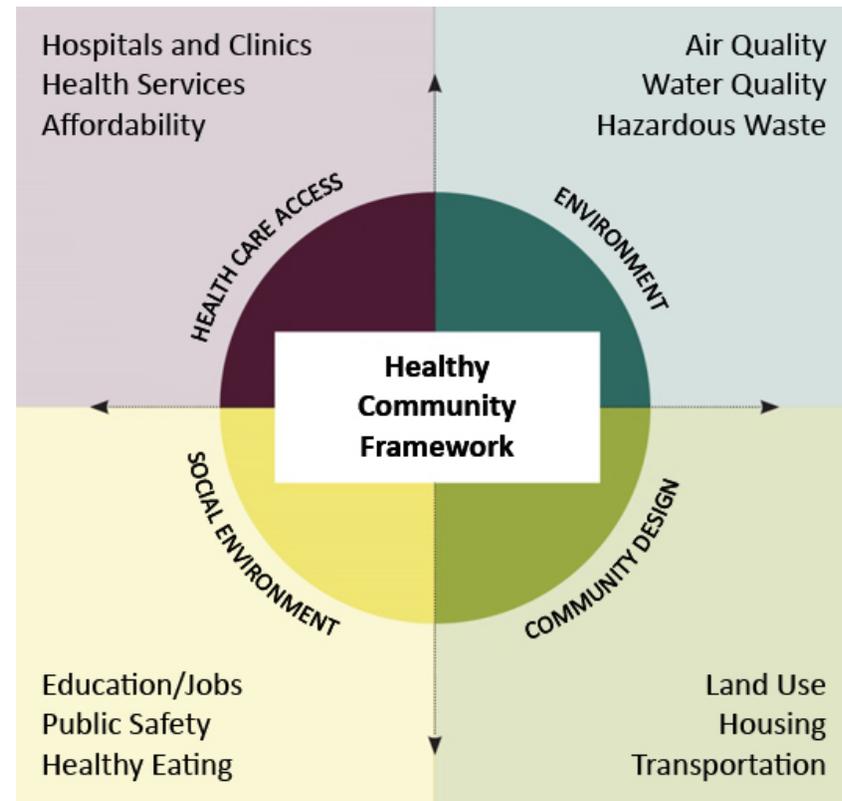
Over the past ten years, there has been a new emphasis at the local, regional, and federal levels on “healthy communities.” The healthy communities’ field emerged based on the premise that the design of our communities plays an important role in current health trends. How we build our homes and neighborhoods, buildings, roadways, parks, and economy to name a few influences our health and wellbeing. Armed with a growing body of evidence, civic leaders across the nation are looking at how to create communities that enable people to live longer, healthier, and more productive lives.

Although the healthy community movement dates back decades, few comprehensive efforts have been undertaken to define it. In 2012, the California Planning Roundtable embarked on a multi-year effort that culminated with the following definition:

“A healthy community is one that strives to meet the basic needs of all residents; it is guided by health equity principles in the decision-making process; it empowers organizations and individuals through collaboration, civic and cultural engagement for the creation of safe and sustainable environments. Vibrant, livable and inclusive communities provide ample choices and opportunities to thrive economically, environmentally and culturally, but must begin with health.”

With a clearer definition of a healthy community, the figure on this page frames what the design of a healthy community will involve. It includes at least four areas:

- Clean Environment, including the availability of clean air, water, and soil that are healthful and free of pollution.
- Community Design, where land uses, parks, housing, and transportation are designed to support health.
- Social Environment, where education, public safety, and food availability create opportunities for healthy choices
- Health Care Infrastructure, where quality health services and facilities are affordable and accessible to residents.



As Torrance continues to track and evaluate its performance using key performance indicators (KPIs), the City may consider ways to assess community health. Health indicators are a powerful tool for assessing the health needs of a community and, with appropriate thresholds, can also measure progress toward a desired outcome. Common measures used to diagnose community health include residents with good access to grocery stores, density of crime or traffic accidents, or acreage of parkland. By developing indicators that are relevant to the particular health concerns of a community, planners can enable local residents to monitor improvement relative to baseline conditions over time. Based on its assessments, Torrance may be able to move towards creating a healthier community through changes in community design (land use, transportation, housing, parks and open spaces), improving the natural environment (air quality, water quality, toxic remediation), and responding to social determinants (food access, education and employment, public safety, and improved social capital).

