

A Study of Small Businesses in the City of Carson, California

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Prepared for:

The City of Carson, California



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Executive Summary

In the latter part of 2007, the city council received complaints that the city was not doing enough to assist small businesses. City staff met with business owners to discuss available small business resources. The city's Economic Development Commission studied the matter and directed staff to conduct a survey of the city's small business community. The city surveyed 1,817 small businesses located throughout the city. The study showed Carson small businesses have generally increased their overall growth and activity and are a major employment sector for the entire city.

The majority of small businesses in the city are oriented to take advantage of Carson's central location along two major federal interstate highways and the city's general proximity to the Port of Los Angeles, the Port of Long Beach and Los Angeles International Airport. "Wholesale Distribution", "Manufacturing", and "Transportation" were the three most common industries selected by survey respondents, accounting for 138 total small businesses surveyed, or 50.92% of the 288 returned surveys.

As a major employer, small businesses located throughout the city of Carson employ on average 22.10 individuals per small business and pay an average hourly wage of between \$10.01 and \$30.00 an hour with 90 total survey respondents paying between \$15.01 and \$20.00 per hour. A significant portion of small businesses located within the city also provide some type of employee benefit such as health care, a retirement package or dental care. A total of 176 survey respondents, or 61.11% of the 288 returned surveys, indicated that they did provide their employees with some type of employee benefit *in addition* to the employee's average hourly wage.

Based upon the answers returned by the 288 survey respondents, there are several opportunities for the city of Carson, in partnership with other small business assistance organizations – i.e., the Los Angeles SBA District Office, Los Angeles SCORE, and Orange County SCORE – to provide better assistance and outreach to small businesses located throughout the city.

Of the 288 returned surveys, 164 total respondents or 56.94% indicated that they *did not* have a written business plan. According to Coupal (2004) and Korsching and Allen (2000), and their national studies of small business success, the successful development of an effective business plan and its proper implementation can mean the difference between success and failure. In fact, only 24 total survey respondents, or 8.33% of all returned surveys,

indicated that they had been assisted by Carson Economic Development, Los Angeles SCORE, Orange County SCORE or the Los Angeles SBA (Small Business Administration) District Office.

Comparatively, 29 survey respondents indicated a desire for assistance in writing a business plan. An additional 54 survey respondents indicated a need for assistance in securing a small business loan. Thirty-two survey respondents wanted assistance in writing a marketing plan and 26 survey respondents would welcome assistance in acquiring market data for the city of Carson. In regards to specific services, 23 survey respondents indicated that they would like assistance with accounting services and an additional 20 survey respondents indicated that they would like assistance with payroll services.

Although there is considerable room for the city and its small business assistance partner organizations to provide additional levels of support for Carson's growing small businesses, the city of Carson itself is perceived to be a supportive and business-friendly environment. A total of 165 survey respondents (57.29% of the 288 returned surveys) believe that Carson's local government is committed to solving the problems the business owner faces. A total of 202 survey respondents (70.14% of 288) believe that the city of Carson has adequate growth potential – in terms of both population and jobs – to support small business development in the future. Finally, a total of 221 survey respondents (76.74% of 288) feel that the city of Carson has a positive and business-friendly image.

Results and Analysis

Introduction

As part of the city of Carson's ongoing commitment to the development of small businesses, the city developed a small business survey to examine current trends in the Carson small business community and identify potential avenues and areas in which the city could potentially assist existing small businesses and help new small businesses to grow.

The survey used for this study was developed based upon past Carson surveys as well as a study by Steinmann and Harris (2007) for the University of Nevada, Reno. Additional studies, including Coupal (2004) and Korsching and Allen (2000), were also used to help develop the survey used in this study.

Survey Results

In 2008, the city developed a survey to measure the current impact and activities of small businesses located throughout the city of Carson. The survey consisted of 40 total questions divided into six general categories, including:

1. General Information (5 total questions)
2. Operation and Labor Information (6 total questions)
3. Physical Characteristics (9 total questions)
4. Assistance and Support (2 total questions)
5. Carson Area Strengths and Weaknesses (11 total questions)
6. Demographic Information (7 total questions)

A total of 1,817 total surveys were mailed out in February 2008 to various small businesses located throughout the city of Carson. The original mailing list was developed using the city's business license database. Only those businesses that had a total of 2 or more, or 50 or fewer employees were kept in the mailing list database and the database was further edited to eliminate known national chain stores that do not fit the definition of a "small business" as provided by the United States Small Business Administration.

Table 1 summarizes the total number of surveys returned and used for analysis in this report.

Table 1
Number of Returned and Analyzed Surveys

Number Originally Mailed	1,817
Number Returned, Bad Address	24
Final Population	1,793
Number Returned and Answered	278
Number Answered Online	10
Total Number of Responses	288
Percentage of Responses	16.06%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

Of the 1,817 total surveys mailed out, a total of 24 were returned by the US Postal Service as “undeliverable”. Of the 1,793 remaining “valid” surveys, a total of 278 completed surveys were returned by mail and an additional 10 surveys were returned by the survey respondent completing the survey online. A total of 288 completed surveys were used to build the analysis presented in this report, representing a returned and completed response rate of 16.06%, well above the standard 10.00% return rate needed to validate the survey’s findings.

