

City of Tacoma, Washington

ONE A Comprehensive Plan
for a Vibrant, Connected,
and Sustainable City
TACOMA

**DRAFT Recent Engagement Gap Analysis | December
2023**

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1 CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

- The City of Tacoma is updating its Comprehensive Plan (to 2050) and concurrently will refresh its Strategic Plan (to 2035). The planning effort will go from approximately September 2023 to June 2025.
- Both plans require equitable and inclusive community engagement to inform policies and strategies.
- The Tacoma community has been extensively engaged in recent years for many intersecting initiatives. Metro Parks Tacoma is also conducting engagement in Fall 2023. However, there are likely to be gaps.
- This community engagement strategy is intended to maximize leverage of existing data and existing engagement efforts to minimize respondent burden and confusion. Additional resources or “new engagement” should be focused on thematic gaps and/or gaps by community group.
- Early conversations with City staff highlighted that Outreach should not start from scratch and should build from prior outreach efforts. An early task will be to review data from prior outreach and summarize themes. Findings from this task will be used to check in to see if it still reflects current thoughts.

2 GAP ANALYSIS METHODS

In October and November 2023, Seva Workshop sourced existing engagement reports from the City of Tacoma, relevant partners, and internet research. We limited our review to studies that had direct engagement with community members in recent years (2016 or later). We did not include studies or plans that were created only through stakeholder interviews or those created through a single representative advisory or steering body. The full list of reviewed documents is included in the Appendix.

Over fifty documents were coded in Max QDA to conduct a gap analysis to determine which planning themes and which communities have not been addressed in recent years. Each document was reviewed and coded for the following topics related to Comprehensive Plan Chapters, neighborhoods within Tacoma, group demographics and identities, engagement methods used, and Tacoma 2035 Goal Areas. The full list of codes is listed in the Appendix.

Limitations

The analysis was limited by the structure of the source documents. For example, each study presented their findings in different ways, using different types of disaggregation or different ways of describing groups or neighborhoods. Many studies did not disaggregate findings at all, making it impossible to determine which subgroups were represented.

Some studies also presented helpful overall reflections on their targeted audiences and the gaps that they experienced in trying to reach them and lessons learned about effective engagement methods. However, the majority of engagement summaries did not.

3 OVERALL GAPS AND PRIORITY AUDIENCES FOR ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Gaps by topic include:

- historic preservation
- economic development
- downtown

Gaps by group include:

- The **8 percent of the Tacoma population that speaks a language other than English at home and speaks English less than “very well.”** This includes Pacific Islander languages (Chukcese), Asian languages (Vietnamese, Korean, Khmer, Tagalog, Mandarin Chinese), Russian and Ukranian (in West End), and Spanish (Eastside and throughout Tacoma).
- Relative to their share of the population, **Hispanic/Latine** residents and **Asian** residents are consistently the least connected to engagement efforts. **Black** residents – outside of Hilltop – are also less likely to engage.
- **Renting** households are also typically underrepresented (when data is available disaggregated).
- There has not been any explicit effort to collect data from **seniors** though seniors are one of the fastest growing populations in Tacoma in recent years. **LGBTQIA+** population is infrequently disaggregated in engagement and has not been a focus of recent engagement.
- **South Tacoma** and **South End** residents (especially residents in the Tacoma Mall area) and **Central Tacoma** (outside of Hilltop) have been identified by staff as focus groups for engagement.

4 EXISTING ENGAGEMENT THEMES BY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TOPIC

4.1 VISION

Engaged Tacomans consistently raised priorities related equity, to affordability and livability, and sustainability.

