



# Demographic Analysis of the City of Pico Rivera

SOL PRICE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

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## **BACKGROUND:**

Incorporated in 1961, the City of Pico Rivera leases land for a span of fifty years from the Department of the Army for the purpose of recreation and the public use of the land (Department of the Army, 1984). Currently, the land is occupied by the Pico Rivera Sports Arena, a facility that primarily hosts Mexican rodeos, festivals and musical events (La Noria Entertainment Inc, 2015). The Sports Arena boasts itself to be one of the largest rodeo rings in the United States, which appropriately targets the general population that consists of 91.2% Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, State and County QuickFacts. Data derived from Population Estimates, American Community Survey, Census of Population and Housing, County Business Patterns, Economic Census, Survey of Business Owners, Building Permits, Census of Governments, 2015).

While the City of Pico Rivera strives to ensure that the residents have a safe place to live, work and play, the land surrounding the Pico Rivera Sports Arena remains highly underutilized, comprised of mostly empty and inaccessible land that does not achieve the city's ultimate goal. Additionally, the city subleases management of the Pico Rivera Sports Arena to the group La Noria Entertainment, Incorporated, who determines all the programing, costs and revenue of the facility (Cardenas & Hernandez, 2016).

## **RESEARCH MOTIVATION**

The city deserves a renovated or new functional space to serve the immediate and surrounding population, considers appropriate preservative measures for the environment, and effectively uses and funds the creation and maintenance of the space. While the Pico Rivera Sports Arena is enjoyed by many, its age and inefficient layout hinder potential

revenue flow and ultimately inefficiently utilizes the abundant space to the detriment of the city and its residents. This study hopes to determine the needs of the population and identify any trends that will aid in the city's decision making process as they determine how to renovate or revamp the Pico Rivera Sports Arena.

## **DATA:**

### ***Overview***

Since the city of Pico Rivera has a majority Hispanic or Latino population, the services provided by the city ought to match the interests of that demographic. The Mexican rodeo, or charrería, is regarded as the Mexican national sport, as reflected by the immense popularity of the rodeos in Pico Rivera (Barraclough, 2015). In addition to the rodeos, the site also serves as a concert venue for many popular Latino artists, which can be enjoyed by the residents of the city (La Noria Entertainment Inc, 2015). However, as a result of the narrowly-focused programming, the Sports Arena fails to attract visitors from beyond the immediate city and limits the potential of the space as an asset to its residents.

Pico Rivera is surrounded by the cities of Whittier, Montebello, Downey and El Monte, all of which also have a majority population of Hispanics or Latinos (U.S. Census Bureau, What Does Your Community Look Like Compared with Others Across America?, 2010). The residents deserve an improved complex that can house a greater number of attendees and promote a safe, family-friendly environment that cherishes and highlights the community culture. Likewise, the facility ought to be openly accessible to non-Hispanic or Latinos in order to build a more unified community. Pico Rivera's

Comprehensive Annual Financial Report also indicates that though the per capita personal income and unemployment rates have shown tremendous improvement since the recession, the residents of Pico Rivera still only have a per capita personal income of \$18,794 (City of Pico Rivera, 2015). The new development must consider the financial state of the population and provide equitable access and enjoyment.

### ***Educational Attainment***

The U.S. Census breaks down educational attainment in the following categories: Less than high school, high school graduate, some college or Associate's Degree, and Bachelor's Degree or higher. In 2014, 73% of the residents in Pico Rivera reported to have a high school degree or higher, which is just slightly less than the 77% of residents in the surrounding region containing Whittier, Commerce, Downey, Montebello, South San Gabriel, Monterey Park and South El Monte. Comparatively, in 2009, only 69% of residents had a high school degree or higher in Pico Rivera, an increase from the rate of 62% in 2007, indicating progression in education accessibility throughout the city (U.S. Census Bureau 2007).

A deeper look into the data shows that residents are obtaining higher levels of education as well. The rate of residents with a Bachelor's Degree or higher has increased from 9.6% in 2007 to 11% in 2009 to 13% in 2014 (Appendix A). However, given the improvements, still a significant portion of the population remains without proper education, thus impacting the economic viability of the region.

