Using the Equity Index FAQs

Which layers are you supposed to use in your analysis? The whole index, one of the 5 categories, or one of the 29 indicators?

When using the equity index in your analysis, you should always start with the overall index. The strength of the data in supporting your analysis is based on the all 29 indicators role determining opportunity.

Some programs may benefit from looking at the category layers, for example if a program is specifically looking at increasing livable wage jobs, it can be helpful to see how the economy index layer opportunity ratings are distributed. This additional layer of consideration could help to focus a program after taking the whole map into consideration to focus in.

What if the data I gathered is already represented in the equity index? For example, tree canopy is already utilized in the index, but you want to look at where to plant trees.

When considering how the equity index impacts your analysis it is important to consider how the many indicators come together to create patterns of higher and lower opportunity, and how no one indicator can shift the map without change in the others. In cases like this your team can use an overlay area of tree canopy and the equity index, and see where trees have been planted, compared to areas that are still considered low opportunity. Targeting low opportunity areas is not the only factor in directing resources, you also have to consider where there are already trees planted or good tree coverage. It is only one piece of the story you are telling when prioritizing new tree plantings.

What if I am interested in adding indicators to the index? How should I approach advocating for new indicators versus creating a layer on top of the index?

If the project/group proves that the proposed indicator fits the metrics of opportunity created by the Kirwan Institute, it should be added and considered for the next update. If not, an overlay of your data will suffice. Additional data on the people who live in the community, along with demographic factors such as race and age can be laid over the opportunity map to demonstrate who in the community has access to greater or lesser opportunity. Overlays can also show where a community’s assets, such as street lighting, can be leveraged to improve opportunity, and policy analysis can help identify how existing or proposed policies impact the opportunity within that area.

We as a City talk about leading with race in our anti-racist transformation work. How is this incorporated into the equity index?

The equity index currently has a layer for communities of color that you can access. This allows you to see census data about area demographics and see where the greatest concentrations of persons of color in the Tacoma and surrounding areas. In comparing high and low opportunity areas of the city, there is often correlation to the higher concentrations of communities of color. Our Tacoma team is currently developing breakouts so you can see the percentage and number of residents of color per opportunity rank by race. This will allow quick visualization of what races make up low and high opportunity zones, and allow us to better focus race in the analysis of our programs and services.
Mapping Polygons and Geographic Limitations

When mapping data to our City limits, there are sometimes census block groups that are cut short, and the full picture is missed. For example in the Day Island area or Swan Creek, there are higher outcomes in the overall census block group, but only a small portion of that group falls within the city boundary. With the Day Island example, this leads to high opportunity slivers showing in the city where there are primarily lower quality housing and lower outcomes.