



City of Torrance

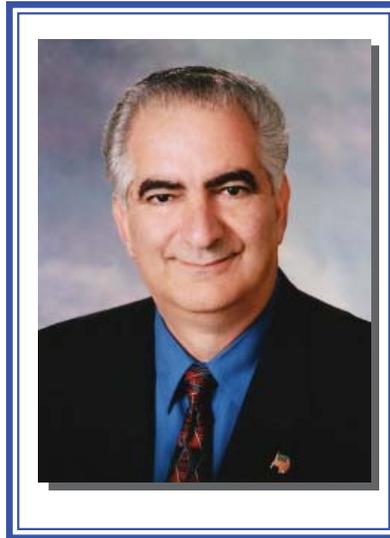
2008 State of the City

Hi! I'm Mayor Frank Scotto. It is my pleasure to tell you about the state of the city. Torrance is a great city, a city where we maintain balance amidst our efforts to do more for our diverse community... a community comprised of people committed to making Torrance a place where lives can be enriched every day with every activity or program.

Last year, I shared with you my vision for Torrance – it's of "a community led by more transparent government, by leaders who listen to the concerns of the residents. I envisioned Torrance as a place where residents participate in resolving issues and get involved in the civic process; it is a community whose life improves through the contribution of all its members." Today, I am happy to share with you the progress we've made in the past year in making this vision a reality.

Together with my colleagues on the City Council, City staff, and members of the community, we have taken numerous steps to take Torrance to where it is now – a wonderful city... a safe city ... a thriving city ... a great city, and I am truly honored to serve as your mayor.

As mayor, I held this vision shared by my colleagues, and we have been taking steps toward its fruition. I will share these with you in a moment,



Mayor Frank Scotto

for I realize that at present, the future presents a shade of uncertainty, and the burning question in everyone's minds is probably this – in the face of our present national and regional economic outlook, with the downturn in housing markets, the credit crunch and the rising fuel costs presenting a challenge, how is the City of Torrance doing? Of course, we are concerned with the less than rosy picture of our future, and with vigilance, we're preparing for any local impacts. The good news, however, is that our fiscally conservative approach, wherein we save for the uncertainties of the future even as we move forward in the present, places us in good standing.

The budget remains balanced for the upcoming 2008 through 2009 fiscal year. The continued stability of the City is a direct result of the fiscally conservative approach the City follows, looking ahead and planning over a five year period, as well as only allocating funds when necessary. This fiscally conservative approach is reflected in the City's investment grade "A" bond rating.

Having said that, we have several budget concerns as we look out over the next five years. The condition of the State budget, in which the deficit is reported to be as high as \$20 billion, the downturn in the economy, which is reducing consumer spending,



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and the uncertain future on the City's ability to collect telephone utility user's tax, will all have an adverse effect on both the City's Operating Budget and the Capital Budget. Due to the size of the State's budget deficit, and the likelihood that the State will reduce or delay State funding that the City receives and uses to fund capital projects, the City will delay taking action on extending and updating the City's Five Year Capital Budget until the State passes its 2008-2009 budget.

We will continue to keep a close watch on, and prepare for the impacts of the State's budget, the slow growth pattern of the economy, the decline in housing demand, which can affect property taxes and our retail sales, which is a source of revenue for the City.

We also realize that our school district is facing a daunting challenge. The City is concerned about the future of education in our schools; this directly impacts the future of our community – it impacts our youth. TUSD is critical to the life of our community, to the preparation of our future as it educates our youth who will become the future leaders and shapers of our community. The quality of education in our schools has always been an asset to our community. In fact, it is often cited as the reason why people move here, so we'll do all we can to assist the District.

Our infrastructures, particularly our streets, are also a concern for our community. I often hear the requests and concerns about improving our streets;

this endeavor, however, is also a constant challenge because by the time we finish fixing one street, the others already need more attention since these are roads we travel on multiple times a day. It is truly a constant cycle that the City goes through, and I appreciate your understanding and patience as we do our best in providing smooth roads for you to travel on.