### ***Ethnicity and Age***

Pico Rivera is primarily comprised of people from Hispanic or Latino descent. According to the ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates in 2014, 90.9% of residents claimed Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). Only 4.8% of residents claimed to be of White only race, a trend that has been consistent throughout the past five years. Data from the 2010 census generally represent the same demographic, with the only change being a higher percentage of White only residents (5.3%). With regard to age, 40.2% of the population is within the 25 to 54 years old range, which is again consistent with the data found in 2010.

### ***Economic Viability***

Los Angeles County currently has an unemployment rate of 5%, according to the Employment Development Department, compared with the California unemployment rate of 5.3% (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). Both of these data points have been trending downwards, from a peak of 10% unemployed in October of 2009, corresponding with the Great Recession of 2008 to 2012 (EDD, Labor Market Information Division 2016) (EDD, Labor Market Information Division: Monthly Labor Force, 2016). Focusing in on the city of Pico Rivera shows that much of the city still finds itself straggling behind both the County and State unemployment rates. All thirteen of the census tracts within Pico Rivera have a rate of 5.6% or above, with a high of 19.8% unemployed in the tract (Appendix B).

Furthermore, the tracts with the highest unemployment rate correspond with the areas with the lowest median household income. The California median household income in 2014 was \$61,489, a standard that only 21 of the 81 tracts analyzed attained

(U.S. Census Bureau 2014). Additional research into the city's economic viability reveals other encouraging signs. In the past year, Pico Rivera had an average rate of 9.37% of residents with poverty status compared to the Los Angeles County rate of 12.45% (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). However, four tracts of Pico Rivera have a higher proportion of their population below the poverty level (Appendix C). While it is clear that there have been improvements on a national, state and local level with regard to the poverty level, any significant development in the city that utilizes the city's resources will provide benefits including job creation and economic sustenance.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

To determine the population data trends within Pico Rivera and its surrounding cities, data was gathered from the U.S. Census American FactFinder from 2014 and 2010. The city hopes to learn more about the site's surrounding demographic in order to best cater the development towards its residents and most probably high-volume users. Through this study, the team focused on educational attainment, ethnicity and age, and economic viability of the residents. I first began by downloading all the necessary data from the U.S. Census.

I needed to clean up the data by removing unnecessary rows and columns that would enable me to import correctly into ArcGIS. I started with a grey scale base map of California, which would allow me to use color to help the comparative data stand out. I was able to download the correct shapefiles from the census website as well. When I joined the data points with the shapefile, I was able to remove unneeded regions from my original map of California. After doing so, I layered Household Median Income under

Unemployment Rate in one map, and in the other, I focused specifically on Pico Rivera and its Poverty Rate. Maps are found in the Appendices.

### **LIMITATIONS:**

One major limitation that I faced was the amount of data I was able to collect. When I decided to use census tracts to divide up the aggregate data, I was left with an overwhelming amount to sift through. Additionally, it was challenging to identify which tracts belonged to which city, since some overlapped with city boundaries. In the end, I looked at a total of 82 census tracts, spanning the scope of 12 cities. Originally, I had proposed to look at a five to ten mile radii around Pico Rivera, but soon found that to be too broad for my scope. Another challenge I faced was how to helpfully design the map so that it would help identify key areas in and around the city that are in need of aid. Since there were so many tracts, my original maps were cluttered and difficult to read. I sought to overcome this challenge by creating broader ranges that would encompass more data, but would still identify the outliers.

