

City of Tacoma, Washington

# ONE TACOMA

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

Community Profile | July 2024

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# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Tacoma is situated on a natural delta region and traditional lands of the Puyallup Tribe. The U.S. government relocated several Puget Sound area tribes onto reservations through the Treaty of Medicine Creek 1854. Today the Puyallup Reservation encompasses all of Northeast Tacoma and parts of the New Tacoma and the Eastside neighborhood council district. Tacoma is a port city and the primary urban center on the South Puget Sound. The city is bordered by other incorporated suburban areas to the east and south and the Puget Sound waterways to the north and west. The Tacoma Narrows Bridge to the west connects to other incorporated communities on the Kitsap Peninsula.

In the most recent decade Tacoma has experienced demographic shifts. While the City has been growing, outlying suburban areas have been growing more rapidly. Families with children are declining as a share of the population in Tacoma and are proportionately more prevalent in outlying parts of Pierce County. Retirees and working age adults without children are growing as a proportion of the Tacoma population. Though families with children are declining overall, there are pockets of Tacoma where they are highly concentrated (Eastside, South Tacoma and South End neighborhood council district), in some places making up over 40% of all households. However, these areas also experience relatively high mobility, with households moving in or out of the city for better access to opportunities in work, homeownership, childcare or school.

Most communities of color are likely residing in the New Tacoma, Eastside, South End, and South Tacoma neighborhood council districts. There's a high concentration of Asian, Hispanic, and Latino communities in those areas that have varying degrees of English proficiency. Asian and Pacific Islander households have a lower English proficiency compared to other multilingual households.

Housing, income, and race are highly linked in Tacoma. For example, the median income of Tacoma's Black-headed households is nearly \$20,000 less annually than the overall median income. Black households are the only racial or ethnic group in Tacoma to experience declining homeownership rate over recent years and the most likely to be renting. Data shows that very low-income households are losing foothold in the Tacoma market, where homeownership rates have declined for the income bracket between 30-50% area median income. In contrast, more *extremely* low-income households are living in homes that they own relative to 10 years ago. In both Pierce County and Tacoma, the only other income bracket to decline in homeownership rates is those earning 100% or more of HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI). This may suggest a slight change in preference for renting or geographic mobility among higher earners.

## INCOME DEFINITIONS

Terms describing income are relative to the area's median income and adjusted for household size. As a reference point, the FY 2023 AMI was \$112,600.

- **Low-income:** A family whose annual income does not exceed 80 percent AMI
- **Very low-income:** A family whose annual income does not exceed 50 percent of AMI
- **Extremely low-income:** A family whose annual income does not exceed 30 percent of AMI

## 2 BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The City of Tacoma is updating its Comprehensive Plan, One Tacoma, to plan for growth through the year 2050. This Community Profile is part of the scoping effort to understand the current context of the city and recent trends as a starting point for comprehensive plan research. It is also intended to serve as a key resource for shaping the community engagement process by summarizing information about City residents. The Community Profile is a working document, and each Comprehensive Plan chapter will expand on this research in the process of developing specific policies.

This Community Profile is developed using publicly available sources of data, including U.S. Census products, data products from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Washington State Office of Financial Management. Some findings from prior analysis and action planning efforts such as the Vision Zero Action Plan and the Analysis of Systemic Disparities in Achievable Housing Options report also appear in this document.

The 2015 One Tacoma Vision is that of a “20-minute city.” In other words, every Tacoma resident can reach daily essentials (groceries, school, parks, medical care, etc.) within 20 minutes without a car. This vision informed the selection of data presented.

### Document Organization

The community profile has three sections.

- **Geography** summarizes physical and administrative features and baseline data about availability of daily essentials.
- **Demographics** summarizes information about who lives in Tacoma and their individual identities and characteristics.
- **Individual and household outcomes** provides information about how residents are faring in terms of income, education, employment, housing and transportation. More detailed information about certain outcomes disaggregated by race and ethnicity may be available in the Equity Framework and baseline (see below).

### Other Reference Documents

Related documents developed (or in development) during the scoping phase for the Tacoma 2050 include:

- **Recent Engagement Gap Analysis:** A review of community engagement materials from recent years, highlighting gaps and priority populations.

- **Equity Assessment Context History and Baseline:** A review of relevant historical context, equity indicators, and baseline outcomes data disaggregated by race and ethnicity in Tacoma.
- **Equity Assessment Framework:** A summary of equity priorities and policy and review rubrics used for the Comprehensive Plan policy audit.
- **Engagement Plan:** A draft plan for Comprehensive Plan engagement in 2024-2025.

Tacoma's [Equity Index and Map](#) also contains a wealth of data on community demographics and 32 outcomes across Accessibility, Economy, Education, Livability, and Environmental Health. The Index summarizes these 32 indicators into a single measure of opportunity that ranges from very high to low. The Equity Index has been an integral tool for the City of Tacoma to shape and prioritize city policies, programs, and investments. This profile does not intend to replicate this work but will refer at times to high opportunity or low opportunity as defined by the Equity Index.

### 3 GEOGRAPHY

Encircling the natural deepwater port of Commencement Bay and rich in natural resources, the land that comprises the City of Tacoma has been inhabited for thousands of years. These traditional homelands of the Puyallup Tribe were conveyed to the United States in the 1854 Treaty of Medicine Creek and the City of Tacoma was incorporated in 1875 with a population of roughly 1,000. Today, the city is a dynamic, multiethnic community of 217,332 – the county seat and urban core of Pierce County and the third largest city in Washington State.

The City of Tacoma has eight neighborhood council districts as shown in Exhibit 1 each with distinct character. State Route 16/Interstate 5 delineates the three southern neighborhood council districts of South Tacoma, South End, and Eastside from the northern neighborhood council districts of North End, Central, New Tacoma, and North East before crossing the Tacoma Narrows strait to the Kitsap Peninsula to the west. The West End neighborhood council district has portions on both sides of SR-16. I-5 bisects the city in the south before running northeast out of the city. North East Tacoma is on the far north eastern side of Commencement Bay, separated from the rest of the city by New Tacoma neighborhood council district which is largely made up of industrial port areas and downtown as seen in Exhibit 2.

#### NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL DISTRICTS

In 1992, the Tacoma City Council passed legislation designating eight Neighborhood Councils whose boundaries correspond to the City's traditional planning areas.

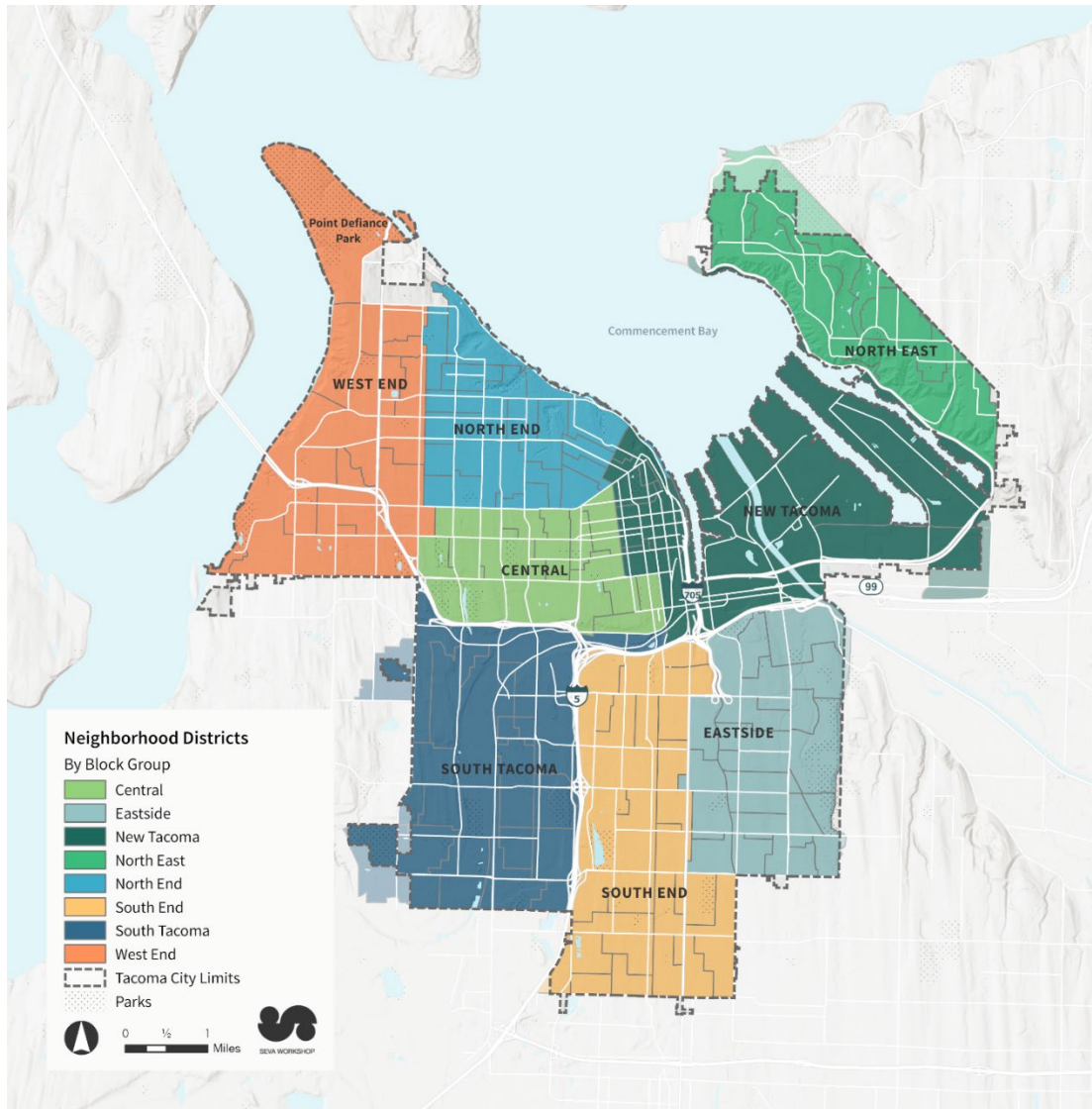
- Central Tacoma
- Eastside
- New Tacoma
- North End
- Northeast
- South End
- South Tacoma
- West End

The goal of the Neighborhood Council Program is to foster a partnership of open communication between the City and its neighborhoods and to ensure residents feel included and empowered to contribute to improving the livability of their communities. Each Neighborhood Council serves as an independent, non-profit organization to promote community-based efforts for neighborhood improvement.

Analysis in this document and other baseline conditions documents use neighborhood council districts to disaggregate data geographically. At times, the term “neighborhood” is used as shorthand for neighborhood council district. However, it is important to remember that these planning areas are large and diverse and contain many “neighborhoods” in the sense of the word meaning an area with distinguishing community characteristics and in the sense of a 15-minute neighborhood.

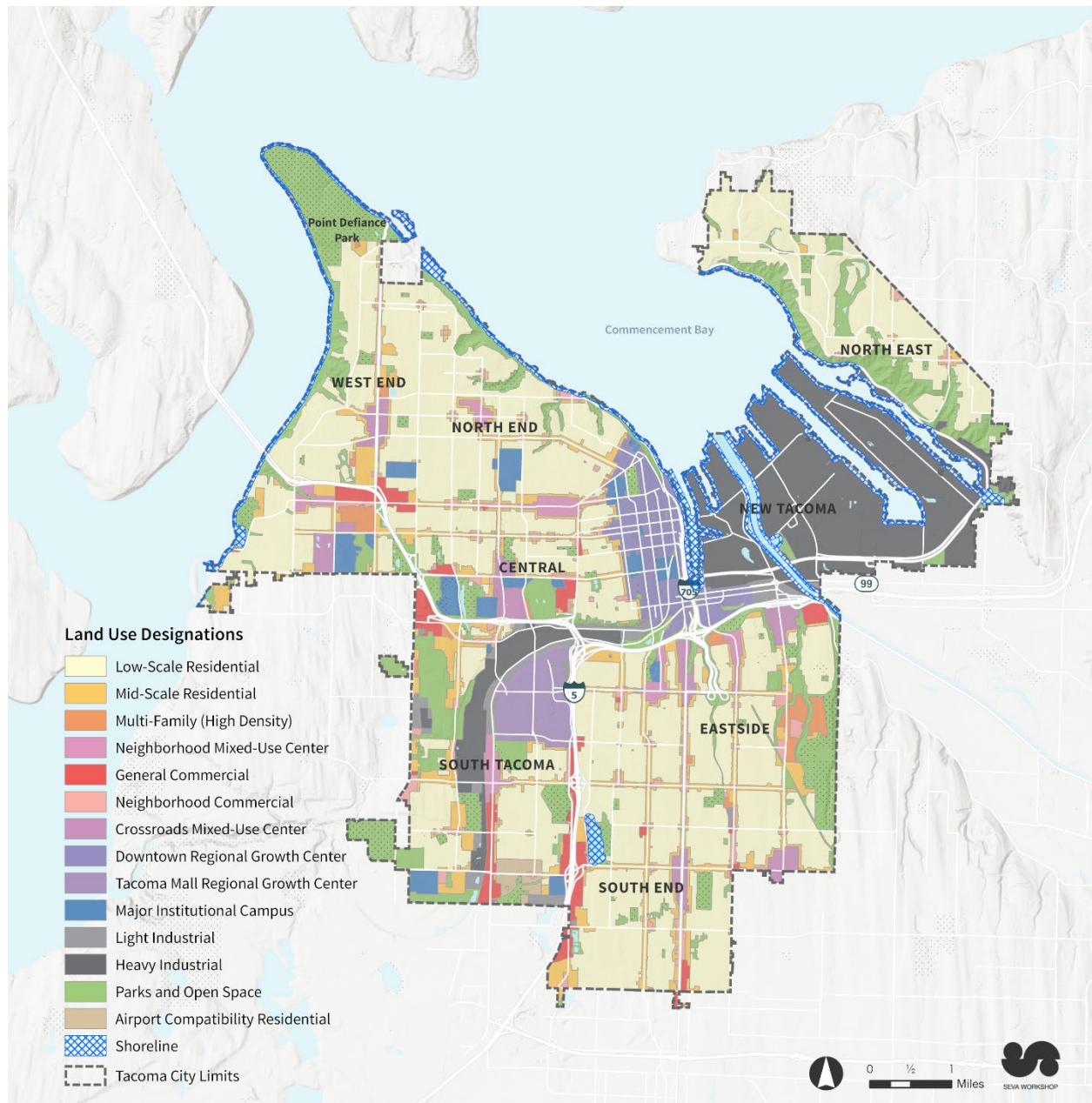


## Exhibit 1 City of Tacoma Neighborhood Council Districts, 2023



Source: City of Tacoma, Seva Workshop. 2023.

## Exhibit 2 City of Tacoma Land Use Designations, 2023



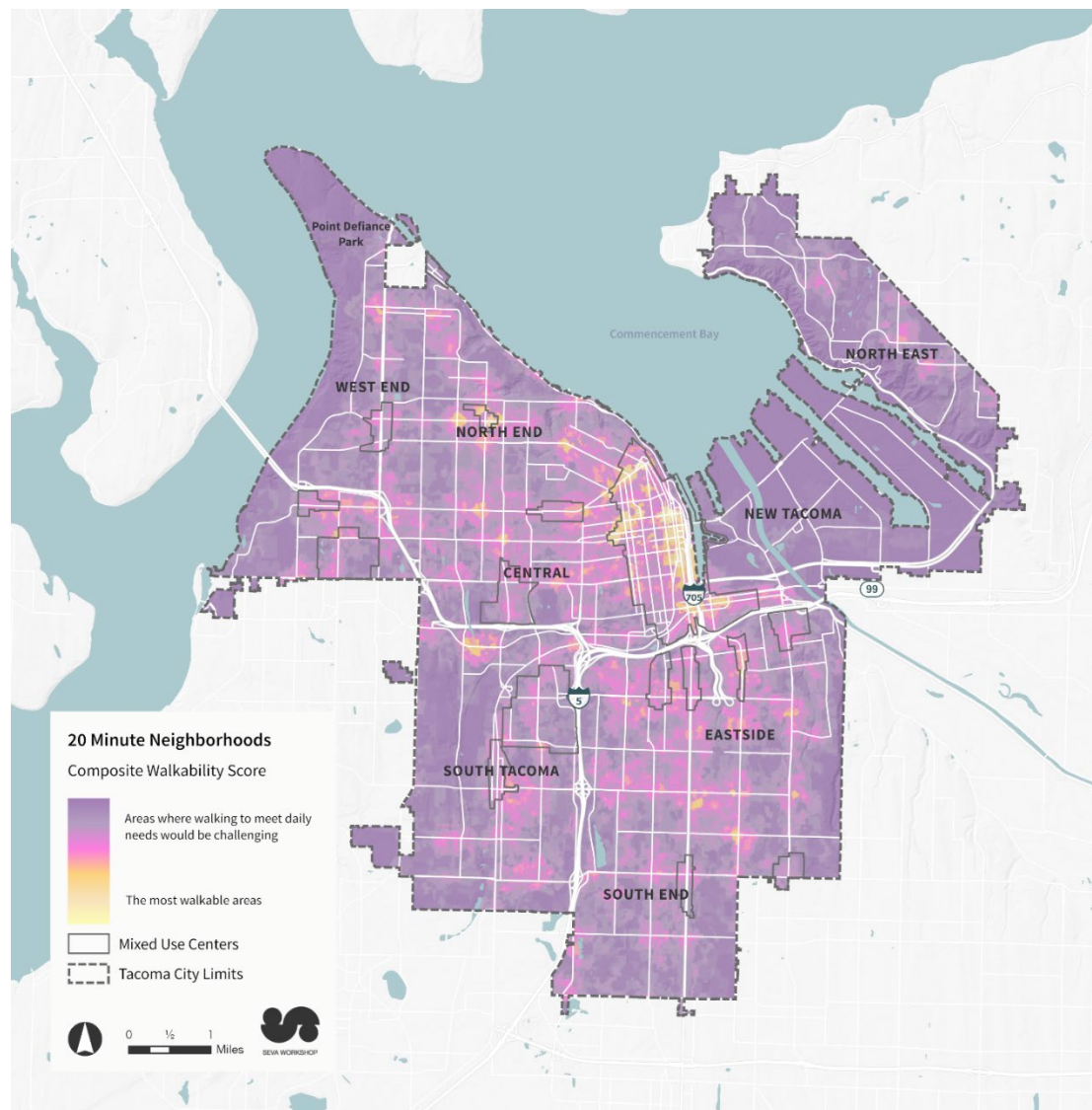
Source: City of Tacoma, Seva Workshop. 2023.

