City of Tacoma, Washington

ONE TACOMA

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

Equity Assessment Context History and Baseline | July 2024

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1 PURPOSE

The City of Tacoma is updating its Comprehensive Plan One Tacoma to the year 2050. Equity is a key focus for the City of Tacoma and therefore this update. There are also statewide and regional efforts to articulate equity and orient policies and programs to achieve more equitable outcomes for Washington residents. For example, House Bill 1220 introduced new requirements related to housing equity in Growth Management Planning which the Comprehensive Plan will be subject to.

To advance equity in the Comprehensive Plan update, we developed an equity assessment framework to guide an audit of the existing plan against equity goals. The equity goals included in the framework were selected after research into the policy context of Tacoma's equity work and historical context. After selecting the equity goals, we also conducted baseline data analysis to identify priority subgroups for each outcome.

This document contains a summary of our contextual research and baseline analysis as a reference document. The accompanying Assessment Framework contains a summary of conclusions and is meant to be a tool for policy writers in the Comprehensive Plan update.

2 POLICY CONTEXT

How is this work guided by and aligned to existing frameworks at the State, Regional, County, and City levels?

2.1 State of Washington

HB 1220

HB 1220 changed RCW 36.70A.070 (2) which describes requirements for the Housing Element of Comprehensive Plans in Washington State. It requires housing needs to be assessed by income levels – moderate, low, very low, and extremely low income, as well as emergency housing and permanent supportive housing. It also requires that the residential land capacity analysis accounts for needs by income level. HB 1220 also requires assessment of displacement risk and an audit of policies and regulations for racially disparate impacts, displacement, and/or exclusion.

2.2 Puget Sound Regional Council

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is the organization responsible for long-range planning in the central Puget Sound Region which includes King, Pierce, Kitsap, and Snohomish Counties. VISION 2050 is the long-range plan for this multi-county region and provides guidance for local governments to set local priorities within their own plans. The region's vision for 2050 is to “provide exceptional quality of life, opportunity for all, connected communities, a spectacular natural environment, and an innovative, thriving economy.”

VISION 2050 also includes a specific equity goal.

“All people can attain the resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life and enable them to reach their full potential. Differences in life outcomes cannot be predicted by race, class or any other identity. Communities of color, historically marginalized communities and those affected by poverty are engaged in decision-making processes, planning and policy-making.” Vision 2050

To achieve this goal, PSRC released a Regional Equity Strategy in 2023, developed in partnership with an Equity Advisory Committee (EAC). This document, *Equity Planning Resources for Comprehensive Plans* provides guidance to local jurisdictions about integrating equity in comprehensive planning. PSRC uses Access to Opportunity and Displacement Risk as their main equity outcomes, both of which are composite measures of multiple indicators. As the region's transportation planning organization as well, the PSRC Regional Transportation Plan Equity Analysis identifies six transportation related outcomes.

2.3 City of Tacoma

Equity and Empowerment Framework

The City of Tacoma Council adopted an Equity and Empowerment Framework in 2014 that is a consistent guiding principle across the entire organization. The framework focuses on five goals:

- **The City of Tacoma Workforce Reflects the Community it Serves.** We will actively work to eliminate racial and other disparities and provide accommodations for people with disabilities in hiring, promotion, and retention
- **Purposeful Community Outreach and Engagement.** We will work with community partners and businesses to promote equity and inclusion within Tacoma and throughout the region, producing measurable improvements and disparity reductions
- **Equitable Service Delivery to Residents and Visitors.** We will provide guidance, education and assistance to all departments as they develop sustainable methods to build capacity in achieving equitable outcomes and services
- **Support Human Rights and Opportunities for Everyone to Achieve their Full Potential.** Promote, support and build capacity for compliance with civil rights laws, ordinances and regulations, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, within the City of Tacoma
- **Commitment to Equity in Policy Decision Making**. We will be transparent and collaborative with internal and external individuals and groups, holding ourselves and our partners accountable for measurable improvements and outcomes

In line with this framework, the One Tacoma 2050 update includes community outreach and engagement. This equity assessment is the main tool in the Comprehensive Plan update for defining equitable service delivery goals and making transparent policy decisions to support equity goals.

Equity Index

The City of Tacoma worked with Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity to create the Tacoma Equity Index. This tool makes equity related data easily accessible to staff and other parties. With these data at hand, projects, policies, programs or services can be better

designed to have the largest impact on addressing inequity. The data is also a key resource for designing community engagement. The tool and data have been updated since the initial investment and brought to an interactive online mapping platform managed by the Tacoma Office of Strategy. Today the City of Tacoma uses the Equity Index to identify, track, and close disparities, and prioritize investments based on where and who has access to opportunity, for example opportunity to safely walk to school, opportunity to earn a living wage job, opportunity to access healthy food and opportunity to have safe and health environmental interactions. There are 32 indicators in five categories (livability, accessibility, economy, education, and environmental health) as well as an equity overview with demographic information. (City of Tacoma, 2024)

Transforming Tacoma (Becoming an Anti-Racist City)

The City of Tacoma is on a journey of transition to become an anti-racist city. Resolution 40622 passed by City Council in 2020 formally acknowledges that the City of Tacoma's existing systems have not adequately served the needs of everyone in the community and, in particular, the needs of Black community members and other community members of color. It affirms the City of Tacoma's commitment to improving existing systems for all. Specifically, the City Manager is directed to keep anti-racism as a top priority in the process of budget development and in the evaluation of new policies and programs, as well as the sustained and comprehensive transformation of existing services, with initial priority being given to policing. The City Manager is also directed to assess the current state of systems in place at the Tacoma Police Department and work to improve transparency and accountability in policing. Finally, Resolution 40622 directs the City Manager to work with the Mayor and City Council to build a legislative platform at the local, state, and federal levels that works to transform institutions impacted by systemic racism for the greater equity and wellbeing of all residents of Tacoma, Washington State, and the United States.

Health and Equity in All Policies

In 2016, the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department passed Resolution No. 2016-4495 to adopt a health in all policies approach to promote healthy communities. This recommended that decision-makers consider health in the development of new policies and in the review and rewrite of policies to include potential impacts of specific communities burdened by health inequities. With Resolution No. 39893, *Health and Equity in all Policies*, the City of Tacoma adopted this approach in 2017.

City of Tacoma Strategic Plan and Council Priorities

Tacoma's Strategic Plan, Tacoma 2025, was developed in 2014 with the input of over 2,000 community members. Every year, the City Council determines Council Priorities based on the current strategic plan. The current priorities are:

- Community Safety
- Housing and Homelessness
- Livable Wage Jobs
- Access to Facilities and Services (including Transportation)
- Human and Environmental Health
- Belief and Trust (City of Tacoma, n.d.)

The Office of Strategy conducts a Community Survey every other year to collect input from a statistically representative sample of Tacomans. This is the primary data source for monitoring progress on Council Priorities and the Strategic Plan.

3 A HISTORY OF TACOMA & HOUSING

Tribal Use & Early White Settlement

The City of Tacoma is located on the shores of Commencement Bay, where the Puyallup River ends its long flow down from Mount Rainier and enters Puget Sound in a broad delta. This area has been home to the spuyaləpabš—also known today as the Puyallup Tribe of Indians—since time immemorial. The spuyaləpabš speak txʷəlšucid, a Southern dialect of the Lushootseed language (Puyallup Tribe of Indians). In this dialect, suyaləpabš is translated as "people from the bend at the bottom of the river," in reference to the many dispersed villages that once spanned outward from a turn in the Puyallup River near the site of the present-day Tacoma Dome (Puyallup Tribe of Indians, 2023). Permanent suyaləpabš villages were also found along Commencement Bay, the mouth of the Puyallup River, other rivers and streams, and the Puget Sound shoreline (City of Tacoma, 2024). For many centuries, the suyaləpabš relied on gathering of roots and berries, hunting, and the abundance of salmon, shellfish, and other marine resources in the area (Puyallup Tribe of Indians, 2023).

The suyaləpabš world was forever changed with the arrival of European explorers in the 18th century. The first white visitors came to what is now known as Commencement Bay in May 1792 as part of Captain George Vancouver's voyage aboard the *Discovery*. Both Vancouver and his Second Lieutenant Peter Puget—for whom Puget Sound is named—explored the Tacoma area aboard longboats. Local Coast Salish people (likely including the suyaləpabš as well as Suquamish and Nisqually) encountered Vancouver and Puget's crews during their journeys (Morgan, 2018).

Puget Sound, however, was a far journey from Europe and saw no further white visitors until 1824 (Morgan, 2018). The first permanent white settlement on the Sound arrived in 1833, when the Hudson's Bay Company established Fort Nisqually as a fur trading outpost in modern-day DuPont, south of Tacoma (Metro Parks Tacoma, 2024). The fort brought additional British traders to the region and expanded to include a farm with cattle and sheep (Pierce County, 2024).

The first American expedition to the region did not come until 1838, when the US Navy sent a fleet under the command of Lieutenant Charles Wilkes (Pierce County, 2024). The participants in Wilkes' expedition reported on the beauty of the South Sound: the Cascade and Olympic mountains rising to the east and west, the imposing figure of Mount Rainier towering over the horizon, the thick forests plunging into deep waters (Morgan, 2018). Wilkes and his men reached Fort Nisqually in 1841 and, from this base, sent out multiple surveying parties to explore and chart the region—including the inlet from which they "commenced" their survey of Puget Sound: Commencement Bay (Pierce County, 2024).

The first white settlers on Commencement Bay came not long after it received its Euro-American name when Swede Nicholas Delin arrived circa 1852. Delin built a sawmill and house near what is now Twenty-fifth and Dock streets in Tacoma. He was followed soon after by the first wagon train party to the region, a group of 171 pioneers led by James Longmire, who settled on the south shore of the bay.

In 1853, Washington Territory was carved from a portion of the Oregon Territory and the new governor Isaac Stevens arrived soon after. Upon Stevens' arrival, the non-Native population in the state was around 4,000 people, and the new governor estimated the Native American population at around 10,000. This number was already drastically reduced from what it had been only a century earlier, as many Tribes had been decimated by diseases like smallpox, measles, and influenza that had arrived with the first European ships.

