

President's Message

By Karen Wheeler



Dear Friends:

It's all coming toward us! The Holiday Season, New Years, the end of 2024 and the start of 2025! Should we worry?! Not us, here at the Torrance Sister City Association. We live at the intersection of Happy St. and Busy Blvd. We look forward to a lot more "happy" and "busy".

In 2025, the monthly Association Meetings will once again be located in the West Annex Commission Room at 7 PM, but starting in January 2025 the meetings will be ON the THIRD TUESDAY of each month.

Here's what else is happening in our neighborhood:

Our 2025 Summer Program is in development. We have selected a new Adult Leader. We will proudly introduce this person at the Annual Alumni Reunion Potluck on January 11, 2025. (See the complete article in this newsletter for location, time, what to bring, etc.)

The applicants to become 2025 Student Ambassadors have submitted their paperwork and we look forward to introducing them at the Alumni Reunion. If you are curious, please come and meet them. They would love to hear your experiences with TSCA. TSCA is just beginning the selection process that will take several weeks, with interviews, home visits, and social activities. As a participant in the Student Selection Committee myself, I can tell you it's a great way to meet some of Torrance's best young people.

The Bunka-Sai Festival planning committee is also underway. A lot happens before we can actually start cutting vegetables and lighting up the barbecue grill. Bunka-Sai weekend is **April 5-6, 2025**. But now is when we start looking for donations from corporate and individual donors. If your business or your employer has something to offer.... Let Alina Nadsady know at unasonrisa@aol.com. We also get our chairpersons lined up early, so responsibilities are shared and nobody gets overwhelmed. Our next organizing meeting is December 9, 2024 at 7 pm in the Katy Geissert Library Meeting Room. You don't have to be an experienced chairperson to show up. If you are curious to know how this event gets done, or have an idea or two to improve things, come to the meeting.

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DECEMBER 2024

Bunka Sai planning meeting

Monday 12/9/2024. 7:00PM

Katy Geissert Library Meeting Room

There is NO TSCA Monthly

Association Meeting in December.

Executive Board Meeting

Tuesday 12/17/2024. 7:00PM

City Hall West Annex Commission Room

JANUARY 2025

Alumni Reunion

Saturday 1/11/2025 11AM to 2PM

Ken Miller Recreation Hall

TSCA Monthly Association Meeting

Tuesday 1/21/2024 7:00PM

City Hall West Annex Commission Room

Bunka Sai Planning Meeting

Wednesday 1/22/2024 7:00PM

Katie Geissert Library Meeting Room

Have you heard that TSCA has a job opening? Well, not exactly. It's more like a life-opening!! We are offering an opportunity for a High School ENGLISH TEACHER to live and work in Kashiwa Japan, starting in August 2025. There is a salary and housing, and a current teacher to show you the ropes. See the notice in this Newsletter and on our website. The selection process kicks off in early 2025.

Thank you all for taking the time to keep up with TSCA people and events throughout the past year. We look forward to continuing the adventure with you in 2025. Don't forget— **in 2025 the Monthly Association Meetings will be on the THIRD TUESDAY in the West Annex Commission Room at 7 PM.**

From our TSCA family to yours, a heartfelt Happy Holidays and best wishes for your health, prosperity and happiness in the coming year.

Alumni Reunion

Saturday, January 11, 2025 | 11 a.m.—2 p.m.

Ken Miller Recreation Center | 3300 Civic Center Drive, Torrance

Celebrate the New Year with old friends and new! Join us at the annual Alumni Reunion for the installation of new officers and board members. Come enjoy the 2024 ambassadors' video presentation of their trip to Kashiwa last July. Renew friendships, share favorite memories, and enjoy tasty potluck dishes. Applicants for the 2025 student exchange program will be attending to learn more about the trip of a lifetime.

Individuals or couples: Bring a dessert or a salad/side dish

Families: Bring a main dish and a salad/side dish

Please have your serving utensil labeled with your name.

Drinks will be provided.

Feel free to wear your happi coat, yukata, or t-shirt from your year.

We'll also be accepting membership renewals at the event.

For more info, contact Shirley Tanaka, ksjtanaka3@yahoo.com

Torrance Sister City Association

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Eve Rappoport

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Comments or submissions?