### 3.1 15-Minute Neighborhoods

The 2015 One Tacoma Plan envisioned a city with 20-minute neighborhoods. The One Tacoma Update is even more aspirational, recognizing that mode shift and increased quality of life will be better achieved if people can access most daily amenities within a 15-minute walk. Achieving the Vision of a “15-minute city” requires distributing daily essentials throughout a city, such as

food stores, parks, and schools. The Vision also aspires to a robust multimodal transportation network and pedestrian infrastructure such that these amenities are accessible without a car. Tacoma residents vary in proximity to this vision, depending on where they live as shown in Exhibit 3. The Stadium to Dome corridor through the downtown core, Hilltop in Central Tacoma, Oakland/Madrona in South Tacoma, and the Proctor District in North End score highly on the composite walkability score and would be considered 20-minute neighborhoods. Most of the rest of Tacoma rates as areas where walking to meet daily needs would be challenging using these criteria. Further analysis will be needed to see which neighborhoods meet the 15-minute neighborhood vision.

**Exhibit 3      20-minute Neighborhoods Based on 2015 Vision**



Source: City of Tacoma, 2015.

## 3.2 Access to Parks and Open Space

In the City of Tacoma, park and open space services are provided by the City in partnership with Metro Parks Tacoma. Active areas are those that are developed for and dedicated to community access and recreation. Passive open space properties are generally undeveloped and covered with vegetation and most provide or have the potential to provide benefits to stormwater quantity and quality. There are approximately 1,480 acres of active open space and parks and 3,900 acres of passive open space (including undeveloped private property) in the City of Tacoma<sup>1</sup>. In 2014, the passive open space parcels were transferred from the City Planning and Development Services to Environmental Services while Active open space sites remain managed by the City's Public Works Department, specifically the Real Property Services section.

In 2018, Metro Parks Tacoma adopted, and the City of Tacoma endorsed, the goal that every resident within the Park District have access to a park or open space within a 10-minute walk of their residence. Metro Parks analysis conducted as part of their 2024 update of the System and Strategic Plan noted that only approximately 75% of Tacoma residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park. They have identified the Tacoma Mall Area, Southwest Tacoma Area, Helen B. Stafford Elementary Area, Northwest Tacoma (Silas High School Area), and the Larchmont & Fern Hill Neighborhoods as particularly underserved by parks access<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Tacoma, Parks and Open Space Inventory

<sup>2</sup> Metro Parks Tacoma System & Strategic Plan, <https://engagepiercecounty.mysocialpinpoint.com/strategic-plan>



#### Exhibit 4 Parks in Tacoma, with 10-minute walksheds.



Sources: City of Tacoma, 2022; Seva Workshop, 2023.

## 3.3 Tree Cover

Tacoma, with 20% of the land area covered by tree canopy, has the least amount of tree canopy as a percentage of land cover for all communities assessed in the Puget Sound

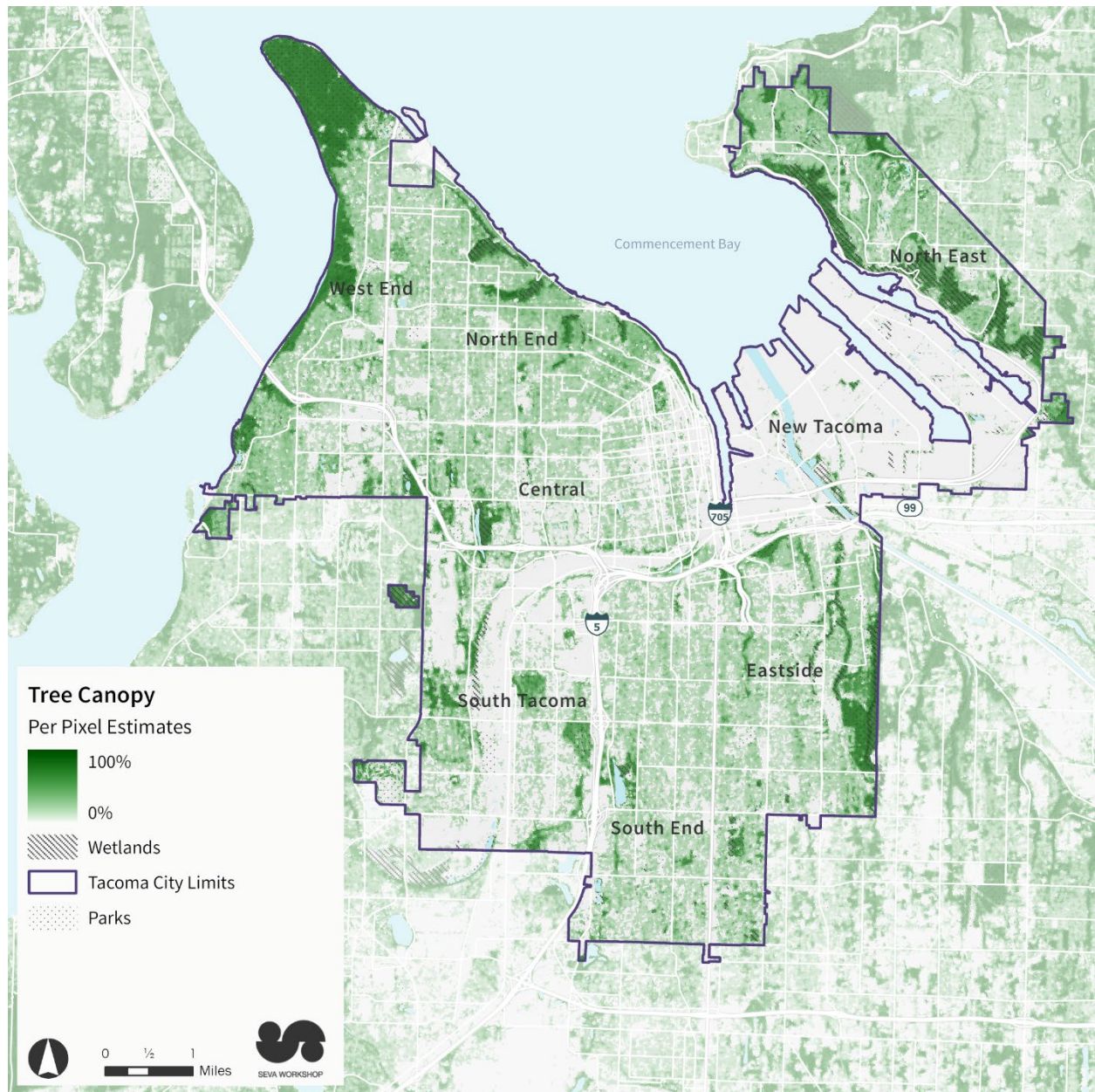
Region<sup>3</sup>. The City of Tacoma Urban Forestry team has committed to a goal of 30% tree canopy cover by 2030. Tacoma's existing tree canopy is mapped in Exhibit 5.

When an area has fewer green spaces and more impervious surfaces like roads, parking lots, and buildings, etc. it absorbs and retains more heat from the sun and can create a heat island. Because of built infrastructure, many urban areas experience higher temperatures compared to their rural surroundings. This difference in temperature is what defines an urban heat island effect. A 2020 analysis conducted by Earth Economics found that urban heat islands in Tacoma increase maximum temperatures by as much as 6.2°F above the local baseline. Combined with regional climatic effects, neighborhoods in Central and South Tacoma may be as much as 14°F hotter than neighborhoods in North Tacoma. Higher opportunity neighborhoods, according to the Equity Index, have 15% more tree cover than lower opportunity neighborhoods. Lower opportunity neighborhoods have 19% more impervious surface than higher opportunity neighborhoods.

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<sup>3</sup> ["Urban Tree Canopy Assessment"](#) City of Tacoma, 2018

**Exhibit 5**      **Tree Canopy in Tacoma, 2017.**



Source: City of Tacoma, 2017; Seva Workshop, 2023.

## 3.4 Access to Transportation and Complete Streets

A safe and accessible multimodal transportation network is key for ensuring the health and wellbeing of the Tacoma community. Currently, many in Tacoma do not have direct access to

quality pedestrian infrastructure, public transportation, or bicycle lanes. Addressing traffic safety concerns for travelers of all modes is a top priority for ensuring community health. In February 2020, Tacoma City Council adopted Resolution 40559 committing to Vision Zero and setting the goal of zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2035. While the City of Tacoma has made substantive efforts to create safer streets over many years, there is still an unacceptable number of crashes.

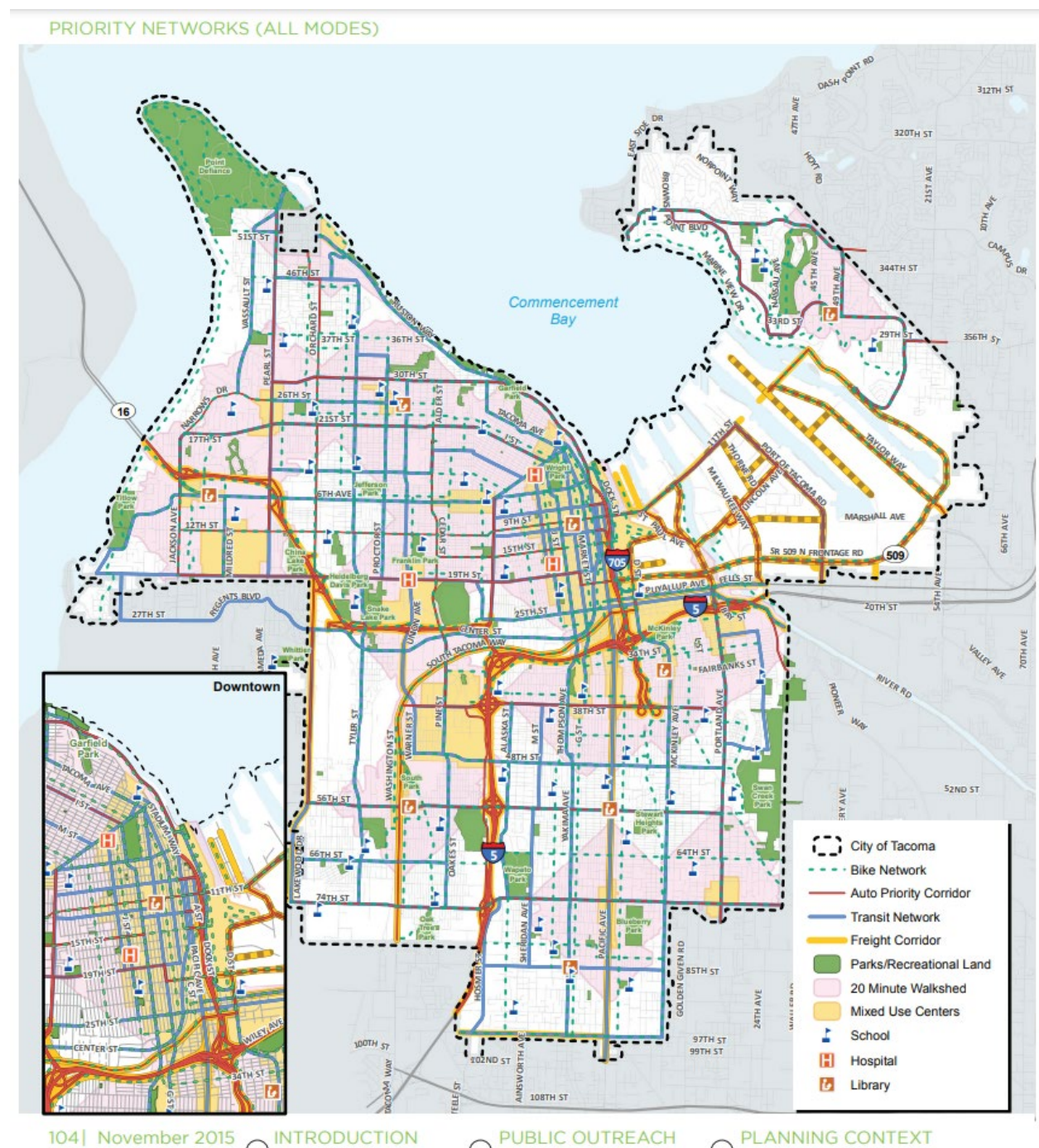
In alignment with the City's Complete Streets ordinance adopted in 2009 and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the City is working to make Tacoma's streets safe and accessible for all ages and abilities. The City manages 760 miles of streets and over a thousand miles of sidewalks<sup>4</sup>. These assets represent a huge opportunity for improving community health and the daily experience of moving in and around Tacoma. The 2015 Transportation Master Plan outlines a vision for a comprehensive network of multimodal transportation across Tacoma (see Exhibit 6). Many elements of this vision remain unrealized. The Transportation Master Plan will be updated as part of the comprehensive planning process to align with the updated future land use map.

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<sup>4</sup> City of Tacoma, Transportation Inventory, 2022



## Exhibit 6 Vision for Multimodal Transportation Networks in Tacoma, 2015.

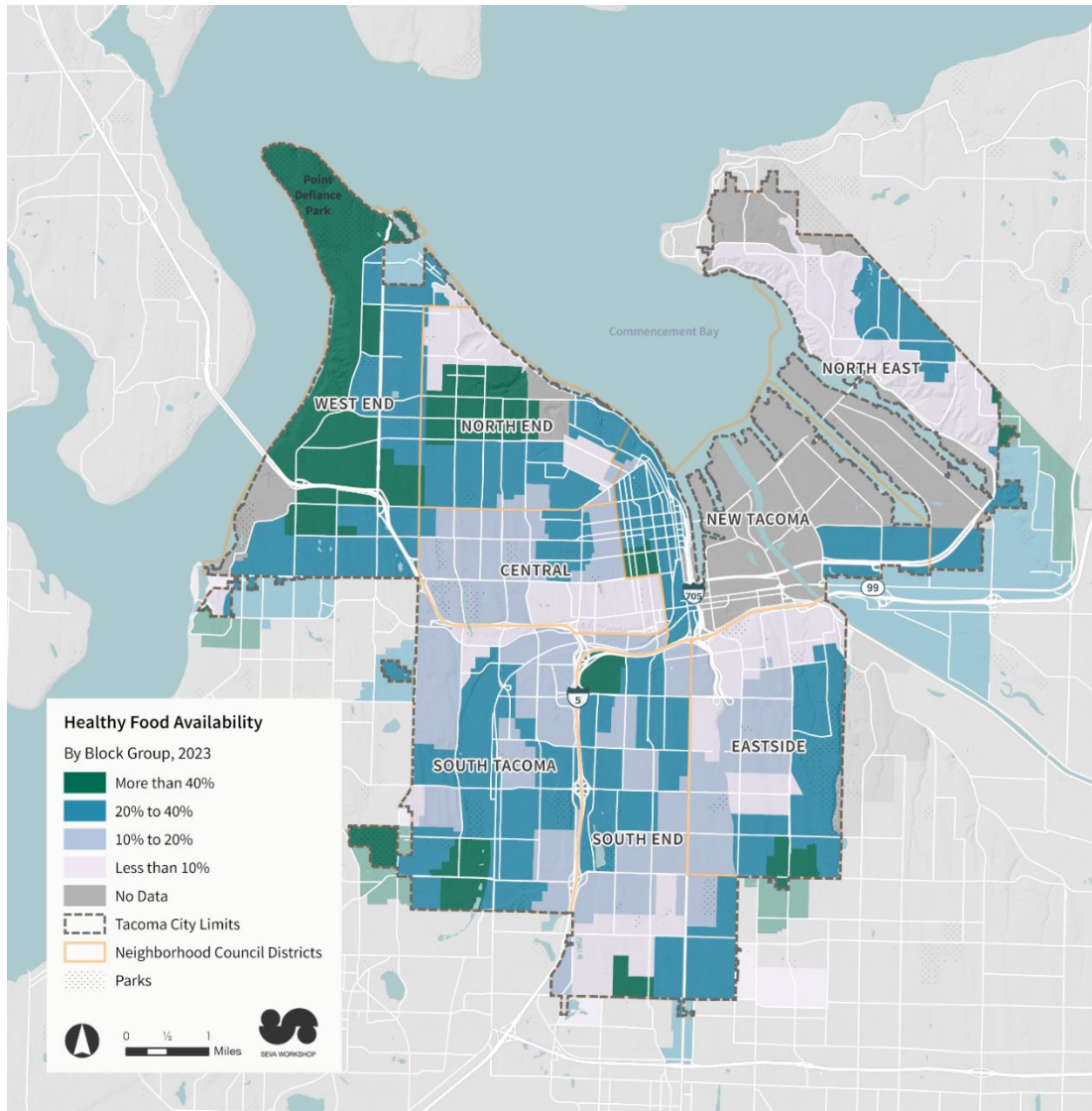


Source: City of Tacoma, Transportation Master Plan, 2015

## 3.5 Access to Healthy Food

Healthy food is one of the daily essentials contained in the draft vision for Tacoma. 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, a methodology first used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 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). City-wide the mRFEI ratio is about 0.25, meaning about one out of every four food retailers is considered healthy. Areas that tend to have more unhealthy options than healthy options are in Central Tacoma, South End, and Eastside.

## Exhibit 7 Food Access Map of Tacoma.



Source: City of Tacoma, Equity Index 2024.