On that note, we've had successes recently. Last fall, we finished the rehabilitation of Sepulveda Boulevard and we repaved the road with rubberized asphalt, which is partially comprised of recycled rubber tires. The project also included the installation of a 12-inch storm drain to help on rainy days, the replacement of damaged curbs, gutters and sidewalks, and the addition of designated left-turn and right-turn lanes on Sepulveda Boulevard at the intersections of Hawthorne Boulevard, Anza Avenue and Palos Verdes Boulevard. As a result, traffic circulation at these intersections has improved.

Particularly for our seniors, we installed 480 curb ramps citywide. Hopefully, this will improve their traveling experience as they head to the Bartlett Senior Center for some fun activities or wherever else they need to go.

Presently, the Plaza Del Amo Sewer project is underway. The existing sewer main along Plaza Del Amo Boulevard from Jefferson Street to Arlington Avenue is undersized for current flows. Tree roots have also infiltrated and caused extensive damage. The project will increase the size and help relieve



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sewers in the Downtown Area, and it is expected to be completed by spring.

And more projects are already in the pipeline. The rehabilitation of 190th Street is already in design phase, with construction scheduled to begin this summer following a joint traffic signal upgrade or capacity enhancement project with L.A. County and the City of Redondo Beach. This will provide for a designated westbound right-turn lane at Anza Avenue, the addition of a second westbound right-turn lane at Anza Avenue, and a second eastbound left hand turn lane at Inglewood Avenue. Following the completion of 190th Street, the rehabilitation of Torrance Boulevard will begin. Both projects include the repaving, overlay, and replacement of damaged curbs, gutters and sidewalks, and storm drain improvements. The staggered schedule will help minimize any traffic impacts on the two east-west arterial streets.

This brings me to our focus for this year. We will focus on addressing the following primary concerns of the community: traffic, and the revitalization of our downtown area.

We're already working on these comprehensive and complex tasks. Besides the street improvements I just mentioned, the City is finalizing a citywide engineering and traffic study, and upon the commission's review of it, it will be forwarded to the City Council for final approval and implementation.

A separate element in our Strategic Plan also focuses on the revitalization of the downtown area. The City has been working with businesses and residents in the downtown area, listening to their needs, their concerns and their vision for the downtown business district, so that we can come up with a sensible plan that will draw businesses to locate there and encourage patrons to visit these businesses. It won't happen overnight but with diligence, patience and your contributions, I'm sure, our vision of a downtown Torrance that is full of life, will also be a reality, and will add to all that Torrance already has to offer.

I believe that together, step by step, we can find solutions. In fact, the results of our Strategic Plan focus groups revealed that we have been successful in finding solutions and addressing the needs of our community. Torrance residents and businesses who participated in the surveys view the City of Torrance, and the services we offer positively. They also have an optimistic outlook for our future. I think most of you will agree that this is not news to us, yet, it's good to hear. It confirms the steps we're taking – we are headed in the right direction. The services we provide are vital...they are diverse... they are geared towards the needs of each member of the community...the programs are fun...they are enriching...the activities are enjoyable...they are entertaining.

Providing these services daily to the entire community takes time, effort and resources; it is a



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responsibility that the City of Torrance embraces willingly; however, in spite of the excellent, skilled and diligent employees working for the City of Torrance, we cannot do it alone. We're able to do so through the harmonious cooperation and contribution of all our members, particularly our business community.

Businesses provide a stream of revenue to the City that enables us to fund City programs and services. The services, products, and participation of businesses in community events, add richness to the life of the Torrance community as a whole in numerous ways – tangible and intangible. Here in Torrance we are lucky, for while we hear of a slowing down in our regional or national economy, we have good news: we have a thriving business community.

Torrance continues to be an ideal place for businesses!