Stevens soon turned his attention to what he and many other Americans deemed "the Indian problem" with the goal of wresting land from the Tribes to make way for white settlers. Throughout the 1850s, Governor Stevens led negotiations with Tribes across Washington Territory, often characterized by large imbalances of power and poor translation during treaty councils. In these treaties, Tribes ceded their traditional lands to the United States in exchange for reservation lands on which to live, as well as promises of medicine, money, and education. Significantly, Tribes reserved their rights to fish, gather, collect shellfish, and hunt at their "usual and accustomed grounds and stations." (Puyallup Tribe of Indians, 2023; Oldham, 2022)

On December 26, 1854, the Puyallup (suyaləpabš), Nisqually, and Squaxin Island Tribes, signed the Treaty of Medicine Creek, ceding to the United States lands within much of present-day Kitsap, Mason, Thurston, King, and Pierce Counties. The treaty designated a reservation for the Puyallup Tribe in an area that is now downtown Tacoma; however, this land was far from the Puyallup River and its tributaries—critically important resources for the Tribe—and was therefore "completely unsatisfactory for Tribal members." (Puyallup Tribe of Indians, 2023)

The Puyallup were not the only Tribe negatively impacted by the treaties. From 1855 through 1856, a series of regional wars between white settlers and Native Americans spread across Washington Territory in response to these unsatisfactory terms (City of Tacoma, 2024). During these Treaty Wars, the small white settlement that had developed on the south shore of Commencement Bay evacuated. They did not return (Wilma & Crowley, 2003).

In response to the conflicts, Governor Stevens conceded to the Puyallup Tribe's demand to expand their reservation to include an additional 18,000+ acres on both sides of the Puyallup River, "extending from the mouth upstream about seven miles toward and to the edge of what is now the City of Puyallup, as well as what is now Northeast Tacoma and the City of Fife." This expansion was further amended by Executive Order in 1873 to add tidelands in what is now the heart of the Port of Tacoma. (Puyallup Tribe of Indians, 2023)

Founding of Tacoma, Arrival of the Railroad, & Allotment of the Puyallup Reservation

In 1864, President Lincoln chartered the Northern Pacific Railroad Company and provided 40 million acres of the public domain to incentivize a new transcontinental railroad ending in Puget Sound. By the end of the year, recently discharged Union Army veteran Job Carr, Jr. had laid claim to a plot of land on the Point Defiance peninsula known to the Puyallup as Shu-bah-lip, “the sheltered place,” in hopes that it would become valuable with the arrival of the train. He renamed it Eureka (Morgan, 2018).

In 1868, developer Morton McCarver arrived in Commencement Bay, also lured by the promise of fortune that might come with the arrival of the railroad. He purchased most of Carr’s claim and renamed the spot Tacoma City (Wilma & Crowley, 2003). McCarver was a talented promoter and the new Tacoma City soon attracted more settlers. By 1869, it boasted a post office, a wharf, a school district, and elected officials (Morgan, 2018). In 1873, after heated competition between promoters of Tacoma City and Seattle, the Northern Pacific Railroad announced that the terminus of their transcontinental railroad would be on Commencement Bay (MacIntosh & Wilma, 1999). Local boomers like McCarver were ecstatic with the promise of growth, and Tacoma earned the moniker “City of Destiny.” (Ferguson, 2016)

The Northern Pacific Railroad built their long-awaited depot two miles south of Tacoma City and dubbed it New Tacoma. Tacoma City was incorporated in 1874 by the Pierce County Commissioners and 1875 by the territorial legislature. By 1884, Tacoma City and New Tacoma had consolidated as “Tacoma” which boasted a population of 4,400 (Wilma & Crowley, 2003). The transcontinental railroad itself arrived in 1883, although a direct route to the East Coast was not completed until 1888 with the opening of the Stampede Pass Tunnel (Tacoma Historical Society). Just one year after the completion of the tunnel, Washington received its statehood. The completion of the railroad brought with it exponential growth for the City of Tacoma. By 1893, the population had exploded to over 50,000 residents. The city itself had also spread dramatically, with industrial development moving out into the tideflats. (Copass & Eysaman, 1994)

This boom in growth came at a cost to the people who had inhabited these lands since time immemorial. The 1870s-1890s saw increasing pressure on the Puyallup Reservation, as the growing non-Indian community increasingly eyed Reservation lands. The federal government’s efforts to control incursions onto Tribal land were “at best uneven and sometimes non-existent.” (Puyallup Tribe of Indians, 2023)

Caving to pressure from white settlers, the U.S. government began to divide communally owned Reservation lands into smaller parcels or “allotments” assigned to individual Tribal members. The process of allocation generally had the goal of making it easier for non-Indians to acquire Reservation land and discourage communal Tribal identity, culture, and ways of life. In 1886, the Puyallup Reservation was divided into 178 allotments, which were assigned to Puyallup heads of households with appointed non-Native “guardians.” This action left only a 600-acre

"Agency Tract" in the Tribe's communal ownership. A federal commission then began selling these individual parcels of land, resulting in the sale of about 7,000 acres or about 40% of the Puyallup Indian Reservation to non-Tribal members (City of Tacoma, 2024; Puyallup Tribe of Indians, 2023).

After 1903, federal law placed no restrictions on Puyallup Tribal members' ability to sell their land, and white settlers used tactics ranging from legitimate sales to marriage to murder to get their hands on Tribal parcels in and around Tacoma. Other Puyallup Tribal members had their land seized due to inability to pay taxes or a failure to develop the land "properly" according to white standards. The end result was devastating to the Tribe: by 1915, it was reported that fewer than a dozen Puyallup families still owned land on the Reservation.

It was not until the 1970s that some of this land returned to Puyallup hands. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Puyallup Tribe brought a series of successful lawsuits and other legal actions resulting in the Puyallup Tribal Land Claims Settlement Agreement of 1990. This "far-reaching and tremendously important agreement" between 12 parties including the Puyallup Tribe, the City of Tacoma, Pierce County, and the Port of Tacoma among others returned some parcels of land that had been a part of the Medicine Creek Treaty. It also provided funding for development and programming, protection for fishery resources and habitats, and more. In their 2023 Comprehensive Land Use Plan, the Puyallup Tribe explains how such legal actions are part of a long history of Tribal persistence that has "ensured our own survival through an exceptional determination to adapt and adjust to the change of time and ruthless impositions." (City of Tacoma, 2024; Puyallup Tribe of Indians, 2023)

Booms and busts: immigration and exclusion

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw a series of booms and busts for the young City of Tacoma. The impressive growth of the 1880s and 1890s screeched to a halt with the Panic of 1893 and the devastating depression that followed, in which thousands of banks failed and businesses (including the Northern Pacific Railroad) went bankrupt (Caldbick, 2019). Tacoma, however, had bounced back by the turn of the century with development, money, and residents pouring in once again (Wilma & Crowley, 2003).

The jobs, mobility, and promise of fortune from the railroad industry—as well as additional opportunities in logging and mining—brought many new immigrants to the shores of Commencement Bay. From the mid-1800s onward, many new arrivals came from other parts of the United States, especially the Midwest. The first foreign-born immigrants to the Pacific Northwest came mostly from Scandinavia, the British Isles, Germany, and Canada. Norwegians and Swedes in particular made up a large number of the European immigrants to the Tacoma area after the arrival of the railroad in 1883 (Copass & Eysaman, 1994).

New arrivals also flocked to Tacoma from across the Pacific. Chinese immigrants were the first Asians to arrive in Washington State in significant numbers, with many Chinese workers arriving in the mid-1800s to seek gold and, later, work on railroad construction (Kingle, Matthew W. and Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest). The Northern Pacific Railroad alone employed

roughly 17,000 Chinese contract laborers in its construction (Morgan, 2018). By the 1880s, Pierce County had approximately 1,000 Chinese residents, 700 of whom were within the City of Tacoma (University of Puget Sound, 2017). Nearly all of the Chinese in Tacoma came from Canton (now known as Guangzhou) in Kwantung Province—the first and for many years only port in China that allowed foreign business (Morgan, 2018).

White workers often saw these Chinese laborers as job competition. This perception only worsened with the completion of the railroads in the early 1880s, which resulted in many Chinese workers moving into cities like Tacoma in search of their next jobs (Morgan, 2018). Economic anxieties combined with racist ideology to stir fierce anti-Chinese sentiment throughout the West Coast. Labor organizations and nativist groups popularized slogans like "The Chinese Must Go!" which frequently appeared in publications like *The Tacoma Daily Ledger.* In the *Ledger*, Tacoma's Chinese residents were often portrayed as not just an economic threat to the city, but also a clear and present danger to citizens: "Allow Chinese twenty feet on any prominent street in a city with a future to it, and like the speed of atmospheric pestilence they spread the contagion of their filthy numbers so rapidly that in a brief time they will occupy the whole street," they wrote after a Chinese merchant leased a property on Pacific Avenue for a laundry (Morgan, 2018; University of Puget Sound, 2017).

In response to anti-Asian attitudes, US Congress banned Asian immigrants from obtaining citizenship under any circumstances in 1875 and passed exclusionary "Alien Land Laws" that prevented them from owning land (Grant, 2008). In 1882, the federal Chinese Exclusion Act provided an absolute ban on Chinese laborers immigrating to the US for 10 years (National Archives, 2021).

Prevented from buying real estate, most if not all the Chinese population in Tacoma lived on the waterfront on land leased by the railroad companies. This burgeoning Chinese community included fishermen, miners, domestic laborers, restauranteurs, and several prominent businessmen.

Despite efforts by this Chinese community to build relationships with their white neighbors, anti-Chinese sentiment had reached a fever pitch in Tacoma by 1885. On February 21, Mayor Jacob Weisbach called a town meeting to discuss the "Chinese Problem." 900 of Tacoma's 6,936 citizens gathered to discuss how the Chinese should be persuaded to leave the city—that they should leave was already considered a foregone conclusion. After this meeting, other anti-Chinese actions ramped up, including boycotts of Chinese businesses, employees, and tenants, and the creation of groups like the Tacoma Anti-Chinese League. Following an "Anti-Chinese Congress" in Seattle in September, Tacoma created an official ouster committee to lead the expulsion of their Chinese community (Morgan, 2018; University of Puget Sound, 2017).

On November 3, 1885, a mob of 500 white citizens marched through Tacoma's Chinatown, rounding residents onto wagons or forcing them to march eight miles to the Lake View train station where they were loaded onto trains to Portland. Just days later, what remained of the once vibrant Chinatown was burned to the ground. Although these events were condemned by some national papers and politicians, others lauded them as an effective way to remove Chinese communities, dubbing this "the Tacoma Method." The City continues to heal from the

lasting shame of this event. A 1993 unanimous City Council resolution (No. 32415) acknowledged this “reprehensible occurrence,” and set in motion efforts to address past harm, including the development of Chinese Reconciliation Park on Commencement Bay (Resolution No. 32415 Amended, 1993).

The first decades of the 20th century witnessed more boom and bust for the City of Tacoma. In the 1900s and 1910s, additional transcontinental railways plowed into the city bringing economic opportunity and development with them. By 1910, Tacoma’s population had swelled to 83,000. 1917 saw the construction of the U.S. Army’s Camp Lewis (later Fort Lewis), and the Port of Tacoma was founded the following year. Industry boomed once again during World War I, with an influx of new residents and plenty of demand for lumber to feed the city’s economy. The 1920s, however, did not roar in Tacoma, as the economy tanked along with lumber exports. The Great Depression provided a further hit to the region (Copass & Eysaman, 1994; Wilma & Crowley, 2003).