## 3.6 Access to Childcare

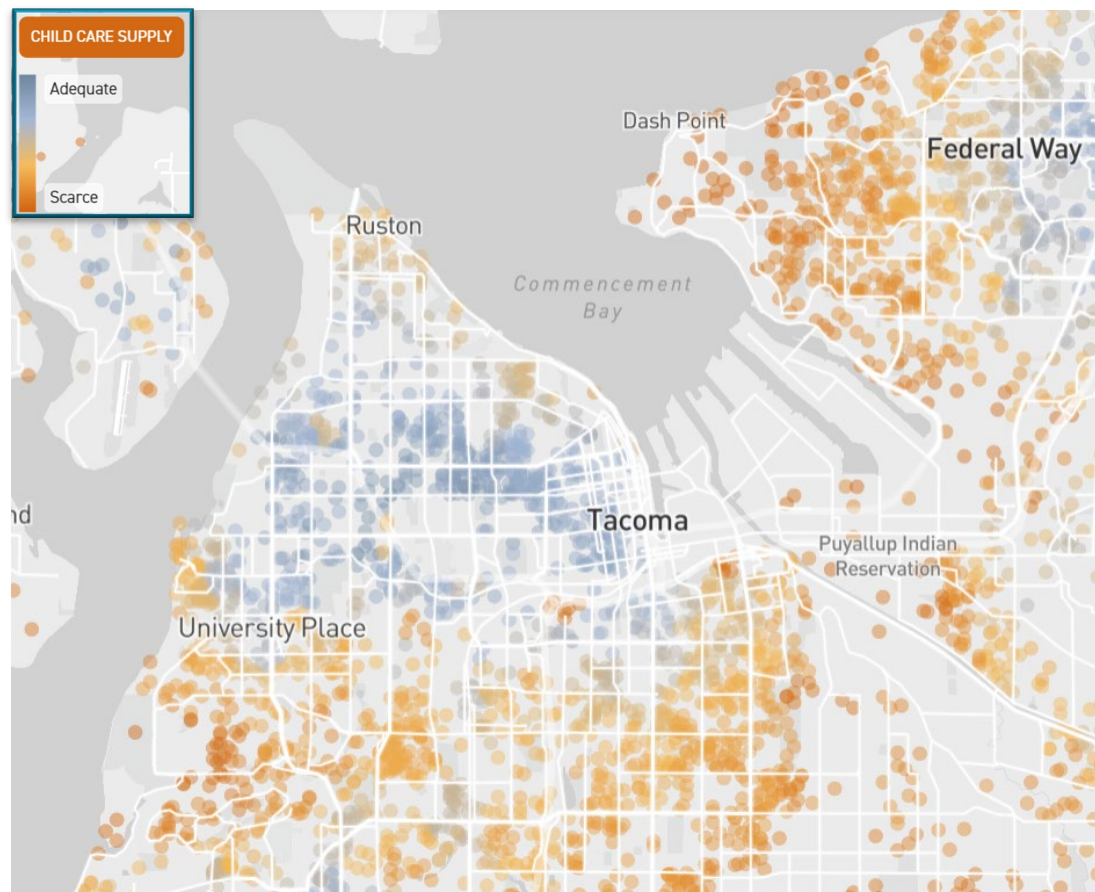
In Tacoma, current licensed childcare availability only meets the needs of approximately 25% of children under 6 in low- and low-middle income families ( $\leq 85\%$  state median income) who need care. For infants and toddlers (under 3 years old) only 15.3% of the estimated need is met.

Between childcare centers and family childcare homes, there were over 4,000 childcare slots in the TPS Boundary before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, much of the area



is considered a childcare desert by the Center for American Progress and the areas of low childcare access overlap with areas of high poverty in the region<sup>5</sup>.

### Exhibit 8      Childcare Supply Relative to Demand



Source: Center for American Progress, Child Care Deserts, 2023.

In 2020, the average monthly cost of full-time childcare in Pierce County was \$987 per child, which meant 18 percent of the median household income for a family with a child aged 6 years or younger went towards childcare costs. Paying for childcare is a larger financial burden for households with a single parent, where 28 percent of the household income went towards childcare costs. Black households with a single parent spent 36 percent of their household income on childcare costs. Comparatively, households with two parents spent 15 percent of their household income on childcare costs. A White household with two parents spent 14 percent of their household income on childcare costs<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> "Head Start Needs Assessment", Tacoma Public Schools, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.childcareaware.org/our-issues/research/ccdc/state/wa/>

## 4 DEMOGRAPHICS

Tacoma has grown in the past decade, but its growth has been slower than the county as a whole. Compared to 2011, Tacoma today is a city with smaller-sized households, more retirees, and a higher proportion of working-aged adults without children. There is a declining proportion of teenagers and families with young children. The main driver of regional growth in recent years has been net migration, as opposed to natural causes, which has been stable or declining due to a declining birth rate coupled with the aging population. Net migration primarily comes from other parts of the County and Washington State (as opposed to out of state and international migration).

Tacoma and Pierce County have been particularly attractive for the Baby Boomer generation, having experienced high rates of growth among adults between 60 and 79 years of age. In Tacoma, there has been a 45% increase in the size of this population from 2011 to 2021. Countywide, this cohort has grown by 50%. Tacoma has also been a destination for 30-39 year olds which has seen a large proportional increase in the population. The population of middle-aged adults (40 – 59) has remained relatively stagnant in size. This is fairly consistent with countywide trends, although there is slightly higher growth shown at that scale. This reflects the smaller size of Gen X nationally.

Areas adjacent to Tacoma have grown much faster than the city in both population and housing units. Relative to other parts of Pierce County, the population of households with young children in Tacoma and school age children has remained relatively stagnant or declining. This change has important implications for the school networks and local service providers. In conjunction with changes observed in surrounding areas, families with children may be leaving the city for home ownership opportunities, opportunities to access different schools, affordable childcare, and/or larger unit sizes that may support working from home or larger families. Tacoma is also not attracting many adults in their 20s or families with 2 or more children relative to other parts of Pierce County, again suggesting affordability concerns.

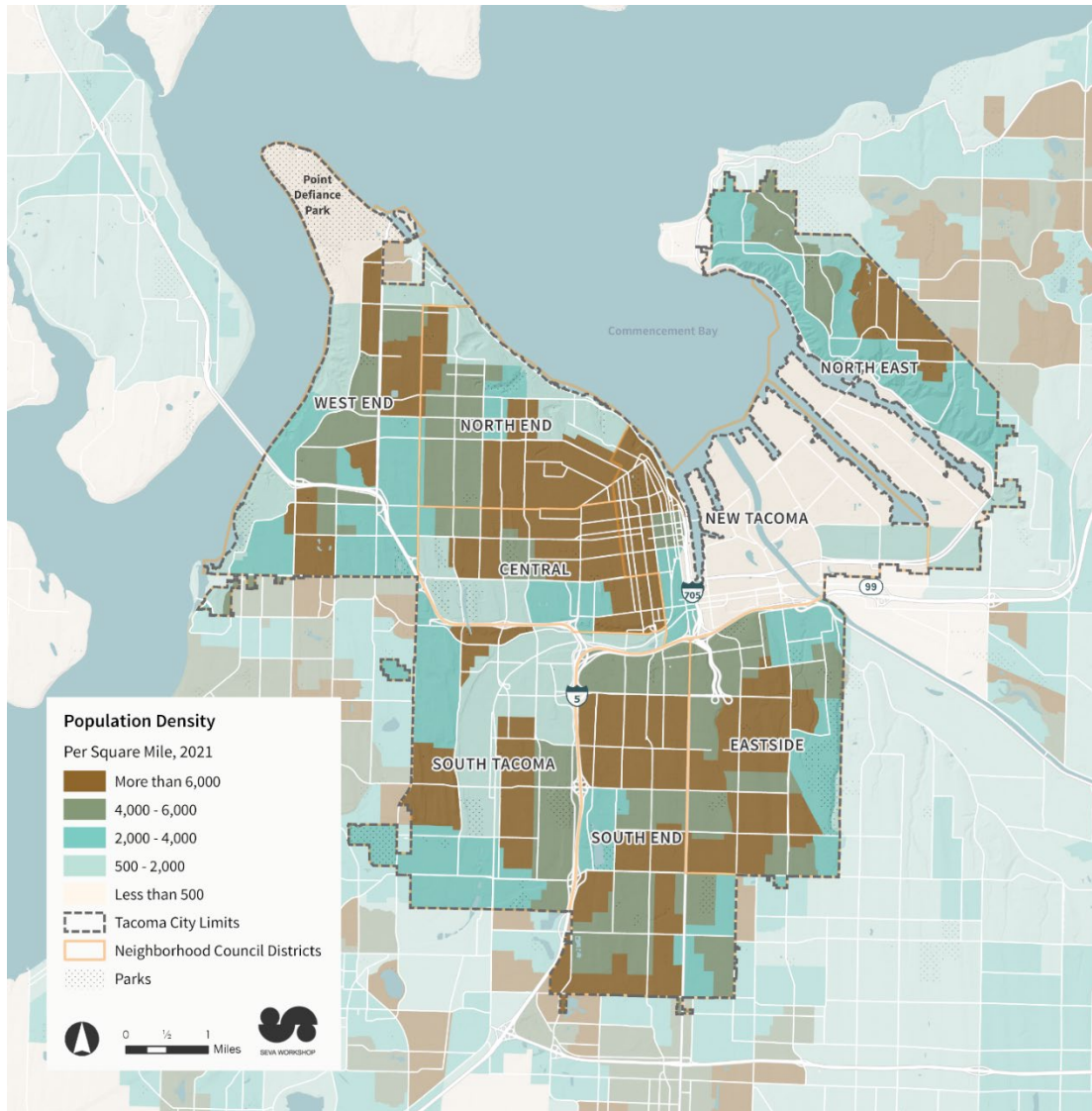
Opportunities for homeownership have tightened in Tacoma over recent years. Housing sales prices have been on a steep incline without wage increase to match. Low-income households especially have lost ground in homeownership rates, as have Black households.

### 4.1 Population

The City of Tacoma has an estimated population of 217,332 people (2021), up 9% over the past ten years. The average annual rate of population growth over this decade (2011 to 2021) is 0.9%. In Pierce County overall, there has been an average of 1.4% population growth annually, over this same time period. The most rapid rates of growth in Pierce County have been in incorporated areas adjacent to Tacoma such as Gig Harbor (5.3%) and Ruston (3.5%). Nearby communities of Milton (3.5%) and Edgewood (3.4%) have also seen high rates of growth.

Central Tacoma, Eastside, and South End have the greatest land areas with high population density, more than 6,000 people per square mile. The neighborhood council districts of West End, South Tacoma, and North East are less densely populated these are geographically very large areas and include variation in population density. As can be seen on the following map, Exhibit 9, the incorporated areas surrounding Tacoma to the northeast, south, and west have similar levels of population density.

**Exhibit 9 Tacoma Population Density, 2021**

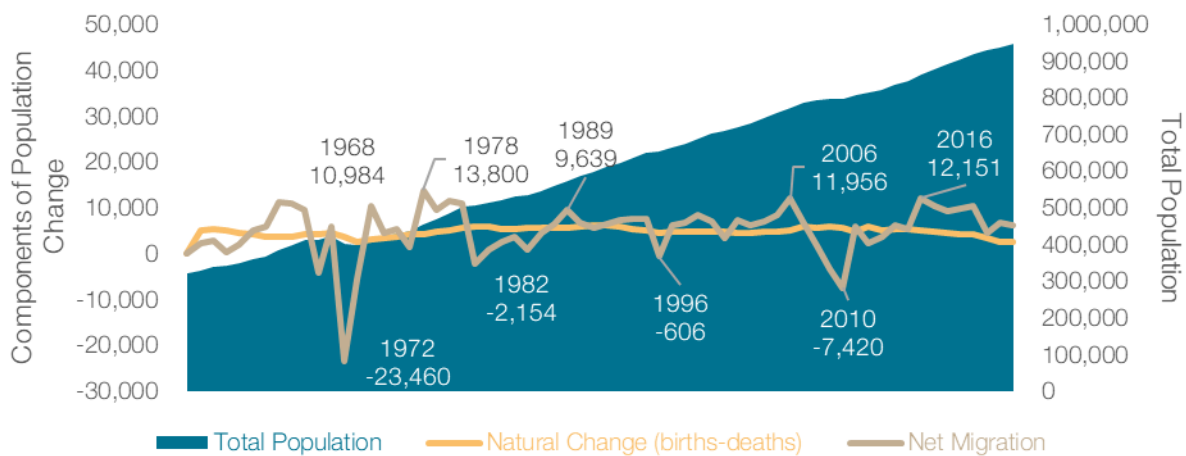


Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017 to 2021).

The Office of Financial Management estimates components of population change at the County level based on census estimates and vital statistics. Population change in a given region is comprised of natural change (births minus deaths) and net migration (people moving in minus

people moving out). As shown in Exhibit 10, the combination of births and deaths has been a steady, and in recent years slightly declining, contributor to population growth in Pierce County. This reflects broad trends in decreasing birth rates and an aging population. Net migration has been a more volatile variable in population change with a few peaks and valleys highlighted in the following exhibit. Since 2016, net migration has been the more significant contributor to population growth in Pierce County (as opposed to natural change).

**Exhibit 10 Total Population and Components of Population Change 1960-2023, Pierce County**

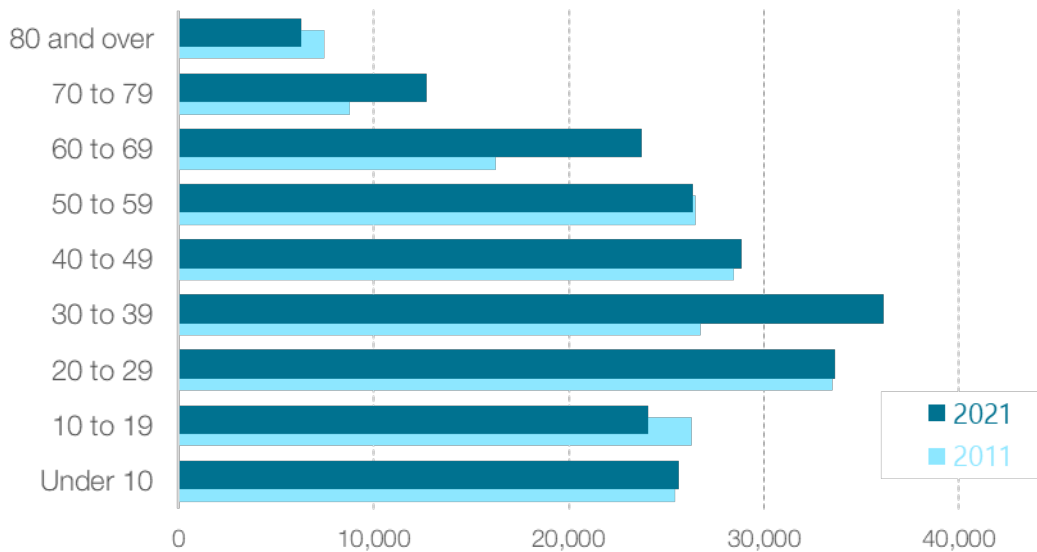


Source: Office of Financial Management April 1 population estimates, U.S. Census Bureau decennial census counts, and vital statistics from the Washington State Department of Health.

Exhibit 11 and Exhibit 12 show that the age cohorts contributing the most to population growth between the years 2011 and 2021 have been 60 to 79 year olds and 30 to 39 year olds in both the City of Tacoma and Pierce County overall. The retirement age cohort has grown by roughly 50% in both regions over the past decade.

However, there are also notable differences between the City of Tacoma and Pierce County in population changes by age. For example, the City of Tacoma has seen little to negative growth in the number of young people (ages 0 to 29) in the population while Pierce County has had growth in line with overall trends or greater. Tacoma has also had a net loss of residents aged 80 and over while Pierce County has seen this population grow.

**Exhibit 11 City of Tacoma Population by Age, 2011 and 2021**



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017 to 2021).

**Exhibit 12 Tacoma and Pierce County Percent Population Change (%) by Age Cohort, 2011-2021.**

	Tacoma	Pierce County
<b>Under 10</b>	1%	11%
<b>10 to 19</b>	-9%	3%
<b>20 to 29</b>	0%	13%
<b>30 to 39</b>	35%	27%
<b>40 to 49</b>	1%	-1%
<b>50 to 59</b>	-1%	5%
<b>60 to 69</b>	46%	50%
<b>70 to 79</b>	45%	51%
<b>80 and over</b>	-16%	18%
<b>Total Population Change</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>15%</b>

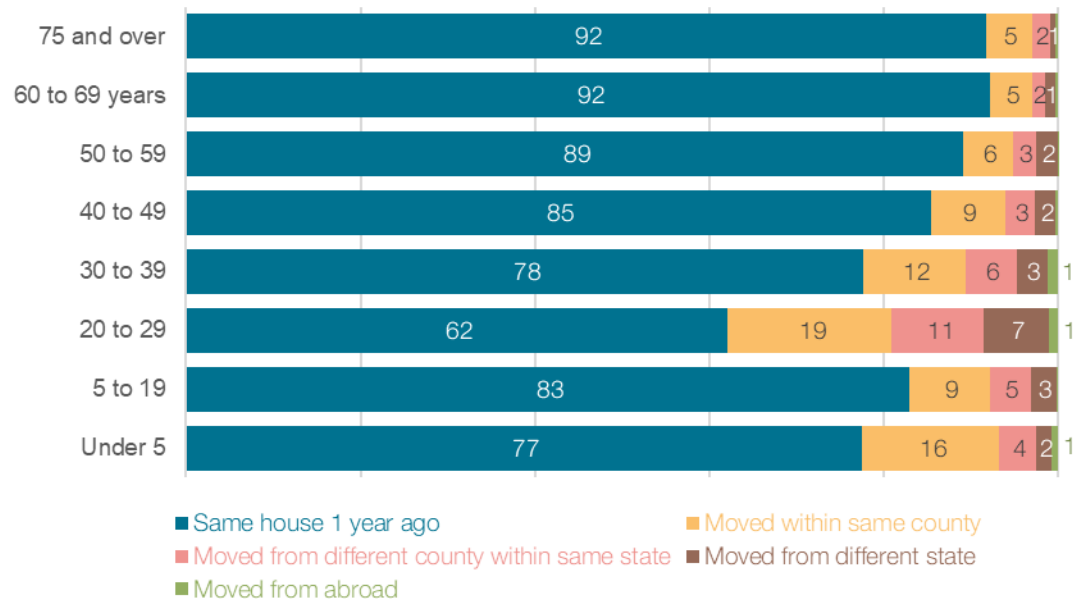
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2011 & 2021.

