



Environmental
Services

TACOMA'S MOBILE TOILET KIT PILOT

an extension of the Purple Bag Project

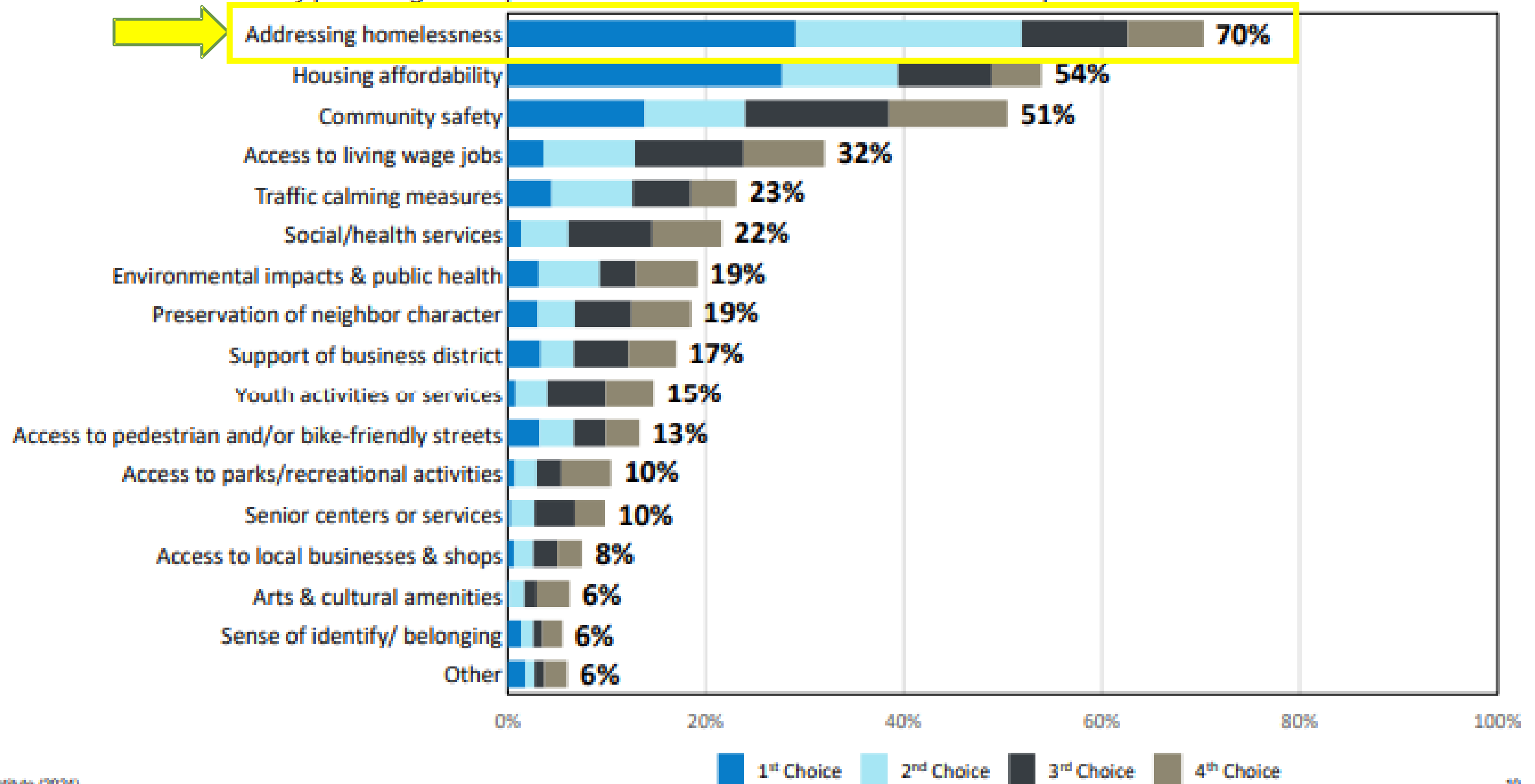
May 2025

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Q7. Issues In Your Neighborhood You Think Are MOST IMPORTANT For The City Of Tacoma And Partners To Address