General Information

The first section of the survey asked survey respondents to provide some information related to the type of business they currently operate, how many years the business has been in operation in the city of Carson, how the business is organized and whether or not the business has a written business plan.

Question 1 asked the survey respondent to identify the “main activity”, or industry, which best describes their current business. **Table 2** below summarizes the survey’s findings.

Of the 288 total surveys returned and completed, the “Wholesale and Distribution” sector was the most common category, accounting for businesses owned and operated by 55 (19.10%) of all survey respondents. “Manufacturing” was the second most common sector, accounting for 46 (15.97%) of total respondents. “Transportation” was the third most common sector, accounting for 37 (12.85%) of total respondents. “Arts and Crafts” and “Value-Added Processing (Food Processing)” were the least common sectors, with both sectors having only one respondent (0.35%) each.

Table 2

Question 1: Which business category or main activity best describes your business? (please check only one box)

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
Wholesale/Distribution	55	19.10%
Other	47	16.32%
Manufacturing	46	15.97%
Transportation	37	12.85%
Construction	20	6.94%
Professional Services	19	6.60%
Retail/Merchandising	13	4.51%
Health Services	12	4.17%
Financial Services	8	2.78%
Restaurant/Bar	8	2.78%
Catering - Food Services	6	2.08%
Mechanical Repair	5	1.74%
Agricultural Services	4	1.39%
Consumer Services	4	1.39%
Assembly/Assemblages	2	0.69%
Arts/Crafts	1	0.35%
Value-Added Processing (Food Processing)	1	0.35%
Did Not Answer	0	0.00%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

A total of 47 (16.32%) survey respondents identified “Other” as the sector that best describes their business. Of these 45 “Other” respondents, “logistics”, “logistics support”, “freight handling”, “freight forwarding”, “real-estate”, “printing and publishing” and “educational” were among the most common descriptions written in by the survey respondent.

The results of the survey listed above for Question 1 in **Table 2** are consistent with data provided by the US Census Bureau on the total number of establishments by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code. **Table 3** presents the most recent “county business pattern” data as provided by the US Census Bureau for 2005 for five zip codes located throughout the city of Carson. The five zip codes used for this analysis account for approximately 95% of the city of Carson’s total land and include:

1. 90248
2. 90747
3. 90746
4. 90745
5. 90810

Table 3
Total Number of Establishments by Industry
City of Carson
2005

Industry Code Description (NAICS)	Total No. of	Total - All Zip Codes	Percent of Total All Zip Codes				
	Establishments 90248	Establishments 90747	Establishments 90746	Establishments 90745	Establishments 90810		
Wholesale trade	278	1	135	75	60	549	16.74%
Manufacturing	316	0	78	43	38	475	14.48%
Transportation & warehousing	127	0	93	73	74	367	11.19%
Retail trade	110	2	84	109	50	355	10.82%
Other services (except public administration)	94	3	36	75	30	238	7.26%
Health care and social assistance	30	0	71	90	24	215	6.55%
Accommodation & food services	59	1	48	74	30	212	6.46%
Professional, scientific & technical servi	81	0	45	50	32	208	6.34%
Admin, support, waste mgt, remediation ser	80	0	27	37	21	165	5.03%
Construction	82	1	21	22	18	144	4.39%
Real estate & rental & leasing	44	1	17	31	19	112	3.41%
Finance & insurance	36	0	22	44	5	107	3.26%
Information	16	0	7	9	8	40	1.22%
Management of companies & enterprises	15	0	3	9	7	34	1.04%
Educational services	6	0	7	6	5	24	0.73%
Arts, entertainment & recreation	4	0	12	6		22	0.67%
Unclassified establishments	4	0	1	2	1	8	0.24%
Utilities	0	0	2	0	1	3	0.09%
Mining	0	0	1	0	1	2	0.06%
TOTAL	1,382	9	710	755	424	3,280	100.00%

Source: US Census Bureau 2005 County Business Patterns, City of Carson Economic Development

According to the US Census Bureau, “Wholesale Trade” accounted for the largest portion of the total number of establishments located throughout the city of Carson in 2005, accounting for 549 total establishments or 16.47%. “Manufacturing” accounted for the second largest portion of the total number of establishments, accounting for 475 total establishments or 14.48%. “Transportation and Warehousing” and “Retail Trade” accounted for the third and fourth largest portions of the total number of establishments located throughout the City of Carson in 2005, accounting for 367 and 355 total establishments or 11.19% and 10.82% respectively.

Although “Other” was the second most common response amongst survey respondents as shown above in **Table 2**, “Wholesale Distribution” (or commonly known as Wholesale Trade) accounted for 55 total respondents, or 19.10%. “Manufacturing” accounted for 46 total respondents, or 15.97% of total survey respondents, “Transportation” accounted for 37 total respondents, or 12.85%, and “Retail/Merchandising” accounted for 13 total respondents, 4.51%. The results in **Table 2** are consistent with the findings for 2005 County Business Patterns presented in **Table 3**. From this, it is plausible to conclude that the responses provided throughout the survey can be considered fairly “typical and representative” of the small business community located throughout the entire city of Carson.