### **CONCLUSION**

The data gathered from the census must be taken into consideration in regard to the new development projects for the city of Pico Rivera. Since the city aims to serve its residents, demographic data helps to elucidate the needs of the region and surrounding cities. Revitalizing the area around the Pico Rivera Sports Arena could provide tremendous benefit economically to the residents. Given the discouraging economic state uncovered by U.S. Census data, the creation of more jobs within Pico Rivera is necessary

in order to lift residents from below poverty level and increase the median household income of the region. An increase in jobs is supported by the high unemployment rate that exists in Pico Rivera and the surrounding region,

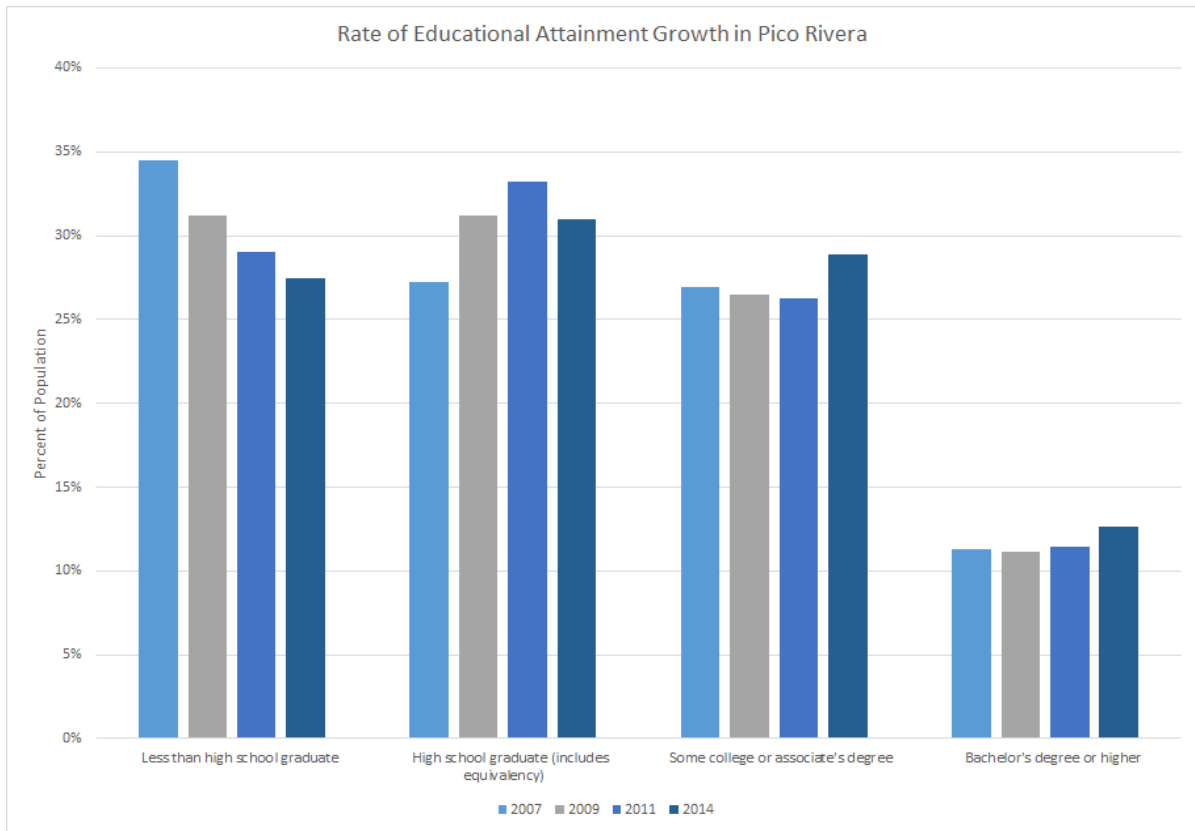
In considering the design of the new renovation, several key demographic trends may assist in the planning process. Educational attainment within the city of Pico Rivera has been trending positively in recent years, reflecting well on the local education system and how citizens would embrace the development of common wildlife preservation/habitat and active recreational areas unique to Pico Rivera. Incorporating an educational component to the park caters may fuel the growing rate of educational attainment. Likewise, when designing the new space, the city must keep in mind that over 90% of its population claims Hispanic or Latino origins, with the majority of that group originating from Mexico. While common for Southern California, the city could consider how to cater both in design and function to the majority population in order to uphold residents' proud heritage.