by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top four choices



Encampments everywhere in Tacoma have a need of waste disposal services

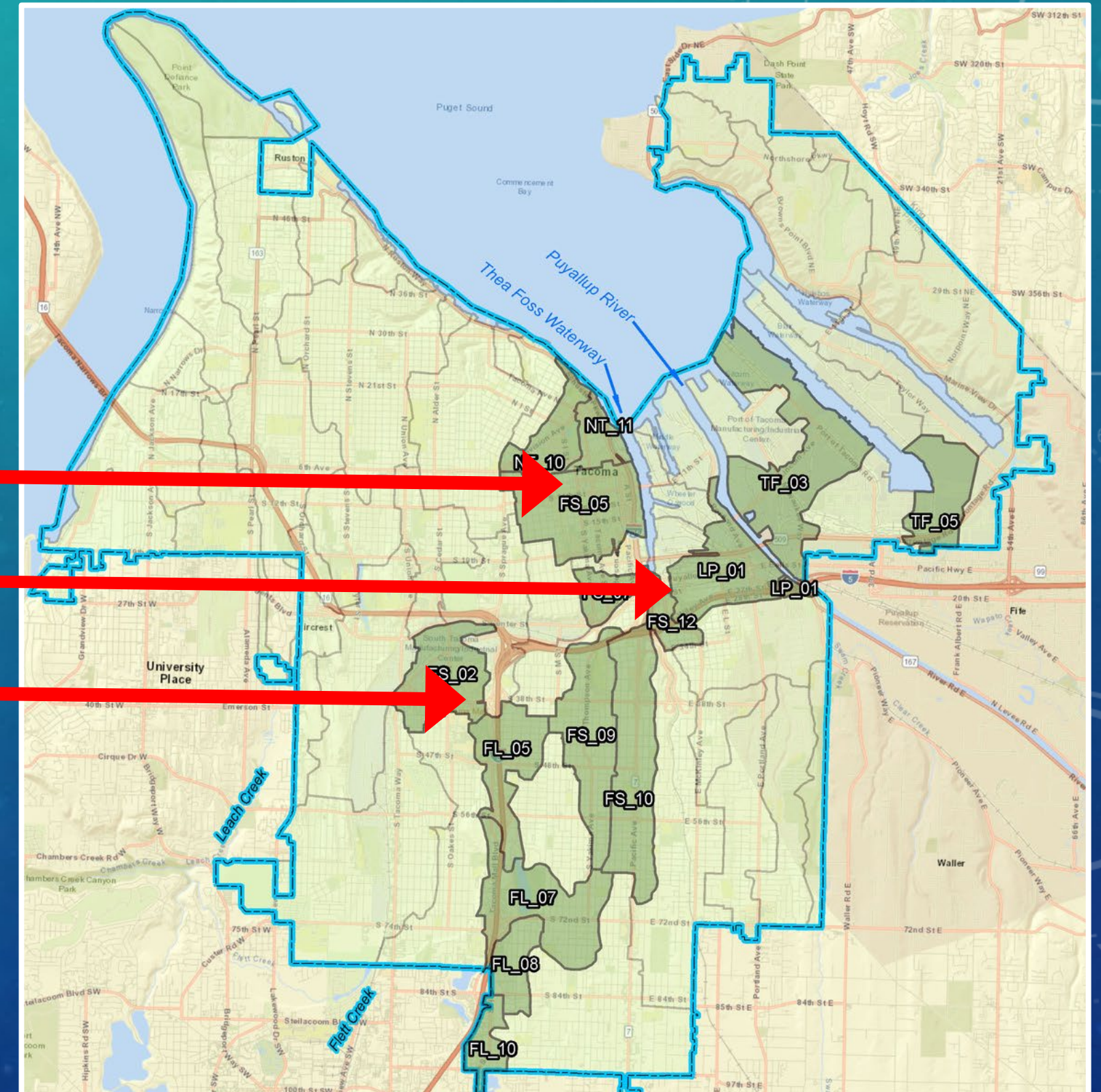
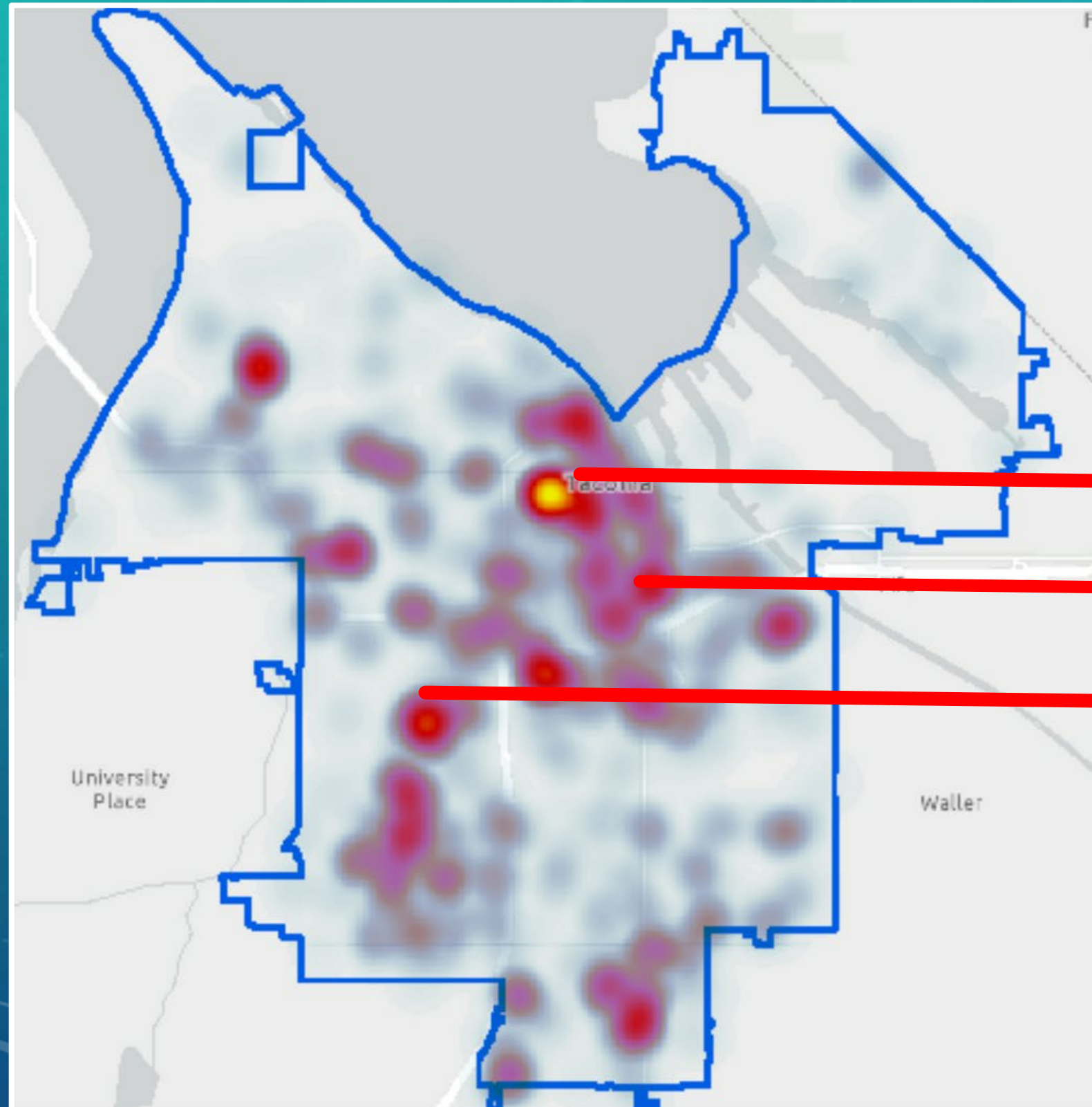
2,661