Table 4
Question 2: How many years has your business been in operation in Carson?

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
Less than 1 Year	5	1.74%
1 to 5 Years	102	35.42%
6 to 10 Years	64	22.22%
11 to 20 Years	57	19.79%
21 to 40 Years	39	13.54%
41 to 80 Years	11	3.82%
81 or More Years	1	0.35%
Did Not Answer	9	3.13%
Total	288	100.00%
Average Number of Years	12.51	-
Low	0.25	-
High	81	-

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

Question 2 asked the survey respondent to identify how many years their current business has been in operation in the city of Carson. **Table 4** above summarizes the findings for Question 2.

The largest number of survey respondents, 102 (35.42%) of all total respondents, indicated that their business had operated in the city of Carson between one and five years. Of the 288 surveys returned, the average number of years a small business has been in operation in the city of Carson was 12.51 years with the low being 0.25 years (three months) and the high being 81 years.

Question 3 asked the survey respondent to identify the type of “legal structure” – i.e. sole proprietorship, corporation, etc. – of their current small business. **Table 5** summarizes the findings for Question 3.

Table 5
Question 3: Is your business a:

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
Sole Proprietorship	49	17.01%
Partnership	9	3.13%
Limited Liability Company (LLC)	21	7.29%
Corporation (S-Corp, C-Corp, etc.)	206	71.53%
Other	0	0.00%
Did Not Answer	3	1.04%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

The vast majority of survey respondents, 206 (71.53%) of all survey respondents, indicated that their business has been structured as a “corporation”. A total of 49 (17.01%) of all survey respondents indicated that their business was a “sole proprietorship”, nine (3.13%) indicated their business was a “partnership” and an additional 21 (7.29%) indicated their business was a “limited liability company”.

Question 5 asked the survey respondent to indicate whether or not their business was either a “franchise”, “subsidiary” or an “independent operator”. **Table 6** below summarizes the findings for Question 5.

A vast majority of survey respondents, 237 (82.29%) of total respondents, indicated that their business is an “independent operator”. A total of 25 (8.68%) of all survey respondents indicated that their business is a “subsidiary” and an additional seven (2.43%) indicated that their business is a franchise.

Table 6
Question 4: Is your business: (check all that apply)

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
A Franchise	7	2.43%
A Subsidiary	25	8.68%
An Independent Operator	237	82.29%
Did Not Answer	19	6.60%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

The final question in the first section, Question 5, asked the survey respondent whether or not the small business owner/operator has completed a business plan. **Table 7** summarizes the findings for Question 5.

Table 7
Question 5: Does your current business have a written business plan?

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
No	164	56.94%
Yes	104	36.11%
Did Not Answer	20	6.94%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

The majority of survey respondents, 164 (56.94%) of all survey respondents, indicated that they *did not* have a written business plan while only 104

(36.11%) total survey respondents indicated that they do in fact have a written business plan.

Operation and Labor Information

The second section of the survey asked the survey respondent to provide some general level of information regarding the current operations of their small business. Survey respondents were asked to identify whether or not they were able to successfully secure financing for their small business, how many employees their small business employees, the average wage level and whether or not the majority of their customers are from Carson.

Question 6 asked the survey respondent to indicate whether or not the small business owner/operator has had difficulty in obtaining financing for their small business. **Table 8** below summarizes the findings for Question 6.

Table 8
Question 6: Have you had difficulty in obtaining financing for your business?

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
No	215	74.65%
Yes	70	24.31%
Did Not Answer	3	1.04%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

A total of 215 (74.65%) of survey respondents answered “no” to Question 6, indicating that they had been *able* to obtain some form of financing for their small business without difficulty. Only 70 (24.31%) of all total survey respondents answered “yes” to Question 6, indicating that they did have some difficulty in obtaining financing for their small business.

Survey respondents were asked to write in the total number of employees, including themselves, employed by their business in Question 7. The largest number of survey respondents, a total of 123 (42.71%) of survey respondents, indicated that between one and five employees were currently employed by their business. The second largest number of survey respondents, 60 (20.83%) of total survey respondents, indicated that their business currently employs between 11 and 20 total employees. The third largest number of survey respondents, 48 (16.67%) of total survey respondents, indicated that they currently employ between six and ten total employees.

In total, the majority of survey respondents, 231 (80.21%) of all total survey respondents, indicated that they currently employ between one and 20 employees. On average, a total of 22.10 individuals per business surveyed

are employed by small businesses located throughout the city of Carson with a low of one employee per business surveyed and a high of 712 employees per business surveyed.

Question 8 asked the survey respondent to indicate whether or not the small business owner/operator provides any level of employee benefits to their current employees. **Table 9** below summarizes the findings for Question 8.

A significant majority of survey respondents, 176 (61.11%) of total respondents, answered “yes” to Question 8, indicating that their business does provide some level of employee benefits in addition to the employee’s regular pay. Approximately one-third, 109 total respondents, answered “no” to Question 8.

Table 9
Question 8: Do you provide any employee benefits for your employees? (health care, retirement packages, dental plans, etc.)