## HOMELESSNESS

Homeless persons are defined as those who lack a fixed and adequate residence. Homelessness is a pressing issue for many communities, and the varied dimensions involved have implications for housing programs. People who are homeless may be chronically homeless (perhaps due to substance abuse) or situationally homeless resulting from job loss, family strife, incarceration, or violence. Despite the fray of discussions that arise about the cause of homelessness, the problem is real and of great concern, particularly for children, foster youth, and victims of violence who often have no “choice” other than homelessness.

Counting the homeless population is problematic due to their transient nature, different definitions of homelessness, and political and funding issues. Every two years, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) organizes the Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. The 2013 Homeless County report showed 58,423 homeless people in the county, compared to 50,214 in 2011 – a 16 percent increase. The homeless population in Los Angeles County is inherently transient between cities, and as a result, homelessness is largely seen as a regional issue. Torrance works with the South Bay Coalition for the Homeless. The primary goals of the Coalition are to respond to and prevent homelessness in the South Bay. It is building a strong network to establish and expand an effective referral system for the homeless and to coordinate the efforts of many homeless service providers. Currently, the Coalition includes:

- Faith-based organizations (King’s Harbor, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Shared Bread, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, St. Lawrence Martyr Catholic Church, St. James Catholic Church, St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church) who provide meals and pantries.
- South Bay Family Health Care and Torrance Health Center who provide health care services.
- National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence and Exodus Recovery who provide addiction services.
- Behavioral Health Services, Torrance Memorial Medical Center, Los Angeles County Homeless Outreach, and others who provide services to those with chronic mental or physical illness.

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority identifies a number of issues that may have contributed to the increase in homeless persons in the county from 2011 to 2013, including:

- The continued recession in California and Los Angeles and the resulting unemployment
- The loss of resources available under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing funds
- Lack of adequate affordable housing options for low income households, and increasing median rents
- Prison realignment, which released probationers without adequate funding and coordination for services and housing options
- Reduced Federal McKinney Vento funding due to CDBG funding formulas
- In-migration of homeless persons to Los Angeles County

As Torrance continues to work with service providers in the South Bay to address homelessness in the region, it may want to consider these contributing factors and identify opportunities to address them, where possible.

## FUTURE ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

### THE FUTURE OF MANUFACTURING

As shown in Figure 30, manufacturing is an important component of Torrance's economy, more important than it is nationally. However, the national press talks a lot about the decline of manufacturing in the United States. This raises questions about the future role of manufacturing in Torrance, a community that was designed around the principle of a balance of land uses.

Nationally, manufacturing employment in the United States peaked in 1978, and it has generally been continuously declining since then. However, the number of manufacturing jobs has increased since the recession, leading to some discussion about a renaissance in American manufacturing. Such discussion, however, do not reflect the reality of manufacturing. The total value of goods produced in the United States has continued to grow since the end of World War II, with fluctuations reflecting the general business cycle.

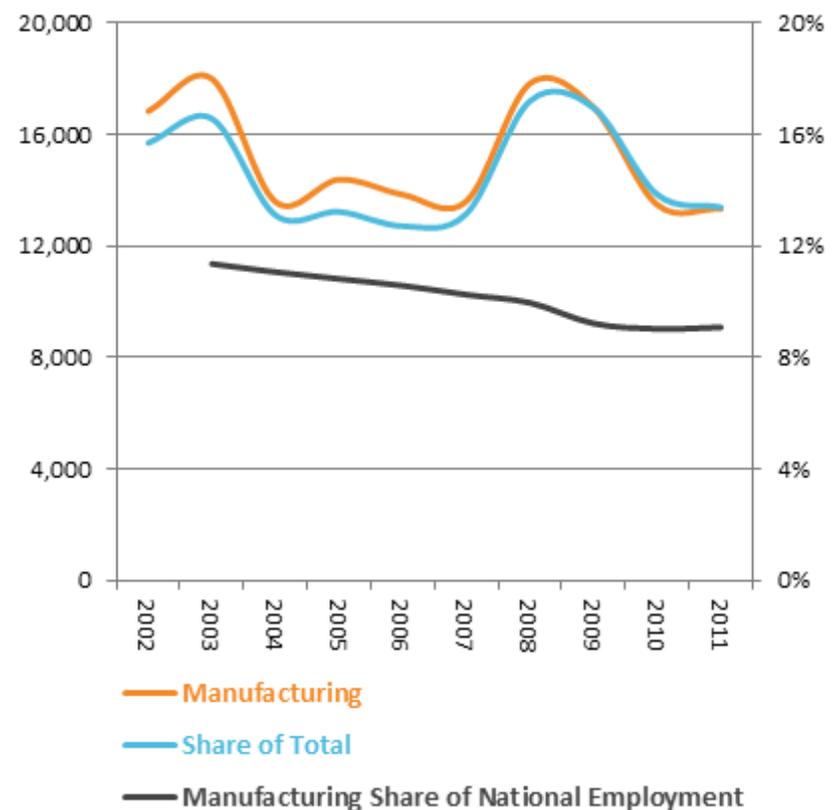
What has happened is that the United States has exported the low-skill manufacturing of goods. The national economy maintains a competitive advantage in producing high-value-added goods. Manufacturing in California has followed a similar path. The reality of manufacturing is that our economy continues to produce more and more value from fewer workers. The future of manufacturing, in the United States, in California, and in Torrance, is a continuation of that trend, growth in the value of things manufactured with little growth and probably a decline in the number of manufacturing workers.