Businesses want to locate here. Businesses want to stay here. We have close to 10,500 businesses here in Torrance! Throughout the year we continue to welcome new ones and see the growth of existing ones. For example, American Honda Corporation unveiled its new Acura Design Center, the first design studio in the United States devoted to the Acura brand. Our two major hospitals will also be contributing to the economic development of our city. With the future development of the Daily Breeze property acquired by Little Company of Mary, as well as Torrance Memorial's plans for

expansion, we will enhance the well-being of Torrance residents.

The Del Amo Fashion Center continues to be a key player in our economy. Since the opening of the lifestyle wing, more stores have been added with Crate and Barrel, Johnny Rockets, Z Gallery, and Origins opening last year. And others, such as BJ's, which is in construction, will follow suit. We've also had discussions with the new mall owner, the Simon Property Group. We are excited with what's to come. We're eagerly anticipating the continued revitalization of the remainder of the mall.

The auto industry also continues to add to the economic vitality of our City. Carmax opened on Hawthorne Boulevard, giving our community members more options for their vehicle choice at a reasonable price. And besides the location of dealerships like Carmax, or headquarters like Honda and Toyota's, we're now seeing the result of a cottage industry. Companies related to the production and maintenance of cars are coming to Torrance. The opening of Lexus's service repair center is an example.

Growing a business is not easy. As a business owner myself, I know that, and the City knows that. That's why we have the Office of Economic Development available to assist businesses in their needs. Torrance wants your business to succeed and appreciates all the efforts you place, not only in growing your business, but also in contributing to the community in so many different ways ...



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volunteering your time, your talent, facilities and resources to different organizations in our city.

So, this year, to demonstrate our appreciation, the City hosted its first “Torrance Advantage Awards” Ceremony wherein we honored and recognized eight businesses for their locally significant economic development strategies. Awards were given in four categories, focusing on businesses’ investment in people, efforts on enriching the community, enhancing the quality of life, and long-term investment. Keep your eyes and ears open for the 2008 Torrance Advantage Awards or contact the Office of Economic Development for information.

To help our businesses succeed, we are developing a “one stop permit center”, which will hopefully save you time and resources.

Here in Torrance, we firmly believe that the security of the future relies on the steps we take today. So, as we move towards progress daily, we also conserve for the future. Why? As John F. Kennedy once said, because “It is our task, in our time, and in our generation, to hand down undiminished, to those who come after us, as was handed down to us by those who went before, the natural wealth and beauty which is ours.” How? By taking steps to realize the commitment we made as a “Cool City”. We planted an additional 150 trees next to Continental Development. We offered and expanded the green

waste recycling program to more residents and hope to make this citywide. We also partnered with the Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce to develop the site, greentorrance.com, which is a new resource for businesses and residents who want to go “green”. In addition to the Architectural Guidelines offered by the Community Development Department, staff will propose to the City Council, an environmental program for the City to adopt.

The effort to secure our future, to ensure a community whose quality of life improves everyday, is like a putting together a jigsaw puzzle with numerous pieces. Each piece is crucial and linked to each other, and without a base to place the pieces on, none of these pieces can be laid out successfully, and none can stay interconnected to create a masterpiece.

For Torrance, this backdrop is the safety of our community, which we achieve, through the hard work of all departments, particularly, of our outstanding public safety personnel.

Members of our Torrance Police Department constantly and continuously pursue innovative and effective means to keep our community safe, such as the implementation of a new method called focus-based policing. Focus-based policing enhances the policing service provided to the community by enabling officers to use all resources available for their police work. It also encourages accountability, with every officer following through each case they work on until the very end. It has proven to be



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beneficial to the community, resulting in positive outcomes. Through it, a number of crime trends have been identified and addressed.

Under focus-based policing, we've also enhanced the police presence in each area of the City; each area now has an assigned lieutenant and at least two sergeants who are responsible for the concerns of the community members, specifically from that area. This effort is also aligned with the re-invigoration of the Neighborhood Watch program that's in progress.