Throughout this period, another group of immigrants began to make their home in Tacoma: the Japanese. From 1880s onward, Japanese men arrived in Tacoma to work on railroads, mills, and farms. Like the Chinese, these Japanese immigrants were not eligible for citizenship, were prohibited from owning land, and faced regular discrimination from the white community. Nonetheless, these immigrants created a small but close-knit Nihonmachi (Japantown) in Tacoma from the 1880s through 1940s. Wary of receiving the same treatment as the former Chinese residents of the city, the Japanese avoided the waterfront, instead making their home in an eight-block radius stretching from 17th Street to 11th Street and Pacific Avenue to Market Street. This thriving enclave included “hotels; restaurants; barbers; dry cleaners; laundries; Japanese newspaper offices, churches, and temples; import shops; produce stands; and a Japanese-language school.” By 1910, Nihonmachi was home to more than 1,000 Japanese immigrants and their children. The community continued to grow at a steady clip throughout the next several decades and, by 1940, was home to 181 Japanese-owned businesses (Nimura, Tacoma Neighborhoods: Japantown (Nihonmachi) - Thumbnail History, 2016).

World War II, however, had a devastating and lasting impact on Tacoma’s Nihonmachi. On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt authorized Executive Order 9066, which ultimately removed 120,000 Japanese and Japanese-Americans from the West Coast to inland concentration camps. In Tacoma, over 700 Japanese were forcibly evacuated via Union Station. After the war, only a fraction of this community—174 out of 872 former residents—returned to the city and Tacoma’s Nihonmachi never fully recovered. Today, hints of this once-thriving enclave can be found in the Tacoma Buddhist Temple and a memorial for the Japanese language school; however, most of Nihonmachi is now under parking lots, the Tacoma Convention Center, or the University of Washington Tacoma campus (Nimura, Tacoma Japanese American Day of Remembrance, 2018, 2018; Nimura, Tacoma Neighborhoods: Japantown (Nihonmachi) - Thumbnail History, 2016).

Redlining and Racially Restrictive Covenants

In addition to the exclusion of the Japanese community, World War II also created other changes for the makeup of Tacoma's population. The war brought with it an economic boom, with incoming shipyards, war workers, soldiers, and sailors. This included an influx of African American workers, recruited from the Deep South to work in war plants. Between 1940 to 1945, Tacoma's black population increased from 650 to 3,205 residents (Wilma & Crowley, 2003). Some of these new arrivals moved into the homes that had been left empty by the interned former residents of Tacoma's Nihonmachi; some settled in Salishan, an integrated wartime housing development (University of Richmond Digital Scholarship Lab). Others made their homes elsewhere in the city but, because of discriminatory housing practices, were often limited to racially segregated neighborhoods.

The 1930s saw an intensification of racial segregation in many cities through the practice of "redlining." Redlining was the discriminatory process through which banks and other lenders refused loans for people of color to purchase homes in specific neighborhoods. The term comes from maps used by bankers and lenders that color coded neighborhoods by desirability, using red to identify "hazardous" neighborhoods—which were generally those with residents of color. Banks would often refuse loans to anyone in red zones. In practice, redlining restricted where people could buy or rent based on their race and ethnicity, often sequestering people of color to specific neighborhoods within a city.

In redlined maps of Tacoma, many of the neighborhoods ranked "safest" for investors are historically white neighborhoods in the north end of the city. On the other hand, neighborhoods with many black and/or immigrant residents like Hilltop and McKinley are ranked as "hazardous" and colored red. The 1929 Tacoma Residential Security (Redlining) Map notes that just a few families of color were sufficient to deem a neighborhood undesirable for investment, noting of one neighborhood: "there are several Negro families (three known) who own property and live in this area. This constitutes hazard to justify a 4th grade [red] rating." (Tacoma Public Library Northwest Room, 2020; Honig, 2021; University of Richmond Digital Scholarship Lab)

In addition to redlining, the use of restrictive covenants also made it difficult for people of color to find housing in Tacoma. Racially restrictive covenants are deed restrictions that a landowner places on their property to forbid the sale or lease of that property to specified groups because of their race, color, or religion. Throughout the 1920s-1940s, such covenants played a major role in urban development across the country. More than 4,500 properties in Pierce County, including many in Tacoma, were subject to racially restrictive covenants. While some covenants were included on properties as early as 1906, the majority in Pierce County were placed between 1937-1948. In one example, a property owner in the West End placed the following restriction into the deed of their house in the 1920s: "Said premises shall not nor any part thereof be occupied by any person not of the Caucasian race." In other locations, developers placed racial covenants on entire subdivisions, such as the Orchard Place development in the North End: "No person of any race other than the white or Caucasian race shall use or occupy any building or any lot, except that this covenant, shall not prevent occupancy by domestic

servants of a different race domiciled with an owner or tenant." (Civil Rights and Labor History Consortium, University of Washington, 2022; Gregory, 2022)

In 1945, the US Supreme Court ruled in Shelley v. Kraemer that racially restrictive covenants violated the Fourteenth Amendment and were therefore legally unenforceable (Gregory, 2022). This ruling, however, did not put a stop to their use in practice, as racial covenants could still be established and socially enforced. Realtors and property owners continued to discourage individuals of color from moving into traditionally white neighborhoods through threats, harassment, and rampant discrimination. Black, Asian, Jewish, and other minority families were often told—explicitly or implicitly—that they would not be welcome in prospective neighborhoods with racial covenants, regardless of their enforceability (Silva, 2009).

Due to practices like redlining and racially restrictive covenants, the black community in Tacoma was essentially restricted to certain neighborhoods. By the late 1960s, the majority of Black residents in Pierce County who were not military personnel at Fort Lewis lived in the Hilltop neighborhood (Civil Rights and Labor History Consortium, University of Washington, 2022).

In 1967, the Tacoma City Council passed legislation that criminalized racial discrimination within the housing sector, followed by an Open Housing Ordinance in 1970 (Tacoma Public Library Northwest Room, 2020). These landmark pieces of legislation were thanks in no small part to a long tradition of advocacy by Tacoma's black community. In the early 1900s, Nettie J. Asberry—also the founding member of Tacoma's NAACP chapter—partnered with longshoreman Ernie Tanner to create the Tacoma Inter-Racial Council, which worked to end unfair treatment in the housing market. Later in the century, Ernie's son Jack Tanner worked as a lawyer and president of the NAACP's Tacoma chapter to continue the fight against discriminatory housing and employment practices. In 1968, Harold Moss—Tacoma's first black Mayor—and Hilltop residents founded the Tacoma Urban League to help address housing and other issues facing the black community (Washington State Historical Society).

The federal 1968 Fair Housing Act and 1977 Community Reinvestment Act prohibited home lending discrimination on the national scale. Despite these changes, however, the history of redlining, racial covenants, and other discriminatory practices had already made a lasting impact on Tacoma. By restricting where people of color could live, these policies impacted what schools they could attend, what services their neighborhoods would receive, and what economic opportunities would be available to them. Recently, the City of Tacoma's Office of Strategy and GIS developed an Equity Index measuring the city's 153 Census block groups by 32 different indicators across 5 categories: Livability, Accessibility, Economy, Education, and Environmental Health. From this analysis, they ranked each Census block from "Very High Opportunity" to "Very Low Opportunity." Areas identified in the 1929 Tacoma Residential Security (Redlining) Map as "hazardous" (i.e. neighborhoods that were redlined such as Hilltop, Central, and South Tacoma) tended to rank lower on the Equity Index, indicating a need for more investment. On the other hand, neighborhoods identified as "best" in the 1929 Tacoma Residential Security (Redlining) Map had some of the highest levels of opportunity (City of Tacoma, 2023).

Urban Renewal & Historic Preservation

The second half of the 20th century saw certain areas of growth for the City of Tacoma—although not necessarily without its losses. Post-war urban renewal and suburbanization hit downtown businesses hard, while the return of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge in 1950 (rebuilt after the disastrous collapse of the first iteration) and 1965 arrival of Interstate 5 changed the focus of transportation from rails and ferries to highways (Wilma & Crowley, 2003). These forces soon threatened Old City Hall and the former Northern Pacific Headquarters.

The potential loss of these iconic structures sparked a historic preservation movement in Tacoma. In 1973, the City created a historic preservation program, one of the first in Washington State, and quickly listed Old City Hall as the first building in the new Tacoma Register of Historic Places (City of Tacoma, n.d.). After the last passenger train departed Union Station in the mid-1980s, the community rallied to find a new use for the structure, eventually transforming it into a federal courthouse (Calabrese, 2015). In the 1990s, Tacoma adapted a series of warehouse buildings along Pacific Avenue into a new urban campus for University of Washington, winning a National Preservation Honor Award in the process.

As of April 2024, the Tacoma Register of Historic Places includes over 180 properties. The City has also designated four local historic districts, all of which are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Washington Heritage Register. Tacoma is home to five additional historic districts that are listed on either the National Register, the Washington Register, or both (City of Tacoma Historic Preservation Program, n.d.; City of Tacoma, n.d.; City of Tacoma Historic Preservation Program, n.d.).

4 BASELINE EQUITY OUTCOMES

How are different subgroups in Tacoma faring on selected equity outcomes?

We selected a short list of equity outcomes that are cross-cutting across chapters and most relevant to the 2050 Comp Plan vision. A baseline analysis of these outcomes is intended to help set direction for policy and to prioritize communities and areas for investment.

Of course, no single metric can tell the complete picture in a complex and dynamic system like a city. Equity outcomes often need to be considered in their relevant context and together with other outcomes to develop the most effective policies. We also know that while the City does have significant influence, policies and programs alone are not sufficient to influence these outcomes. Again, these are meant to help set direction and prioritize actions.

Important notes. This information highlights differences in race and geography on a few selected priority equity outcomes for the Tacoma Comprehensive Plan Update. Policy writers should also refer to other data available in the Community Profile and other resources such as the Racial Equity Index for additional context. The data is displayed categorically according to definitions set by the data source.

Using the Targeted Universalism framework, we seek to understand subgroup difference from the overall group outcome (typically for Tacoma as a whole, or what would be expected assuming equitable distribution that reflects the underlying population). Each table includes a column where the subgroup outcome is compared to the overall Tacoma goal or what would be expected for that subgroup given an equitable distribution. The red and blue color coding varies by the directionality

SELECTING EQUITY OUTCOMES

These equity outcomes were selected from a long list of priorities. The following criteria were used to filter and focus on the equity outcomes most relevant to the One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan. These outcomes may require coordinated policy work across chapters and departments to advance.