### TOYOTA RELOCATION

As this Community Profile was being prepared, Toyota announced that it would relocate its North American headquarters from Torrance to Plano, Texas. The move allows Toyota to be closer to its manufacturing operations. Some analysts suggest the move will allow Toyota to shed some of its expensive middle management employees and become less top heavy. The firm intends to relocate around 2,500 jobs. Although Toyota is offering relocation packages to workers, the move may follow in Nissan's footsteps in which only about a third of employees moved.

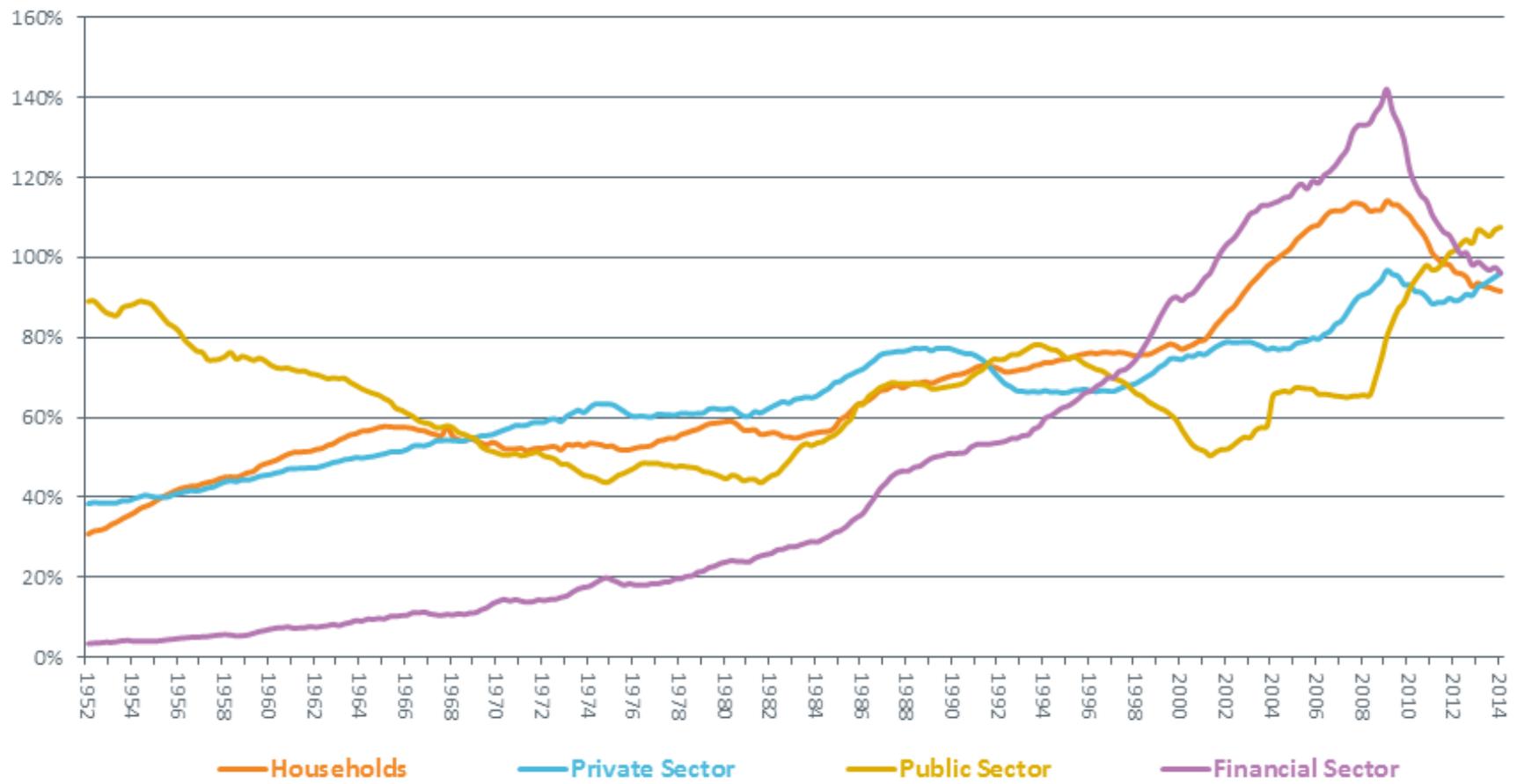
The financial impact on Torrance could be quite large. The impact, of course, depends on the types of companies filling the office space after Toyota completes its move in 2017. As discussed previously, in the Local Economy section, Torrance is actually well positioned as far as proximity to a diverse labor force. Nevertheless, filling the Toyota void will be a major challenge facing the City, the community, and the local economy over the next several years.