Assigned personnel become more involved in the community by attending all Neighborhood Watch meetings. They also attend other community meetings in their areas to personally listen to concerns and educate the citizens on efforts to address them. Ten new neighborhood watch groups also started in 2007. This is great news because you – the residents and homeowners – are also an integral piece to the puzzle of keeping Torrance safe. In fact, the last couple of burglary arrests made by the Police Department were accomplished through the tip-off provided by a member of the Neighborhood Watch program. With the success of this program, the Department is also starting a similar program with apartments and businesses.

Hand in hand with our stellar police department is our Class 1 Fire Department, which continues to respond effectively to calls for assistance to protect lives and properties. In 2007, as I promised, we added a fifth paramedic unit – a goal we were able to achieve

through the cooperation between management and the Torrance Firefighters Association who truly had the well-being and safety of the entire community in mind.

The landscape for our first-responders is changing. Approximately 73% of all requests are for rescue and emergency medical services. So, the addition of a paramedic unit is necessary to ensure the well-being of our community. It enables our Fire Department to be on scene anywhere in the City within five minutes. In fact, we already do this for 95% of all calls received. Now, with the 5th unit, we can continue to do even better. And as I look at our aging population and their changing needs, the importance of paramedic units is underlined, so I hope we can also add a sixth paramedic unit in the future.

Torrance is secure; it is the second safest city in L.A. County.

And within a safe community, residents and visitors can enjoy a wide variety of activities, creative programs and excellent facilities that the City offers – these are also pieces of the puzzle that help improve the quality of life. These pieces can provide you – whether you're a senior, a parent, a teen, or a young child – with an experience that elevates you from the stresses of a busy life, or the ho-hum of day-to-day routine, to the joys of living in a great city like Torrance. Through our variety of offerings, you can be swept up into the drama or comedy unfolding in the James Armstrong Theatre, be transported to



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different eras through the musical variations one can hear in the Nakano Theatre, or be mesmerized by the artistic installations at the Torrance Art Museum. You can also let all your concerns be washed away by a nice stroll on Torrance Beach, or at the Madrona Marsh. At one of our 34 parks, you may also engage in sports, check out the Farmers' Market or simply read a book under a tree.

As a City, we are keenly aware of the value that these experiences bring to you and your families, and to our community as a whole...besides opportunities for rest and relaxation, they foster our sense of community, nurturing that quality that is unique to our City, that leads people to describe Torrance as a "city with that hometown feel".

So, we keep improving on our programs and facilities. We installed new equipment at El Retiro Park and are developing a new park at the intersection of Lomita Boulevard and Anza Avenue. This is also why we continue to celebrate traditions such as the Fourth of July celebration at Wilson Park and our longest-standing tradition - the Armed Forces Day Celebration. Next year will be the Parade's 50th anniversary. I encourage each one of you to plan for that even now, and invite friends and family, for what will be an exciting event, that demonstrates our gratitude, and honors the selfless sacrifices of the men and women of our Armed Forces.

These are some of the numerous steps we took last year to make my vision of Torrance, one shared by my colleagues on the City Council, a reality.

With their support, I envisioned: responsible and transparent government. So, we replaced roll-call voting with an electronic voting system in the Council Chamber. At the recent city council meeting, the Torrance City Council made history as we signed the "Commitment to Integrity", which is part of the adopted Code of Ethics for the City of Torrance. Upon signing, we affirmed our commitment to abide by the values and standards stated in the Code. This gives residents a guide in holding their leaders accountable for serving the community responsibly, honestly, and with integrity. And I'd like to thank member of the Ethics Committee who toiled away for a year and a half to bring this forward; thank you for your time and dedication.

I envisioned: leaders who listen. So, besides our weekly Tuesday evening appointment with you at City Hall, the City Council went on road trips and met with you in your specific communities. We held workshops and meetings at North Torrance Library, at the Wilson Park Gym, at South Torrance Gym, and most recently at West Torrance Library. It fostered more dialogue, provided us with greater insight into your needs, and gave us the opportunity to help address those needs and concerns. I hope the dialogue continues, for your input is truly valuable in shaping the city of Torrance.