Alignment Criteria

- Anti-Racism. The City's stated goal of becoming an anti-racist city is outlined in Resolution 40622.
- Targeted Universalism. The City of Tacoma's Equity and Empowerment framework led by the Office of Equity and Human Rights uses a strategy of "targeted universalism" which recognizes that we all need different strategies to achieve our full potential.
- HB 1220. The new State requirement mandates housing analysis conducted by income and geography to identify and address housing disparities.

Implementation Criteria

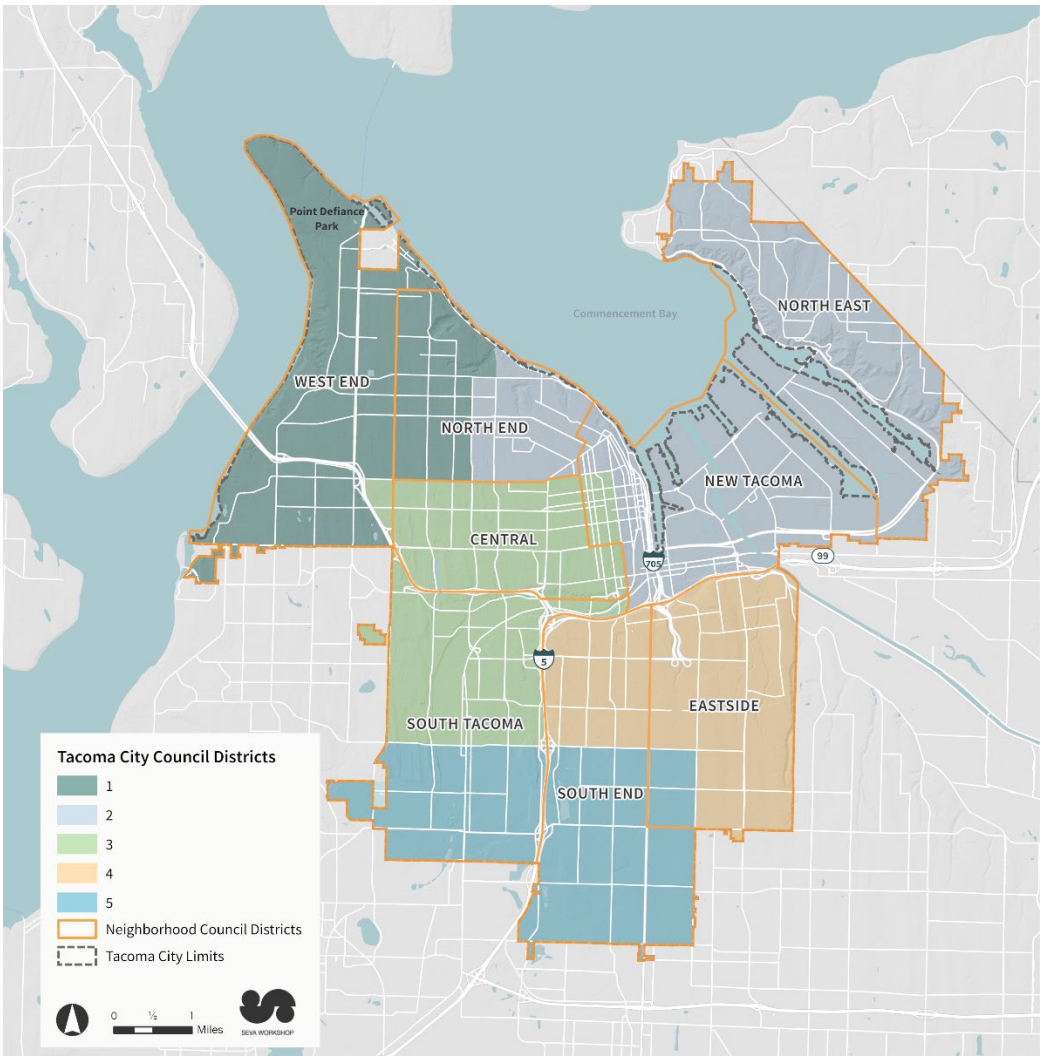
- Drives the Vision. The Plan vision is a Tacoma where "every resident can reach daily essentials (groceries, school, parks, medical care etc.) within 15 minutes without a car."
- Coordination with Council and Community Priorities. We prioritized adopting measures that have already been articulated to avoid duplication of effort, such as the homelessness strategy, the affordable housing action strategy, the climate action plan, and Vision Zero. Comprehensive Plan strategies and these actions should be mutually supportive.
- Replicable/trackable. We prioritized indicators with publicly available data or data that is already being tracked by the City to be able to assess future progress on.
- Actionable. We prioritized outcomes over which the Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan have influence. This Equity Assessment is intended as key reference material for plan writers to craft policies and programs addressing key disparities. One key decision relating to actionability was to not include overall Index measures as an outcome (such as the Tacoma Equity Index or Displacement Indices), but rather, key component measures.

of the outcome (sometimes larger numbers are the desired outcome, sometimes smaller numbers are desired).

This disaggregation and comparison to the overall outcome by subgroup is essential for a targeted universalism approach and for understanding progress on equity goals. However, it does create the potential for in- and out-group or exclusionary thinking when City services are for all Tacoma residents. Subgroups are highlighted here and in the Equity Framework to highlight where additional emphasis may be warranted based on differences in outcomes. In designing policy solutions, writers should pay attention to the nuance of targeting groups with specific needs, without excluding others. Further this is a snapshot-in-time reflecting geographic and demographic patterns that are continuously shifting. The locations of residents are not necessarily where they want to be, it's where they can afford to live at this moment in time. Finally, we must acknowledge the limitations and biases that are inherent in relying on public data sets such as these. Community engagement and voice will continue to be essential to validate, refine, and address the disparities shown here.

Where available, data is presented by geographic subgroups and race/ethnicity subgroups. Depending on the source, geographic subgroups are based by neighborhoods or Council Districts. Finally, housing cost-burden is further shown by household income relative to the area median per the state’s 1220 guidance.

Figure 1 Geographic Subgroups in Equity Analysis – City Council District and Neighborhoods



Source: City of Tacoma, 2024; Seva Workshop, 2024

4.1 Housing

Housing equity means that choices about the neighborhood of Tacoma in which you reside should not be restricted by race or ethnicity or income. Tacoma is working to undo the effects of years of exclusionary housing policy, dispossession, and displacement at the same time it is facing very high housing market pressure. This work is articulated in more detail in the Anti-Displacement Strategy, Affordable Housing Action Strategy, and Home in Tacoma initiatives. In alignment with this work, the Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan seek to create more equity on the following measures:

- First-time buyers of single dwelling structures

- Renter-occupied housing cost burden greater than 50%
- Percent of residents living in the same house one year ago

First-time buyers of single dwelling structures

Homeownership is one of the greatest contributors to housing stability and wealth creation. However, the likelihood of owning a place of residence varies widely across racial and ethnic groups in Tacoma. Native Hawaiian households and Black households are much more likely to be renters than homeowners, with ownership rates of 32% for both groups compared for 50% across all Tacoma households. Moreover, homeownership rates have been declining over time for both of these groups, while the overall rate is trending upward. An in-depth discussion of race-based disparities homeownership in Tacoma and factors contributing to this decline is available in this Analysis of Systemic Disparities in Achievable Housing Options[1].

In addition to the individual households benefits of homeownership, first-time homeowners play an important market role in stabilizing communities and concentrating investment in neighborhoods as well as freeing up rental housing for other households. The assumption for this outcome is that in an equitable city, access to first-time homebuying would be proportional to the underlying population. Figure 2 compares the distribution of first-time home buyers by neighborhood and by race/ethnicity to the underlying distribution of households.

Federal Housing Finance Agency data on 1,007 first-time home buyer mortgages for single family (in 1-4 unit) properties shows that the Central, Eastside, and South End neighborhoods are the most accessible for first-time homeowners. Relative to its size, South Tacoma was disproportionately unlikely to have first-time homebuyers in 2022. Race and ethnicity data shows troubling trends eroding Native Hawaiian and Black homeownership are continuing. These groups were disproportionately unlikely to have accessed a first-time homeownership mortgage relative to their size of the population.

Figure 2 First-Time Homeownership by Neighborhood and Race/Ethnicity, 2022

	DISTRIBUTION OF FIRST-TIME BUYERS BY NEIGHBORHOOD	ALL HOUSEHOLDS BY NEIGHBORHOOD	DIFFERENCE
Central	13%	10%	4%
Eastside	18%	13%	5%
New Tacoma	2%	9%	-7%
North East	8%	8%	0%
North End	12%	13%	-1%

[1] ECONorthwest and BDS Planning, *Analysis of Systemic Disparities in Achievable Housing Options,* 2021. https://www.cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/CBCFiles/Tacoma%20Housing%20Disparities%20Report_2021.pdf

	DISTRIBUTION OF FIRST-TIME BUYERS BY NEIGHBORHOOD	ALL HOUSEHOLDS BY NEIGHBORHOOD	DIFFERENCE
South End	22%	18%	4%
South Tacoma	11%	15%	-4%
West End	14%	15%	-1%

	DISTRIBUTION OF FIRST-TIME BUYERS BY RACE/ETHNICITY	ALL HOUSEHOLDS BY RACE/ETHNICITY	DIFFERENCE
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	2%	-1%
Asian	11%	7%	4%
Black or African American	6%	10%	-4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%	3%	-3%
White	72%	68%	4%
Multi-race household	10%	9%	1%
Hispanic or Latino	14%	12%	2%
Not Hispanic or Latino	86%	88%	-2%

Source: Federal Housing Finance Agency, Public Use Database (PUDB) - Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, 2022 Single-Family Census Tract File
Note: Up to five races can be assigned per individual borrower and co-borrower (if applicable).

Renter-occupied housing cost burden greater than 50%

We study renting households under high cost-burden because these households are the most vulnerable to displacement pressures, including gentrification and development projects. Cost-burden is a key factor in displacement analyses. In the Targeted Universalism framework, the universal goal is that no household should experience such a high housing cost burden. In our progress toward this goal of zero, it is useful to compare individual subgroup rates of cost-burden to the city-wide average. City-wide, 8,909 households in Tacoma are renting their residence and experiencing a cost-burden greater than 50%. Relative to their size in the population, Black households and multi-race households are far more likely to be renters, and further to be renting with a cost-burden of 50% of more, making them highly vulnerable to displacement. High rental cost burdens are most common in New Tacoma, South Tacoma, and West End. Not surprisingly, high cost burdens are much more common among low-income residents. Forty-four percent of those in the lowest income bracket are renting with cost burden

over 50%. Roughly one-quarter (26%) of those earning between 30 and 50 percent of the area median incomes are also heavily cost-burdened.