While planning for a renovated or new Pico Rivera Sports Arena's target audience, City officials ought to consider insights stemming from both the demographic and income data. The proposed site's primary users will be those of the immediate surrounding, explaining the present popularity of the rodeo. Given Pico Rivera's cultural bent towards the rodeo and similar events, it is uncertain how it's residents will react towards a major change in function away from in the Sports Arena. Furthermore, since the resident population consists of people with lower incomes and higher poverty rates, majority users will likely not be able to afford expensive entrance fees. However, it is also true that Los Angeles is known to be a sprawling and auto-oriented city and

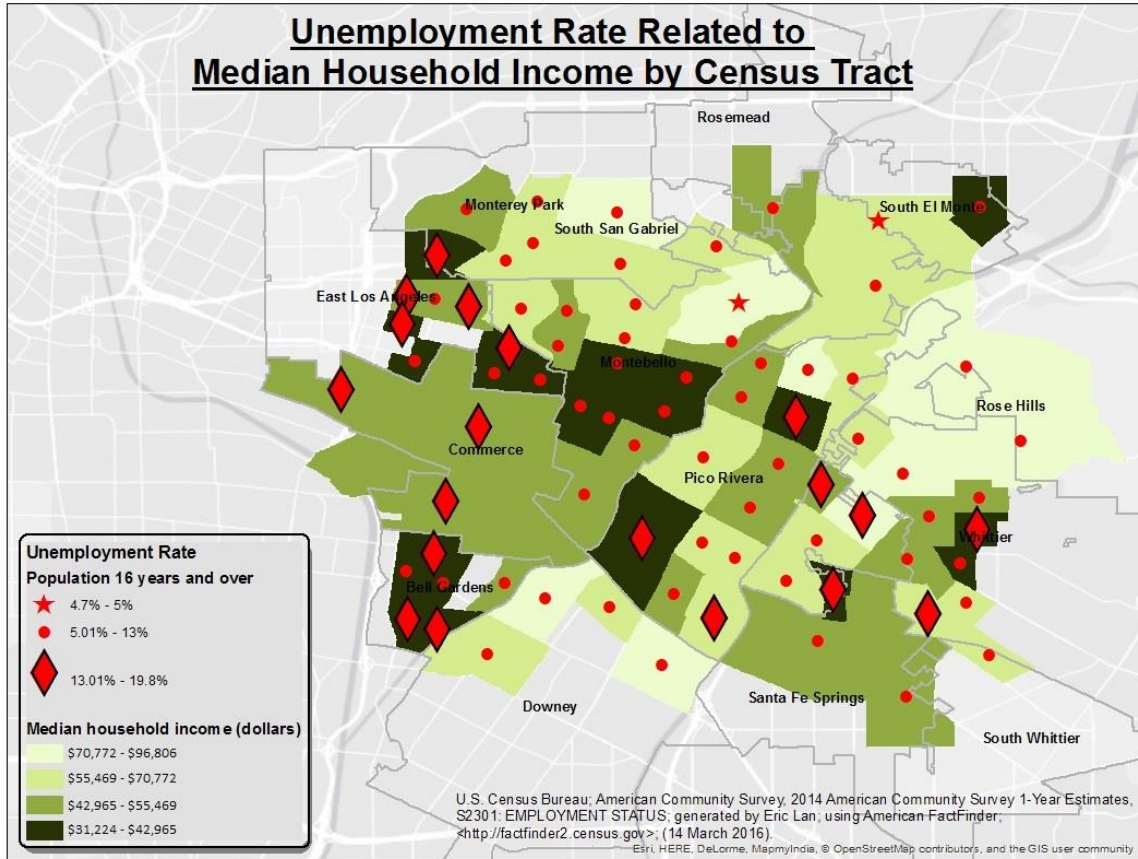


audiences may travel from across Southern California to attend. As a result, the unintended consequences must be considered prior to development.