people counted in January 2025
during Pierce County's homeless
Point-in-Time Count



IMPACT Hot Spots

2024 Priority Watersheds for Water Quality improvement



generated from Q2 2024 311 report data

Municipal Stormwater Permit

Related elements in the Stormwater Management Program

- Public Participation
- Public Education and Outreach – Behavior Change
- Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
- Source Control – strategy to reduce stormwater impacts from lands owned or maintained by the Permittee



Equity Analysis Process

Steps to develop Mobile Toilet Kit Implementation Plan

Desired Results:

We want unhoused community members to use personal toilet kit supplies and purple bag pick-up service as a preferred way to handle personal waste at their camp site.

Focus: support individual health, clean neighborhoods, and a thriving Puget Sound.

Step by step. The Equity Analysis is made up of six steps from beginning to completion and includes mileposts for management review along the way. *Read Guidance section before beginning Step by Step worksheet.*

Step 1. Identify Desired Results.

To guide equity analysis, team communicates key community goals and results

Management review milepost 

Step 2. Collect and Analyze Data.

Gather performance indicators (quantitative and qualitative) around the service or program.

Step 3. Engage Stakeholders.

Determine benefits and burdens of marginalized voices through stakeholder analysis and outreach.

Step 4. Advance Equity.

Develop strategies to: reduce or mitigate disparities, unintended consequences, and unconscious bias or to enhance positive impacts.

Step 5. Develop Implementation Plan.

Improve the system through stakeholder communication and service or program adaptations.

Step 6. Accountability, Evaluation, and Communication.

Report results of impacts tracked through performance indicators and stakeholder feedback, compared to desired outcomes and previous data and stakeholder engagement.

Purple Bag Pilot Project (2020)



- Test out regular waste pickup service at homeless encampments
- Improve sanitation at encampments
- Reduce blight in neighborhoods and improve water quality

Purple color helped distinguish between people's personal belonging versus garbage that they wanted to throw away.

Implementation Steps



Prepped Tacoma First Complaint Call Center (311)



Partnered with Neighborhood and Community Services Dept to provide outreach through Homeless Engagement Alternatives Liaison (HEAL) Team



Designed and purchased purple bags



Worked with City COVID Emergency Management to get sanitation supplies



Utilized existing encampment cleanup contractor for weekly bag pickups

Purple Bag Program Update (2025)



- Purple Bag Program expanded city-wide to support waste pickup at homeless encampments
- Currently, the program distributes an average of 10,000 purple bags annually (~\$7,000)
- For purple bag pickup requests, community members call 311 or submit a request online

Mobile Toilet Kit Pilot (2024-2025)



- Build on success of purple bags
- Use established waste pickup service at homeless encampments
- Expand beyond litter/dumping to improve sanitation at encampments by also managing human waste
- Improve health and safety outcomes for unhoused community members

Seattle Man's Toilet Kit For The Homeless Brings Privacy, Opens Doors

AUGUST 3, 2019 · 8:55 AM ET

HEARD ON MORNING EDITION

By Gabriel Spitzer

FROM **knkx**

▶ 3-Minute Listen

+ PLAYLIST



Seattle tech worker Mark Lloyd navigates the city's homeless encampments, giving away toilet kits and connecting with people.

Gabriel Spitzer/KNKX

Mark Lloyd pulls up to a group of 10 tents near a freeway on-ramp, pops his trunk and pulls out his supplies: cat litter, a small military surplus tent, toilet paper, sanitizer, and a 5-gallon plastic bucket, complete with toilet seat.

This is the rudimentary toilet setup that Lloyd has been assembling and delivering to homeless encampments for about three years now. He guesses he has given away between 75 and 100

The Inspiration and Initial Model

- “Without [the kit], we're having to squat in the bushes [with hardly any] privacy whatsoever... And I know I've had way less [urinary tract infections] and stuff like that because of it. It makes it a lot better for us.”
- <https://www.npr.org/2019/08/03/746581586/seattle-mans-toilet-kit-for-the-homeless-brings-privacy-opens-doors>