Please send an email to

tscanewsletter@gmail.com

Membership List

Compiled by Alyssa Yamauchi, Membership Chair

Please see page 10 to renew your membership for 2025! New and renewing members will be listed in future newsletters.

Biking in Japan by Jordan Kisiler

Student Post Visit Trip Report

Getting around Japan is done in many forms. I was told that the most common is riding a bike and I was not deceived. Every day while I was there, I would see people out and riding even in the scorching hot sun. Although I had done research in advance with regards to infrastructure, norms for cyclists, and the practicality of riding a bike everywhere, it was definitely not the full picture. I found that while most of my research was very true about biking in Japan, there were still some surprises.

Throughout the trip I saw a lot of infrastructure in place for riders. While I was researching, I was expecting there to be more bike lanes as a little bit more parking space. In my initial research, my source made it seem like these bike parking lots were under construction and I was surprised to find that they were so commonplace. There was a bike rack everywhere. At the train station, there were rows of bike racks. At schools there were normally sheltered areas where students could lock their bikes while they studied. One of the things that shocked me the most was how even the Seven Elevens and Lawson convenience stores had a place to lock up a bike.

Along with the bike parking zones, I expected to see more bike lanes, but I was very surprised to find that more often than not, that there was no bike lane at all. Riders would have to ride on the narrow roads, or on the sidewalks. Within Kashiwa, I never had problems with the lack of a bike lane while I was out riding with my host brother. The culture around cyclists was very respectful.

Another aspect of cycling in Japan that I found interesting was the whole culture and norms around biking. I initially expected for there to be control in the way people rode, which turned out to be true. I had also expected that everyone would wear a helmet, and was shocked to find out that nobody wore a helmet while riding. According to my host brother who rides to school every day, "helmets are too hot and uncomfortable to ride in, so we just don't wear them and ride carefully".

Actually, riding in Japan was a much different experience than I had imagined. I thought going out for a bike ride would be just like at home or on my way to school, but it wasn't anywhere near as crowded or dangerous. While I was out with my host brother, we would sometimes have to ride on the side of the road, and the cars were very respectful. They would give us enough space to ride comfortably before we could let them pass. While I was observing the cyclists, I also looked at the design of their bikes. Every bike that I saw followed the same slim and practical design of narrow tires, a thin but ergonomic frame, a small basket in the front and a mute paint scheme. The convention was to blend in and not look too fancy. The bikes were completely practical.

The popularity of biking in Japan comes from its practicality compared to using a car. On a free day with my second host family, we went to the supermarket by car. The market was close to their house. Parking took quite a while, was crowded and would end up costing a bit of money. It is understandable why biking is such a popular way to pick up groceries and make small trips as it alleviates the need to find and pay for parking. The practical design of most of the bikes make transporting the food back to home very efficient and simple, and the short distance to the grocery store makes it worth the effort.

Through my observations, I found that there is much more riding infrastructure than what was depicted in my initial research, the conventions of riding a bike are very different from what I expected to see, and I now see how practical biking is for a Japanese citizen.

The School Uniforms of Japan by Aidan Reynolds

Student Post Visit Trip Report

I had a delightful time while I was in Japan. It was an amazing experience to visit schools and interact with people my age from another country. While at these schools, I was able to look at and ask questions about the school uniforms the students would wear. This report will summarize my findings about Japanese uniforms in Japan.

I will first talk about what I expected. In my pre-trip report, I mentioned two types of uniforms in Japan. Although I was unable to see the more traditional uniforms, I was able to see and ask questions about the blazer-style uniform. The research I did regarding this type of uniform was accurate and I was not surprised with what I saw. Another thing that I knew beforehand was PE uniforms. Students are required to wear school-issued jerseys whenever they are in Physical Education classes.

Despite doing research on uniforms before the trip, there were many new things that I learned. The first thing I learned was about uniforms for middle school. Since I focused most of my attention on researching high school uniforms, I knew little about the uniforms of middle and elementary school students. More accurately, I was surprised to learn that they had no uniforms. The students were able to wear their clothes instead of school-issued uniforms. Another surprising thing was the popularity of uniforms outside of schools. On many occasions, including Tokyo Disney Land, I saw students wearing school uniforms. When I asked about it, it turns out that uniforms are commonly worn outside of schools. The reasons behind this are that they are used as a way of identifying students as well as many students find them comfortable.

