

# 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

TORRANCE HIGH SCHOOL

### Summary

Torrance High School is located on a 9-acre, landscaped site at the end of El Prado Park near Downtown Torrance. The campus includes three well-preserved structures in Mediterranean styling built between 1917 and 1923, an auditorium in PWA Moderne that dates from 1938, and a variety of more recent structures built (or significantly remodeled) between 1952 and 1970. Because of the large number of newer buildings, the 4 significant structures are being nominated in a limited thematic format.

MAIN BUILDING (A)\* UTM: 11/377820/3744000 Acreage: 0.5

The Main Building, built in 1917, was the first building on the high school campus. It is a two-story structure designed in the Mediterranean styling and influenced by both Classical and Spanish Colonial design elements. The form is rectangular with the central two-story mass flanked by one-story wings.

The main entrance is the dominant element of the building's facade. It consists of a set of layered elements; a large pediment with cornice, a coffered arch, a flat window with pediment above, a large arched fanlight, and a flat door opening. The doorway is flanked by paired columns supporting a broken cornice at the first story level.

Alterations to the facade are minor. They consist primarily of modifications to window and door openings. The original design intent is still clearly evident. Two lamps of a more recent vintage flank the central doorway.

A detached building (the Home Economics Building) is located to the north and behind the original structure. This building is visually connected by means of a semi-circular colonnade, included in the nomination.

An addition also adjoins the original structure to the rear, forming a slightly offset "T" shaped configuration. The southern side of the area formed by the intersection of the two structures has been designed as a patio area with tile fountain, benches brick patio, and an arched portico with balcony above. This addition is also designed in a style compatible with and similar to the original.

HOME ECONOMICS BUILDING (B) UTM: 11/377760/3744030 Acreage: 0.3

The Home Economics Building at Torrance High School is in Mediterranean styling with classical detailing. This building dates from 1923.

The two-story cast-in-place concrete structure exhibits bold rectilinear massing which gives it a strong monumental quality. The exterior walls are painted white while the hip roof is steeply pitched and uses red

\*Note: Building letter designations are keyed to locations on site plan.

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Spanish clay tiles. The building is internally organized with a straight-forward double-loaded corridor on both floors.

Ornamentation of the facades is restrained. An entablature is suggested where the walls and roof meet by two moulding-like rain gutters. The main northeast facade is composed in the 2:1:2 proportion. A large three-inch deep rectangular recess on either side of the entry accentuates this proportional system while modulating the wall surface. In the center of the facade, a seven-step staircase leads to a shallow portico of the Tuscan order. This portico is three feet deep with one free-standing column on either side of the doorway supporting an entablature. Two pilasters are shadowed behind the columns on the wall. The entablature supports a finial, rather than a pediment, located directly above each column. Above the portico there is a vertical rectangular window trimmed with a shouldered architrave and a balcony railing.

There is no ornament on the other three facades except for the rain gutter entablature. Fenestration consists of large vertical rectangular windows on the northwest and southeast facades. The southwest facade is proportioned in the same manner as the main northeast facade, but is missing a portico and surface articulation.

Alterations include sun control louvers and solar glass double doors and windows on the southeast fenestration. A building exit and steel staircase from the second floor were added to the southwest facade to conform to Uniform Building Code's requirements. While these alterations adversely affect the original design of the building, they are reversible.

TORRANCE HIGH SCHOOL ANNEX (TORRANCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL) (K) UTM: 11/378000/  
3743690 Acreage: 1  
The Torrance High School Annex is an L-shaped cast-in-place concrete structure. It is designed in an Italian Renaissance style and was completed incrementally between 1923 and 1925.

The two-story building has two virtually identical entrances located at the one-third points of its principal east facade. Each entrance is of a vertical proportion with a broad pilaster on either side of the doorway, supporting a simple entablature and pediment. Above each doorway is a vertical rectangular window without ornament. Fenestration is grouped into large horizontal rectangular segments separated by pilaster strips which run vertically the full height of the facade.