Figure 3 Households renting with cost-burden of 50% or greater, 2022

	HOUSEHOLDS RENTING WITH COST-BURDEN OF 50% OR GREATER	DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE RATE
Central	10%	0%
Eastside	10%	0%
New Tacoma	16%	6%
North East	3%	-7%
North End	5%	-5%
South End	9%	-1%
South Tacoma	14%	4%
West End	12%	2%
Tacoma	**10%**	

	HOUSEHOLDS RENTING WITH COST-BURDEN OF 50% OR GREATER	DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE RATE
American Indian or Alaska Native	9%	-1%
Asian	7%	-3%
Black or African American	18%	8%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	9%	-1%
White	8%	-2%
Multi-race household	35%	25%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	10%	0%
Tacoma	**10%**	

INCOME GROUP	HOUSEHOLDS RENTING WITH COST-BURDEN OF 50% OR GREATER	DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE RATE
less than or equal to 30% of HAMFI	44%	34%
greater than 30% but less than or equal to 50% of HAMFI	26%	16%
greater than 50% but less than or equal to 80% of HAMFI	4%	-6%
greater than 80% but less than or equal to 100% of HAMFI	0%	-10%

greater than 100% of HAMFI	0%	-10%
Tacoma	**10%**	

Source: HUD, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), 2016-2020 ACS 5-year estimates by tract

Percent of residents living in the same house one year ago

As discussed earlier, some movement in the housing market is healthy, especially as households move through life stages or from renting to homeownership. However involuntary moves due to displacement erode stability for households as well as for neighborhoods. City-wide, 81% of residents were residing in the same home they were in the previous year. Neighborhoods that have experienced relatively high rates of mobility include New Tacoma, South End, and South Tacoma. Eastside and West End stand out as relatively stable populations where the vast majority of residents have lived in the same place for at least a year. In an equitable city, you might expect the rate of moves (whether for displacement or for opportunity) to be similar across subgroups.

Multi-racial individuals and Hispanic or Latines of any race were the most likely to report a move in the last year. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders reported a one-year housing stability rate that was higher than the overall city average.

Figure 4 Percent of individuals living in the same residence as one year ago, 2022

NEIGHBORHOOD	PERCENT LIVING IN SAME RESIDENCE AS ONE YEAR AGO	DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE RATE
Central	87%	6%
Eastside	97%	16%
New Tacoma	59%	-21%
North East	78%	-3%
North End	83%	3%
South End	74%	-6%
South Tacoma	66%	-14%
West End	92%	11%
Tacoma	**81%**	

RACE/ETHNICITY	PERCENT LIVING IN SAME RESIDENCE AS ONE YEAR AGO	DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE RATE

American Indian or Alaska Native	79%	-2%
Asian	82%	2%
Black or African American	80%	-1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	89%	8%
White	81%	1%
Multi-race household	77%	-4%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	77%	-3%
Tacoma	**81%**	

Source: U.S. Census, ACS 5-year estimates 2018-2022 by tract (B07004A-I)

4.2 Homelessness

Functional Zero

The City of Tacoma recently developed a Homelessness Strategy for the years 2022-2028 that states a vision of "Our vision is to sustain an equitable, dignified, and culturally responsive homeless and housing response system that quickly and effectively addresses everyone's homeless crisis while supporting the needs of residents and local businesses." The City has been operating under a public health emergency declaration since 2017 regarding homelessness. Tacoma is part of the Pierce County continuum of care for federally funded homelessness services which is the primary funding source for homeless services in the City. Data collection and tracking also primarily happens at the county-level.

The equity outcomes reported here are for Pierce County as a whole, of which people with a last known zip code within Tacoma typically represent at least one-quarter of the population. The outcomes of making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time are components of an overall goal of achieving "functional zero," or a state in which people who do experience homelessness are quickly and well-served, and able to retain permanent housing after the episode. On the way to achieving functional zero, however, interim goals are concerned with ensuring that the homelessness system is equitably serving unhoused residents.

The Point-in-Time count is a 24-hour census of unhoused people in temporary shelters and unsheltered in a continuum of care. While there are many limitations of these data, the count is the most consistent and available method of estimating the prevalence of homelessness in an area. Black or African American people are highly overrepresented in Pierce County's Point-in-Time count. American Indian and Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders are also disproportionately likely to experience homelessness in Pierce County according to this count.

Figure 5 Point-in-Time Count (rare) by Race, 2022

	POINT IN TIME COUNT (TACOMA-LAKEWOOD)	PIERCE COUNTY POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY	DIFFERENCE
American Indian or Alaska Native	6%	1%	5%
Asian	2%	6%	-4%
Black or African American	24%	7%	17%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	5%	1%	3%
White	60%	65%	-5%
Multiple Races	3%	8%	-5%
Hispanic or Latino	11%	12%	-1%
Not Hispanic or Latino	89%	88%	1%

Source: HUD Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs, 2023

American Indian and Alaska Native residents are the least likely to have a successful experience with the homeless care system, with a housing placement rate of 20% and a 39% return to homelessness within 2 years. Successful placements for this group also take 90 days on average, likely reflecting 90-day maximum stays in temporary housing.

Figure 6 Placement Rates, Length of Stay (brief), and 2-year Return Rate (one-time) by Race

	PLACEMENT RATE	AVERAGE STAY IN DAYS AMONG SUCCESSFUL EXITS	2-YEAR RETURN RATE
American Indian or Alaska Native	20%	90	39%
Asian	27%	50	27%
Black or African American	38%	68	14%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	39%	74	7%
White	27%	91	16%
Two or more races	36%	59	13%
Hispanic/ Latina/e/o of any race(s)	29%	69	12%
Not Reported	13%	54	17%

Source: Pierce County Homeless Crisis Response System, 2023

4.3 Health

Life expectancy at birth

Life expectancy is an overall measure of health that can be affected by a multitude of factors – personal, social, and environmental. The US Centers for Disease control produces tract-level estimates of life expectancy for births between 2010 and 2015. Their model suggests a nearly 8-year range in life expectancy within Tacoma based on neighborhood as described in the following table. More equitable outcomes for life expectancy would result in less variation by neighborhood.

Figure 7 Life Expectancy at Birth by Neighborhood

NEIGHBORHOOD	LIFE EXPECTANCY	DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE AVERAGE
Central	76.8	(0.52)
Eastside	75.8	(1.51)
New Tacoma	75.2	(2.04)
North East	82.6	5.30
North End	80.3	3.03
South End	75.1	(2.15)
South Tacoma	74.7	(2.57)
West End	79.8	2.54
Tacoma	**77.3**	

Source: CDC, U.S. Small-area Life Expectancy Estimates Project (USALEEP), 2010-2015 by tract

Access to healthy food

Access to healthy food is a key component of health equity. City plans and programs can create the conditions for healthy food stores and temporary food markets to open in neighborhoods, as well as support mobile food options, food affordability, and food distribution. The Tacoma Equity Index uses the modified Retail Food Environment Index (mRFEI) to measure access to healthy food. The mRFEI is the percentage of all food retailers in an area that are considered healthy. This measure captures areas with no food options ("food deserts"; correspond to a score of zero) as well as areas that have food outlets that are dominated by large relative amounts of unhealthy snack foods ("food swamps"; correspond to lower scores) (Centers for Disease Control). Tacoma overall has an mRFEI score of 0.7. The South End and New Tacoma stand out as areas with relatively healthy food options. The North East, South Tacoma, and West End have relatively unhealthy options.

Figure 8 Access to Healthy Food by Neighborhood

NEIGHBORHOOD	HEALTHY FOOD AVAILABILITY	DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE AVERAGE
Central	0.9	0.20
Eastside	0.5	(0.16)
New Tacoma	1.3	0.63
North East	0.1	(0.62)
North End	0.5	(0.23)
South End	1.4	0.67
South Tacoma	0.3	(0.35)
West End	0.3	(0.38)
Tacoma	**0.7**	

Source: City of Tacoma, Equity Index 2022 by block group; ESRI Business Analyst

The distribution of grocery stores by neighborhood largely reflects similar patterns as the mRFEI. However, contrasting figures for South Tacoma and West End suggest that while there are relatively more food outlets available, they are not necessarily healthy options. More equitable distribution of healthy food access would result in less variation in this index across the city. Tacoma also has a goal for daily essentials, including grocery, to be within a 15-minute walk of all residences. In North East, where a single grocery serves many people in a large area, many residents likely drive to a neighboring city or to other parts of Tacoma for grocery access.

Figure 9 Grocery by Neighborhood

NEIGHBORHOOD	GROCERY	ACRES PER GROCERY	PEOPLE PER GROCERY	ACRES PER GROCERY DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE RATE
Central	7	346	2,939	(73)
Eastside	11	331	2,974	(88)
New Tacoma	6	788	2,536	369
North East	1	2,986	19,760	2,567
North End	6	471	4,458	52
South End	21	213	2,061	(206)
South Tacoma	12	440	2,728	21
West End	10	466	2,881	47
Tacoma	74	419	2,963	

Sources: City of Tacoma, 2022.

Youth mental health

Urban environments play an important role in youth development and mental health, directly in terms of access to clinical care and services as well as indirectly by promoting or enabling promotive factors such as strong relationships and a sense of safety. Youth mental health has become an increasing priority for policymakers in recent years following troubling pandemic- and post-pandemic spikes in reports of poor mental health among young people. Because the adolescent period is marked by such heightened sensitivity to stimuli, a focus on promoting mental health in this period can have far-reaching and generational impacts in public health, homelessness, and workforce development (Buttazzoni, Doherty, & Minaker, 2022; Collins, et al., 2024). In an equitable city, the prevalence of poor mental health would not be associated with race/ethnicity or neighborhood. The Healthy Youth Survey is administered by the Washington State Department of Health every two years to students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 across the state. Mental health questions are only asked of grades 8, 10 and 12.

The closest publicly available data is for the entire Tacoma School District under a data sharing agreement established for Safe Routes to School. These data and related questions may be available at the school building level to better assess equity within the school district, but a new data sharing agreement would have to be established and was not possible within the timeframe of this assessment[2]. Generally, reports of poor mental health related to depression and anxiety increase in prevalence in older grades.

Figure 10 Tacoma Public Schools Self-Reported Anxiety and Depression among 8-12 Graders

	TACOMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS		
	GRADE 8	GRADE 10	GRADE 12
During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities (answered yes)?	32.2%	32.4%	41.0%

Source: Tacoma Public Schools, 2024; DOH Healthy Youth survey, 2023.

To examine differences by race and ethnicity, we had to rely on a broader set of data available for Pierce County as a whole. Across grade levels, American Indian and Alaka Native students in Pierce County tend to report symptoms of depression and/or anxiety at higher rates than the group average.