One other thing I learned about was Japanese gals. Although not specifically related to my topic, a significant portion of their subculture involved modifying school uniforms. When I saw them while in Japan, I noticed that their uniforms were less taken care of when compared to other students. Their clothes were baggy, skirts short, loose neckties, and their bags were covered in decorations. They also wear a lot of cosmetics and hair accessories, something that is not allowed in Japanese schools. Although I never directly interacted with any at the schools we went to, I saw some on trains and out in public. After learning more about them from the internet and my guides, I decided to include them and the modifications they make to their uniforms.

According to a survey I used in my pre-trip report, an overwhelming majority of high school students liked their uniforms. I decided to do my own smaller survey to see if this information is accurate. I had twelve people respond to my questionnaire with the following results. Out of the 12 people I asked, eight said that they liked the uniform. Some of the reasons they gave were that it was nice not being able to worry about what to wear, it made them look cool and like students, and that the uniform was cute. Out of the 12 people I asked, eight said that they didn't like the uniforms. Some of the reasons they listed were because it got rid of individuality and the uniforms are gender divided. Both groups agreed that it would be nice to have shorter skirts and get rid of the rules regarding school uniforms. One issue I had with this survey was whether students felt the uniform was comfortable. Many of the students who said they liked the uniforms thought that the uniforms were comfortable and were better than the uniforms they used to wear. The students who said they didn't like the uniforms thought that the uniforms were too hot and uncomfortable. This makes me believe that the differences between summer and winter uniforms and the school you go to influence if you like the uniform.

Some other information I learned about school uniforms in Japan is their cost. In Japan, you have to buy your school's uniform from special shops, and this tends to be very expensive. This means that many students only have one uniform. Students go to great lengths to make sure that their uniforms do not get ruined to avoid having to buy a new pair. I like the uniform that my school makes me wear. Although it isn't as formal as the uniforms in Japan, I agree with what many of the students I surveyed said about their uniforms. I had a lot of fun asking questions about and learning more about school uniforms. I wish I could have spent more time in Japan learning about their uniforms and interacting with those who wear them. I can't wait to go back to Japan and see if there are any new uniform trends or if anyone I asked has new opinions about school uniforms.

Japanese Train Culture by Colin Welsch

Student Post Visit Trip Report

When I visited Kashiwa in July, my motivations included meeting my host families, practicing Japanese and savoring the incredible cuisine. But above all, I was excited to explore the complexities of Japan's train systems and the culture surrounding them. Before visiting, I thought I had a clear understanding of Japan's trains—a beautiful system that was used by all, and with manners followed and supported by everyone. However, thanks to the Sister City Exchange Program, I learned that Japan and trains are not as simple as I once thought. Coming out of the trip, I now have a much more nuanced and educated understanding of how the Japanese use trains.

First, I'll start with the areas of Japan's train culture being just as passionate as expected.

Previously, I had heard about the significance of Japan's train fandom. As someone who is interested in Japanese trains and public transportation all over the world, I have been exposed to this fandom for quite a while. With my Instagram "For You" page constantly filled with pictures of Japanese trains, I was well aware of their popularity. My host family selections worked perfectly with this. In the words of my first host mother, it was a "perfect match". My host brother, Hidehiko, is a massive train enthusiast. He has ridden every single Shinkansen line in Japan, and together we bonded over our love of railways.

On our free day, I was able to see—and purchase—the incredible variety of goods available for the Japanese train fandom. The presence of train fandom in Japan can even be seen in the stations themselves. Hidehiko taught me that many major stations sell platform admission-only tickets, a train-sighting cheat code that we used on our free day to view dozens of Shinkansen up close and personal—for an affordable 150 yen per person. We were joined by many train fanatics taking pictures of the trains together with us, many with expensive cameras set up to get the perfect angle of their favorite train.

But not all things proved to be the same as I expected. In my pre-trip report, I raved on and on about the massive amounts of ridership Japan's railway network boasts. While this is certainly the case, and I learned that many of the Kashiwa students use trains when going towards central Tokyo, some of them almost every day, I also learned a lot about the many situations that people choose not to use trains.