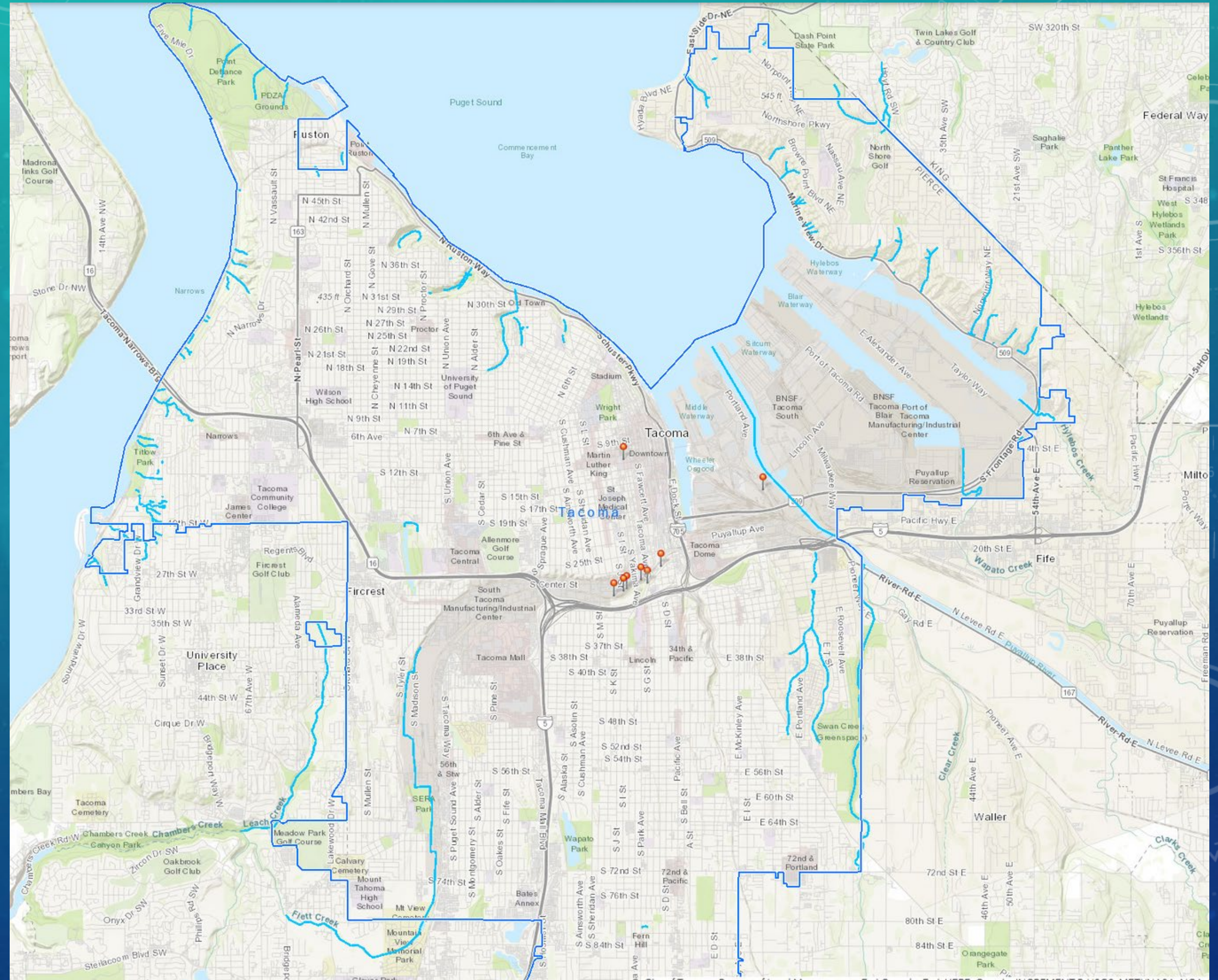
Kit Elements

Supply List: 5-gallon bucket and lid, kitty litter, TP, toilet wipes, hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, personal hygiene products, bag liners, zip ties, privacy tent



Pilot #1 Locations

July-Sept 2024
(10 kits)



Pre-Pilot RESPONSES

How often are you able to access public restrooms in a typical week?

(Never, Not often, Sometimes, Often, Always)

Name	Response
Participant #1	A few times a week at Nativity House
Participant #2	Never
Participant #3	Never
Participant #4	Never
Participant #5	"a couple times a day at the mission. They let me in because I am disabled and in a <u>wheel chair</u> ."
Participant #6	never
Participant #7	never
Participant #8	Rarely, maybe once or twice a week
Participant #9	Rarely, <u>once</u> or twice a week

- 5 out of 10 unhoused community members are not able to access a public restroom in a typical week.
- For most others, it is a rare occurrence or due to exceptions that are not applicable to other individuals.

Pilot Study Results

- Fifty bags of human waste were collected in total by the contractor.
- Average recommended bag pick-up time by participants is 3x a week.
- More frequent restocks recommended.
- From the initial ten kits:
 - Only two kits still in use at the end of the pilot.
 - One kit was lost due to the individual getting housing. (YAY!)
 - One kit was lost due to the individual moving into a temporary shelter.
 - One kit was never used or was hardly used.
 - Remaining kits were not able to be located or were lost due to encampment removals.