There is a high degree of intra-county geographic mobility, especially in younger age cohorts. Compared to their residence one year ago, 19% of those between age 20 and 29 and 16% of those under 5 years old were living somewhere else in Pierce County. The 20 to 29 year old age cohort is also the most likely to have moved in from somewhere else in the state or from another state. Though Tacoma has a very significant foreign-born population (see 4.5



Immigration) moves from abroad was a much smaller contributor to net migration in the last year compared to within-County and within State moves.

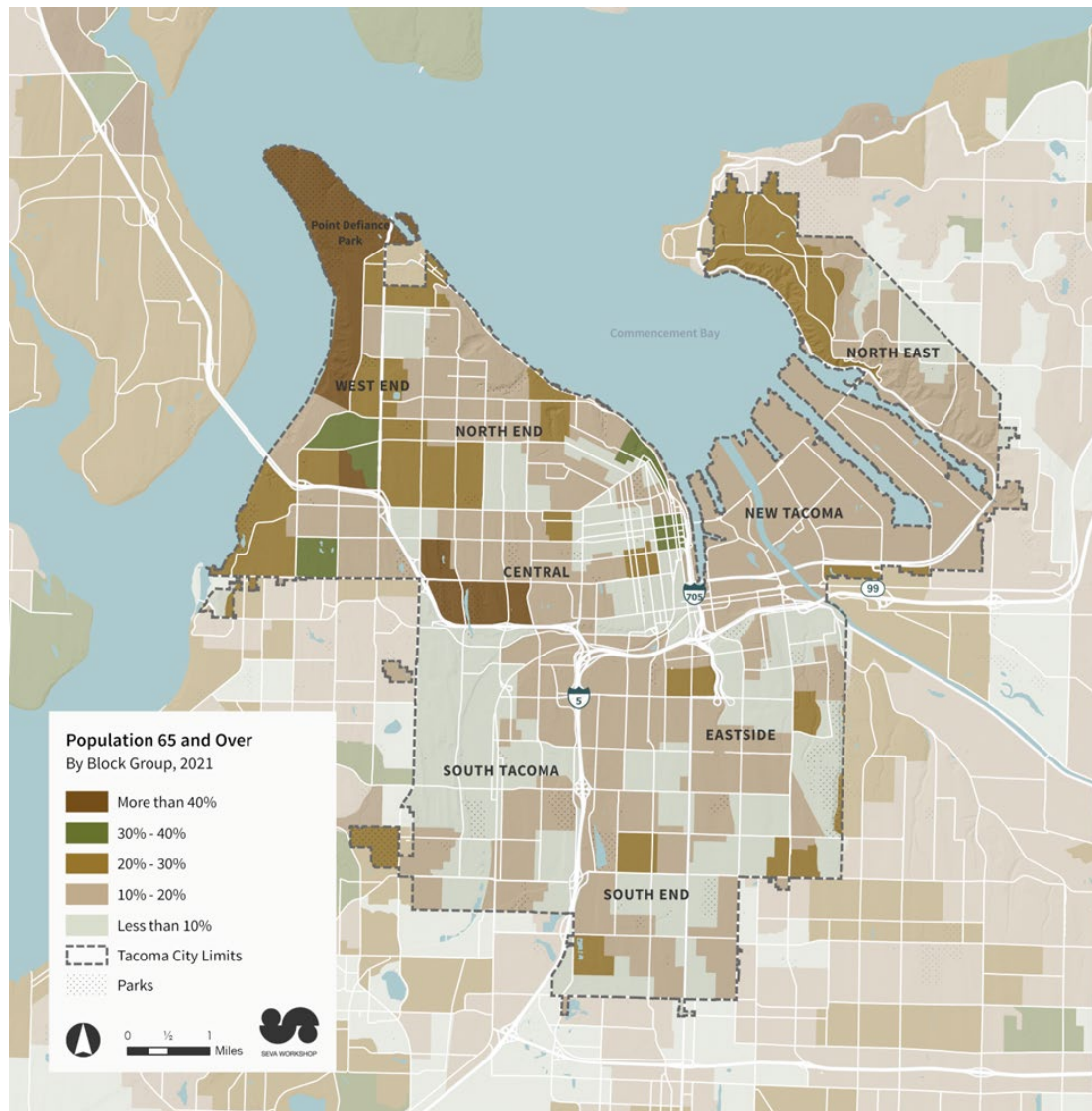
### Exhibit 13 Tacoma Geographic Mobility by Age, 2021



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2021.

The areas shown on the following map with the largest proportion of population 65 years old and older are largely natural and commercial areas with overall low population density, including Port Defiance, Brown's Point and the Cheney Stadium and Allenmore Hospital and Golf Course area. Several senior and retirement housing options, as well as adult family homes and assisted living facilities can be found in these areas. Outside of these areas, the senior population tends to live in West End and North End neighborhood council district, with other pockets scattered throughout the rest of the city.

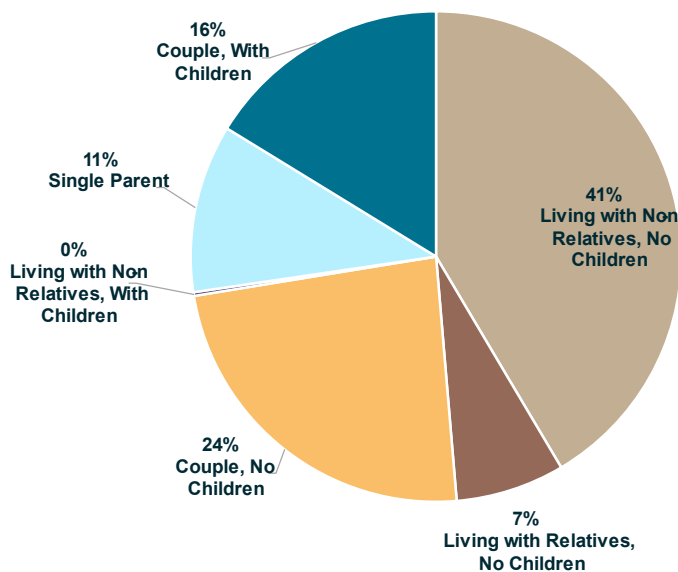
**Exhibit 14** City of Tacoma Population Age 65 and Older, 2023



## 4.2 Household Composition

An estimated 87,379 households reside in Tacoma, up approximately 10% in the last ten years and in line with overall population growth. This translates to an average of 2.4 people per household.

**Figure 15 Household Composition in Tacoma, 2021**



Note: Household composition considers children as all persons under 18 years of age living in the household, regardless of relation to the householder.

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021) B11005; Seva Workshop, 2023.

**Exhibit 16 Change in Household Composition in Tacoma & Pierce County, 2011 & 2021**

Households by type	Tacoma		Pierce County		% change 2011-2021	
	2011	2021	2011	2021	Tacoma	Pierce County
<b>Households with children under 18</b>	24,365	24,091	105,422	110,973	-1%	5%
<b>Households without children under 18</b>	55,065	63,288	192,417	224,996	15%	17%

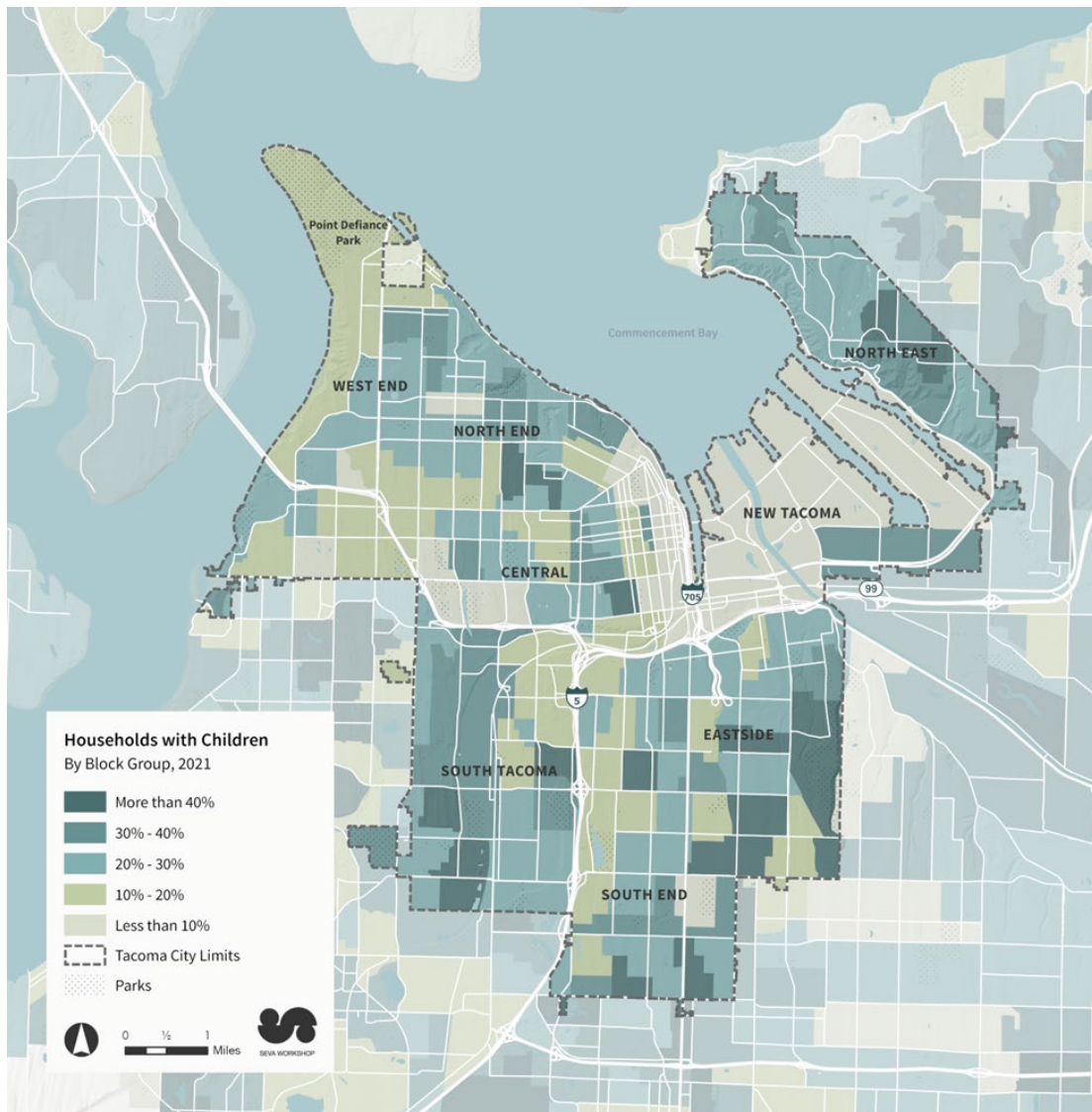
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021) B11005; Seva Workshop, 2023.

Overall, 28% of Tacoma households have children. In 2011, this figure was 31%. Despite overall population growth in this period, Tacoma has fewer households with children under 18 today compared to 2011. This aligns with the overall trend observed in age cohorts with a reduced proportion of children in the city. In contrast, Pierce County has had a modest increase in households with children. Households without children have significantly increased both in Tacoma and in Pierce County overall, and at similar rates.

The households with children in Tacoma tend to concentrate in more affordable residential neighborhoods and near schools. The map in Exhibit 17 explores this geographic distribution, with higher concentrations of children in neighborhood council districts including North East Tacoma, Eastside, South Tacoma and South End, as well as the North End. In some of these residential pockets of Tacoma, over 40% of households have children. Many of these areas with

the highest density of children also about other parts of Pierce County that have similarly high concentrations of households with children. Together with the high within-county geographic mobility for these age groups, these data suggest a high degree of movement for families with young children across the line dividing the City of Tacoma from the rest of Pierce County.

### Exhibit 17 Tacoma Density Map for Households with Children, 2021



Note: Household composition considers children as all persons under 18 years of age living in the household, regardless of relation to the householder.

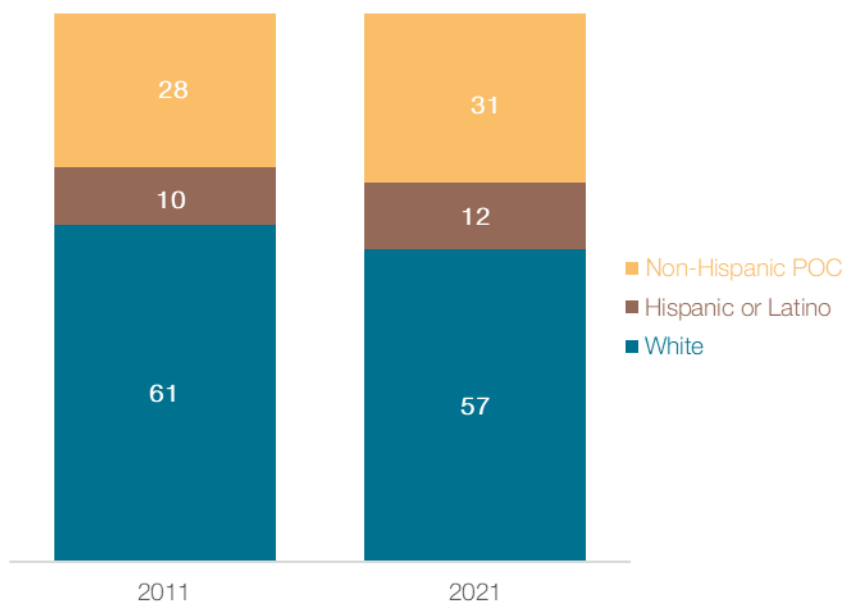
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021).

## 4.3 Race and Ethnicity

This Profile provides a high-level summary of patterns in Tacoma by race and ethnicity. More detailed information by priority planning and equity outcomes will be available in the equity analysis.

Tacoma is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Between the 2011 and 2021 American Community Survey, the proportion of residents who identify as White decreased from 61% to 57%. The proportion of residents who identify as non-Hispanic people of color or as Hispanic or Latino increased by 3% and 2%, respectively.

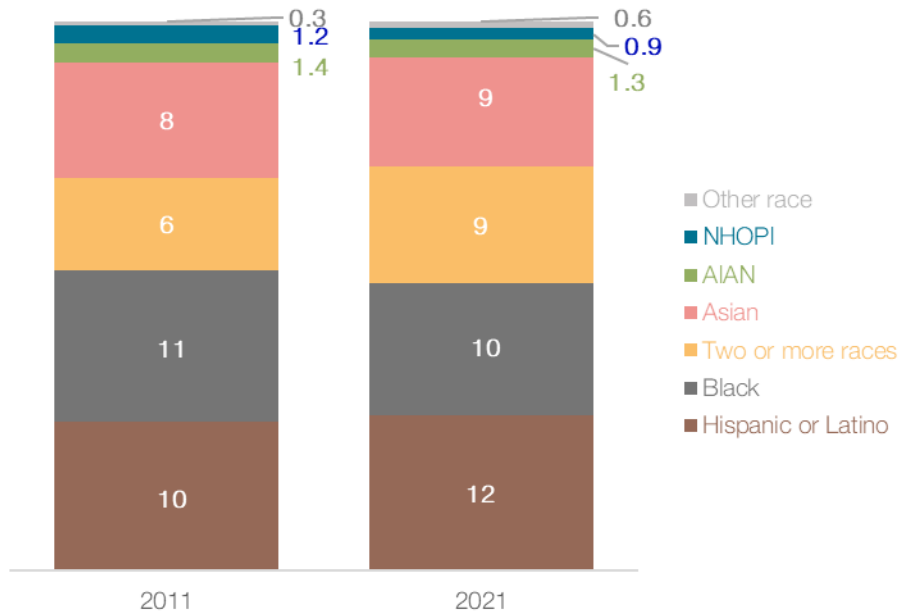
**Exhibit 18 Race and Ethnicity in Tacoma, White and People of Color 2011 & 2021**



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2011 & 2021.

With significant proportions of Hispanic or Latino, Black, and Asian residents, as well as those of two or more races, Tacoma is home to a diverse population of people of color and continues to diversify. Relative to their share of the 2011 population, those with a multiracial identity (6% to 9) and those identifying as Hispanic or Latino (10% to 12%) have grown. The Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population is the only group that experienced a nominal decline over this time period, from 2,481 in 2011 to 1,920 in 2021.

**Exhibit 19 Race and Ethnicity in Tacoma, People of Color Detail 2011 & 2021**

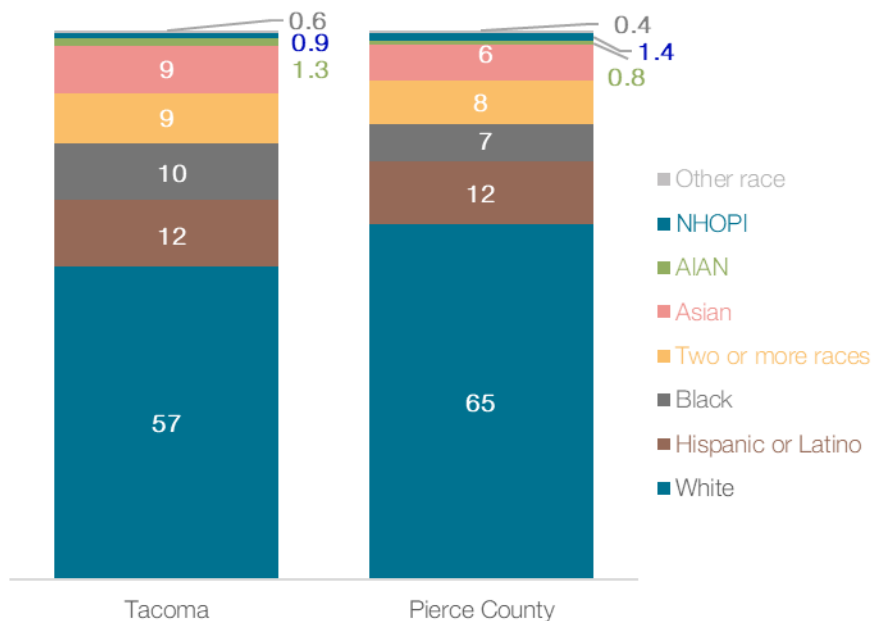


Note: AIAN=American Indian and Alaska Native; NHOPI=Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. Hispanic or Latino is an ethnicity. The Hispanic or Latino category includes Hispanic and Latine people of all races. All other categories show non-Hispanic races.