**FIGURE 27. Number of Manufacturing Jobs in Torrance, Share of Total Torrance Jobs, and Manufacturing's Share of National Employment, 2002 to 2011**



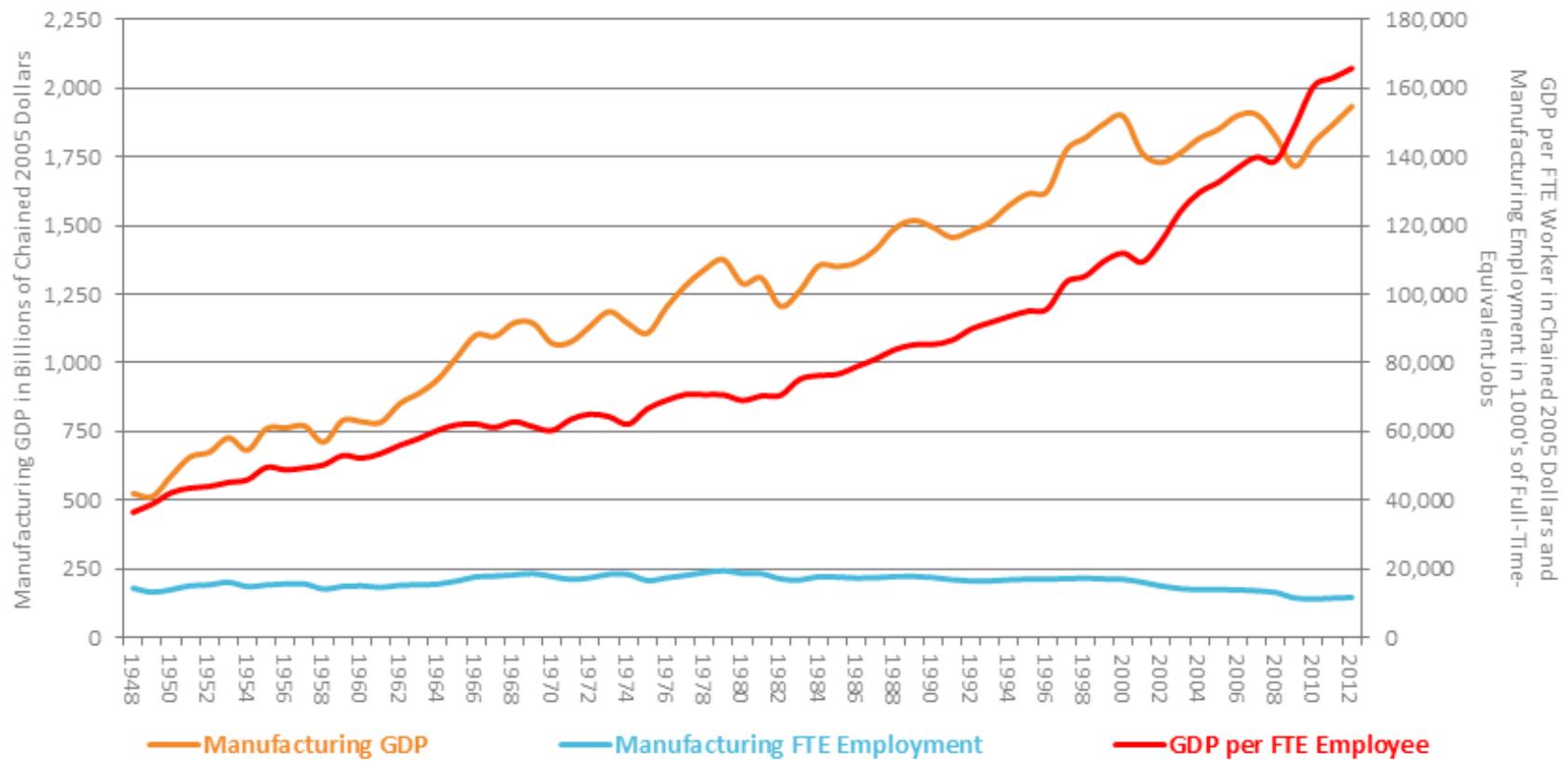
Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the Census Bureau's Local Employment Dynamics Program.