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
No	109	37.85%
Yes	176	61.11%
Did Not Answer	3	1.04%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

Question 9 asked the survey respondent to indicate the “average hourly wage” currently paid to their employees, excluding themselves. **Table 10** summarizes the findings for Question 9.

Table 10
Question 9: Please indicate the average hourly wage of your employees, NOT including yourself: (dollars per hour)

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
\$0 - \$10.00	45	15.63%
\$10.01 - \$15.00	82	28.47%
\$15.01 - \$20.00	90	31.25%
\$20.01 - \$30.00	46	15.97%
\$30.01 or More	14	4.86%
Did Not Answer	11	3.82%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

The largest number of survey respondents, 90 (31.25%) of total respondents, indicated that they pay their employees between \$15.01 and \$20.00 per

hour. The second largest number of survey respondents, 82 (28.47%) of total respondents, indicated that they pay their employees between \$10.01 and \$15.00 per hour. The third largest number of survey respondents, 46 (15.97%) of total respondents, indicated that they pay their employees between \$20.01 and \$30.00 per hour.

According to the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics, the median hourly wage for all occupations and all employees in 2008 for the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana California Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was \$15.84. The mean hourly wage for all occupations and all employees in 2008 for the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana Californian MSA in 2008 was \$20.89. Based upon the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics of median and mean hourly wages, the small businesses that responded to Question 9 above indicate that median and mean hourly wages for employees of small businesses in the city of Carson are comparable to the MSA median and mean hourly wage levels.

Question 10 asked the survey respondent to indicate the gross income of the small business itself for the past year of operation. **Table 11** summarizes the findings for Question 10.

Table 11
Question 10: Please indicate the GROSS INCOME of your business over the last year:

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
\$15,000 or Less	14	4.86%
\$15,001 - \$50,000	22	7.64%
\$50,001 - \$100,000	26	9.03%
\$100,001 - \$500,000	76	26.39%
\$500,001 or More	137	47.57%
Did Not Answer	13	4.51%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

The largest number of survey respondents, 137 (47.57%) of total respondents, indicated that the gross income of their small business for the past year was \$500,001 or more. The second largest number of survey respondents, 76 (26.39%) of total respondents indicated that the gross income of their small business for the past year was between \$100,001 and \$500,000. The third largest number of survey respondents, 26 (9.03%) of total respondents, indicated that the gross income of their small business for the past year ranged between \$50,001 and \$100,000.

The final question in this section, Question 11, asked the survey respondent to indicate whether or not the majority of their current customers are city of Carson residents. A significant majority of survey respondents, 212

(73.61%) of total respondents, answered “no” to Question 11, indicating that the majority of customers patronizing Carson small businesses are from *outside* the city of Carson and *not* Carson residents. Only 44 total respondents (15.28%) indicated that the majority of their customers *are* Carson residents. This result indicates that Carson small businesses are apparently very successful at attracting customers from outside the city limits. In short, Carson small businesses are apparently very effective at “importing cash” while “exporting goods and services”, a healthy sign of a growing and expanding small business sector and overall city-level economy.

Physical Characteristics

The third section of the survey asked small business survey respondents to indicate the physical characteristics of their current small business (i.e., the total number of square feet their business occupies and the monthly amount of rent) and provide some detail as to whether or not the small business has any current plans to expand the current size of their existing business.

Question 12 asked the survey respondent to indicate whether or not the physical space at which the small business is located is either rented or owned by the business owner/operator. A significant majority, 220 (76.39%) of total respondents, indicated that they rent the space in which their small business is located and only 64 (22.22%) of total respondents indicated that they own the space in which their small business is located.

Question 13 asked the survey respondent to indicate the approximate size of the physical space at which the small business is located in square feet. The average size of all businesses surveyed was 34,744 total square feet with a low of 150 total square feet and a high of 1,000,000 total square feet. The largest number of survey respondents, 91 (31.60%) of total survey respondents, indicated that the estimated size of their current space was between 1 to 2,500 square feet. The second largest number of respondents, 38 (13.19%) of total respondents, indicated that the estimated size of their current space was between 2,501 to 5,000 total square feet. The third largest number of respondents, 29 (10.07%) of total respondents, indicated that the estimated size of their space was between 15,001 and 30,000 total square feet.

For only the 220 total respondents in Question 12 that indicated that they currently “rent” the physical space at which their business is located, Question 14 asked the survey respondent to estimate the monthly lease/rent price of their space. The average monthly lease/rent price of all “renting” businesses surveyed was \$12,613.98 per month with a low of \$1.00 per month and a high of \$500,000 per month. The largest number of survey respondents, 88 (30.56%) of total respondents, indicated a monthly lease/rent charge of \$1.00 to \$2,500 per month. The second largest number of survey respondents, 59 (20.49%) of total respondents, indicated a

monthly lease/rent charge of \$2,501 to \$5,000 per month. The third largest number of survey respondents, 29 (10.07%) of total respondents, indicated a monthly lease/rent charge of \$8,001 to \$15,000 per month.