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2011 & 2021.

Compared to Pierce County, Tacoma has a higher proportion of People of Color. This is particularly true for the Asian and Black communities, as well as the American Indian and Alaska Native, 'Other race', and multiracial identities. The percentage that identifies as American Indian and Alaska Native alone or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander may appear small. However, these populations include relatively large communities that are often farthest from opportunity and representation due in part to their smaller size in Census figures.

**Exhibit 20 Tacoma and Pierce County Populations by Race and Ethnicity, 2021**



Notes: AIAN=American Indian and Alaska Native; NHOPI=Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. Hispanic or Latine is an ethnicity. The Hispanic or Latine category includes Hispanic and Latine people of all races. All other categories show non-Hispanic races.

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021).

The map in Exhibit 21 explores the geographic distribution for communities of color in Tacoma. The highest concentrations for people of color are in the city's southern and eastern neighborhoods. Densities are lowest in the North and West. The current distribution of communities of color is the result of historical policies and practices, such as treaties, redlining<sup>7</sup>, Japanese incarceration, and Chinese expulsion as well as the outcomes of individual household resources and decisions.

The City of Tacoma is located on the traditional homelands of the Puyallup Tribe and today the municipal border of the city extends into the reservation lands of the Puyallup Tribe of Indians to the northeast, established by the 1854 Treaty of Medicine Creek. The Puyallup Reservation encompasses all of Northeast Tacoma and parts of the New Tacoma and the Eastside neighborhood council districts. The culture and identity of the Puyallup people within Tacoma is an important piece of its multiethnic identity today.

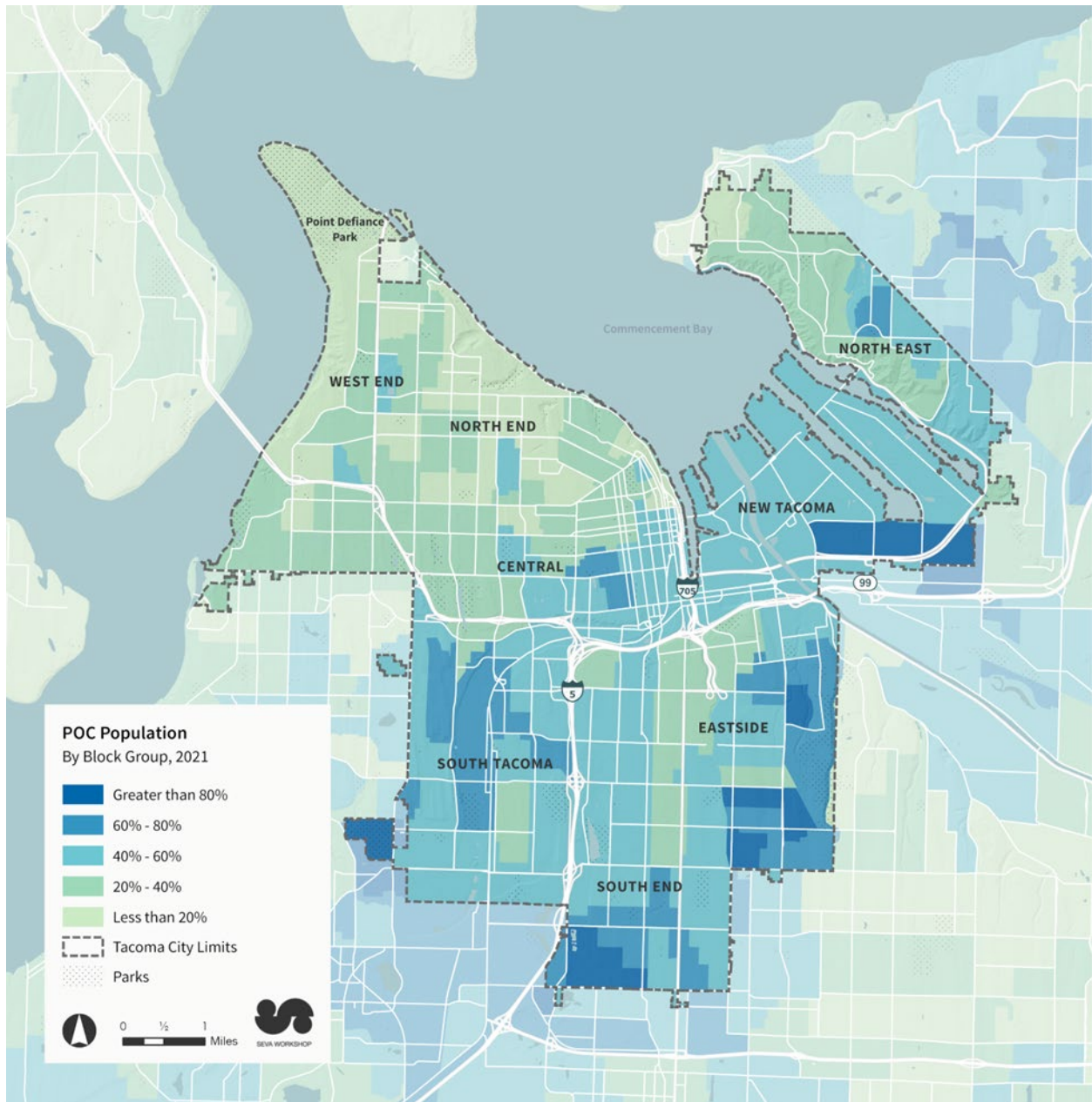
The redlining practices of the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) identified the North End and areas extending to the bay as the most desirable parts of the city. Downtown and Hilltop area and the northern parts of Eastside and parts of South Tacoma as hazardous or undesirable due to the presence of non-white

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed history see: Mapping Inequality, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/map/WA/Tacoma/context#loc=12/47.2481/-122.4546>



residents. These practices concentrated communities of color in neighborhoods that were deprioritized for public investment and services.

## Exhibit 21 People of Color as a Proportion of the Population in Tacoma by Block Group, 2021



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021).

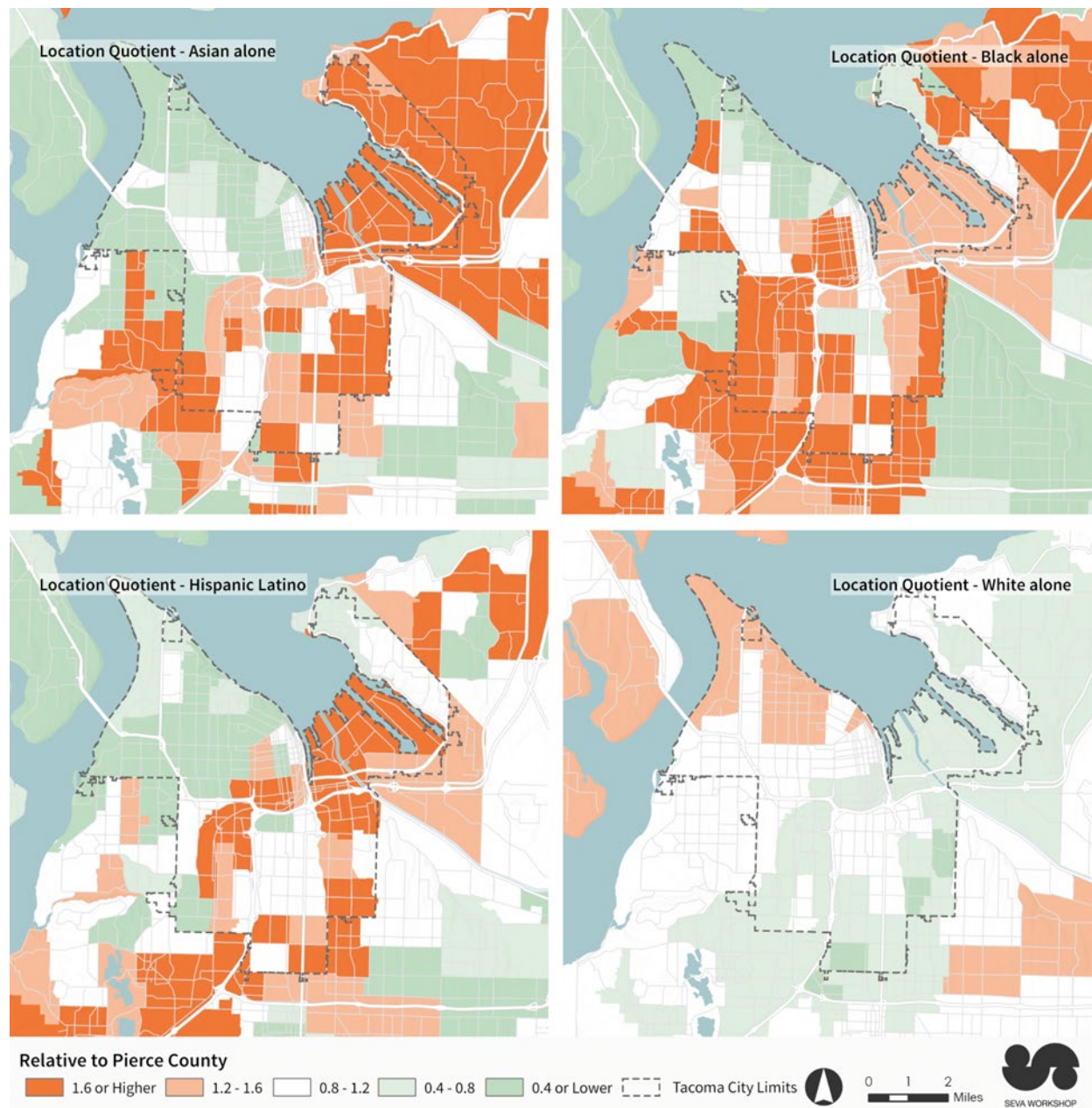
A location quotient is a metric calculated to show the concentration of communities of interest in each census tract relative to county as a whole. It is a useful way to illustrate segregation of



groups. For example, if 7% of the neighborhood population is Black, and 7% of the county population is Black, then the location quotient is 1. A tract where 14% of residents are Black would have a location quotient of 2. And a tract where only 3.5% of residents are Black would have a location quotient of 0.5. So, tracts with high location quotient scores have a greater share of that population compared to the rest of the County. Tacoma has long been more diverse than Pierce County as a whole. As noted above, the City has historically been home to particularly high concentrations of Asian and Black residents as compared to Pierce County. However, as the location quotient maps show, these communities are likely to live just outside of the Tacoma City boundary in other urban, peri-urban areas of Pierce County.

The location quotient and charts suggest that the concentration of White and Hispanic/Latino communities is relatively even across Tacoma and Pierce County. The durability of redlining effects can be seen in the North End that has a higher concentration of White households than compared to Pierce County as a whole and lower concentration of Asian, Black and Hispanic/Latino residents. For an overview of the structural factors that have contributed to these patterns, see PSRC's [Legacy of Structural Racism](#) and the [Racial Restrictive Covenants Project](#).

## Exhibit 22 Location Quotient, Asian, Black, Hispanic Latino, White Alone



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021); Seva Workshop, 2023

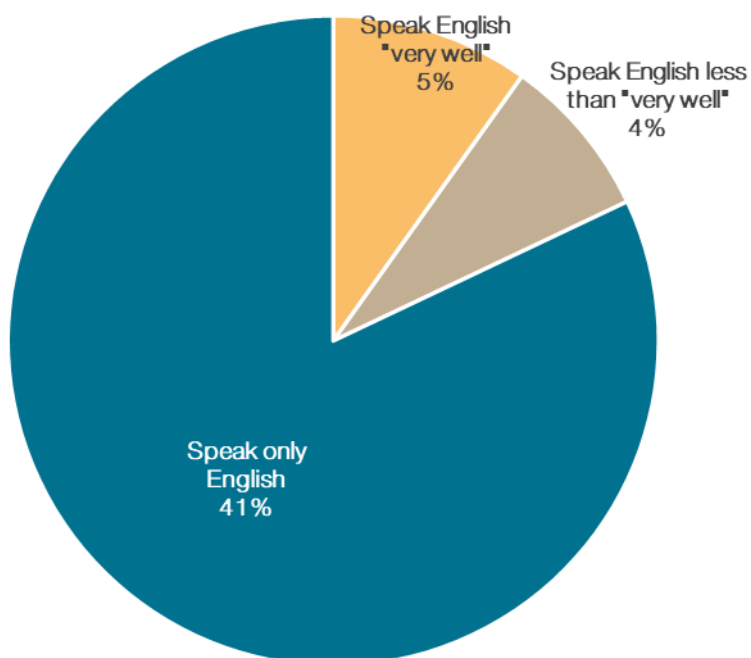
## 4.4 Linguistic and Cultural Groups

There is a wide range of languages spoken across Tacoma. While most Tacoma residents age 5 and older speak English as their primary language (82%), other common languages spoken at home are Spanish (7%), Vietnamese (2%), and Russian, Polish, or other Slavic languages (1.4%), Korean (1.1%), and Tagalog (0.9%). An additional 3% of the population speaks other

Asian and Pacific Island languages, which could include languages such as Samoan, Marshallese, Chuukese, and Lao.

Roughly 20 percent of the population speak more than one language at home with varying English proficiency. Asian and Pacific Islander language speaking households are less likely to have English proficiency of “very well” compared to other multilingual households. They comprise roughly half of the population that speaks English less than “very well.” Another one-third of households that speak English less than “very well” are primarily Spanish speakers.

**Exhibit 23     Language Spoken at Home among Population aged 5 and older, 2021**



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021).

## Exhibit 24 English Proficiency for Households that Speak Additional Languages

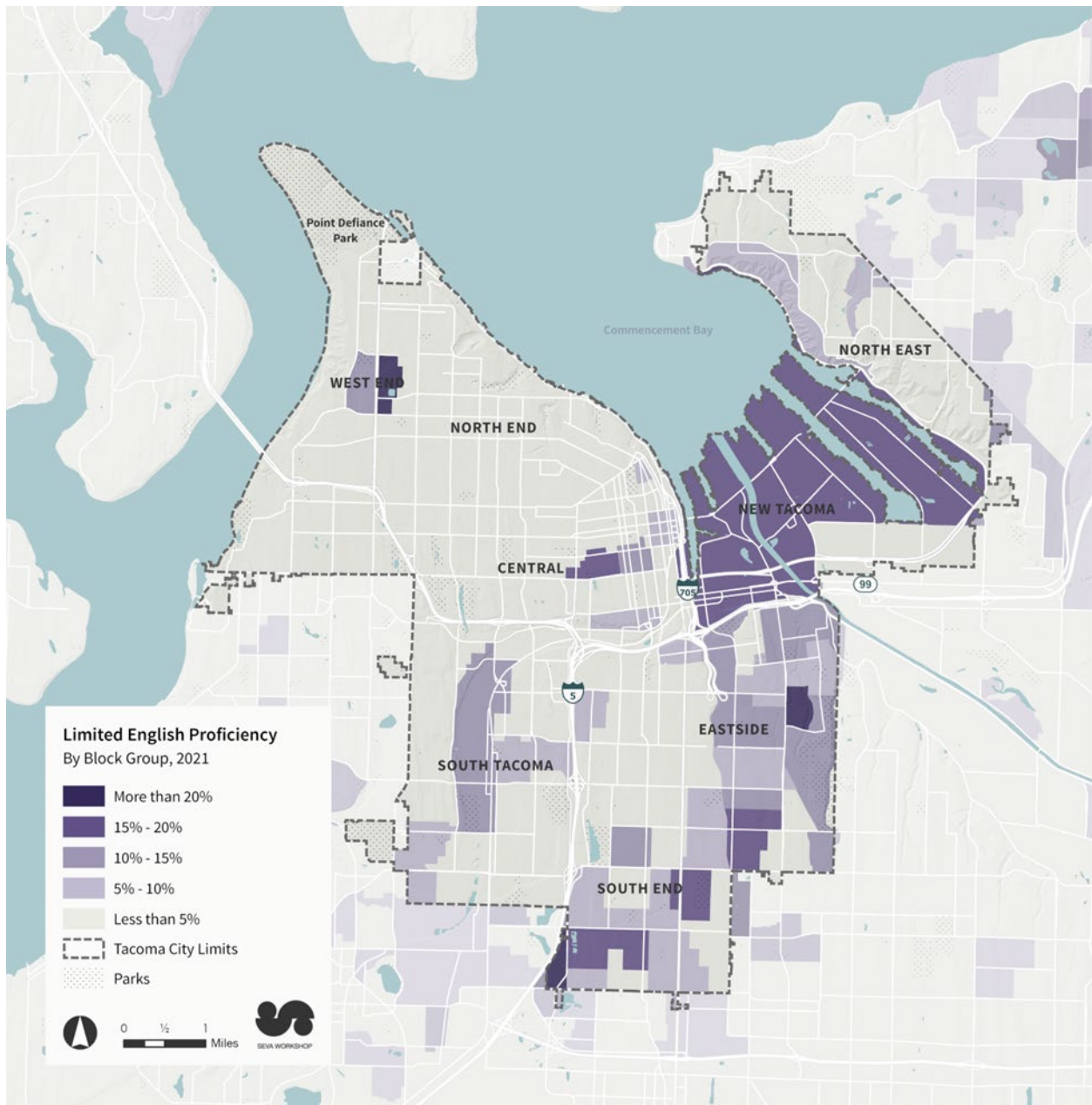
	Speak English "very well"	Speak English less than "very well"	% of those who speak English less than "very well"	Total
Speak Asian and Pacific Island languages	5,990	8,377	51%	
Speak Spanish	9,028	5,277	32%	
Speak other Indo-European languages	3,434	2,350	14%	
Speak other languages	1,645	493	3%	
Speak only English				167,248
<b>Total Population, 5 years and older</b>				<b>203,842</b>

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021).