**FIGURE 28. Total Outstanding Debt by Sector as a Percentage of Total Personal Income, United State, Q1 1952 to Q1 2014**



Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using outstanding debt data from the Federal Reserve and personal income data from the US Bureau of Economic Analysis.

**FIGURE 29. Measures of Manufacturing Activity in the United States, 1948 to 2013**



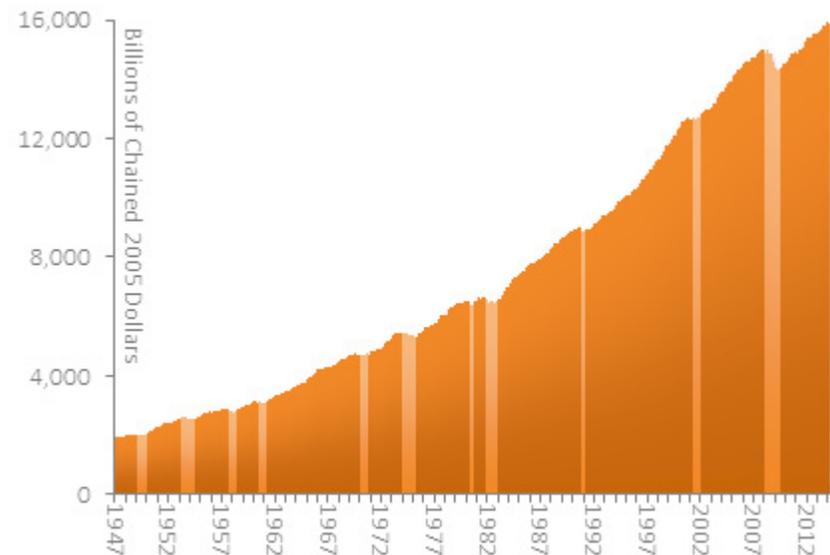
Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the US Bureau of Economic Analysis and the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## ECONOMIC RECOVERY

In March of 2006, the number of housing units constructed in the United States peaked and began a 58-month decline, dropping from 2.2 million (at a seasonally adjusted annual rate) to 0.5 million. In the summer of 2006, housing values stopped growing and reversed course. Values declined for the next 92 months, and a sustained growth trend did not start again until March 2012. In December of 2007, the total number of jobs in the United States peaked and began a 25-month, 6.3 percent decline that shed 8.7 million jobs, ending in February 2010. The National Bureau for Economic Research determined that the national economy entered into recession in December 2007 and entered into a recovery and expansion phase in June 2009. During the recession, the value of goods and services produced by the US economy shrank by \$639 billion, or 4.3 percent.

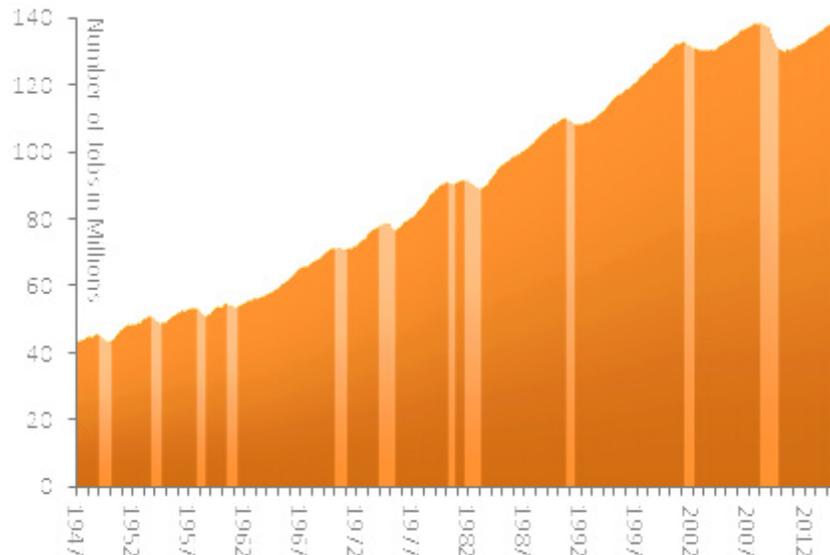
All major economic indicators have been increasing, some for longer than others, and some have outpaced their prerecession highs. Gross domestic product, the total value of all goods and services produced in the United States, was at an annual value of \$15.9 trillion in the first quarter of 2014, 6.0 percent above the prerecession high. In contrast, the total number of jobs across the country in May 2014 was 138,463,000, only 0.07 percent above the prerecession high. In fact, May 2014 was the first month that the job count exceeded the prerecession high. The number of housing units constructed is still 60 percent below the prerecession peak and lower than at any point since the Census Bureau started counting housing completions in 1968. The value of housing nationally is still 20.6 percent below the prerecession high. In fact, housing values are at about the same level as in March 2004.