[2] Contact for future DSA needs: Josh Zarling, EdD Director of DART Data, Assessment, Research, and Technology jzarlin@tacoma.k12.wa.us

Figure 11 Self-Reported Anxiety and Depression by Race/Ethnicity, Grade 12 Pierce Co.

GRADE 12	DEPRESSIVE FEELINGS		FEELING NERVOUS, ANXIOUS OR ON EDGE		UNABLE TO STOP OR CONTROL WORRYING	
RACE/ETHNICITY	RATE	DIFFERENCE FROM GRADE LEVEL AVG.	RATE	DIFFERENCE FROM GRADE LEVEL AVG.	RATE	DIFFERENCE FROM GRADE LEVEL AVG.
Am Indian/AK Native	46.9%	8.9%	78.1%	8.9%	64.2%	6.0%
Asian	39.5%	1.5%	71.6%	2.4%	61.5%	3.3%
Black	41.0%	3.0%	65.8%	-3.4%	53.0%	-5.2%
Hispanic	37.1%	-0.9%	66.6%	-2.6%	55.3%	-2.9%
Pacific Islander	52.3%	14.3%	65.1%	-4.1%	63.4%	5.2%
White	38.4%	0.4%	72.2%	3.0%	60.9%	2.7%
Other	38.2%	0.2%	67.4%	-1.8%	57.6%	-0.6%

Source: DOH Healthy Youth survey, 2023.

4.4 Environmental Justice & Climate Impacts

In 2019, the City of Tacoma passed Resolution 40509 declaring a climate emergency and setting an intention for a just transition to a carbon-neutral economy and adaptation and resilience in the face of climate impacts. The City of Tacoma Climate Action Plan published in 2021 is the primary policy document guiding efforts to achieve net-zero emissions by 2030 in an equitable and anti-racist way.

The Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan identified the following equity outcomes as the ones on which their policies can have impact in alignment with this work:

- Urban heat
- Particulate matter

Urban Heat Index

In city environments, more heat from the sun is absorbed and retained by impervious surfaces. This can intensify temperatures locally creating health impacts and impacting neighborhood livability. A 2020 analysis by Earth Economics found that neighborhoods in Central and South Tacoma may be as much as 14°F hotter than neighborhoods in North Tacoma, including regional climate effects (Earth Economics, 2020). Urban forestry, tree cover, and building and street design are all key tools to mitigate urban heat.

Figure 12 Urban Heat Island Index by Neighborhood

NEIGHBORHOOD	URBAN HEAT INDEX	DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE AVERAGE
Central	86.9	0.52
Eastside	87.2	0.81
New Tacoma	86.0	(0.35)
North East	85.8	(0.59)
North End	85.9	(0.53)
South End	86.8	0.38
South Tacoma	86.6	0.18
West End	85.5	(0.87)
Tacoma	**86.4**	

Sources: City of Tacoma, Equity Index 2022, 2020 by block group; Earth Economics

Particulate matter (PM2.5)

Particulate matter less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter can be inhaled and cause lung damage. It also affects visibility and quality of life as the primary contributor to haze. In 2024 the EPA lowered the level of the health-based annual PM2.5 standard to 9.0 micrograms per cubic meter (from 12.0). While PM 2.5 is not the only air pollutant, we include it as an equity priority for the next planning period because of the recent prevalence of wildfires. The neighborhoods with highest rates of PM2.5 relative to the city average are the East Side and North East. However, all neighborhoods have, on average, rates considered safe under the new standard.

Figure 13 PM 2.5 by Neighborhood

NEIGHBORHOOD	AIR QUALITY (PM 2.5)	DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE AVERAGE
Central	8.1	0.01
Eastside	8.2	0.11
New Tacoma	8.2	0.09
North East	8.2	0.14
North End	8.0	(0.05)
South End	8.1	0.04
South Tacoma	8.0	(0.05)
West End	7.9	(0.20)
Tacoma	**8.1**	

Sources: City of Tacoma, Equity Index 2022, 2020 by block group; Environmental Protection Agency EJScreen

4.5 Transportation

High-capacity transit access

We examine neighborhood equity in the proportion of residents within a half mile walk of a high-capacity transit stop and the completeness of sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure. For the purposes of this analysis, high-capacity stops include all Tier 1 bus stops[3]. City-wide, an estimated 39% of residents live within a half-mile of a Tier 1 stop. However, this varies greatly by neighborhood, with the Central area the most dense and well-served. Residents in South Tacoma and North East have almost no access to Tier 1 service.

Figure 14 Residents within 1/2 mile of high capacity transit stops

NEIGHBORHOOD	TOTAL POPULATION	POPULATION NEAR HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT		DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE AVERAGE
Central	20,734	20,711	100%	61%
Eastside	32,455	8,550	26%	-13%
New Tacoma	15,508	14,382	93%	54%
North East	17,990	-	0%	-39%
North End	28,675	10,891	38%	-1%

[3] Tier 1: High-capacity Transit Stops serve all day with 15 minutes or better frequency (City of Tacoma)

South End	42,575	19,992	47%	8%
South Tacoma	29,342	192	1%	-38%
West End	32,091	11,016	34%	-5%
Tacoma	**219,370**	**85,735**	**39%**	

Source: U.S. Census, Decennial Census 2020 by block (P1); City of Tacoma Tier 1 bus stops; Seva Workshop

Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

The following analysis of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure completeness assumes sidewalk coverage would be desired on both sides of arterial and residential streets. Bikeways completion is relative to arterial streets only. City-wide 49% of streets have complete sidewalks, and 36% of arterials have bikeways. There is slight variability by neighborhood in terms of sidewalk completion. Priority neighborhoods may be Eastside, New Tacoma, South Tacoma, and West End. Bikeways are most complete in the West End, South End and North End, and the least complete in North East, Eastside, and New Tacoma. However, it is important to note that data is lacking about the quality of this infrastructure. Future analysis may also want to compare completion against future master bicycle and pedestrian plans, rather than these assumptions about the street network.

Figure 15 Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure completeness

NEIGHBORHOOD	STREETS WITH SIDEWALKS	SIDEWALK COMPLETION DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE AVERAGE	BIKEWAYS COMPLETE	BIKEWAYS COMPLETION DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE AVERAGE
Central	53%	4%	39%	3%
Eastside	46%	-3%	26%	-10%
New Tacoma	46%	-3%	25%	-11%
North East	54%	5%	3%	-32%
North End	51%	2%	49%	14%
South End	51%	2%	52%	16%
South Tacoma	45%	-4%	39%	4%
West End	46%	-3%	55%	20%
Tacoma	**49%**		**36%**	

Source: City of Tacoma sidewalks, 2022; bikeways, 2024

Household vehicle availability

Tacoma has made significant commitments to reduce motor vehicle dependency in the city for climate and health goals, among others. However, the transition to a more climate-friendly 15-minute city requires many long-term investments in infrastructure and economic development to locate accessible high-quality jobs. In the time to come, many workers still rely on vehicles to commute to work and access daily essentials. We measure household vehicle availability not because the goal is to make more vehicles available. Rather, we hope to highlight households that are *already* more dependent on non-vehicle modes of transportation to prioritize investments in their mobility and compact livable neighborhoods.

Eight percent of Tacoma households do not have a vehicle available[4] as shown in Figure 13 and another 7% have fewer vehicles available than workers. We also include the rate at which households have fewer vehicles than workers. Together, these highlight households where one or more adults may be more dependent on non-vehicle modes of transport. This rate is highest in New Tacoma and South Tacoma. Only 6% of households in North East, the most car dependent neighborhood, have fewer vehicles than workers.

Figure 16 Household Access to Vehicle and Vehicles Available by Number of Workers

NEIGHBORHOOD	HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO VEHICLES AVAILABLE	DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE RATE
Central	9%	1%
Eastside	6%	-2%
New Tacoma	20%	11%
North East	2%	-7%
North End	6%	-3%
South End	7%	-2%
South Tacoma	10%	1%
West End	10%	2%
Tacoma	**8%**	

[4] Vehicles available is asked on the American Community Survey only of occupied housing units. These data show the number of passenger cars, vans, and pickup or panel trucks of one-ton (2,000 pounds) capacity or less kept at home and available for the use of household members. Vehicles rented or leased for one month or more, company vehicles, and police and government vehicles are included if kept at home and used for non-business purposes. Motorcycles or other recreational vehicles are excluded. Dismantled or immobile vehicles are excluded. Vehicles kept at home but used only for business purposes also are excluded. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023)

NEIGHBORHOOD	HOUSEHOLDS WITH FEWER VEHICLES AVAILABLE THAN WORKERS	DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE RATE
Central	7%	0%
Eastside	8%	0%
New Tacoma	11%	4%
North East	5%	-3%
North End	6%	-2%
South End	8%	1%
South Tacoma	11%	4%
West End	4%	-3%
Tacoma	**7%**	

Source: U.S. Census, ACS 5-year estimates 2018-2022 by block group (B08203)
Note: Not all households have workers.

4.6 Public Services & Amenities

Walkable neighborhoods

Ensuring equitable distribution of public services and amenities is core work for city government and a focus for the Comprehensive Plan update. The Comprehensive Plan's overarching vision is for a city in which daily essentials are not more than 15 minutes away from the average resident by foot, public transportation, or non-motorized transportation. There are many ways this concept can be measured and disaggregated – by transportation method, and by varying sets of amenities for example. The City of Tacoma produced an analysis in 2021 dubbed the 20-minute neighborhood that is focused on walking access, and integrates several walkability inputs, including distance to schools, parks, trails, commercial businesses and transit stops.

The following table describes the results by neighborhood. The percent of each neighborhood area classified as highly walkable varies by thirty percentage points in either direction. The Central area is the most walkable, nearly one-third of the total area is classified as highly walkable. North East is the least walkable area, with only 2% of the area classified as highly walkable. Overall 17% of Tacoma's total land area is considered highly walkable by this measure. Areas such as South Tacoma and West End also lag the city-wide average for walkability.

Figure 17 Walkability Scores by Neighborhood

NEIGHBORHOOD	LOW (SCORE OF 1 - 2)	MEDIUM (SCORE OF 3 - 9)	HIGH (SCORE OF 10+)	HIGH WALKABILITY DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE AVERAGE
Central	4%	64%	32%	15%
Eastside	5%	72%	23%	6%
New Tacoma	38%	27%	18%	1%
North East	22%	69%	2%	-15%
North End	0%	75%	24%	7%
South End	1%	78%	21%	4%
South Tacoma	10%	76%	12%	-5%
West End	18%	69%	11%	-6%
Tacoma	**14%**	**65%**	**17%**	

Sources: City of Tacoma, 2022.