The map in Exhibit 24 captures the geographic distribution of those who speak English less than "very well." The residential communities located in the Eastside and South End neighborhood council districts are home to the highest prevalence of speakers who don't speak English very well.

The [Tacoma Equity Map](#) provides additional insight to specific language groups in these areas. Spanish is most prevalent in the Eastside and Central Tacoma. Russian, Polish, Slavic languages are most common in West End and South Tacoma. Vietnamese is most common in South Tacoma, South End and Eastside. Tagalog is common in the West End, South Tacoma, South End, and the Eastside. Korean is most common in the West End, Central Tacoma, and North East.

## Exhibit 25    Persons with Limited English Proficiency as a Proportion of the Population in Tacoma by Block Group, 2021



Note: While New Tacoma shows a high proportion of Limited English Proficiency persons, the area is primarily industrial with few residents.

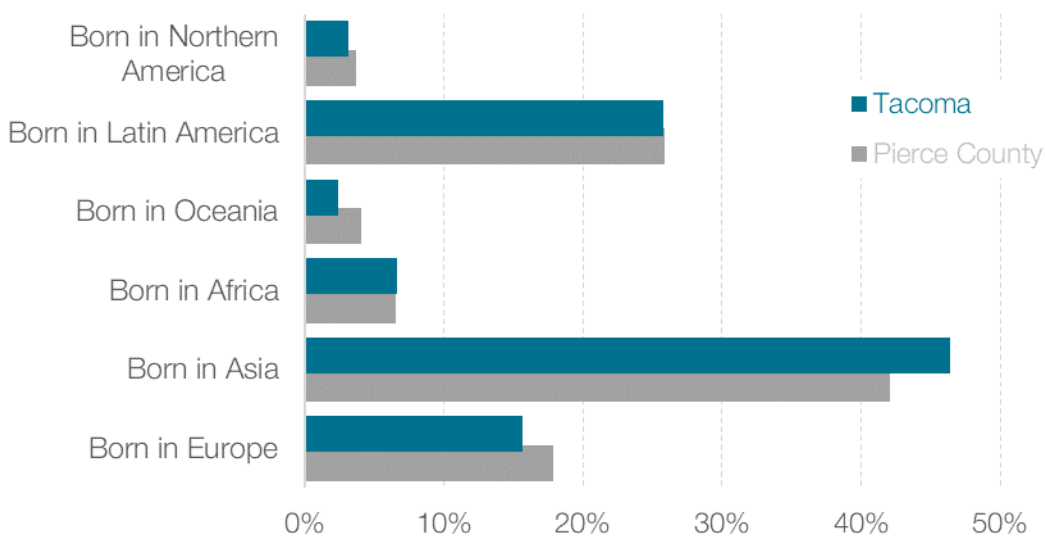
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021)

## 4.5 Immigration

The City of Tacoma is home to 26,123 foreign-born residents, comprising 13% of its total population. Immigrants in Tacoma come from across the world, but highest numbers are from

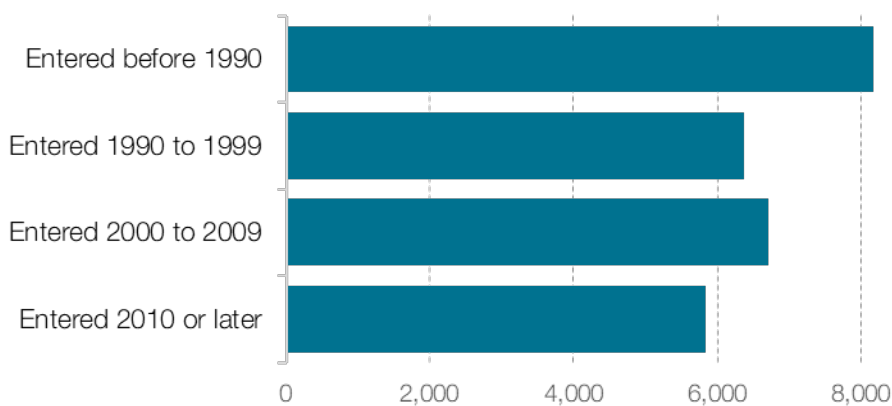
countries in Asia (46% of total), Latin America (26%), and Europe (16%). This aligns with the findings on languages spoken at home in the above section. Rates of immigration have slowed over the past decade for Tacoma: the foreign-born population increased 4% in 2011-2021 compared to 9% citywide population growth. The graph in Exhibit 27 highlights this decline, which is likely related to shifts in immigration policy at the federal level. As described earlier in this profile, Tacoma's growth in recent years has primarily been driven by net migration, but mostly from within county and within state rather than from abroad.

**Exhibit 26 Foreign-Born Place of Birth for Tacoma and Pierce County Population, 2021**



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021).

**Exhibit 27 Tacoma Foreign-Born Population by Year of Entry, 2021**



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021).

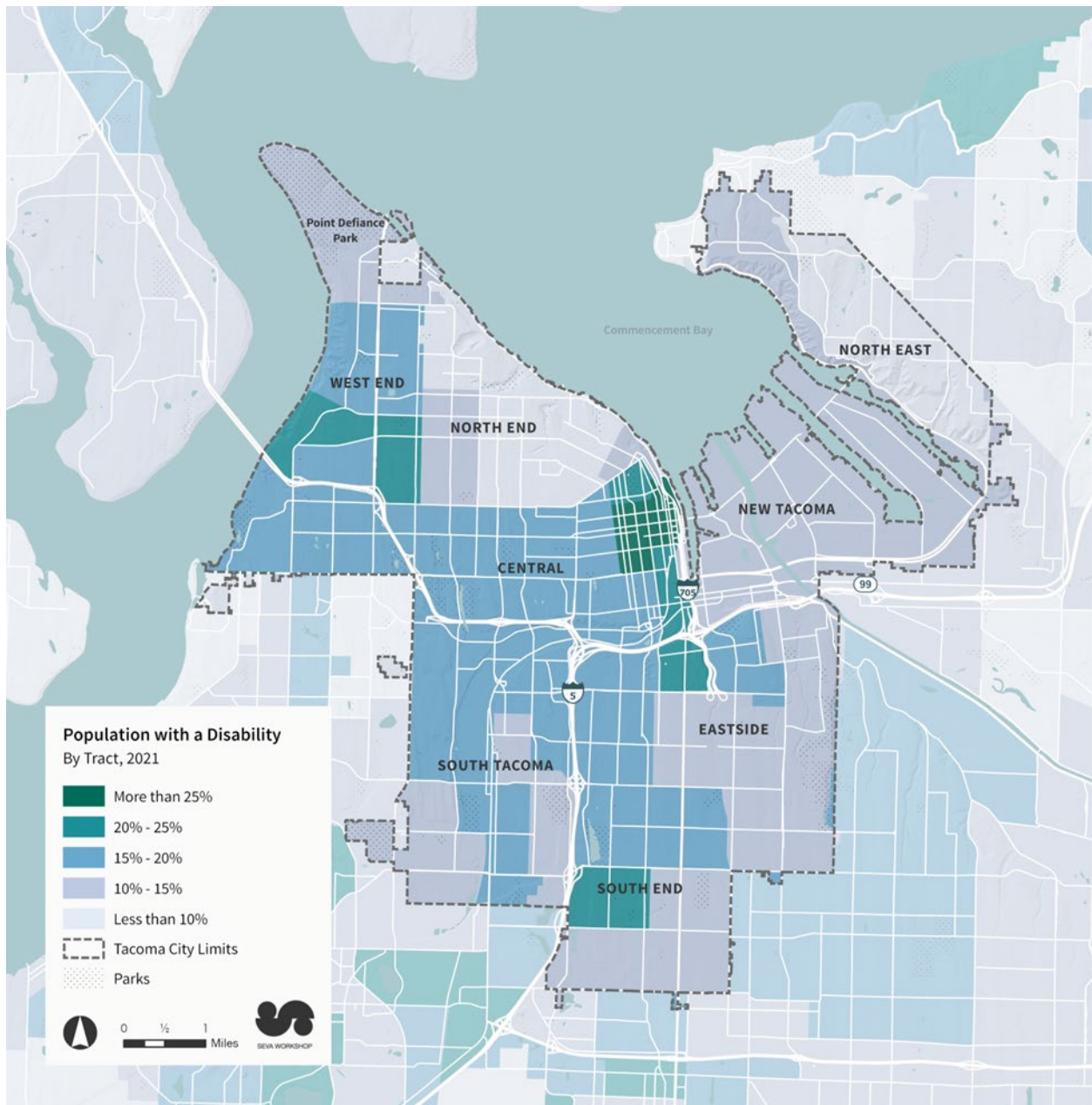


## 4.6 Disability

Fifteen percent of the population are living with a disability, including disabilities in hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living. This statistic has remained consistent for the last 5 years. The population living with a disability in Tacoma is slightly higher in Tacoma as compared to Pierce County overall where it is about 13%.

While people with disabilities live in every block group within Tacoma as shown in Exhibit 28, there are neighborhood council districts where over one-quarter of residents are living with a disability. Areas of the West End, downtown Tacoma and South End are home to the highest concentrations of residents living with a disability. These concentrations may be related to the presence of services and or housing that are well-suited to living with a disability. It may also be due to housing affordability relative to other parts of the City and County. Notably, just outside the Eastern boundary of the city in Pierce County, there is also a relatively high concentration of residents living with a disability.

## Exhibit 28      Persons with a Disability as a Proportion of the Population in Tacoma by Block Group, 2021



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021)



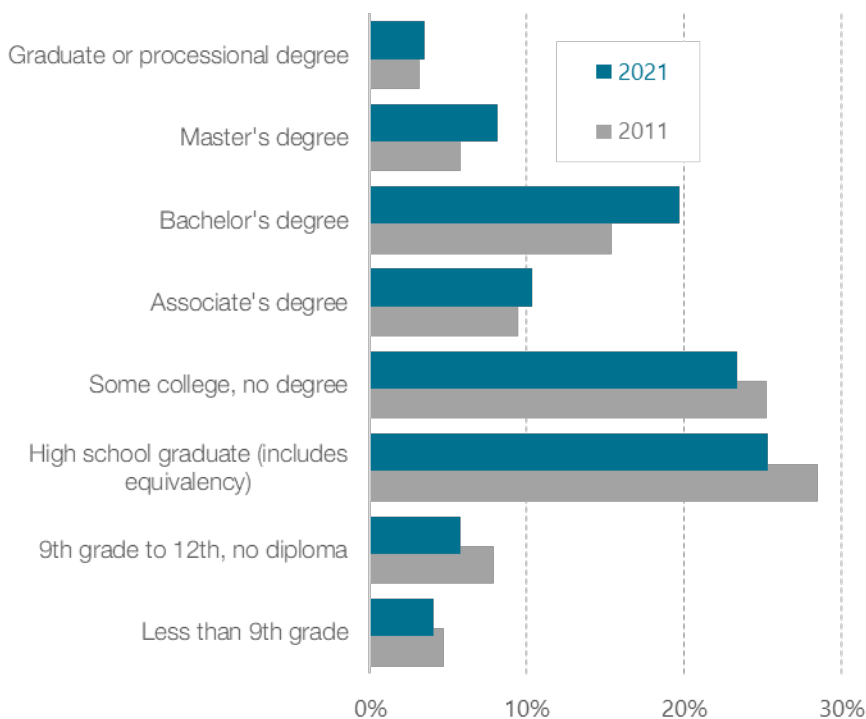
## 5 INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLD OUTCOMES

### 5.1 Education

Tacoma's population is attaining higher levels of education. Over the last ten years the proportion of residents with a completed Associate's degree or higher has increased from 34% to 42%. The City has also made gains in rates of residents with at least a high school diploma or equivalency completion.

Despite these gains, Tacoma's rates of educational attainment still lag behind statewide levels. More than one third of residents (35%) have terminated formal education at high school completion or earlier, compared to 30% in Washington state overall. These lower rates in Tacoma are consistent across almost every race category. Racial disparities in educational attainment also persist, with Black attainment of a bachelor's degree at around 18.9% in contrast to 33.4% of White residents.

**Exhibit 29      Population by Highest Level of Education Attained, 2011 & 2021**



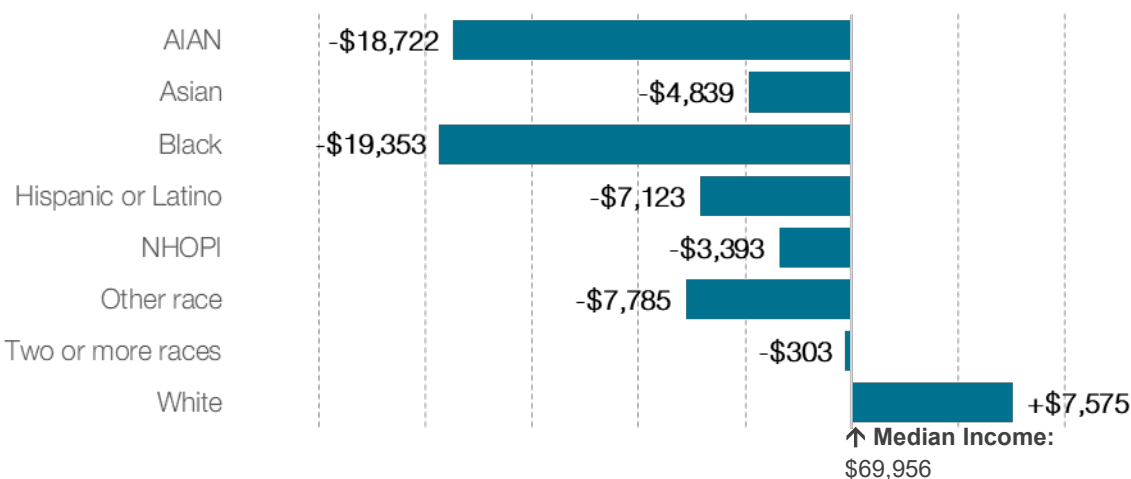
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2007-2011 & 2017-2021).

## 5.2 Income and Employment

Tacoma's overall median household income in 2021 was \$69,956, a 42% increase (without inflation adjustment) from the overall median household income in 2011, which was \$49,232. Adjusted for inflation, real median household income has increased by about 22%. There are wide disparities for median household income when comparing by race and ethnicity, as shown in Exhibit 30. White households have a higher median household income at \$77,531. Black and AIAN households have the lowest incomes, with medians at \$19,353 and \$18,722 below the citywide median - respectively. All other BIPOC groups also have median household incomes below the citywide median. For an overview of the structural factors that have contributed to these disparities, see PSRC's [Legacy of Structural Racism](#).

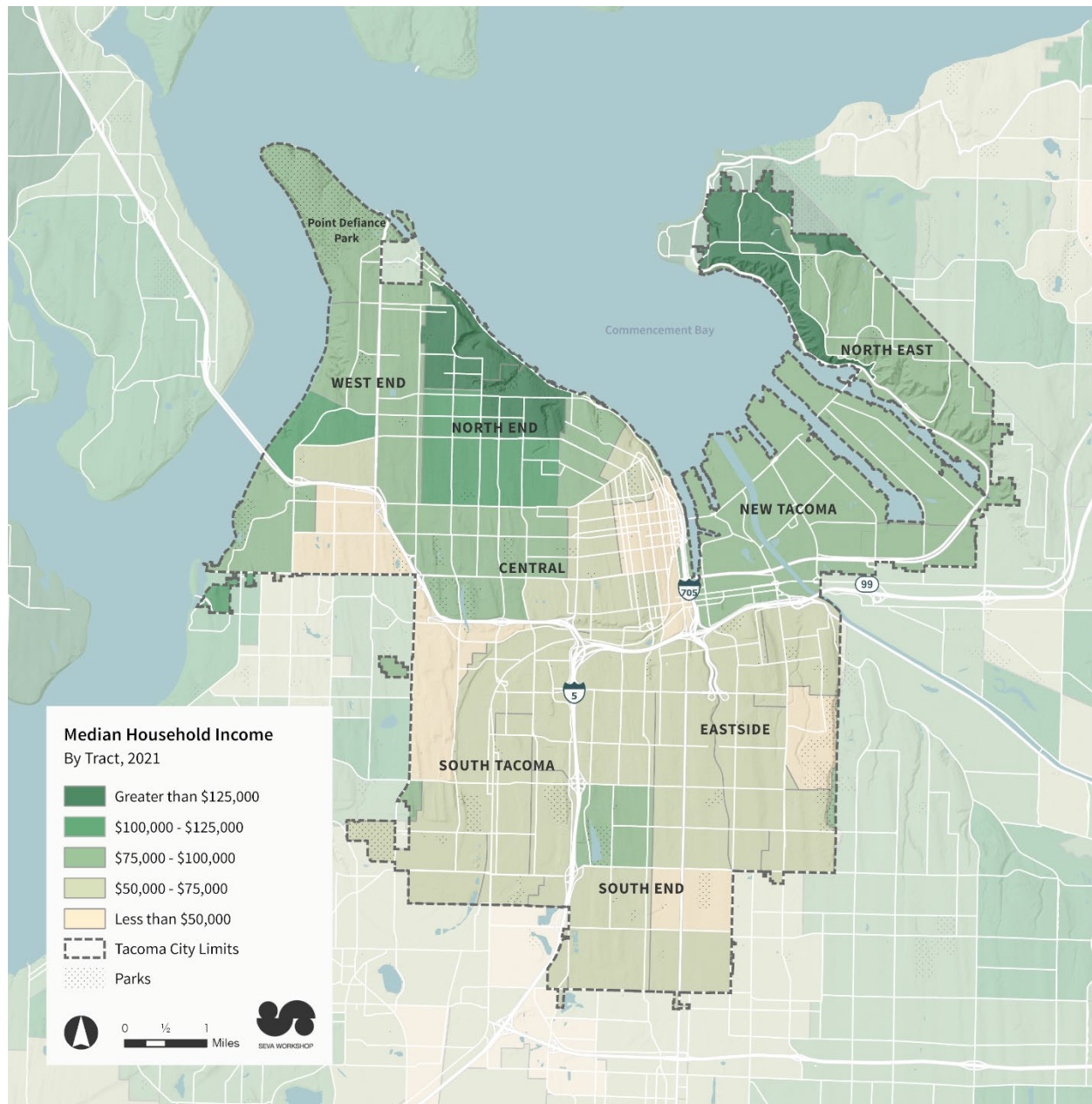
In Tacoma, incomes are higher in areas around the North End, West End, and Northeast Tacoma. Incomes are lowest in South Tacoma, the South End, and the Eastside. These geographic trends are visualized in the map in Exhibit 31.