Dividing the average monthly lease/rent price estimated for Question 14 by the average number of total square feet reported for Question 13, the average monthly lease/rent price for survey respondents was \$0.36 per square foot per month.

Question 15 through Question 19 specifically asked the survey respondent to indicate whether or not the small business owner/operator has plans, for the next five years, to expand their current business, open a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location and whether or not the small business currently owns and operates an additional location of their business in another jurisdiction outside the city of Carson. **Table 12** through **Table 16** summarizes the findings for each question between Question 15 and Question 19.

Table 12 summarizes the findings for Question 15 which asked the survey respondent to indicate whether or not the small business owner/operator has any plans for future expansion.

Table 12
Question 15: Does your business have plans for future expansion?

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
No	141	48.96%
Yes	141	48.96%
Did Not Answer	6	2.08%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

Survey respondents who answered Question 15 were evenly split with 144 (48.96%) of total respondents answering “no” to Question 15, indicating that they did *not* have plans for future expansion, and 141 (48.96%) of total survey respondents answering “yes” to Question 15, indicating that they *did* have plans for future expansion.

Table 13 summarizes the findings for Question 16 which asked the survey respondent to indicate whether or not the small business owner/operator has any plans, within the next five years, to open a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location *specifically* in the city of Carson.

Table 13
Question 16: In the next five years, do you plan on opening a second location in Carson?

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
No	239	82.99%
Yes	39	13.54%
Did Not Answer	10	3.47%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

A significant majority of respondents, 239 (82.99%) of total survey respondents, answered “no” to Question 16, indicating that a significant majority of surveyed small business owner/operators do *not* have any plans to open a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location in the city of Carson over the next five years. Only 39 (13.54%) of total survey respondents indicated that “yes”, they do have plans to open a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location in the city of Carson over the next five years.

Table 14 summarizes the findings for Question 17 which asked the survey respondent to indicate whether or not the small business owner/operator has any plans, within the next five years, to open a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location *specifically outside* the city of Carson in *another city*.

Table 14
Question 17: In the next five years, do you plan on opening a second location outside Carson in another city?

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
No	195	67.71%
Yes	84	29.17%
Did Not Answer	9	3.13%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

A significant majority of survey respondents, 195 (67.71%) of total survey respondents, answered “no” to Question 17, indicating that a significant majority of surveyed small business owners/operators do *not* have any plans to open a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location in *another city outside* the city of Carson. Only 84 (29.17%) of total survey respondents answered “yes” to Question 17, indicating that they *do* have plans to open a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location in *another city outside* the city of Carson.

Comparing the answers in Question 16 (**Table 13**) to the answers in Question 17 (**Table 14**), only 39 survey respondents indicated plans for

opening a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location *inside* the city of Carson while 84 survey respondents indicated plans for opening a second (or third, fourth, etc.) *outside* the city of Carson. Apparently, many more existing small business owner/operators currently located in the city of Carson are considering expansion plans for locations outside the city of Carson.

Table 15 below summarizes the findings for Question 18 which asked the survey respondent to indicate whether or not the current small business owner/operate currently operates a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location in the city of Carson.

A significant majority of respondents, 269 (93.40%) of total respondents, answered “no” to Question 18 indicating that the vast majority of all survey respondents do *not* have a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location within the city of Carson. Only 16 (5.56%) of total respondents answered “yes” to Question 18, indicating that only a small number of total survey respondents operate a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location, currently in operation, within the city of Carson.

Table 15
Question 18: Do you currently have a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location in Carson?

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
No	269	93.40%
Yes	16	5.56%
Did Not Answer	3	1.04%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

Table 16 summarizes the findings for Question 19 which asked the survey respondent to indicate whether or not the current small business owner/operator currently operates a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location in *another city outside* the city of Carson.

Table 16
Question 19: Do you currently have a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location outside Carson in another city?

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
No	205	71.18%
Yes	80	27.78%
Did Not Answer	3	1.04%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

A significant majority of respondents, 205 (71.18%) of total respondents, answered “no” to Question 19 indicating that the vast majority of all survey respondents do *not* have a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location outside the city of Carson. A total of 80 (27.78%) respondents answered “yes” to Question 19, indicating that a small, yet significant, number of total survey respondents do operate a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location currently outside the city of Carson.

Comparing the answers in Question 18 (**Table 15**) to the answers in Question 19 (**Table 16**), only 16 survey respondents indicated that they do currently have a second (or third, fourth, etc.) location *inside* the city of Carson while 80 survey respondents indicated that they do currently have a second (or third, fourth, etc.) *outside* the city of Carson. Apparently, many more existing small business owner/operators currently located in the city of Carson have second locations located outside the city of Carson as compared to those Carson businesses that have existing second locations located inside the city of Carson.

The final question in this section, Question 20, asked the survey respondent to indicate whether or not their current small business was “growing”, “declining” or “neither growing nor declining” in-terms of overall business activity. **Table 17** summarizes the findings for Question 20.

Table 17
Question 20: How would you best describe the current status of your existing business? (please check only one)

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
Growing	143	49.65%
Declining	49	17.01%
No Change (Neither Growing or Declining)	92	31.94%
Did Not Answer	4	1.39%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

The largest number of survey respondents, 143 (49.65%) of total respondents, described their business as “growing” while only 49 (17.01%) of total respondents described their business as “declining”. A total of 92 (31.94%) survey respondents answered “no change”, describing their business as neither growing nor declining.