Toilet Kit Bag Collection Count

Week 1: 10 bags

Week 2: 9 bags

Week 3: 9 bags

Week 4: 7 bags

Week 5: 6 bags

Week 6: 5 bags

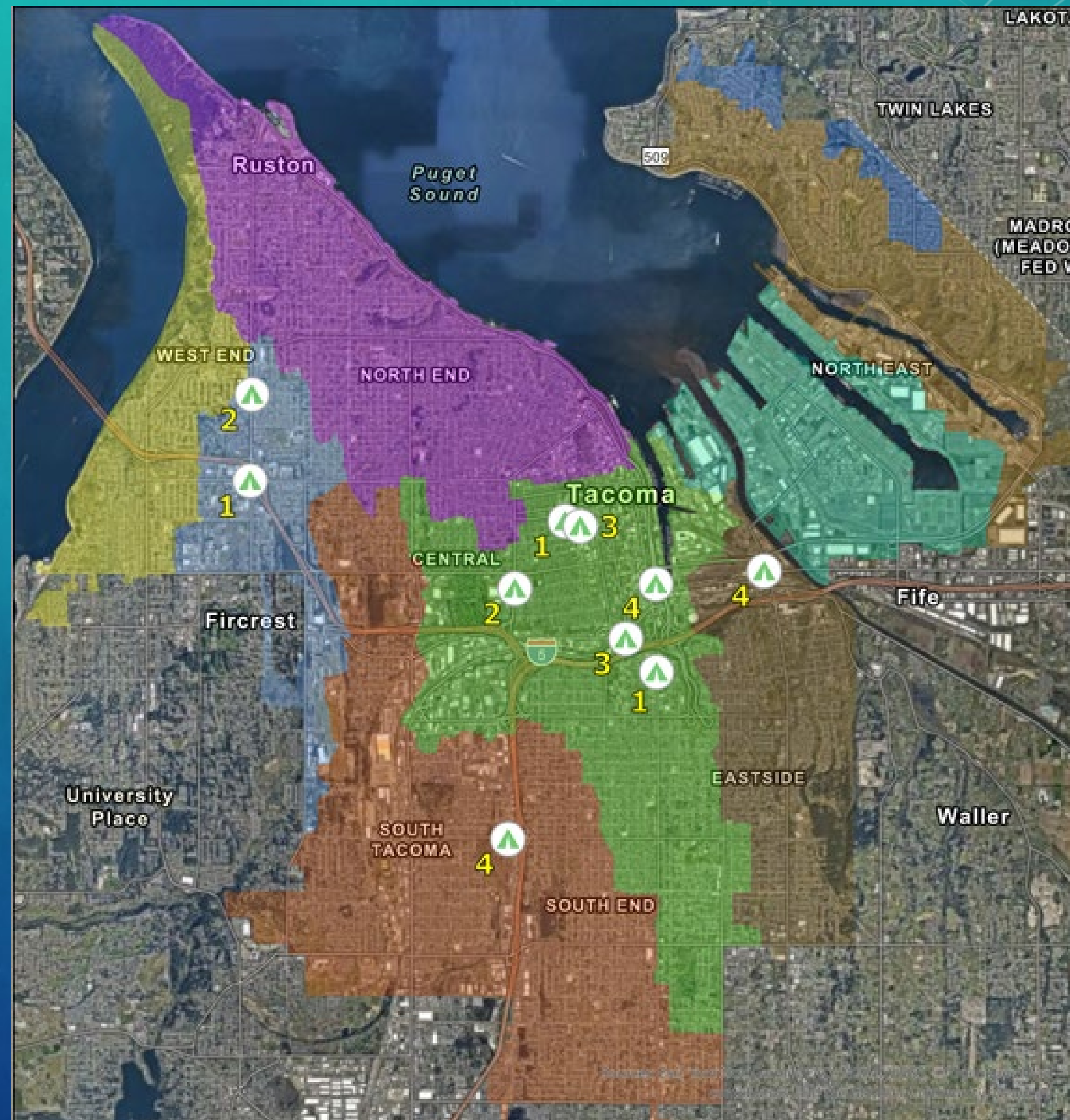
Week 7: 2 bags

Week 8: 2 bags

Total: 50 bags

Pilot #2 Locations

February-April
2025 (25 kits)



Pilot #2– How it went...

Confirmed with the contractor that they could accommodate the expansion of the program.

Supplies delivered to off-site storage facility. Assembled and distributed kits to Homeless Outreach Team members in February.

Homeless Outreach Team distributed 25 mobile toilet kits, regularly checked-in with participants, and supplied restocks.

Approximately 10 bags of waste picked up by the contractor per week February-April.

As before, interviewed participants with survey questions about 8 weeks in.

Even though we reminded people the kits are mobile, kits were still tossed out during encampment removals.