My second host family was my biggest example of this. A family of four with a preschool-aged daughter, they showed me that there is still a calculation of whether or not to use trains. According to them, for people with toddlers and young children, taking the train can be quite burdensome, and that taking a car is often the easier option.

Another spot where my expectations were subverted came in the area of train etiquette. Going into the program, I had an image of Japan's train etiquette as quite black-and-white. The area that I was particularly convinced of was the shunning of conversation. Scared to be the "noisy foreigner", I was always embarrassed when me and my fellow Torrance Students busted onto a train in the middle of a conversation. However, my host families challenged the reality I assumed I knew. They said that when Japanese people ride trains in groups, they talk all the time. They unanimously agreed that talking on the train is completely allowed, and that the only reason it can feel prohibited is because most people taking the train—especially in Tokyo—are riding alone.

Thanks to my time in Kashiwa, I was able to experience Japan and its train culture firsthand. Before coming to Japan, I thought I knew everything. However, in Kashiwa I learned that Japan and trains aren't as simple as I once thought. Because of my experiences in Kashiwa, I now have a much better understanding of the nuances of train culture in Japan—and for that, I cannot express my gratitude enough.

Thank you to my parents for supporting me in taking this opportunity. Thank you to my teachers and coaches for endorsing me for this program. Thank you to my host families for generously hosting me in your homes. Thank you to all the Torrance and Kashiwa delegates for giving me some of the best friends I have ever had. And thank you to everyone at TSCA and KIRA who spent countless hours planning and fundraising for my trip of a lifetime. Thank you for giving me a second home—Kashiwa, Japan.

Bunka Sai 3: The Final Dance by Chris Pigao

I would be remiss not to open this article with “Time is a flat circle” or “Time works in mysterious ways” because this time around, time is slowly rearing its head in my direction. These statements and metaphors seem apropos for this article since, as you probably are aware, it is about my favorite event of the school year!

On September 13th and 14th, Ichikashi had its annual Bunka-Sai festival. The festival was met with the sun’s beaming rays mixed with a dash of humidity. However, luckily the rain did not bless us with its presence. The students spent the beginning of the week decorating their classrooms and creating innovative themes such as Space Mountain, American Diner, and even Dippin’ Dots. This year, the school allowed classes to serve warm, cooked snacks such as French Fries from the senior students and Churros provided by our 3A International Class.

Their class decided on serving churros after their homestay visit to Torrance and the various times they went to Disneyland during each respective homestay exchange. Their Matcha, Chocolate, and Original flavors were such a big hit, that they quickly sold out of all the flavors in such a short amount of time.

With our underclassmen international students, they provided such great entertainment. The 2A class, who previously held a Disco Party the year prior, decided to revamp the Disco, making it a classy Jazz club-esque feel. Our students, DJ Aizawa and DJ Ryouma, provided a variety of genres for the patrons to listen to while Mayako brought LP vinyl records to spin as

well. Guests came through to sing songs and they provided cool refreshments for everyone to drink. While last year’s version had their infectious energy, they certainly brought a more maturer side to their attraction.

Our freshman 1A class decided to do an international arcade. Games from 4 different countries, China, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Japan were played by patrons. Simple games such as Jakenpon and Hacky Sack were played, while more meticulous ones like Ludo and a Quiz Game made players think strategically. After finishing each game, the participants were given snack prizes for the games that they won.

With many alumni coming back to the school, I was able to reconnect with the recent graduated students. M.D, an international student from last year’s 3A class, updated me on his current life in University. Hinako, a very eccentric student who excelled in the brass band, came back to support her underclassmen’s performance. In showing support for their underclassmen, my former student and bandmate in the Rock Music Club - Nozomu, came back to watch his former clubmates on their last performance on the big stage. For the Senior members of the club, Bunka-Sai is their final concert performance. Afterwards, they have to prepare for graduation, focusing on their future after Ichikashi. This was a very special performance because I started out with these students from my 1st year and now I’ve seen all of them grow into amazing musicians.

Memory of the 16th Exchange Program by Yoko Nakano

I sometimes remember the hot summer in 1989. I was an adult leader of the 16th student delegation, who were two boys and six girls. We left Kashiwa for Torrance on August 7.

On the plane, the students were full of joy as they talked about many things they were expecting to encounter. However, when going through immigration at LAX, the tension was extreme and everyone stared at the officer with a fearful look on their faces.