Together with the entire City Council, I envisioned: increased participation. So, we provided more avenues for participation, and these proved inviting. This year, I saw more residents become



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involved in civic activities. Many have served and continue to serve on different committees such as the Blue Ribbon Ethics Committee, and the Council Charter and Compensation Committee, among others.

The great response to the Commissioner Certification Training Program also spoke of the great desire and willingness of Torrance residents to serve their community. Consequently, we're hosting two sessions again this year – one in June and another in the fall. The response we receive speaks volumes of the quality of people we have here in Torrance... people want to serve. And I encourage anyone else who's interested in serving as a commissioner, to attend and become certified.

Even our youth answered this invitation. Through Students and Government Day, they are becoming more involved and aware about the vital role of local government in our community. Now in its second year, Students & Government Day enabled twenty-two eighth grade students to shadow elected officials and city management in their jobs and conduct some official business at a City Council meeting as a culmination of the day.

And this year, Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce launched the Torrance High School Leadership Program at North High. Similar to its original Leadership Torrance program, students get the chance to learn about the different components that make up our City and in doing so, sharpening the skills to become effective leaders in the future.

We envisioned: improving the lives of all, through the contribution of all members. As we continue working on updating the General Plan and the Strategic Plan, the contribution of all members has never been more important because these Plans will guide the direction of our future. Many have already contributed through the surveys and focus groups that were conducted as part of the process. And in your daily lives, I know that in your own way, as a resident, a homeowner, a business owner, an employee, a student, each one is truly making a positive contribution to the City. Thank you and I hope you keep it up.

Torrance has numerous things to offer, yet there are still people who don't know about them. In this past year, I have come to discover so much more of what makes our city a great place to live, work, and play. It makes me sad when I hear of our own residents not aware of what they have in their own backyard. I think, however, this is all about to change. A group of key players in our business community has begun to develop a plan, to more effectively market the jewels of the city of Torrance. This will help others "discover Torrance" and hopefully, see it as a destination for their travels.

But before we start with others, let's start with ourselves. I urge you... to discover Torrance... discover your community...discover the potential you have to shape the community you live in, and discover how to shape it for our youth who will inherit it from us.



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Mark Twain once said, “Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

So, discover Torrance. The ways are many and simple. I’ll suggest one way, which is another piece of the puzzle that is vital to our efforts in improving the quality of life in Torrance – volunteering. Volunteer your time, talent, skills or resources. From my experience, volunteers are often the lifeblood of events and programs...without them, many activities, and programs would not even occur. Recently, through the joint effort of Kiwanis and Rotary clubs, the first celebration recognizing the contributions of non-profit organizations was held in our city. The spirit of doing something, simply for the good of others, is already alive here in Torrance.

Volunteerism is important...its benefits numerous, just ask one of our shining examples... and we have quite a few in Torrance whom we recognize. These are individuals who live their lives rooted in the idea of giving back to the community... in whatever way they can, and in doing so, they leave indelible marks in the life of others and truly make a difference in our community. Last year, we honored one such person by presenting her with the City’s most prestigious award; former mayor Dee Hardison received the Jared Sidney Torrance Award

for her lifetime of service and commitment to our community. We can look to her as an example.

So this year, I encourage each one of you to follow her lead and discover how you can also leave your mark and help make Torrance better each day. I urge you to ask yourself, “what can I give... how can I give back?” and whatever the answer, I ask you to do it. Keep volunteerism alive in our community.

I started my speech today by stating my vision for the City of Torrance...why a vision? According to Rosabeth Moss Kanter, “A vision is not just a picture of what could be; it is an appeal to our better selves, a call to become something more.” This is why.

By sharing my vision with you, I hope that somehow, I have appealed to each one of you, to join me, to join the Council and the City in its efforts to keep shaping Torrance into something more... into a City that’s more safe...more secure... more enriched...more diverse, but always balanced.

Thank you.