Supply storage



The cost of Scaling up

ITEM	UNIT COST	# /PILOT PERIOD	SUBTOTAL
5-gal bucket seat & lid	\$12.99	50	\$649.50
5-gal bucket (6 pk)	\$34.99	9	\$314.91
Privacy Tent	\$22.79	25	\$569.75
Toilet paper (12 double rolls)	\$6.49	25	\$162.25
Toilet wipes (12 pkg)	\$14.83	300	\$4,449.00
Kitty litter (1 pkg)	\$13.79	300	\$4,137.00
Personal hygiene products (48 pk)	\$4.19	15	\$62.85
Ziplock Gallon Bags (120 ct)	\$9.17	2	\$18.34
Hand Sanitizer (6 pk)	\$14.08	10	\$140.80
Zip Ties (1000 pk)	\$15.29	1	\$15.29
Tarps (8x10)	\$13.97	25	\$349.25
Clorox Sanitizer Wipes (3 pk)	\$11.62	12	\$139.44
Total Supply Cost	-	-	\$11,008.38
Total Supply Cost W/ Tax	-	-	\$12,115.50

Post-Pilot Survey

Based on social marketing campaign development strategy

1. BARRIERS

- If the mobile toilet kit didn't work well for you, what are some of the reasons you might not use it in the future? (For example, how were the supplies of the kit, the disposal service, did the compactness of the kit make a difference, did the weight of the kit make a difference, design etc.) What other reasons?
- How often are you able to access public restrooms in a typical week?
(Never, Not often, Sometimes, Often, Always)
- How often are you using the toilet kit?
(Never, Not often, Sometimes, Often, Always)

2. BENEFITS

- What did you like about toilet kit?
- What did you like about the disposal service?
- Did you get enough supplies to last you between restocks? If not, how many more supplies in your kit would you have needed?
- Was the quality of the privacy tent adequate for your needs?
- Was the quality of the tarp adequate for your needs?
- How did the privacy tent hold up in the Pacific Northwest weather over the course of the pilot study? Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

3. MOTIVATORS

- What are your thoughts on the impact of using the mobile toilet kits to keep downstream waterways clean?
- Have you noticed any personal safety or health benefits from using the mobile toilet kits?
- Would you use the toilet kit without a privacy tent?
- What/ if anything should be added to the kits next time to make them work better for you? Kits include: 1 privacy tent, 1 camp toilet, 1 toilet seat with lid, 8? toilet paper rolls, 8? toilet paper wipes, kitty litter, hand sanitizer, and sanitizer wipes
- Were you able to put the purple bag out for pick up?
- Within a week, how often did you put the purple bag out for pick up? If not, why?

4. INFLUENTIAL OTHERS

Who would you suggest we use to share information about the mobile toilet kit program? People in your community? HEAL team? Health department? Churches? Food pantry's? Resource providers? (multiple choice)

Post-Pilot Responses

BARRIERS

- Running out of supplies (zip ties, purple bags)
- Bright sun can make tent transparent
- Didn't use collapsibility – maybe too short

BENEFITS

- Toilet kit and disposal service worked well
- Safety of self and belongings
- Don't have to dig a hole
- Personal hygiene

MOTIVATORS

- Cleaner encampment areas
- Don't need to walk far from camp to use a restroom
- Helps keep nearby waterways clean

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Recommended to give to churches and other community groups
- Existing participants sharing the information with peers

Post-Pilot Interviews were completed with 7 participants

Next Steps: Pursuing new Partnerships

Neighborhood and Community Services HEAL team members weren't able to distribute all of the kits, also challenged to keep up with resupply needs.