- **Equity.** Continued prioritization and use of the Equity Map and community engagement, repair of past inequities and disinvestment, and partnerships. Resolution 40622 (2020) affirms the City of Tacoma’s commitment to anti-racist systems transformation and will continue to undergird future planning work.
- **Affordability and Livability.** Safe, affordable, and vibrant neighborhoods with easy access to healthy food, public services and amenities, tree shade, and community gathering spaces.
- **Sustainability.** A community and economy that is resilient to future changes. Themes across studies included prioritizing environmental and water stewardship, green jobs, and electrification. City of Tacoma (City) defines sustainability as “the City and its citizens meet current needs without compromising the needs of future generations, such that environmental, social, cultural, and economic considerations are balanced and integrated in a day-to-day, decision-making manner” (Resolution 38247).

4.2 URBAN FORM

While there was no engagement that explicitly focused on urban form, several related themes were present in existing engagement. Key themes from existing outreach about urban form included:

- Need for better pedestrian and bike connectivity and multi-modal transportation choices across the city neighborhoods.
- Interest in vehicular traffic safety improvements, traffic calming on major corridors.

We should make residential streets safer by installing traffic calming and eliminating the possibility of through traffic. There should be no non-local traffic on a residential street. Cul-de-sac, one-way, skinnier

residential streets, etc. can all save kids' lives. This can be accomplished with low-cost bollards, curbs, and planters (Vision Zero Community Engagement Summary Report, P. 58: 1294)

- Interest in income-diverse neighborhoods, mixed housing types, and modest residential density increases.
- Concentrate on infrastructure, fix infrastructure, and zoning was the second highest priority role for the City in the 2022 Community Survey.

4.3 DESIGN + DEVELOPMENT

While there was no engagement that explicitly focused on city-wide design and development, several related themes were able to be extracted from existing engagement. The more detailed design and development input came from engagement projects from neighborhood planning, as well as at the school and station area level from Trust for Public Land and Sound Transit projects.

These data will more heavily represent McKinley, Proctor, Tideflats, Eastside and South Tacoma school areas, Hilltop, and the South Tacoma station area. Key themes from existing outreach about design and development included.

- Residents love the distinct character of the neighborhoods and want design and development to reflect local history, context, and cultures.
- Tacomans want more green.
 - This includes trees for shade and interest in the streetscape.
 - Plantings, planter boxes that serve as seating areas and or traffic barriers were also popular.
 - Interest in natural habitat restoration, water stewardship, and native plants such as rain garden project.
 - Local food projects, such as community gardens and food forests were also popular features.
- High levels of support for small businesses and arts and creative spaces.
- Engaged communities enjoy color and art in the streetscapes.

4.4 ENVIRONMENT + WATERSHED HEALTH

There have been several engagements explicitly focused on environment and watershed health in recent years. These include environmental services strategic planning outreach, the Urban Waters Protection Plan, the Urban Forest Management Plan. Topics related to habitat functions

and values, open space lands and tree canopy were also prevalent in many other plans where the environment was not the core focus, such as the Metro Parks Tacoma Community Needs Assessment and the Tideflats Subarea Plan.

- Environmental clean-up was a top priority across multiple engagements. For example:
 - Tacoma residents are generally concerned with the impact that human activities and continued development has on Tacoma’s natural spaces and receiving waters like the Puget Sound. Both the survey and the workshop revealed that cleanliness of streams, ponds, lakes and beaches is the most important priority for residents. (UWPP)
 - Survey respondents overwhelmingly identified the restoration and cleanup of natural areas as one of their top three opportunities for the Tideflats, followed by preserving and strengthening jobs, transitioning away from fossil fuel facilities, and transportation improvements. (Tideflats engagement)
- Respondents and staff generally urged integration of environmental and watershed health actions with other goals such as green jobs, climate action, equity, parks and green spaces, and transportation and housing.
- Desire to partner with the Puyallup Tribe in water and environmental restoration and stewardship was common.
- Barriers and concerns included need for more funding to protect groundwater, and funding to develop and maintain needed infrastructure.
- Air and water pollution were a high concern due to impacts on community health. This may be related to recent wildfire smoke events.

The UWPP specifically notes that Latinx/Hispanic groups and Spanish-speaking communities were underrepresented in their engagement. Renters were also underrepresented. Foss Waterway, Flett Creek, and North Tacoma were the most represented watersheds.