At the north end of the long, rectangular building, an auditorium extends to the west at 90 degrees to form the leg of the "L". This auditorium employs Palladian window motifs as opposed to rectilinear groupings, but is otherwise consistent with the rest of the building. It is, however, lower in height. The roof of both portions of the edifice

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Building	Label on Plot Plan	Date of Construction
*Main Building	(A)	1917
*Home Economics	(B)	1923
*Torrance High School Annex	(K)	1923
*Auditorium	(AUD)	1938
Classroom Bungalow	(C)	1952
Classroom Bungalow	(D)	1952
Classroom Bungalow	(E)	1952
Cafeteria	(CAFE)	1954
Administration Building	(G)	1963
Boys' Gymnasium	(I)	1936 (altered)
Girls' Gymnasium	(L)	1965
Science Building	(M)	1965
Industrial Arts Building	(N)	1965
Music Building	(J)	1966
Library	(X)	1970
Classroom Building	(Y)	1970

\*Nominated buildings

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one of a handful of planned communities in the United States and was first envisioned as a model garden-industrial city by its founders. The original city plans were designed by the Olmsted Brothers of Boston, Massachusetts, sons of the celebrated landscape architect Frederic Law Olmsted.

The Olmsteds' plan called for the separation of residential, industrial, and commercial sectors. A long boulevard, the El Prado, divided the downtown business district extending through the residential area as a common. It was aligned to frame Mt. San Antonio and the San Gabriel Mountains fifty miles to the northeast. Two buildings were planned to face each other across this impressive stretch of parkway: the railroad depot and the city hall. The city hall was never built on this site; instead, Torrance School was situated on the most scenic parcel in the downtown area.

Because of the new construction described above, the few remaining early structures are dispersed throughout the campus and are being nominated individually in a limited thematic format.

**MAIN BUILDING (A)**

Architect: ROBERT ALLEN FARRELL

The Main Building was the first, and originally the only, building of Torrance High School. Named Torrance School and accommodating students from kindergarten through the twelfth grade, it opened on September 11, 1917, and was completed December 23, 1917. Constructed at a cost of \$34,230, it was designed to readily incorporate future additions. It provided seven classrooms, a principal's office, and a makeshift auditorium which could be improvised by sliding partitions between the kindergarten and primary rooms.

In 1921, a rear addition designed by E.H. Cline was built at a cost of \$38,849. Later referred to as the "Senior Patio," the addition included a brick patio with a tile fountain and benches. A long-standing tradition dictates that only Seniors (12th grade students) are permitted to congregate or cross the site. Two one-story wings were also added to the building.

Beginning in 1974, major rehabilitation and restoration work totalling over two million dollars was focused on the Main Building, preserving and enhancing the building's unique architecture.

**HOME ECONOMICS BUILDING (B)**

Architects: Farrell and Miller

The Home Economics Building was added to the school as part of a \$200,000 construction program begun in 1922. At that time, the school population was only 537 students - an increase of 114 in one year - but a campaign to build 3,000 new homes to house Torrance factory workers promised a much larger influx of students in the near future. The Los Angeles City School District purchased 17 adjoining acres of land and contracted with Farrell and Miller to design two additional buildings for the school.

The whole project included two separate structures, one to the east of the Main Building and one to the west, each connected to the Main Building with a

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colonnade. The east building was an auditorium. The one on the west was the present Home Economics Building.

In 1933, an earthquake so damaged the Auditorium and the eastern colonnade that they had to be demolished. The Home Economics Building and the colonnade connecting it to the Main Building were unaffected and remain intact and well-preserved today.

Architect:

TORRANCE HIGH SCHOOL ANNEX (Torrance Elementary School)(K) E.H. Cline

The Torrance High School Annex, some 800 feet south of the Main Building, was built in 1923 as the Torrance Elementary School. The architect was E.H. Cline, who also designed the rear addition to the Main Building. Before it opened, Torrance School (the present Torrance High School) accommodated both elementary and high school students. In 1923, with the opening of the new elementary school for kindergarten through sixth grade students, Torrance School was renamed Torrance High School.