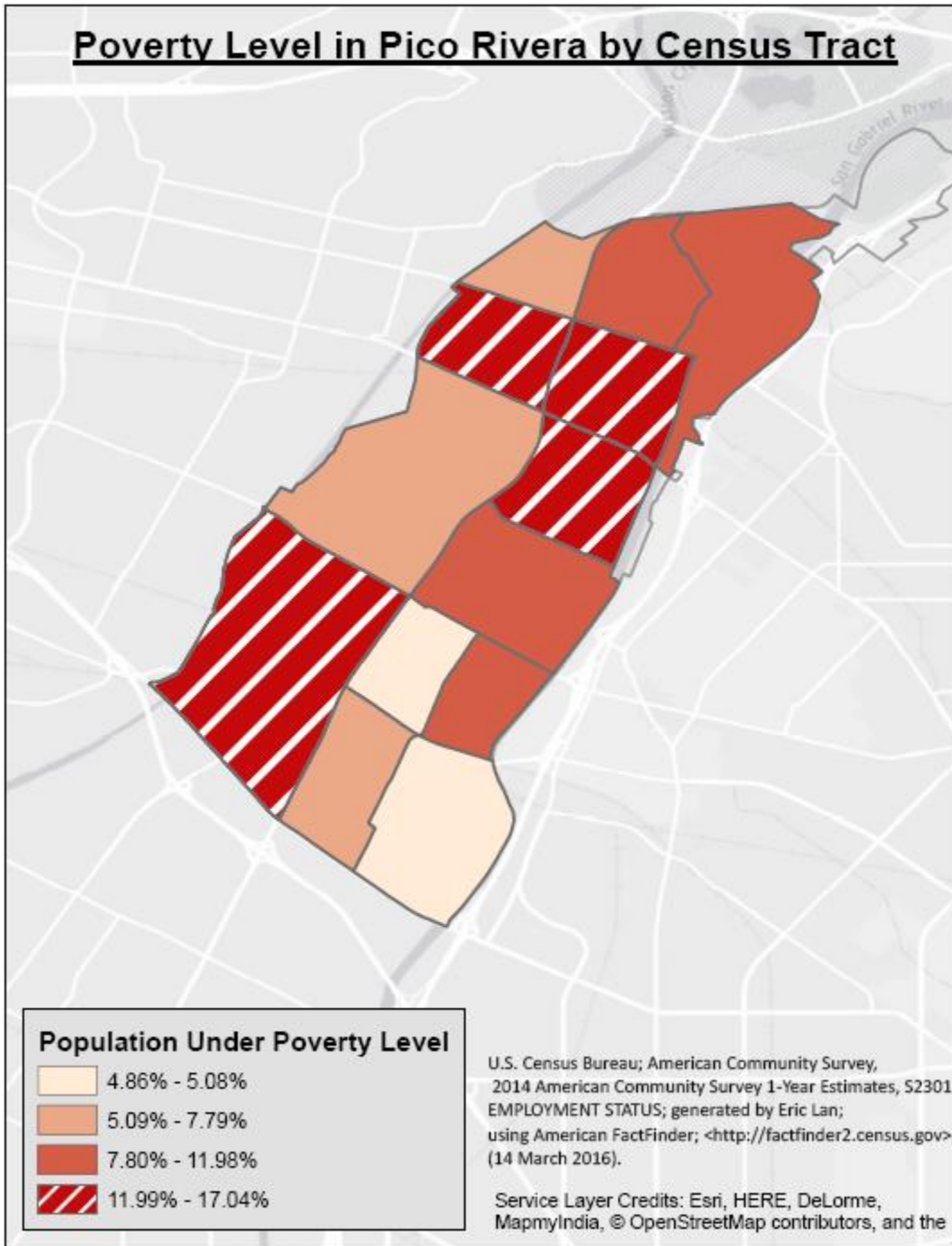
## Appendix A: Rate of Educational Attainment Growth in Pico Rivera



## Appendix B: Unemployment Rate Related to Median Household Income by Census Tract



**Appendix C: Poverty Level in Pico Rivera by Census Tract**



## **References**

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