Commercial amenities

Access to commercial amenities intersects economic development, climate, heath, and neighborhood planning. A variety of commercial businesses distributed throughout the city helps residents reach daily essentials in less time, and with less need for vehicles. Enabling these businesses also provides economic opportunities for small business owners and their employees. Finally, these types of amenities are often what lend neighborhoods distinct character. According to the analysis that follows, the North East and North End have the least density and availability of Type 1 commercial amenities, which are primarily food and gasoline businesses. Type 2 commercial types are much more varied. The Eastside, North East, and South End lag behind the city-wide average in both types.

Figure 18 Commercial Amenities by Neighborhood

	TYPE 1 COMMERCIAL			TYPE 2 COMMERCIAL		
NEIGHBORHOOD	NUMBER	ACRES PER BUSINESS	ACRES PER BUSINESS DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE RATIO	NUMBER	ACRES PER BUSINESS	ACRES PER BUSINESS DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE RATIO
Central	11	220	(84)	129	19	(5)
Eastside	14	260	(44)	90	40	16
New Tacoma	16	296	(8)	300	16	8)
North East	2	1,493	1,189	27	111	86
North End	6	471	167	176	16	(8)
South End	19	235	(69)	217	21	(4)
South Tacoma	19	278	(26)	194	27	3
West End	15	311	7	150	31	7
Tacoma	102	304		1,283	24	

Sources: City of Tacoma, 2022.
Note: Type 1 Commercial includes: Convenience stores, meat markets, fruit and vegetable markets, and gasoline stations with convenience stores. Type 2 Commercial includes: Retail bakeries, baked goods stores, specialty food stores, beer, wine, and liquor stores, book stores, community food services, child day care centers, fitness and recreational sports centers, drinking places, full-service restaurants, limited-service restaurants, barber shops beauty salons, pet care, and religious organizations.

4.7 Community Safety

Police Response Time

Police response time is measured as the average time in minutes between a call received and a police dispatch. The North East neighborhood in Tacoma had an average response time that was over 22 minutes faster than the city-wide average. Eastside and South End residents wait on average nearly an hour before receiving a police dispatch.

Figure 19 Average Police Response Time, 2023

NEIGHBORHOOD	TOTAL CALLS	AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME (MINUTES)	RESPONSE TIME DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE AVERAGE
Central	14,313	44.8	(5.36)
Eastside	16,806	56.6	6.42
New Tacoma	23,968	41.8	(8.34)

North East	3,472	28.0	(22.15)
North End	5,792	53.0	2.87
South End	25,879	57.6	7.48
South Tacoma	27,815	52.3	2.13
West End	11,786	47.9	(2.20)
Tacoma		**50.1**	

Source: Tacoma Computer Aided Dispatch Data, 2023
Note: Cancelled calls and calls with the same received and dispatch timestamp were excluded from the averages

Perceptions of Safety

Community safety is a broad concept that addresses much more than levels of police service and the factors that contribute to a sense of safety may include sidewalks, lighting, prevention, after school activities, restorative justice, and more. The Community Survey polls residents every two years on their sense of safety in a statistically representative manner, asking ""How would you rate your overall feeling of safety in Tacoma, would you say you feel very safe, somewhat safe, not very safe, not safe at all?" In 2022, 72% of Tacomans overall reported feeling very safe or somewhat safe. This proportion varied by District and by Race and Ethnicity as shown below, though the differences were not marked as statistically significant. One distinction that was noted as significant was the difference in safety perceptions between respondents with household income greater than $100,000 (85%) and those with household income between $50,000 to $99,999 (59%) (MDB Insight, 2022).

Figure 20 Perception of Safety by District and by Race/Ethnicity, 2022

DISTRICT	VERY SAFE OR SOMEWHAT SAFE	PERCEPTION OF SAFETY DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE AVERAGE
District 1	81%	9%
District 2	77%	5%
District 3	77%	5%
District 4	65%	-7%
District 5	61%	-11%
Tacoma	**72%**	

RACE/ETHNICITY	VERY SAFE OR SOMEWHAT SAFE	PERCEPTION OF SAFETY DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE AVERAGE
White	75%	3%
Black	82%	10%
Hispanic	50%	-22%
Other	64%	-8%
Two or more races	70%	-2%
Tacoma	**72%**	

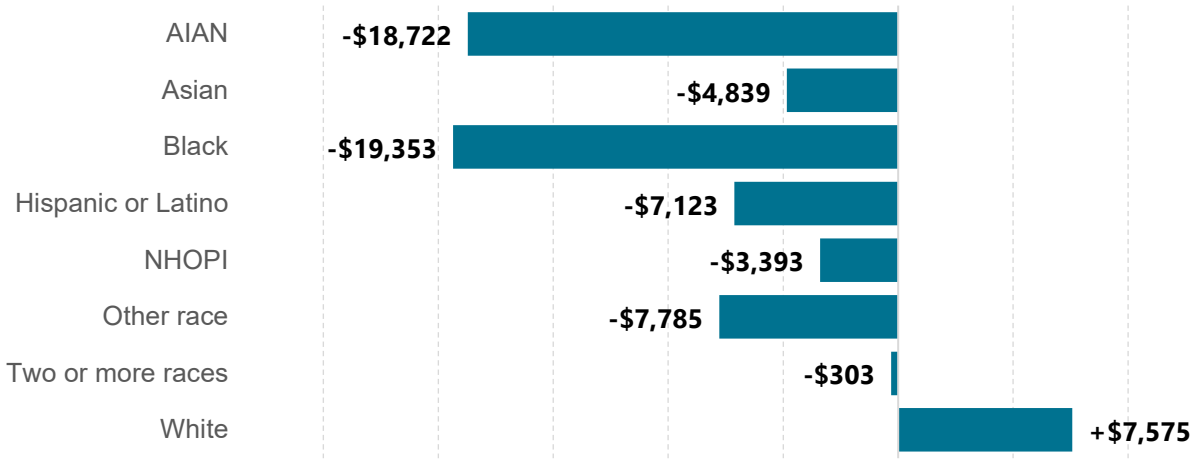
Source: MDB Insight, 2022; City of Tacoma, 2022.

4.8 Economic Opportunity

Median Income

The University of Washington Center for Women's Welfare **Self-Sufficiency Standard** defines the income working families need to meet a minimum yet adequate level, taking into account family composition, ages of children, and geographic differences in costs. The standard is published for the western cities in Pierce County annually and it reflects the income needed to be earned by each adult in the household. Tacoma's 2021 median *household* income was $69,956. Compared to the self-sufficiency standard for Westen Pierce county, this level of income is insufficient for most households with two children, and many households with one child especially if they are below school age. Median income varies in Tacoma according to the race and ethnicity of the head of household as shown below. The median income among American Indian and Alaska Native households and Black headed households is nearly $20,000 less than the overall Tacoma median. Median incomes among Hispanic headed households and households headed by other races also experience a significant lag against the overall median.

Figure 21 Median Household Income by Race Compared to Overall Tacoma Median ($69,956)



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (B19013A-H)

Child Poverty

Child poverty highlights a lack of opportunity and resources at a crucial developmental stage. The incidence of poverty is related to the economic opportunities available to caregivers, as well as the availability and effectiveness of public anti-poverty programs and services such as SNAP. The experience of childhood poverty is disproportionately high in the communities of Eastside, South End and South Tacoma. Across Tacoma, Black communities, multi-racial, and Hispanic and Latino communities experience a disproportionately high prevalence of childhood poverty. These childhood poverty rates are linked other priority outcomes related to health, housing, education, and economic opportunity for the coming generations.

Figure 22 Disproportionality in Children Under 5 in Poverty, by neighborhood and race/ethnicity

	DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 IN POVERTY	DISTIRBUTION OF ALL POPULATION BY NEIGHBORHOOD	DIFFERENCE
Central	4%	9%	-6%
Eastside	25%	15%	10%
New Tacoma	0%	7%	-7%
North East	4%	9%	-5%
North End	1%	12%	-11%
South End	28%	20%	8%
South Tacoma	33%	15%	18%

West End	5%	13%	-8%

	DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 IN POVERTY	DISTIRBUTION OF ALL POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY	DIFFERENCE
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	1%	1%
Asian	6%	8%	-2%
Black or African American	18%	10%	7%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2%	1%	1%
White	19%	57%	-39%
Multi-race household	27%	9%	18%
Other race	3%	1%	3%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	24%	12%	11%

Source: U.S. Census, ACS 5-year estimates 2018-2022 by tract (B17001A-I)

Good and Promising Job Availability

Over 100,000 jobs are located in Tacoma. Health care, retail, government, and administration are some of the sectors that comprise the largest shares of Tacoma-based jobs. The Brookings Institute Opportunity Industries report and analysis examined industries for their ability to provide pathways and quality employment to workers without college degrees. They also produced metropolitan area level estimates by industry about the availability good and promising jobs according to the following definitions:

- **Good jobs** provide stable employment, middle-class wages and benefits.
- **Promising jobs** are entry-level positions from which most workers can reach a good job within 10 years.
- **High-skill jobs** are Good and promising jobs held by workers with a bachelor's degree. The bachelor's degree represents a barrier to entry.
- **Other jobs** do not provide decent pay, benefits, or pathways to good jobs.

About 17% of jobs located in Tacoma are considered good or promising by the Brookings Institute definition. Another 24% are high-skill good or promising jobs. The North East has the highest share of good jobs, driven largely by the number of logistics jobs located there. Many Tacomans have work locations outside of the city but may choose to work closer to home if the opportunity was available.

Figure 23 Good and Promising Jobs by Neighborhood

NEIGHBORHOOD	PROMISING JOBS	GOOD JOBS	HIGH-SKILL JOBS	OTHER JOBS	DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE GOOD AND PROMISING JOBS RATE
Central	8%	7%	25%	60%	-1%
Eastside	8%	9%	23%	60%	1%
New Tacoma	8%	9%	27%	57%	0%
North East	9%	18%	18%	55%	10%
North End	9%	5%	23%	63%	-3%
South End	10%	5%	17%	68%	-1%
South Tacoma	10%	7%	18%	64%	1%
West End	9%	5%	20%	66%	-2%
Tacoma	**9%**	**8%**	**24%**	**60%**	

Source: U.S. Census, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) LODES 8.1 Workplace Area Characteristic (WAC), All jobs (JT00), 2021 by block; Brookings Institute, Opportunity Industries for Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA 2018

4.9 Cultural Vitality

Satisfaction with Cultural Access

The Tacoma 2025 Strategic Plan identified Arts and Cultural Vitality as one of seven key areas to promote equity and opportunity, especially for youth, in the city. In 2018, Tacomans passed Tacoma Creates, a seven year sales tax increase to support arts and culture, by 67.2%, creating the first voter-approved Cultural Access Program in Washington State.