4.5 CLIMATE

The 2021 Climate Action Plan process included robust citywide engagement. Other engagement related to potential climate policies included the Integrated Resource Plan, the Urban Waters Protection Plan and the Tacoma Tideflats engagement summary. Themes prevalent in engagement include:

- Interest in transitioning away from fossil fuels, support for reducing vehicle miles traveled and improved transportation choices
- Concern about equity and need to consider equity impacts from policies such as green building codes and the intersection between housing and vehicle miles traveled.
- Interest in green economy and green jobs
- Interest in expanding tree cover
- The 2022 Community Survey ranked “The efforts of the City to reduce climate change emissions” as a top three priority among social and environmental issues. However, there was a statistically significant gap between homeowners (64%) and renters (84%) in ranking this as a priority.

The Climate Action Plan includes reflections on gaps in engagement. They specifically note that Hispanic/Latinx participation and Asian participation was not at levels hoped for.

4.6 HOUSING

Housing is a major topic of explicit and broad engagement in the Home in Tacoma effort to evaluate diverse housing types and inclusionary zoning options throughout Tacoma as well as the broader Affordable Housing Action Strategy. It was the second highest priority (after homelessness) social issue in the 2022 Office of Strategy Community Survey.

The 2021 Housing Disparities Report also used targeted engagements to understand race-based disparities in housing experiences and outcomes, and to develop recommendations. Housing, particularly affordable housing, has also been a core topic of engagement in neighborhood plans. As housing is a topic of great concern in Tacoma and integrated with many other planning issues, it is also raised in many engagements that are not specifically centered on housing such as the Climate Action Plan.

- Home in Tacoma Survey Results describe the top goals for the future of housing as neighborhoods with mature trees and green spaces, affordable housing at a range of income levels, that some historic buildings remain, that infrastructure and services keep pace with growth, and that transportation choices include walking, biking, and transit.
- Tacomans sense a great deal of urgency and concern related to housing affordability and homelessness in the city. However broad engagement suggests appetite for only very modest increases in density and development speed.
- The housing shortage is of most concern to District 3 residents according to the 2022 Community Survey.
- Parking and traffic, preserving neighborhood character, views, and open space, and associated infrastructure and services were some of the most common concerns.
- Encouraging infill, DADUs, and ADUs were popular policy levers.
- Engagement and analysis show race-based disparities in housing experiences and desire to address past harms. “Historic racism in lending and housing policies directly and indirectly contribute to present-day displacement challenges impacting Black residents and their ability to keep their homes. Beyond the systems of discrimination themselves, the narratives associated with this history continues to impact many Black family’s approach to planning for homeownership, with many believing it perpetually beyond reach. Additionally, respondents described impediments to homeownership access such as rising home prices, low inventory, and challenges associated with income, credit, and the lack of wealth. Interviewees spoke to the need of providing education, counseling, and wrap-around services in addition to financial support. (Tacoma Housing Disparities Report_2021, P. 8: 943)”

4.7 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development input is mostly sourced from the neighborhood and subarea or station area level, including the McKinley Hill neighborhood plan, South Tacoma work by Sound Transit and the Economic Green Zone application, and the Tideflats subarea plan. Apparent for the available engagement is that:

- High levels of support for small businesses and creative artistic enterprises that lend neighborhood character as well as economic development opportunities.
- Support for green jobs, especially as relates to the Port and utilities and transportation.

Economic development at a broader level has not been a focus of explicit community engagement that we have found. Tacoma has a Green Economy Economic Development Strategy, but this work was not the result of community engagement.

4.8 TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is an integral topic that is raised in nearly every community engagement no matter the topic including community health assessments, domestic violence needs assessments, and climate action planning.

Transportation has also been the explicit topic of engagement in neighborhood focused community engagements by Sound Transit around station areas in Hilltop and South Tacoma. The Vision Zero effort to reduce traffic related injury and death has also conducted recent community engagement related to transportation. The Vision Zero Action Plan to eliminate car traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030 was informed by significant community engagement and adopted by Council in 2020.