**Exhibit 30 Household income by race and ethnicity, compared to Tacoma's median in 2021**



Note: Exhibits per group are compared to the overall median income.  
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021)

### Exhibit 31 Median Household Income by Census Tract in Tacoma, 2021



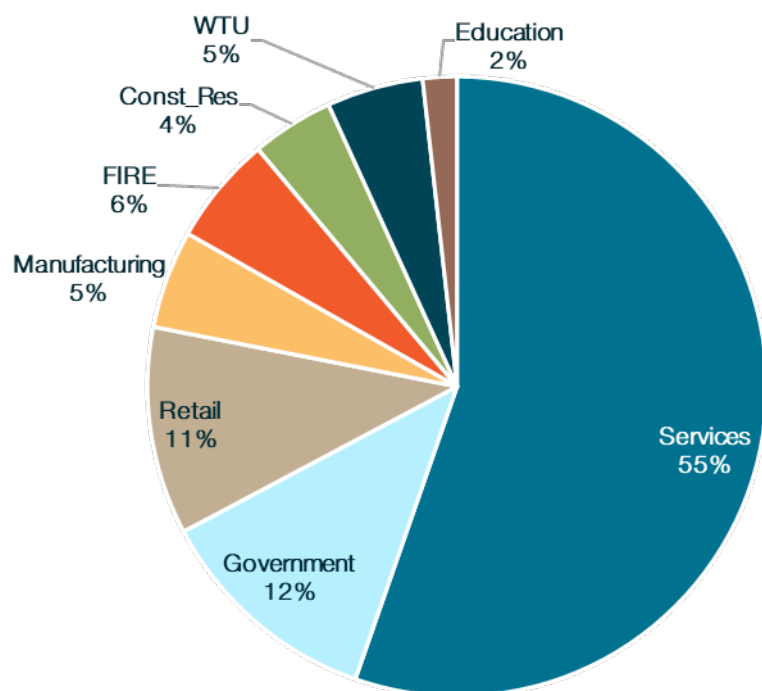
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021)

According to the 2021 American Community Survey, Tacoma has a population of 117,407 that is 16 years of age or older and in the labor force. 2% of these individuals are in the Armed Forces and 93% are employed in the Civilian labor force. This translates to an unemployment rate of 5%, about equal to that of Pierce County.

The 3 largest sectors for covered employment in Tacoma are Services (54%), Government (11%), and Retail (10%). Top employers in the Tacoma area represent the government and

healthcare providers: Joint Base Lewis-McChord, MultiCare Health System, the State of Washington, CHI Franciscan Health, and Tacoma Public Schools<sup>8</sup>. Services includes professional, scientific, and technical services; health care and social assistance; and accommodation and food services.

**Exhibit 32    Employment by Major Sector in Tacoma, 2022**



Note: “Const\_Res” = Construction and Resources; “FIRE” = Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate; “WTU” = Wholesale Trade, Transportation, & Utilities.

Sources: PSRC, 2022; Seva Workshop, 2023.

## 5.3 Commuting Characteristics

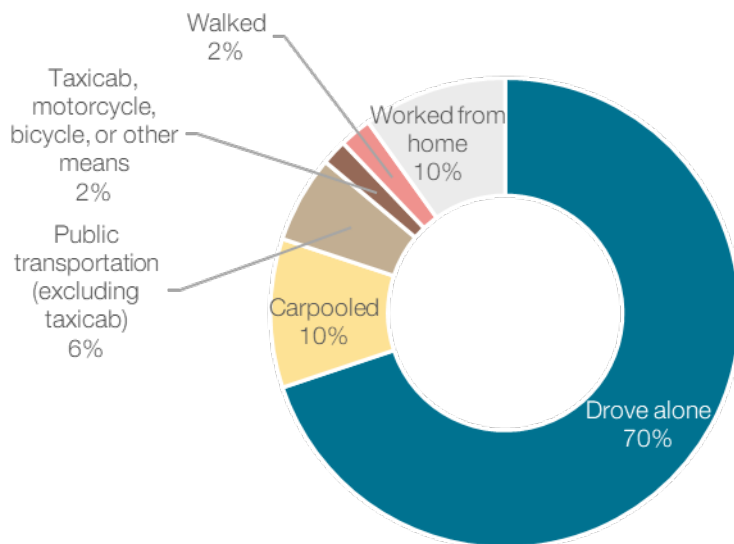
According to 2021 LEHD Origin Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), only 28% of working Tacoma residents also work in Tacoma. A combined 21.7 percent have places of employment in surrounding cities of Lakewood, Kent, Auburn, Federal Way, and Fife. Twelve percent (12%) of Tacoma workers have their place of employment in Seattle. About one-third work elsewhere – this includes at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, one of the largest Tacoma resident employers. It is important to note the LEHD data is based on administrative records such as unemployment insurance reporting connecting place of residence and place of employment. These numbers reflect both commuters and those who are working remotely. They also do not include self-employed workers who are more likely to work from home.

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<sup>8</sup> <sup>8</sup>[City of Tacoma Economic Development Services](#), 2020.

The American Community Survey is based on self-reported respondent experiences and will be inclusive of self-employed workers. Based on the 2021 ACS data, the Tacoma workforce largely commutes by car, 70% driving alone and another 10% carpooling. Ten percent of the workforce works from home. The mean travel time to work is 30.4 minutes with 22.7% of workers commuting 45 minutes or more to work.

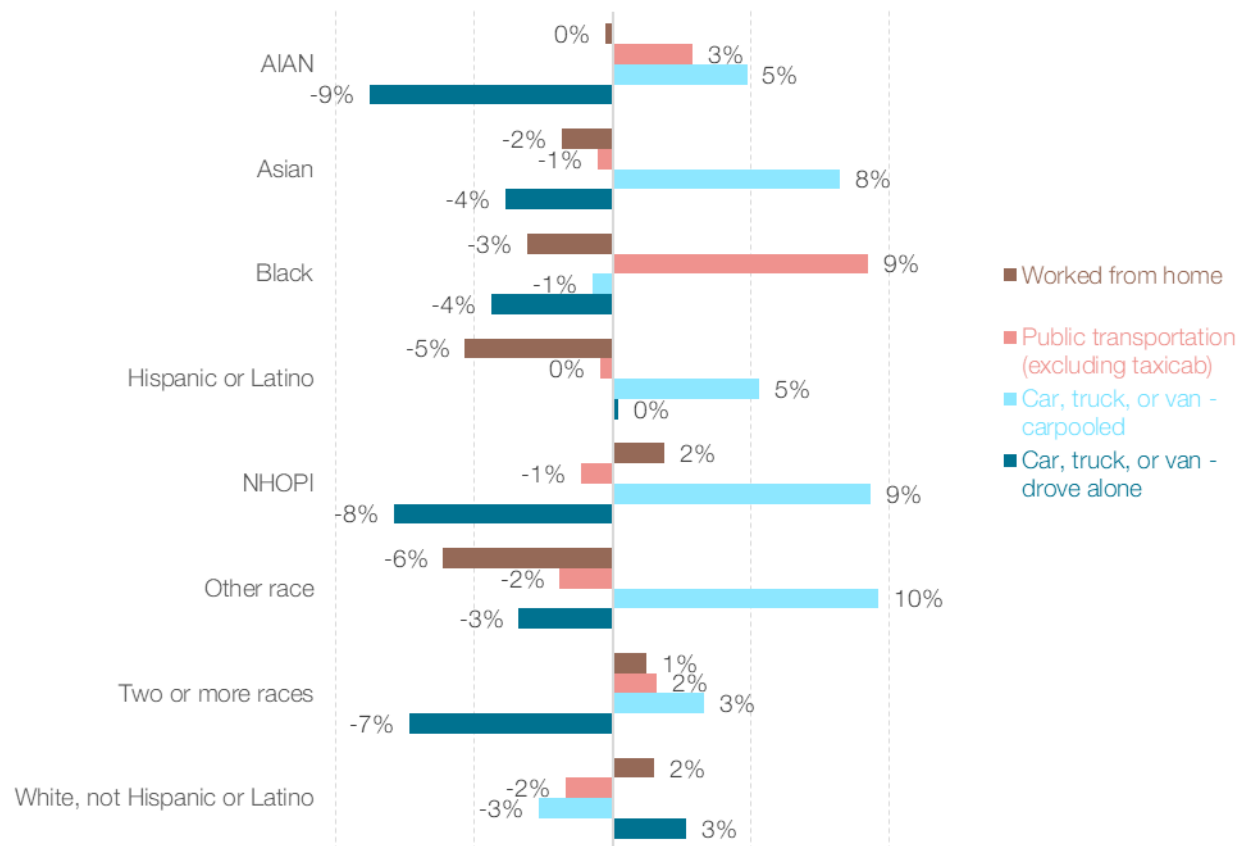
**Figure 33 Means of Transportation to Work, 2021**



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021)

The likelihood of Tacoma workers taking a certain means of transportation to work varies by race and ethnicity. The following exhibit compares the distribution of commute methods to the underlying distribution of workers by race and ethnicity. Communities of color are more likely than average to carpool. Black workers are much more likely than average to commute to work by public transportation. White, non-Hispanic or Latino, workers are the most likely group to commute alone by car, truck, or van.

**Exhibit 34 Means of Transportation to Work by Race and Ethnicity**



Note: Indexed means of transportation to work for workers aged 16 and over, by race and ethnicity in the last 12 months. A value of 0 indicates the share of that group using that means of transportation is equal to their share in the overall population. AIAN=American Indian and Alaska Native; NHOPI=Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. Hispanic or Latine is an ethnicity. The Hispanic or Latino category includes Hispanic and Latine people of all races. All other categories show non-Hispanic races.

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021) (B08119, B08105B-1)

## 5.4 Housing

The Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) dataset produced by Housing and Urban Development estimated Tacoma to have 85,565 occupied housing units in 2020. This represents an 8% increase over the 2010 estimate of housing units. Housing has grown more rapidly in Pierce County overall, where the number of occupied housing units increased 12% from 2010 to 2020. HUD and the US Census Bureau define the homeownership rate as the percent of occupied housing units occupied by an owner. This rate, 54% in Tacoma and 63% in Pierce County has remained stable over the last decade.



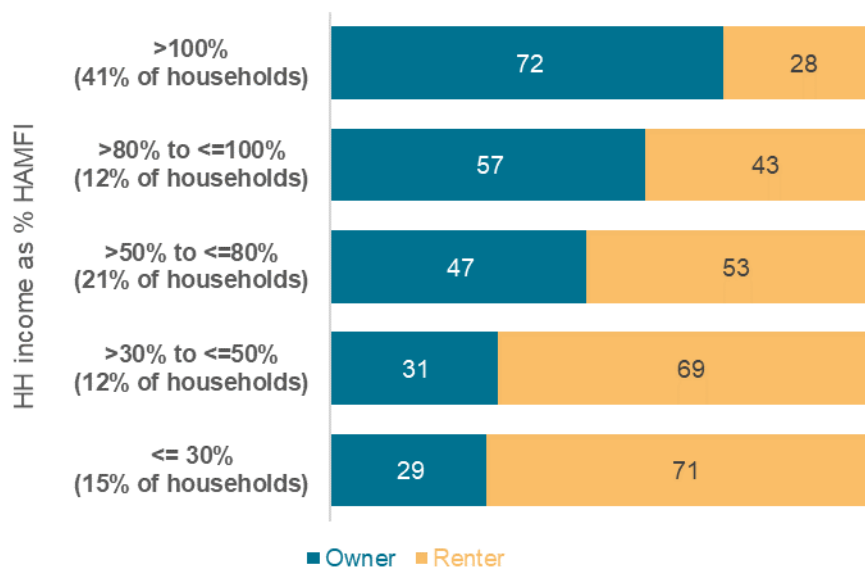
### Exhibit 35 Tacoma Housing Tenure, 2010 & 2020

	2010	2020
Owner Occupied	43,250 (54%)	46,375 (54%)
Renter Occupied	36,750 (46%)	40,190 (46%)
Total Households	80,005	86,565

Source: CHAS (Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy) dataset based on American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2006-2010 & 2016-2020

Household income has a direct relationship with the likelihood of being in owner-occupied housing. Exhibit 36 displays homeownership rates disaggregated by Household Area Median Family Income (HAMFI). 72% of households in Tacoma earning at least the area median income are living in owner-occupied housing, whereas households earning 30% of the median or less are much less likely to live in owner-occupied housing (29%).

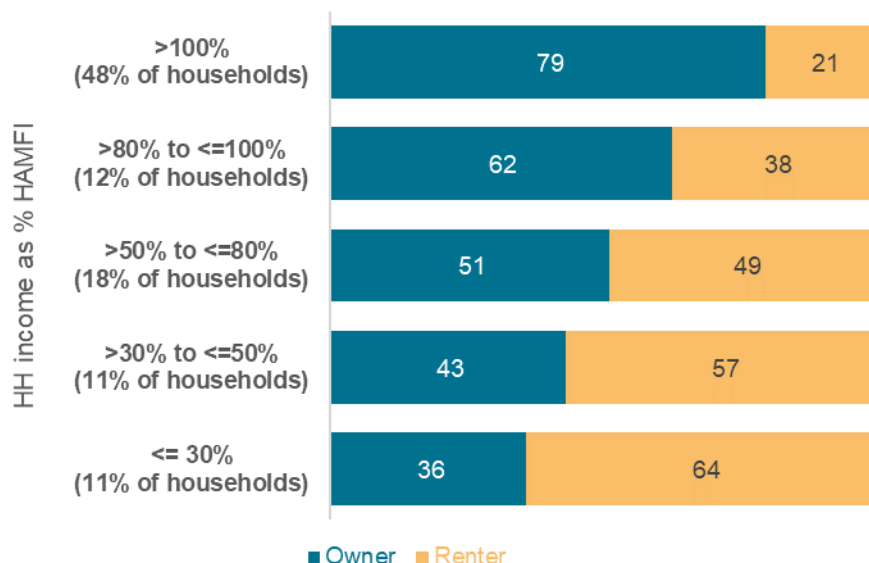
### Exhibit 36 Household Median Income and Housing Status, Tacoma, 2020



Source: CHAS (Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy) dataset based on American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2016-2020

Pierce County households trend slightly higher both in incomes and homeownership rates. For example, 15% of households in Tacoma are in the very low income bracket of earning less than 30% median income, while 11% of Pierce County households earn at this level. However, Pierce County households in the low and very low income levels are significantly more likely to own their homes than similar households in Tacoma.

### Exhibit 37 Household Median Income and Housing Status, Pierce County, 2020



Source: CHAS (Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy) dataset based on American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2016-2020

Comparing homeownerships rates over the past ten years, it is apparent that Tacoma and Pierce County have both seen significant improvements in rates for the very low income bracket. However, the low income bracket of 30-50% area median income has significantly declined in homeownership rates in Tacoma, while the rate for the same group has increased in Pierce County. This may reflect more availability of affordable homeownership options outside of the City boundaries, and the lack of homeownership programs and support (relative to those in the very low income bracket). The only other income group to see declines in homeownership rates has been households earning 100% or more than the area median income.