In 1963, the Torrance Elementary School building became part of the high school campus. Its two-story design was now considered inappropriate for elementary school use, and the high school needed additional classroom space. The Board of Education built a new elementary school facility nearby, and the old 1923 building was annexed to the high school. It was renamed Torrance High School Annex and became an integral part of the high school campus.

For 40 years this building was in continuous use as an elementary school. Up until the 1950's, it was one of only four elementary schools in the city. Two of the other three were subsequently demolished. The third, similar in style to the Torrance Elementary School, was completed in 1932. Thus, although the Torrance High School Annex is not used as an elementary school at present, it is the oldest remaining elementary school building in the city.

AUDITORIUM (Assembly Hall) (AUD) Architect: Wesley Eager

The old auditorium at Torrance High School was irreparably damaged by an earthquake in 1933. It was demolished, along with the colonnade connecting it to the Main Building.

In the fall of 1938, a new auditorium, designed by Wesley Eager, opened on the campus. The Torrance Herald's special edition, "Torrance on the Air," published September 15, 1938, praised the new building:

"The outstanding addition to school properties this year will be the new \$100,700 high school assembly hall which will seat some 700. This building, now in the final stages of construc-

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTIONS

Boundaries are lines of convenience which encompass the historic resources and significant associated features.

Main Building (A)

Beginning at the east corner of the Main Building and proceeding northwest 275 feet to the north corner of the Main Building, then turning left and proceeding 25 feet southwest to the colonnade connecting the Main Building to the Home Economics Building, then proceeding 85 feet in a westward curve around the outside of the colonnade to the Home Economics Building, then turning left and proceeding 2 feet to the corner of the Home Economics Building, then turning right and proceeding southwest 100 feet along the side of the Home Economics Building to a point directly opposite the rear end of the Main Building, then turning left and proceeding 325 feet southeast across the landscaped area between the Home Economics Building and the Main Building, across the rear end of the Main Building and the landscaped area directly to the south of it, to a point directly opposite the southeast side of the Main Building, then turning left and proceeding 175 feet northeast across the landscaped area and the southeast side of the building, back to the starting point.

Home Economics Building (B)

Beginning at the east corner of the Home Economics Building and proceeding northwest 62 feet then turning left and proceeding 115 feet southwest along the side of the building, then turning left and proceeding southeast 62 feet across the rear of the building, then turning left and proceeding northeast 115 feet along the side of the building to the starting point.

Auditorium/Assembly Hall (AUD)

Starting at the east corner of the building and proceeding northwest 175 feet to the north corner of the building, turning left and proceeding southwest 90 feet across the front of the building, to the west corner of the building, turning left and proceeding 165 feet southeast to the south corner, then turning left and proceeding northeast 90 feet across the back of the building, thus returning to the starting point.

Torrance High School Annex (K)

Beginning at the southwest corner of the building and proceeding 90 feet east, then turning left and proceeding north 365 feet across the front of the building, then turning left and proceeding 175 feet west, then turning left again and proceeding 50 feet south across the end of this wing of the building, then turning left and proceeding 75 feet east, then turning right and proceeding 315 feet across the rear of the building back to the starting point.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Torrance High School Campus Thematic Resources

State California LA County

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Home Economics Building

Substantive Review

Keeper

Sinda McClelland 10.13.83

Attest

2. Auditorium

Substantive Review

Keeper

Sinda McClelland 10.13.83

Attest

3. Torrance School

Substantive Review

Keeper

Sinda McClelland 10.13.83

Attest

4. Main Building

Substantive Review

Keeper

Sinda McClelland 10.13.83

Attest

5.

Keeper

Attest

6.

Keeper

Attest

7.

Keeper

Attest

8.

Keeper

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9.

Keeper

Attest

10.

Keeper

Attest