Themes from existing engagement suggest that:

- Traffic violence is a major concern in Tacoma. This is evident from Vision Zero engagement where 47% of respondents said they or someone they were close to have been involved in a serious crash in Tacoma. Outside of Vision Zero engagement, pedestrian safety and motorist speed is also frequently raised as a concern.
- Tacomans desire more frequent and reliable transit service. They do not yet feel that transit is a reasonable substitute for driving given levels of transit service and the available transit network.
- The 2022 Community Survey shows that District 3 has the highest satisfaction with Public Transit services at 89%. Satisfaction in other districts ranged from 64-81%.
- There is a high level of support for improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to create walkable neighborhoods and to support climate goals and reduce traffic violence.
- Improving the ease of bicycle travel in Tacoma was the top priority area for improvement in the 2022 Community Survey. The second was street, trail, and other transportation enhancements in your neighborhood.

- There is a sense that transportation investments, especially sidewalk infrastructure, is not equitably available and maintained across city neighborhoods. Equity issues for persons using wheelchairs for mobility are also a common concern.

4.9 PARKS + RECREATION

Equitable parks access has been a focus of MetroParks Tacoma. Their community outreach for the community needs assessment provides ranked priorities for parks by region of Tacoma. They are also engaging in a series of listening sessions in late 2023. At a more local scale, the Trust for Public Land has conducted community engagement and surveys for a series of green school yard projects mainly in South Tacoma and Eastside.

4.10 PUBLIC FACILITIES + SERVICES

There has not been broad citywide engagement related to the public facilities and services. However most existing engagement does include input on the following list of public facilities and services. There are also planned future and ongoing community engagement on some of these topics that will occur before 2025.

- **Libraries.** Library services in Hilltop and Eastside were specific topics of engagement in 2021-2022. This engagement echoed many parks and neighborhood engagement in highlighting a desire for safe third spaces for youth and families and community gathering spaces for social events, celebrations, and meetings.
 - The 2022 Community Survey shows that District 2 has the highest satisfaction with Public Library Services at 97%, while other districts are in the 83-89% range.
- **Homelessness.** Homelessness was the top priority social issue in the 2022 Office of Strategy Community Survey. It was also one of the top three roles recommended for the city.
- **Childcare.** Childcare was the fourth priority social issue in the 2022 Community Survey. It is commonly highlighted in neighborhood plans as a desired amenity and mentioned in relation to housing (desire for ADU, DADU, multigenerational units or more mixed income housing throughout the neighborhood to support kinship caregiving. Childcare is also an economic development issue.
- **Community safety and policing.** Existing relevant studies include the Hosmer perceptions of safety hope and change study, the Strategic Alliance on Domestic Violence strategy, and the Peace Point community driven plan for Youth Safety. Vision Zero highlighted a citywide desire for increased traffic enforcement and the 2022 Community Survey listed greater policing and enforcement as the top role for the City in addressing community concerns. Further engagement related to community safety and policing is underway and planned with the Office of Strategy.
 - There is a wide range of concern related to crime, gang activity, drugs, and gun control by councilmanic district as shown by the 2022 Community Survey. 1% of District 1 and

5% of District 4 respondents listed this as a major issue for the next ten years, statistically significantly lower than the city average. In contrast, this was a top issue for 25% of District 5 respondents and 22% of District 2.

The 2022 Community Survey also includes statistically representative satisfaction ratings related to City provided public services. These are available disaggregated by race, gender, income, housing tenure, and councilmanic district. EMS, fire services, sewer and power have the highest overall satisfaction ratings. Storm drainage, street cleaning, police investigations, and code enforcement had the lowest.