As the students headed for the exit to get their luggage, they were greeted by Mrs. Mikko Haggott, President of TSCA, my counterpart adult leader, Mrs. Hazel Taniguchi, host families, and the 16th Torrance students. The Kashiwa students were surprised at how welcoming everyone was.

During our stay, TSCA carefully planned our program, which made our daily activities very enjoyable and impressive. Thanks to their planning, everyone at the places we visited asked us, "Are you having fun?" and we were able to interact with each other.

The students learned many things, such as differences in culture and lifestyle while staying with host families. For example, the boys were surprised to find that their host fathers did the household chores such as washing clothes and cooking meals, etc. The girls tried their best to convey their intentions when talking with their host families. During their three-week stay, the students were able to experience firsthand the importance and joy of communication, which was a great benefit for them as they were able to get a taste of people's lives by trying their best despite the language barrier.

Our most memorable experience was a four-day/three-night cruise on Azure Seas from August 21-25. Azure Seas is a cruise ship that runs from Los Angeles to Ensenada through San Diego.

On the afternoon of August 21, we boarded the cruise ship and headed for San Diego. It was a very large ship and there were many other passengers on board. The ship was clean and comfortable. When the ship stopped in San Diego, we took a city tour. We visited the place the World's Fair used to be held, the historical village, and did some shopping. In the evening, the captain hosted a dinner party, which Mikko-san, the students and I attended in formal attire. At the entrance of the restaurant, the captain welcomed each of us with a handshake. While eating, we enjoyed piano performances and other attractions. After dinner, we gathered in Mikko-san's room to talk about our next plans. Some of the students had never been on a cruise ship before, so it was a really great experience for them.

I would like to thank again even after 35 years not only the members of the TSCA, but also the many people who helped us to make this an unforgettable experience.





TORRANCE SISTER CITY ASSOCIATION, INC.
3031 Torrance Boulevard Torrance, CA 90503

October 2024

Dear Friends of Torrance Sister City Association,

The Torrance Sister City Association (TSCA) will hold its 50th Annual Bunka-Sai Japanese Cultural Festival at the Torrance Cultural Arts Center on Saturday and Sunday, April 5th and 6th, 2025. All proceeds from the festival support TSCA's annual Student Cultural Exchange Program with Torrance's Sister City, Kashiwa, Japan.

Each year in July, Torrance sends eight high school students and an adult leader to Kashiwa and Kashiwa sends a similar group to Torrance in August. Both groups live with host families for several weeks, visit historical and cultural landmarks and meet with key business and government officials in each city. These student ambassadors gain cross-cultural experiences that enhance their knowledge and understanding of each other's culture and form many life-long friendships.

Maria, N. a teenager from Torrance who participated as a student exchange ambassador in 2024 shares, "Being an Ambassador of Torrance in Kashiwa was a life-changing experience. My favorite parts of the exchange program were befriending so many Japanese students in the schools we visited - people that I never would have met otherwise; and getting to be a part of everyday life with my host families in Japan."

TSCA is asking for donations for our Bunka-Sai Japanese Cultural Festival that will be used for drawings and/or silent auctions held during the festival. All funds raised will support the exchange program, which is so valuable to creating cross-cultural exchanges between our two cities.

Can you please donate an item? Contributions received by March 1st are acknowledged in the program book and on our website. The Torrance Sister City Association is a nonprofit organization sponsored by the City of Torrance and all donations to TSCA are tax deductible. Our tax identification numbers are: **Federal #:95-3079582, State #:7874400.**

Thank you for your consideration in supporting our Student Cultural Exchange Program!

In appreciation,

Karen Wheeler
TSCA President

www.torrancesistercity.org



TORRANCE SISTER CITY ASSOCIATION, INC.
3031 Torrance Boulevard Torrance, CA 90503

**2025 Bunka Sai Japanese Cultural Festival
Donation Tracking Form**

Please complete and attach to your donation by March 1, 2025

Name or company making donation:	
Contact person for donation (if different from above)	
Address of Contact Person	
Phone Number of Contact Person	
Email of Contact Person	
Description of Item(s) donated:	
Estimated value of gift:	
Please list any conditions, restrictions, or expiration dates that may apply. If you are donating a gift certificate, we kindly ask that the expiration date be one year from our event (event is April 5-6, 2025).	
To whom should we send a letter to acknowledge this donation? Please fill in the information below.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mark here if same contact as above <input type="checkbox"/> Please send to: Name: Address:



Torrance Sister City Association

Dear Friends of TSCA,

This past year has been another successful one for our TSCA programs. We are back to operating at 100% capacity, making for a very full and fun calendar year with new friendships and core memories made! The support and participation in our events and programs have truly been heartwarming, and we are proud of our positive impact on the Torrance community.