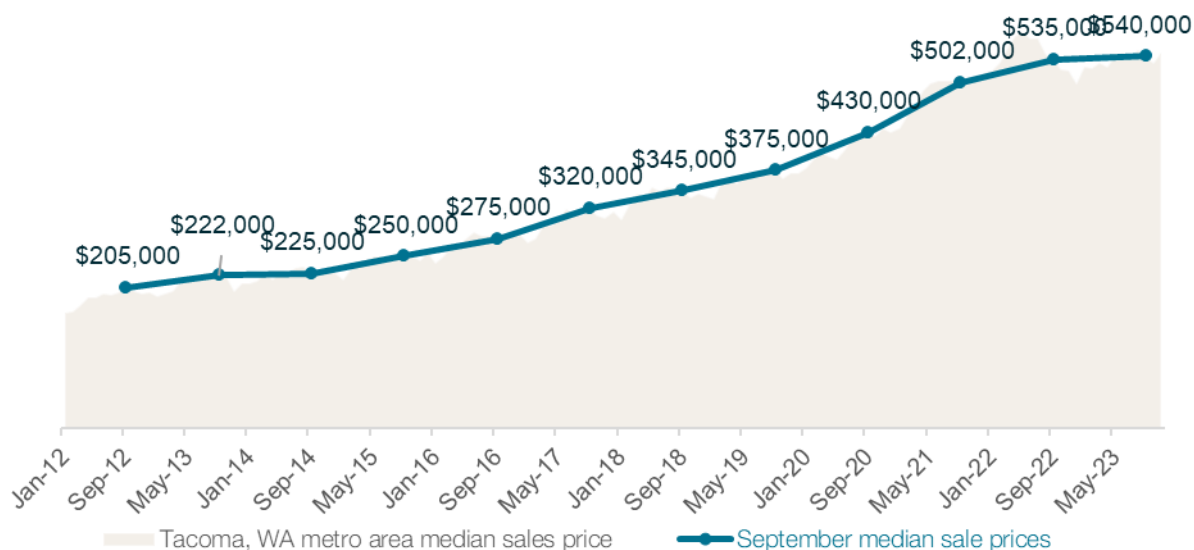
### Exhibit 38 Household Median Income and Home Ownership Rate, Tacoma and Pierce County 2020

	Tacoma			Pierce County		
	2010	2020	Change	2010	2020	Change
<= 30%	20	29	↑ 9	29	36	↑ 7
>30% to <=50%	36	31	↓ 5	40	43	↑ 3
>50% to <=80%	46	47	↑ 1	50	51	↑ 1
>80% to <=100%	53	57	↑ 4	58	62	↑ 4
>100%	75	72	↓ 3	80	79	↓ 1

Source: CHAS (Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy) dataset based on American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2006-2010 & 2016-2020

The median sales price for a home in Tacoma in September 2023 was \$540,000, a 57% increase from 2018. Household incomes have not kept pace with the increase in home prices. For example, from 2018 to 2021, the Tacoma nominal median income increased about 19% (from \$58,617 in 2018 to \$69,956 in 2021) while home prices increased 46% (from \$345,000 in September 2018 to \$502,000 in September 2021)

**Exhibit 39 Tacoma Monthly Median Home Sales Price, September YOY Change (%) 2012-2023**

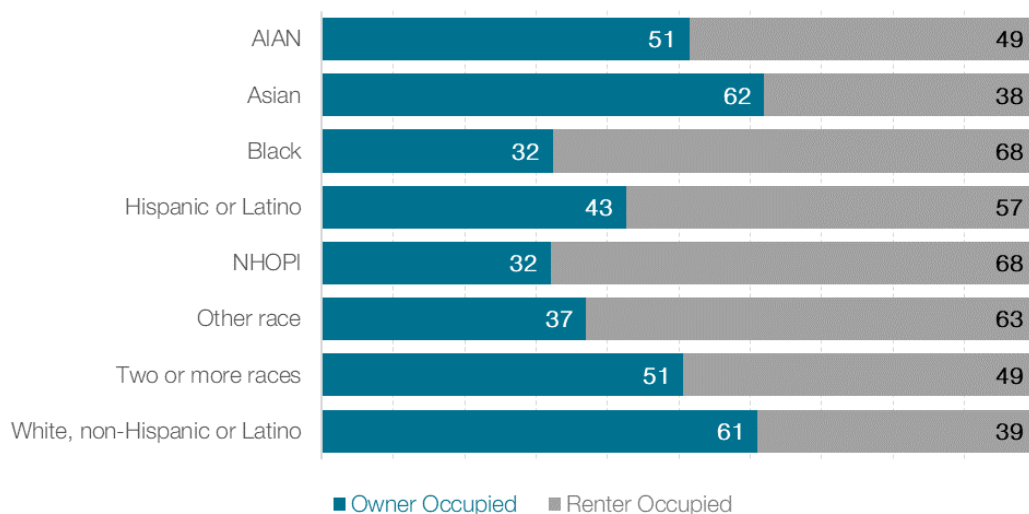


	2012-13	2013-24	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
YOY Change	8.3%	1.4%	11.1%	10.0%	16.4%	7.8%	8.7%	14.7%	16.7%	6.6%	0.9%

The likelihood of owning their place of residence varies widely across racial and ethnic groups in Tacoma. White and Asian households have the highest likelihood of owning their home at 61% and 62%, respectively. Comparatively, NHOPI and Black households are much more likely to be renters than homeowners, with ownership rates of 32% for both groups. Both of these groups have experienced a significant decline in likelihood of homeownership rates over the past decade. In 2011, 36% of Black households and 39% of NHOPI households were homeowners. An in-depth discussion of race-based disparities homeownership in Tacoma and factors contributing to this decline is available in [this report](#)<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> 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](https://www.cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/CBCFiles/Tacoma%20Housing%20Disparities%20Report_2021.pdf)

#### Exhibit 40 Tacoma Housing Tenure by Race and Ethnicity, 2021



Note: AIAN=American Indian and Alaska Native; NHOPI=Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. Hispanic or Latine is an ethnicity. The Hispanic or Latino category includes Hispanic and Latine people of all races. All other categories show non-Hispanic races.

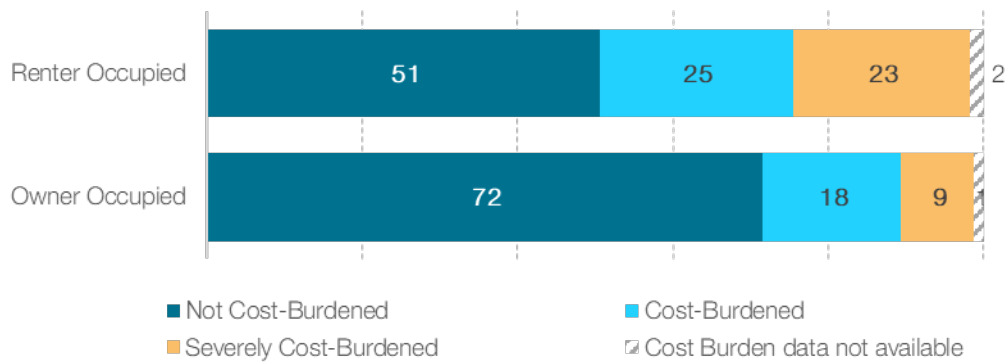
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates

The median gross rent in 2021 was \$1,146 for a 1-bedroom unit and \$1,750 for a 3-bedroom unit. These rents translate to about 20% and 30% of the overall median household income in Tacoma, but 27% and 42% of the median income for households headed by Black earners.

Households that pay 30% or more of their income toward housing are considered cost-burdened and may struggle to cover other essential household expenses, such as transportation or healthcare.

Renters in Tacoma are much more likely than homeowners to experience housing cost burden, which is defined as 30 percent or more of a household's income going towards housing costs. Forty-eight percent (48%) of renters experienced housing costs burden in 2020, and 27% of homeowners experienced housing cost burden. See Exhibit 41. The map in Exhibit 42 explores the geographic distribution of renter cost burden in Tacoma. These rates are particularly high (over 65%) in areas across the City, but are most concentrated in Central, South Tacoma, and the South End.

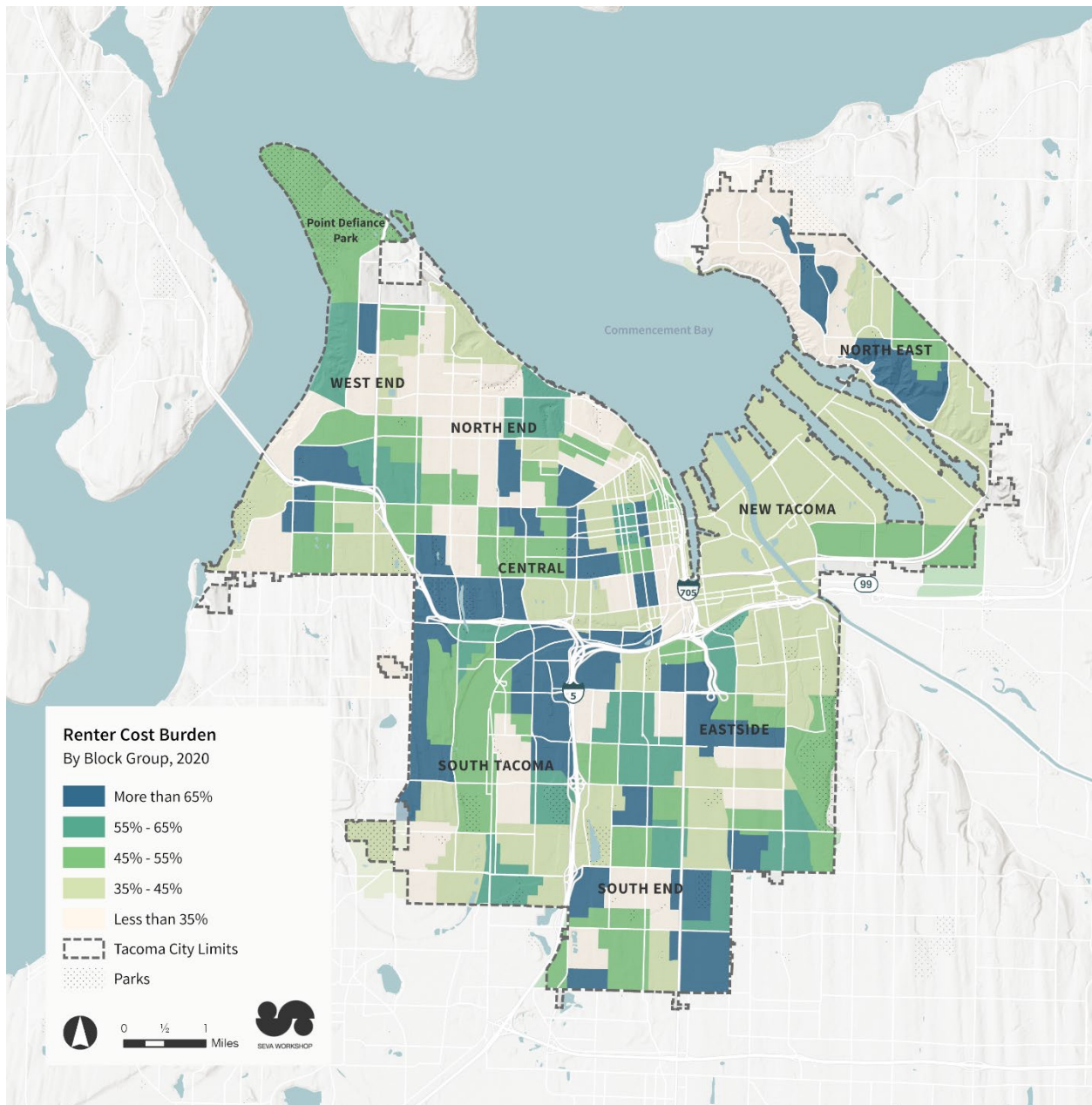
**Exhibit 41     Percent of Households Cost Burdened by Tenure, 2020**



Note: Cost-Burdened households spend between 30-50% of income toward housing. Severely cost-burdened households spend more than 50% of gross income for housing.  
Source: CHAS (Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy) dataset based on American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2016-2020.



## Exhibit 42     Distribution of Renter Cost Burdened-Households in Tacoma, as a % of Block Group Population, 2020



Source: CHAS (Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy) dataset based on American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2016-2020.

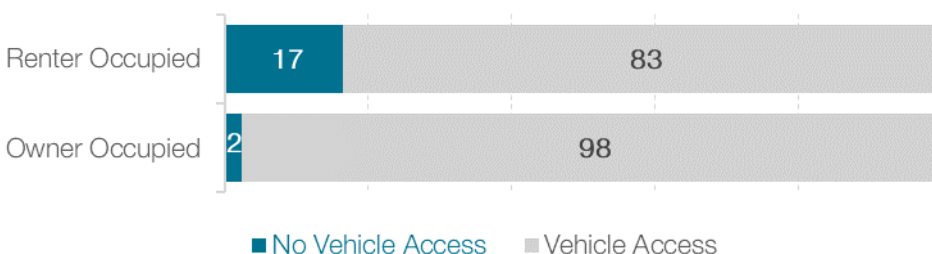
## 5.5 Vehicle Access

In 2021, about 7,545 households or 9% of households in Tacoma live without access to a personal vehicle. These households rely on other modes, such as public transportation, bicycle,

or pedestrian networks. For these households, the 15-minute walkshed (Exhibit 3) and strong multimodal transportation infrastructure (Exhibit 6) are paramount concerns. While Tacoma lacks complete streets and distribution of amenities for these households, they often bear an excessive time burden for accessing daily essentials. These households are primarily renting households as shown in Exhibit 43.

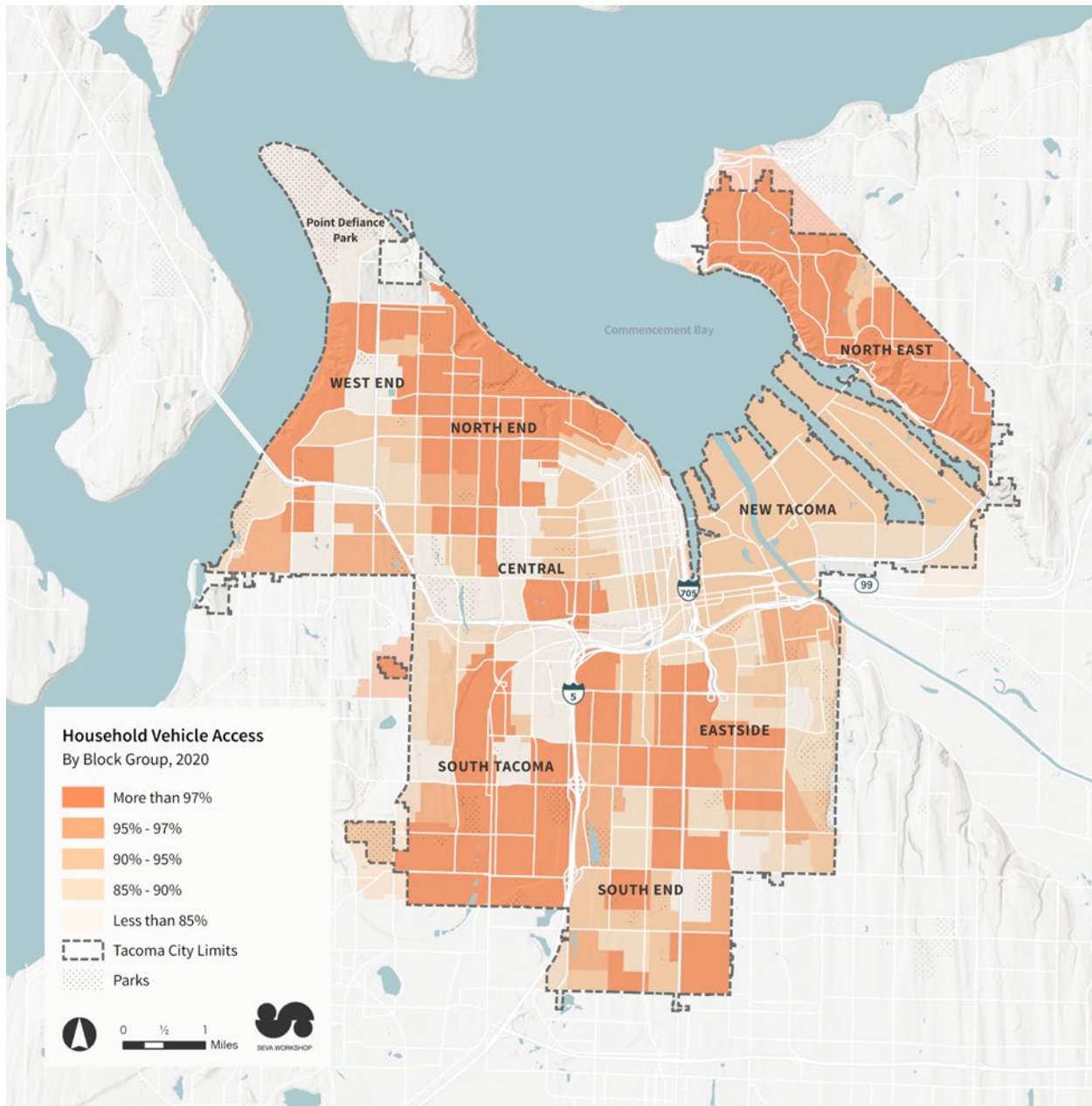
While there is some expected concentration of vehicle-free households in the walkable central neighborhoods of Tacoma, there are also low rates of vehicle access in the Eastside neighborhood council district and in the South End where transit is less frequent and pedestrian infrastructure is less developed. Households' vehicle access is mapped in Exhibit 44. Demonstrating safe access to schools, grocery stores, and other essential daily routes for non-drivers in these areas is important for promoting quality of life and achieving the City's vision.

#### Exhibit 43 Vehicle Access by Housing Tenure in Tacoma, 2021



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2021.

## Exhibit 44 Household Vehicle Access, as a % of Block Group Population in Tacoma, 2021



Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2021.

## 5.6 Homelessness

The Point-in-Time count is a one-day survey of people experiencing homelessness. It is a challenging survey to conduct requiring many volunteers over a large, geographically distributed

area and attempting to contact individuals who may not want to be visible to officials. Results are highly sensitive to external factors like the weather and availability of volunteers. For these reasons, it is well known to be an undercount of the actual prevalence of homelessness, though it is uncertain the degree to which it undercounts. For example, the 2023 Pierce County Point-in-Time Count physically recorded 2,148 unsheltered individuals but 6,500 individuals were known to be in contact with the homeless crisis response system in roughly the same period (and even more may be homeless or at risk of homelessness but not in contact with the system). While the measure has its flaws, it is an important way to track the prevalence of homelessness. Compared to 2019, the 2023 Point in Time Count identified 44.5% more individuals experiencing homelessness. Part of this increase may be due to new methodology that includes more people connected to services (but not unsheltered) in 2023, but at least part of this increase is likely attributable to increases in homelessness overall. While roughly one-third of respondents do not record a last known zip code, typically 25-30% give a Tacoma zip code as the last address.

Forty-one percent of those experiencing homelessness in the 2023 count identified as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color, disproportionate to Pierce County's overall population (Exhibit 20). The majority of households in the Point in Time count are households without children (93% in 2023). Seven percent were households with children and another 1% percent (9 households) represented unaccompanied youth and young adults. However, a youth-specific Point in Time Count conducted in October 2022 suggests that the number of unaccompanied youth and young adults (ages 13-24) experiencing homelessness is much higher, identifying 332 individuals.

Historically, the Point in Time count relies on definitions of homelessness set by Housing and Urban Development and has not included numerous individuals and families living in places unfit for long-term habitation (such as motels) or "doubled up" with other households to remain sheltered. The broader Mc-Kinney Vento definition used by the Department of Education does include these households (though limited to counting households with children connected to public schools). School districts and buildings can vary greatly in the resources available to identify and support homeless children. According to this definition, in the 2022-23 school year, 7.0% (2,030) of Tacoma Public School students are homeless. This rate ranges from 0.7% at Browns Point Elementary School<sup>10</sup> to Sherman Elementary School to a high of 27% in Oakland High School.

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<sup>10</sup> Excludes data from Remann Hall Juvenile Detention Center with 0.0% homeless enrollment

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