- District 1 had statistically significantly higher satisfaction ratings for public sewer, drinking water, and street cleaning services. They were also most likely to be satisfied with fire response and suppression, emergency medical services (EMS), police patrol, and police community programs.
- District 2 had lower than average ratings of EMS, but higher than average ratings of utility billing and customer service.
- District 4 had the lowest satisfaction rating of police community programs.
- District 5 had significantly lower satisfaction rating with electrical power and drinking water compared to city averages.
- Concentrate on infrastructure, fix infrastructure, and zoning was the second highest priority role for the City in the 2022 Community Survey.

4.11 ENGAGEMENT + ADMINISTRATION + IMPLEMENTATION

4.12 DOWNTOWN

5 APPENDIX

Documents Reviewed

Note this list includes all documents shared with Seva Workshop and then reviewed. Not all documents included relevant of community engagement that could be then coded for the gap analysis.

	Organization / Author	Title	Year
1	City of Tacoma	2030 Climate Action Plan Section 7, Community Engagement Summary	2021
2	City of Tacoma	2030 Climate Action Plan Section 7, Environmental Justice Leaders Workgroup	2021
3	City of Tacoma	2030 Tacoma Climate Action Plan	2021
4	City of Tacoma	Affordable Housing Action Strategy	2018
5	South Tacoma Neighborhood Council	AMENDMENT APPLICATION PACKET TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND LAND USE REGULATORY CODE	2021
6	City of Tacoma, BS, ECONorthwest	Analysis of Systemic Disparities in Achievable Housing Options	2021
7	City of Tacoma and Americans for the Arts	Arts and Economic Prosperity 6: The Economic & Social Impact Study of Nonprofit Arts & Culture Organizations & Their Audiences in City of Tacoma	2022
8	Metro Parks Tacoma	City in A Park: System and Strategic Plan Themes for Future Planning	2023
9	City of Tacoma	College Park Historic Special Review District Overlay Zone – Public Comments	2022
10	Tacoma Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability	Community Engagement Phase III Climate Action Planning	2021
11	TPCHD	Community Health Assessment Pierce County	2019
12	Metro Parks Tacoma	Community Needs Assessment Planning Area Results	2022
13	City of Tacoma, MDB Insight	Community Survey - Key Findings	2018
14	Downtown on the Go	Downtown on the Go Final Report	2017
15	Tacoma Public Library	Eastside and Hilltop Feasibility Study - Community Engagement Summary	2022
16	City of Tacoma; Community Attributes	Economic Development Strategic Plan	2019
17	City of Tacoma	Environmental Services Strategic Plan 2018-2025: Appendix	
18	Sound Transit	Fall 2022 Engagement Summary	2022

	Organization / Author	Title	Year
19	City of Tacoma	From Climate Emergency to Shared Prosperity: Tacoma's Green Economic Development Strategy	2023
20	Metro Parks Tacoma, Tacoma Public Schools, Trust for Public Land	Green Schoolyards for Tacoma	2020
21	Tacoma Public Schools, BERK Consulting	Head Start Community Needs Assessment	2021
22	Home in Tacoma	Home in Tacoma Housing Choice Survey Results: Phase 2	2023
23	Home in Tacoma	Home In Tacoma Project – Phase 2 Engagement Summary	2023
24	Tacoma Public Utilities	Integrated Resource Plan	2022
25	Links to Opportunity	Links to Opportunity Round I Outreach Summary	2017
26	Sound Outreach	LTO - Streetscape Outreach Project Concluding Report	2017
27	Foundation for Tacoma Students	Making the Case: The Great Reset	
28	City of Tacoma	McKinley Hill Neighborhood Plan	2023
29	TPCHD	Perceptions of Safety, Hope and Change in Hosmer	2022
30	City of Tacoma	Picture Pac Ave Community Engagement Plan	2023
31	City of Tacoma	Proposed College Park Historic Special Review District Findings and Recommendations Discussion Document	2022
32	City of Tacoma	Proposed College Park Historic Special Review District Planning Commission's Findings and Decision Report	2022
33	City of Tacoma	Stormwater Management Program (SWMP) Plan	2023
34	City of Tacoma & Pierce County Human Services	Strategic Alliance to End Family Violence Report	2021
35	Metro Parks Tacoma	Strategic Master Plan - 7.3 Community Survey Report	2018
36	Downtown on the Go	Streetscape Report	2017
37	Tacoma Tidelands	Summary of Engagement: Visioning Phase	2021
38	City of Tacoma	Tacoma 2025 Shared Vision Shared Future	2014
39	City of Tacoma	Tacoma 2025 Shared Vision Shared Future: Process	2014
40	City of Tacoma	Tacoma 2025 Shared Vision Shared Future: Signature Spreads	2014
41	City of Tacoma , Cascadia Consulting Group	Tacoma Climate Adaptation Strategy	2021
42	City of Tacoma; MDB Insight	Tacoma Community Survey 2022 Final Report	2022
43	City of Tacoma; MDB Insight	Tacoma Community Survey Final Report	2020