We couldn't be more thankful for your continued support through your membership dues and donation contributions—especially over the last few years as we rebuilt our programs. Your contributions continue to help offset increasing annual operational costs, allowing our fundraising efforts to focus on continuing our mission of promoting friendship, goodwill, and understanding through people-to-people connections.

Thank you for being a part of our 50-year story. As friends of TSCA and alums of our programs, your role has been integral. We hope that TSCA has played an important part in your story as well, and we look forward to your continued support and consideration.

Best regards,
Alyssa Yamauchi
TSCA Membership Chair

Our 2025 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE has begun!

There are several membership levels available,
and two convenient payment options:



Pay by MAIL:
Complete the form below,
and mail with your check.



Pay ONLINE:

Check out with **PayPal**

Scan the QR code
or visit

www.torrancesistercity.org



Postmark deadline to be included in the printed TSCA Membership Directory is **02/19/25**.

----- Cut and return the below with your check payment. -----

2025 TSCA Membership Application Form

Mail your check and this form to: Torrance Sister City Association, c/o Community Services Dept, 3031 Torrance Blvd., Torrance, CA 90503



**TORRANCE
SISTER CITY
ASSOCIATION**

3031 Torrance Boulevard • Torrance, California 90503

Except for the Lifetime Membership all dues are in effect from January 1 to December 31.*

☐

\$20 Individual

☐

\$40 Family

☐

\$75+ Supporting

☐

\$125+ Benefactor

☐

\$200+ Corporate

☐

\$2,000+ Lifetime Membership*

Donation to TSCA (in addition to annual dues): \$ _____

☐

I am Interested in TSCA activities, specifically: _____

☐

For the TSCA Directory, only include my: _____

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Please make your check payable to: TSCA

Member Information

Please complete your contact information directly below and to the right.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Additional Contact Info

***TSCA Newsletters are sent to all members via email.*

Email**: _____

Phone: _____

If you have questions about membership, please send an email to: tscamembership@gmail.com



Teach English in Kashiwa, Japan

The Torrance Sister City Association seeks qualified applicants for one high school English teacher in Kashiwa, Japan, the Sister City of Torrance. A minimum one-year contract runs from August 1, 2025, to July 31, 2026. The contract is renewable for a maximum three-year assignment.

Duties: Conduct and assist in a variety of English conversation classes; assist with coordinating campus visits by parents, administrators, and junior high students; and assist with extracurricular activities, which may include judging and assisting with speech contests, serving as adviser to the English Conversation Club and business trips, and coaching students for college interviews. Volunteer work with KIRA (Kashiwa International Relations Association) and other city groups may also be required.

Qualifications

Applicants must:

- Live or work in Torrance
- Be fluent in written and spoken English
- Hold a Bachelor's degree plus a teaching credential or have demonstrated teaching experience
- Possess a keen interest in the Japanese language and culture
- Represent the Torrance Sister City Association and foster the goals and objectives of the English Teacher Exchange Program.

Compensation

- Annual salary of approximately 4,800,000 Japanese yen
- One-way airfare from Los Angeles to Japan
- National health insurance (deducted from monthly salary)
- Subsidized housing and transportation allowance
- Paid Japanese holidays and personal days

To Apply

Please email your resume and cover letter to Lori Chong Eurich (Chair, English Teacher Selection Committee) at torrancesistercityinfo@gmail.com

Also, two recent letters of recommendation from people not related to the applicant must be emailed directly to the Chair.

Deadline to apply is

March 20, 2025

Qualified applicants will be scheduled for panel interviews in mid-April 2025.

Questions? Send an email to torrancesistercityinfo@gmail.com



**Torrance Sister City
Association**

3031 Torrance Boulevard
Torrance, CA 90503