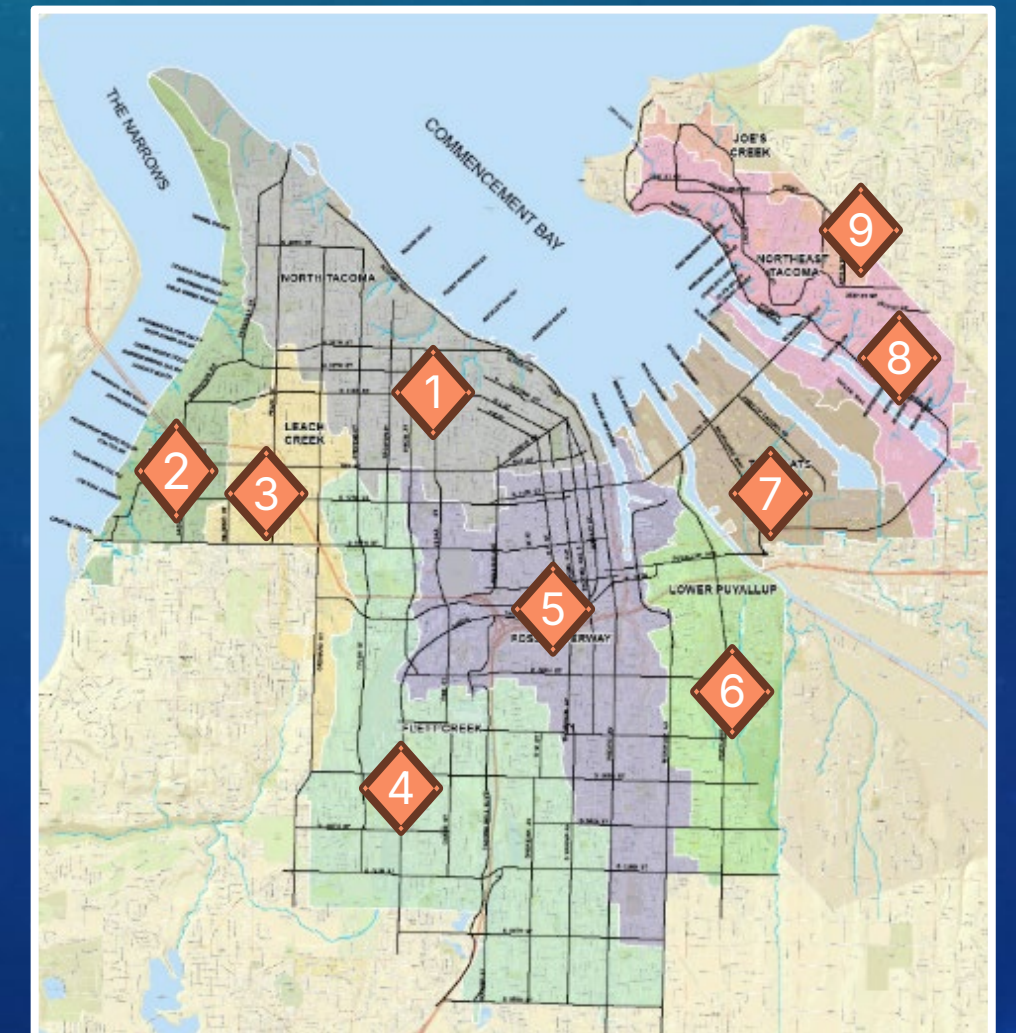
Now we are looking at additional partners to help distribute kits:

- St Vincent de Paul (South Tacoma)
- Tacoma Rescue Mission (Downtown Tacoma)

SUPPLY SIGN-OUT

**to track number of individuals using kit supplies & location:*

- ✓ Name
- ✓ Watershed # (or HEAL zone)
- ✓ Full kit or just restock



Next Steps: Proposed Implementation Plan

Continue program for now. Helping to address additional needs with temporary shelters closing in June 2025 (~300 beds).

Will be reviewing the plan with new Department Director and new Council Members to confirm future direction.

Mobile Toilet Kits and Purple Bags Implementation Tasks	Frequency	Staffing / Resources Needed
Order supplies for storage at distribution sites (up to 100 kits/year)	Quarterly	Staff Time – 3 days per quarter Cost \$50,000/yr
Assemble and deliver kits for partner distribution	Quarterly	Staff Time – 3 days per quarter
Distribute kits through Homeless Service Partner Sites and Outreach Teams: St. Vincent De Paul and Tacoma Rescue Mission	Ongoing	Staff Time – 3 days per quarter Partners Organizations
Purple bag pick-up and disposal service – Encampment Cleanup Contractor	Ongoing	Cleanup Contractor – covered under existing contract
Tracking purple bag and toilet kit use: 1) Track purple bag order numbers 2) Assemble mobile kit sign-out sheet data	Annually	Staff Time – 1 week per year

Quotes from participants

Have you noticed any personal safety or health benefits from using the mobile toilet kits?

"My brother had to go to the hospital from constipation – he's better now, especially with the kit, no issues."

What information is important to share about this program?

"Yeah, if you want to allow people a way to clean themselves instead of living gross. This helps a lot. There are no public facilities within 5 miles. It's a public necessity like water fountains!"



What did you like about the disposal service?

"It worked well! We cleaned up a lot of garbage with the purple bags too!"

What did you like about the toilet kit?

"The toilet seat actually feels like a [standard] toilet seat, it feels normal."



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QUESTIONS?

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