	Organization / Author	Title	Year
44	Tacoma Public Utilities	Tacoma Power 2022 IRP Workshop Notes	2022
45	Tacoma Public Utilities	Tacoma Power 2022 IRP Workshop Notes	2022
46	Tacoma Public Utilities	Tacoma Power 2022 IRP Workshop Notes	2022
47	Tacoma Public Utilities	Tacoma Power 2022 IRP Workshop Notes	2022
48	Environmental Services	Tacoma Urban Waters Protection Plan Community Engagement Summary	2021
49	Peace Point	The Community-Driven Plan for Youth Safety	2023
50	City of Tacoma, PlanIT GEO	Urban Forest Management Plan Action Plan	2019
51	City of Tacoma, PlanIT GEO	Urban Forest Management Plan Research Summary	2019
52	Vision Zero	Vision Zero Community Engagement Report	2022
53	TPCHD	Youth & Young Adult Violence Assessment	2022

Code System

CODE SYSTEM
Code System
Tacoma 2035 Goal Areas
Organizational Effectiveness (Government Performance)
Environmental Health and Climate Justice
Human Health
Belief and Trust in Local Government
Access to Facilities and Services
Livable Wage Jobs
Housing and Homelessness
Community Safety
Sentiments
Desires
Uncertainty

CODE SYSTEM
Concern
Excitement
Positive
Neighborhoods
Puget Sound Partnership
Puyallup Watershed
Chambers Clover
New Tacoma
Tideflats
West End
South End
North End
College Park
Proctor
Eastside
Salishan
Dometop
McKinley Hill
Pacific Ave
Central
Hilltop
Southwest
Southeast
Tacoma Mall
Northwest
Northeast
South Tacoma
Hosmer
Groups
Khmer language
Vietnamese language
Mandarin Chinese language

CODE SYSTEM
Foreign Born
Undocumented
Limited English
Korean language
First-generation
Asian
BIPOC
Black
Disabled
Elders (65+)
High school / GED
Homeowners
Latinx
LGBTQIA+
Living with 3+ generations
Low-income
Middle Eastern North African
Native
Puyallup
Pacific Islander
Renters
Russian Ukranian language
Spanish language
Vietnamese language
White
Youth (16-22)
Methods
Prioritization Tool
Participatory Design
Bicycle tour
Capacity building
CBO Hosted

CODE SYSTEM
Community ambassadors
Focus group
Ideas Wall
Intercept survey
Interviews
Online form
Online meeting
Online Open House
Online survey
Open House
Pop-up
Publicity and Promotion
Road show
Meeting in a Box
Social media comments
Tabling
Walking tour
Workgroup
Workshop
Comp Plan Themes
Historic Preservation
Public Facilities and Services
Engagement and Administration
Parks and Recreation
Transportation
EV
Transit
Bus
Station areas
Connections
Pedestrian infrastructure
Bicycle infrastructure

CODE SYSTEM
Parking
Economic Development
Environment and Watershed
Housing
Design and Development - like urban design standards
Urban Form - big pic land use
Vision
Other Themes
Child care
Tree Canopy
Food
Health
Climate
Equity
Safety and Security