Assistance and Support

The fourth section asked the survey respondent to indicate the “level of assistance” they would like in further developing their small business and

the “level of assistance” they have already received from various small business development oriented organizations and entities.

Question 21 asked the survey respondent to indicate what specific type of small business support they would like. **Table 18** below summarizes the findings for Question 21.

“Assistance in Securing a Small Business Loan” (54 total respondents or 18.75% of total respondents) was the most common type of assistance survey respondents indicated they would like. “Assistance in Writing a Business Plan” (29 total respondents or 10.07%) and “Assistance in Writing a Marketing Plan” (32 total respondents or 11.11%) were essentially equally chosen by surveyed small business owners/operators as a type of assistance they would like.

Table 18
Question 21: Would you like assistance with any of the following:
(check all that apply)

Category	Number of Responses	Total No. of Respondents	Percentage of Whole
Assistance in Writing a Business Plan	29	288	10.07%
Assistance in Securing a Small Business Loan	54	288	18.75%
Assistance in Writing a Marketing Plan	32	288	11.11%
Data on Carson Market Characteristics	26	288	9.03%
Accounting Services	23	288	7.99%
Payroll Assistance	20	288	6.94%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

Table 19 summarizes the findings for Question 22 which asked survey respondents to indicate the different small business development organizations that have assisted them in the past.

Table 19
Question 22: Have you ever been assisted by any of the following?
(check all that apply)

Category	Number of Responses	Total No. of Respondents	Percentage of Whole
Carson Economic Development	5	288	1.74%
Los Angeles SCORE	6	288	2.08%
Orange County SCORE	3	288	1.04%
Los Angeles SBA District Office	10	288	3.47%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

Only a small portion of all total survey respondents, 24 (8.33%) of total respondents, indicated that at least one of the four small business development organizations listed above in **Table 19** have actually assisted them in the past. This certainly points to an opportunity for each organization to work in a more consolidated and coordinated approach in order to increase the level of assistance small business owners/operators in the city of Carson receive.

Carson Area Strengths and Weaknesses

The fifth section of the survey asked survey respondents a series of questions pertaining to the city of Carson’s perceived “strengths” and “weaknesses” in-terms of the city’s ability to help develop and support small businesses.

Question 23 through Question 28 asks the survey respondent to either “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “agree” or “strongly agree” with a series of statements describing the city of Carson’s perceived business climate. **Table 20** through **Table 25** summarizes the findings for each question between Question 23 and Question 28.

Table 20
Question 23: Carson’s central location to other cities in Los Angeles County is an important feature that contributes to small business success.

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
Strongly Disagree	11	3.82%
Disagree	21	7.29%
Agree	205	71.18%
Strongly Agree	41	14.24%
Did Not Answer	10	3.47%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

A total of 246 (85.42%) of survey respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that Carson’s central location in Los Angeles County is an important feature contributing to small business success. Only 32 (11.11%) of survey respondents either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”. A significant majority, 205 (71.18%) of survey respondents, simply “agreed” with the statement made in Question 23.

Table 21
Question 24: The City of Carson has a plentiful and adequately skilled labor force.

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
Strongly Disagree	12	4.17%
Disagree	61	21.18%
Agree	177	61.46%
Strongly Agree	11	3.82%
Did Not Answer	27	9.38%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

A total of 188 (65.28%) of survey respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that Carson has a plentiful and adequately skilled labor force. Only 73 (25.35%) of survey respondents either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”. A significant majority, 177 (61.46%) of survey respondents, simply “agreed” with the statement made in Question 24.

Table 22
Question 25: The City of Carson’s local government is committed to solving the problems I face as a business owner.

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
Strongly Disagree	19	6.60%
Disagree	58	20.14%
Agree	154	53.47%
Strongly Agree	11	3.82%
Did Not Answer	46	15.97%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

A total of 165 (57.29%) of survey respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the city of Carson’s local government is committed to solving the problems small business owners face. Only 77 (26.74%) of survey respondents either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”. A significant majority, 154 (53.47%) of survey respondents, simply “agreed” with the statement made in Question 25.

Table 23
Question 26: The City of Carson has adequate growth potential, in terms of population and jobs, to support my business in the future.

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
Strongly Disagree	6	2.08%
Disagree	50	17.36%
Agree	185	64.24%
Strongly Agree	17	5.90%
Did Not Answer	30	10.42%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

A total of 202 (70.14%) of survey respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the city of Carson’ has adequate growth potential, in terms of population and jobs, to support their business in the future. Only 56 (19.44%) of survey respondents either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”. A significant majority, 185 (64.24%) of survey respondents, simply “agreed” with the statement made in Question 26.

A total of 221 (76.74%) of survey respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the city of Carson has a positive, business-friendly image. Only 48 (16.67%) of survey respondents either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed”. A significant majority, 204 (70.83%) of survey respondents, simply “agreed” with the statement made in Question 27.