The Community Survey polls residents every two years about their satisfaction with access to cultural opportunities. The statistically representative survey asks, “How satisfied are you with the level of access to arts, culture, science, and/or heritage programs or experiences in your community?” There was no statistically significant difference among Districts in levels of satisfaction. However, disaggregation of responses by race showed that White people had significantly higher levels of satisfaction than the city average and Black people had lower levels of satisfaction (significant results marked with ▼or ▲).

Figure 24 Satisfaction with Levels of Cultural Access

DISTRICT	VERY SATISFIED OR SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	CULTURAL ACCESS DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE AVERAGE
District 1	90%	1%

District 2	95%	6%
District 3	94%	5%
District 4	88%	-1%
District 5	78%	-11%
Tacoma	**89%**	

RACE/ETHNICITY	VERY SATISFIED OR SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	CULTURAL ACCESS DIFFERENCE FROM CITY-WIDE AVERAGE	
White	94%	5%	▲
Black	75%	-14%	▼
Hispanic	86%	-3%	
Other	82%	-7%	
Two or more races	91%	2%	
Tacoma	**89%**		

Source: MDB Insight, 2022; City of Tacoma, 2022.
Note: Statistically significant results marked with ▼or ▲.

4.10 Historic Preservation

The City of Tacoma has one of Washington's oldest historic preservation programs, dating back to 1973. The Historic Preservation Office is dedicated to preserving the rich culture, history, archaeological resources, and historic architecture unique to Tacoma. Following a nomination process, the Landmarks Preservation Commission is responsible for making determinations about applications to place historic and cultural resources on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places individually (as City Landmarks) or as Historic Districts, and recommending these to City Council. The Landmarks Commission uses criteria within the municipal code to evaluate the historic merits of each nomination it reviews. Registered properties and districts qualify for legal protections and preservation incentives, and areas with historical and cultural landmarks can help mitigate development impacts and preserve a “sense of place” for areas in which they are located. Inequitable distribution of historically designated resources can contribute to disproportionate impacts from development pressures, when underrepresented areas are redeveloped at a large scale in a manner that is not context sensitive.

A significant but still developing function of the Historic Preservation Office is cultural resource and archaeological protections within the City, particularly for areas of Tribal concern. While efforts to improve tribal coordination through the permitting process are ongoing and have made significant progress with the adoption of cultural resource review within the Downtown and Tacoma Mall Subareas, most of these efforts are focused on the project permit/review stage

and are limited in geography, a status quo that represents an ongoing challenge to equity, inclusion and reconciliation.

Thematic Representation

Historically listed properties in Tacoma can be classified by their historic and present use, architecture styles, and association with historical themes, including historic events and patterns and cultural groups . There are presently over 180 City Landmarks listed individually listed on the Tacoma Register representing a wide variety of perspectives, architectural design, and local history across the city.

In an effort to review the existing Tacoma Register of Historic Places for underrepresented themes and groups, the Historic Preservation Office conducted a study in 2021-22 , in which information was extracted from nomination documents of individually listed properties included on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places to identify themes by Ethnic and Cultural context. As noted in the report, further work is needed to address each theme, and greater emphasis should be placed on expanding the themes list as the existing themes do not cover the whole of Tacoma's history. Though the table below is a helpful start, it is difficult to reach agreement on what a goal for equitable thematic representation would look like without complete context to compare against (Scuderi, 2022).

Figure 25 Ethnic and Cultural Context Themes, Tacoma Register Individual Properties

WOMEN'S HISTORY		ETHNIC HERITAGE HISTORY		CULTURAL HERITAGE		NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY	
Women Owned/Run Business	8	Nisqually and Puyallup Tribe Context	1	Art History	3	Hilltop Neighborhood Context	20
Women's Social Clubs	1	Immigrant History Context	2	Neon Signage	2	First Expansion	2
Reading Group	1	Swedish Heritage	4	Theater and Performing Arts	3	Branching Out	12
Women's Rights	3	Croatian Heritage	3	Transportation History	5	McKinley Hill Neighborhood Context	1
Women's Suffrage	2	Russian Heritage	3	Railroad History	4	Old Tacoma Neighborhood Context	1
Affirmative Action	1	Jewish Heritage	1	Streetcar History	1	Proctor Neighborhood context	1
Women's Health	1	Japanese Heritage	4	Labor History	5		
Notable Women	4	Norwegian Heritage	3	Working Class Housing	12		
		German Heritage	1	WPA Work Projects	1		

	Chinese Expulsion	1	Youth History	3

Source: Scuderi, 2022

Distribution of Landmarks and Districts

Historic districts are areas of the City that have been determined to possess special character, related development patterns, social history and architecture, of an environment specific to a period of time. Tacoma has nine historic districts, listed in Figure 24 below. Figure 26 Historic Districts in the City of Tacoma

DISTRICT[5]	LOCATION	REGISTERS[6]	DATE EST.	WHY EST.
Salmon Beach Historic District	Northwest edge of the city, bordering the Tacoma Narrows to the west and Point Defiance Park to the north	State	1976	"represents a rare glimpse of the waterfront lifestyle from the first part of the 20th century. The original community was a collection of approximately 100 cabins"
Old City Hall District	Roughly bounded by Broadway, South 9th, South 7th and Fireman's Park	Local, State, National	1978 (Local) 1997 (National)	"reflects the grand ambitions of the time. It is an outstanding example of the height of Italianate style in America. Other striking buildings are found throughout the district, including the Northern Pacific Headquarters (1888), the Beaux Arts Elks Temple (1916), and the Winthrop Hotel (1925)."
Union Depot-Warehouse Historic District (surrounded by Union Station Conservation District)	Pacific Avenue, South 17th Street, South 23rd Street and Market Street	Local, State, National	1980 (National) 1983 (Local).	"characterized by rugged brick warehouses and factories--examples of commercial high style and industrial vernacular architecture that developed in America during the early 1900s"
South J Street Historic District	West side of South J Street between 7th and 8th avenue	State, National	1986 (State, National)	"eight late-Victorian detached row houses…erected in 1889 and 1890"

[5] All information in table from

[6] Key to Registers
Local: Tacoma Register of Historic Places
State: Washington Heritage Register
National: National Register of Historic Places

DISTRICT[5]	LOCATION	REGISTERS[6]	DATE EST.	WHY EST.
		Listed locally as multi-property listing rather than historic district		
North Slope Historic Special Review District	Roughly bounded by I Street, North 8th Street, Division Avenue and Steele Street	Local, State, National	1994 (Local) 2003 (State, National)	"The neighborhood is composed primarily of middle class Victorian, Craftsman, Colonial Revival, and Foursquare houses. They represent a collection of Pacific Northwest versions of the residential architecture popular in the United States prior to World War II."
Stadium-Seminary Historic District	between North I Street and the shoreline, and between First Street and North 10th Street	National	1997 (National)	"high-style residential district…early lumber barons and railroad executives…one of Tacoma's earliest residential neighborhoods"
Wedge Neighborhood Historic District (surrounded by Wedge Neighborhood Conservation District)	Roughly bounded by Division Avenue, 6th Avenue and M Street.	Local, State, National	2011 (Local)	"significant for its representation of a pre-WWII, middle class, Tacoma neighborhood. The profiles of its residents--which cut across professions and backgrounds--tell a typical story of an emerging community."
Buckley's Addition Historic District	roughly bordered by North Steele Street, North 8th Street, North Pine Street, and North 21st Street	State, National	2016 (National)	"represents the broad pattern of social and economic history of Tacoma and is a typical early 20th century street-car suburb"
College Park Historic District	125 acres roughly bordered by North Pine Street on the east; North 21 Street on the north; North Alder Street and North Union Avenue on the west; and North 8th & North 18th adjacent to the University of Puget Sound, on the south.	State, National	2017 (National)	"broad pattern of social and economic history of Tacoma…includes the work of master craftsmen and architects"

Sources: City of Tacoma https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/planning_and_development_services/historic_preservation/tacomas_historic_districts and https://www.cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/Planning/Historic-Preservation/Landmarks/PUBLICATION%20LANDMARKS%20REGISTER%202024-04-30.pdf

The City also periodically conducts historic building surveys of various areas of the city depending on availability of resources. The survey data is held by the Washington State

Inventory of Cultural Resources, managed by the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation by federal and state statute, which is a repository of archaeological and historic resources across the state, registered and unregistered. Local survey activities are important to scan neighborhoods for cultural resources and submit them to the Inventory. However, lacking a nomination and designation process initiated by the property owner or other residents, most of these resources will not be registered and receive protections. The reliance on property owner initiated nomination processes has been previously identified by Commissions and staff as a significant barrier to increasing equitable outcomes, but one that will remain a challenge at present staffing and resource levels. In recent years, there have likewise been some concerns amongst residents and government officials about the length and equitability of the nomination process, the potential barriers and gaps in preservation policy, and the need for more proactive measures to create historic districts in currently underrepresented areas (Tacoma Weekly staff, 2023).

To consider equity in Historic Preservation, we examined the distribution of Historic Districts and Landmarks by neighborhood and compared this distribution to the Inventory of Historic Places. In a more equitable city, one would expect that registered places would be distributed proportionally to the underlying distribution of existing cultural resources. This analysis is limited in that the Inventory of Historic Places is incomplete; the last comprehensive citywide survey was done between 1977 and 1982, and subsequent surveys have been much smaller and focused on specific issues or needs (such as anticipated development pressures within Mixed Use Centers) due to a lack of dedicated resources. A complete inventory requires resource intensive survey activities, which investigate individual building histories and include a public participation process to surface relevant stories and cultural assets. For example, Historic Preservation is currently working on a and a in Lincoln was recently completed in 2022. Despite these survey efforts, achieving equitable outcomes will remain a challenge

Figure 27 Distribution of Historic Places and Registered Historic Districts and Landmarks

NEIGHBORHOOD	DISTRIBUTION OF HISTORIC PLACES IN INVENTORY	DISTRIBUTION OF REGISTERED DISTRICTS OR LANDMARKS	DIFFERENCE
Central	7%	8%	0%
Eastside	25%	3%	-21%
New Tacoma	23%	54%	31%
North East	1%	1%	0%
North End	14%	26%	12%
South End	9%	3%	-6%
South Tacoma	12%	2%	-9%
West End	10%	3%	-7%

Note: Historic Places includes both those determined to be eligible and those that don't yet have a determination. Historic Districts that crossed neighborhood boundaries were counted in all neighborhoods.
Source: Department of Archaeology + Historic Preservation, WISAARD database, 2024; Seva Workshop, 2024

This analysis suggests that New Tacoma and the North End have disproportionately high numbers of registered places relative to the underlying number of cultural resources. The Eastside is the neighborhood with the fewest registered places relative to the cultural resources inventoried.

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