**FIGURE 30. Inflation-Adjusted Quarterly Gross Domestic Product, United States, Q1 1947 to Q1 2014**



Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the US Bureau of Economic Analysis.

**FIGURE 31. Total Number of Jobs, United States, January 1947 to May 2014**



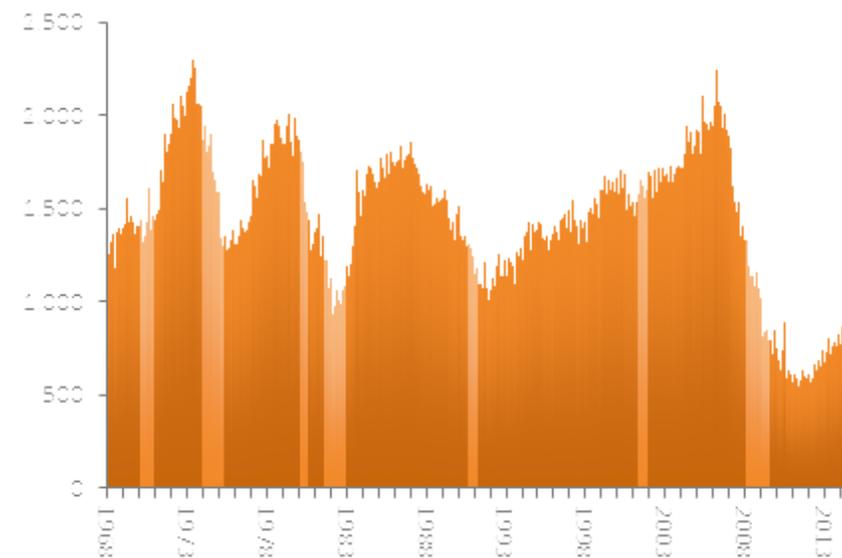
Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Since the beginning of detailed economic records in 1947, the national economy has grown on average by 0.79 percent per quarter. Since the end of the last recession, however, the economy has grown by 0.54 percent per quarter. In large part, the slower growth results from the debt crisis that the last recession really was. At the height of the recession, the total outstanding debt of all households, businesses, organizations, and government agencies totaled \$171,675 per person in the United States, and about a third of that debt was owed by financial institutions. That third was money that financial institutions had borrowed in order to goose the returns they were able to provide to investors. And not just banks and insurance funds were involved; everyone was on the debt train. At the height of the recession, total household debt was 114 percent of total personal income. From 1951 through the first quarter of 2014, household debt relative to total personal income averaged 63 percent.

Since the recession, households and financial institutions have slowly been reducing their total outstanding debt, while the federal government and, after a short respite, nonfinancial businesses have increased their outstanding debt. Nevertheless, the total outstanding debt in the United States declined, from 3.6 times the total gross domestic product of the US in the 2009 down to 3.4 times GDP in 2012. Fueled by borrowing by the federal government and by private-sector businesses, total outstanding debt has since inched back up to 3.5 times GDP.

Many economists believe that outstanding household debt needs to get to about 80 percent of total personal income for household spending to return to more normal levels. Household debt has been decreasing for the past five years, but at the rate it is falling, it might take another two years to get down to about 80 percent of personal income, or summer of 2016.

**FIGURE 32. Housing Completions (Seasonally Adjusted Annual Rate), United States, January 1968 to May 2014**



Source: PlaceWorks, 2014, using data from the US Census Bureau.