Table 24
Question 27: The City of Carson has a positive, business-friendly image.

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
Strongly Disagree	13	4.51%
Disagree	35	12.15%
Agree	204	70.83%
Strongly Agree	17	5.90%
Did Not Answer	19	6.60%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

A total of 184 (63.89%) of survey respondents either “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that local city of Carson business regulations are too restrictive and prohibit the business owner/operator from growing their business. Only 74 (25.69%) of survey respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed”. A significant majority, 163 (56.60%) of survey respondents, simply “disagreed” with the statement made in Question 28.

Table 25

Question 28: Local City of Carson business regulations are too restrictive and prohibit me from growing my business.

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
Strongly Disagree	21	7.29%
Disagree	163	56.60%
Agree	62	21.53%
Strongly Agree	12	4.17%
Did Not Answer	30	10.42%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

Based upon the answers survey respondents gave for each question between Question 23 (**Table 20**) and Question 28 (**Table 25**), it is clear that the city of Carson has managed to successfully develop, cultivate and maintain a “positive” small business reputation and the majority of small business owners/operators who responded to the survey indicated that they feel confident that their existing small business will continue to grow in the city of Carson.

Question 29 asked the survey respondent to write in the specific concerns they, as small business owners/operators, have that they feel are important and that the city of Carson might help them with. A total of 75 survey respondents provided some answer. Of the 75 survey respondents that did answer the question, 22 identified some association with the need for improved law enforcement with particular mention of graffiti removal and deterrence, street youth gang concerns and additional concerns regarding the homeless. An additional 11 survey respondents identified small business financing – via loans, grants and/or tax credits – as the second most important issue responding small businesses owners felt the city of Carson could help them with. Other, less common, concerns ranged from overly restrictive city ordinances on signage to the need for better street maintenance to even “introducing” their business to other business and potential customers located within the city of Carson.

Question 30 asked the survey respondent to write in the specific things that they, as a small business owner/operator, like about the city of Carson. A total of 152 survey respondents provide some answer. Of the 152 survey respondents that did answer the question, 83 respondents identified “location” as the primary reason they like the city of Carson. Specifically, survey respondents indicated central location in Los Angeles County, proximity to Los Angeles International Airport, proximity to the Port of Los Angeles and the Port of Long Beach, easy access to different freeways and major commuter and trucking corridors and central location to a larger number of different customers as the primary locational advantages of the city of Carson. An additional 21 respondents identified “the people” of Carson as what they like most about doing business in the city. Specifically,

survey respondents indicated that the city of Carson’s diversity, mix of different people and the people’s general “friendliness” as primary advantages. Other, less common, “things” that survey respondents identified as positive were the friendliness and helpfulness of city of Carson staff, a generally low tax environment, a generally business friendly climate and a very “clean and safe” image.

Table 26 summarizes the findings for Question 31 which asked, “no” or “yes”, if the survey respondent is considering relocating their current business to another jurisdiction outside the city of Carson.

Table 26
Question 31: Would you consider relocating your business outside the City of Carson?

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
No	187	64.93%
Yes	77	26.74%
Did Not Answer	24	8.33%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

Nearly two-thirds of all respondents, 187 (64.93%) of all survey respondents, answered “no” to Question 31. Only 77 (26.74%) of all survey respondents answered “yes” and that they would consider relocating their current business to another jurisdiction outside the city of Carson.

Question 32 asked the survey respondent to provide a specific reason as to “why” the survey respondent would consider relocating their business to another jurisdiction outside the city of Carson (if they answered “yes” to Question 31 above). Only 68 survey respondents answered Question 32. Although the reasons were somewhat varied, some common responses were closer location to home, finding a cheaper place to rent space for their business and finding larger space for future business expansion.

Question 33 asked the survey respondent to provide a specific reason as to “why” the survey respondent would *not* consider relocating their business to another jurisdiction outside the city of Carson (if they answered “no” to Question 31 above). A total of 121 survey respondents answered Question 33. Like the answers reported above for Question 29, “location” was the most common response. Specifically, survey respondents identified Carson’s central location and proximity – to the Port of Los Angeles, Port of Long Beach, Los Angeles International Airport, current and potential customers, freeways, commuter and trucking routes – as the main reasons as to why the survey respondent is *not* considering relocating their current business to another jurisdiction. Other, less common, reasons given included the high cost of moving the business, ideal customers already exist in

Carson, Carson’s business friendly environment and a general “like” for the city itself.

Demographic Information

The sixth and final section of the survey asked the survey respondent to identify specific individual and personal characteristics such as sex, level of education, ethnicity and proficiency with various computer software programs.

Table 27 summarizes the findings for Question 34 which asked the survey respondent to identify whether or not they are female or male.

Table 27
Question 34: Are you:

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
Female	95	32.99%
Male	186	64.58%
Did Not Answer	7	2.43%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

Of the 288 returned surveys, 186 (64.58%) of all survey respondents indicated that they are male while 95 (32.99%) of all survey respondents indicated they are female. A total of 7 respondents did not answer.

Question 35 asked the survey respondent to indicate all levels of education obtained. **Table 28** summarizes the survey’s findings.

Table 28
Question 35: What schooling and/or training have you completed?

Category	Number of Responses	Total No. of Respondents	Percentage of Whole
High School Diploma, or Equivalent	92	288	31.94%
Associate Degree	47	288	16.32%
Bachelor's Degree	130	288	45.14%
Graduate Degree, Masters or Doctorate	58	288	20.14%
Technical School/Training	28	288	9.72%
Other	14	288	4.86%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

Of the 288 total returned surveys, 130 (45.14%) of total respondents indicated that they currently hold a Bachelor’s Degree. An additional 92

(31.94%) indicated that they have a high school diploma or high school equivalent and an additional 58 (20.14%) of total survey respondents indicated that they currently hold a graduate degree (Masters or Doctorate).

Table 29 summarizes the findings for Question 36 which asked the survey respondent to indicate their individual ethnicity. “Ethnicity categories” used for Question 36 are the same categories used the United States Census Bureau.

Table 29
Question 36: Please indicate your ethnicity:

Category	Number of Responses	Total No. of Respondents	Percentage of Whole
Black (African American)	17	288	5.90%
Caucasian (White, Non-Latino)	115	288	39.93%
Hispanic	31	288	10.76%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0	288	0.00%
Asian, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	103	288	35.76%
Other	9	288	3.13%
Other - Middle Eastern	1	288	0.35%
Other - Korean	1	288	0.35%
Other - Filipino	4	288	1.39%
Other - Armenian	1	288	0.35%
Unknown	2	288	0.69%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

Survey respondents that answered “Caucasian White, Non-Latino” accounted for 115 (39.93%) of all survey respondents. “Asian, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander” was the second most common ethnicity, accounting for 103 (35.76%) of all total survey respondents. “Hispanic” was the third most common ethnicity, accounting for 31 (10.76%) of all total survey respondents.

Table 30 below shows population estimates by ethnicity for the city of Carson as reported by the 2006 American Community Survey published by the US Census Bureau.

According to the US Census Bureau, “Hispanics” accounted for 36.78% of the city of Carson’s residential population but, according to the data presented above in **Table 29**, “Hispanics” only accounted for 9.59% of small business survey respondents. Additionally, “Caucasian White, Non-Latinos” accounted for only 8.48% of the city of Carson’s residential population but, according to the data presented above in **Table 30**, accounted for 39.93% of all small business survey respondents. This may indicate that a substantial portion of small businesses owned and operated in the city of Carson are currently owned and operated by non-Carson residents who live outside the city in neighboring jurisdictions.

Table 30

**Population Estimates by Ethnicity
City of Carson**

Category	2006 Population	2006 Total Population	Percentage of Whole
Black (African American)	22,700	87,876	25.83%
Caucasian (White, Non-Latino)	7,448	87,876	8.48%
Hispanic	32,319	87,876	36.78%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	328	87,876	0.37%
Asian, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	22,861	87,876	26.02%
Other	2,220	87,876	2.53%

Source: US Census Bureau 2006 American Community Survey, City of Carson Economic Development

Table 31 below summarizes Question 37 which asked the survey respondent to identify the different software applications used by the survey respondent for either personal and/or business use.

Survey respondents indicated a wide use of a wide variety of different software applications for personal and/or business use. The majority, 252 (87.50) of total survey respondents, indicated regular use of the Internet. The second largest number of survey respondents, 246 (85.42%) of total respondents, indicated regular use of email. The third largest number of survey respondents, 243 (84.38%) of total respondents, indicated using some type of word-processing software (i.e. MS Word) for personal and/or business use. Other popular software uses included spreadsheet applications, accounting software and even database applications for personal and/or business use.

**Table 31
Question 37: Do you regularly use any of the following computer applications for personal and/or business use?**

Category	Number of Responses	Total No. of Respondents	Percentage of Whole
Word-Processing	243	288	84.38%
Spreadsheet Applications	209	288	72.57%
Database Applications	117	288	40.63%
Presentation Applications	97	288	33.68%
Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	36	288	12.50%
Internet	252	288	87.50%
Email	246	288	85.42%
Accounting Software	213	288	73.96%
Other	15	288	5.21%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

Question 38 asked the survey respondent to “rate” their own level of computer literacy and skills from “very strong” to “very poor”. **Table 32** summarizes the survey’s findings.

Table 32
Question 38: How would you characterize your computer literacy and skills? (check only one)

Category	Number of Responses	Percentage of Whole
Very Strong	64	22.22%
Strong	79	27.43%
Average	111	38.54%
Poor	19	6.60%
Very Poor	9	3.13%
Did Not Answer	6	2.08%
Total	288	100.00%

Source: City of Carson Economic Development

When asked in Question 39 whether or not the survey respondent felt that they needed some level of remedial computer application and literacy training for the areas listed above in Question 37 (**Table 32**), only 45 (15.63%) of total survey respondents answered “yes”. A total of 232 (80.56%) survey respondents answered “no”.

When asked in Question 40 whether or not the survey respondent would be willing to pay for a remedial computer application and literacy course, only 47 (16.32%) of total survey respondents answered “yes”. A total of 220 (76.39%) survey respondents answered “no”.

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