

City of Tacoma, Washington

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

Public Engagement Plan | February 2024

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1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The City of Tacoma is updating its Comprehensive Plan (to 2050) and concurrently will refresh its Strategic Plan (to 2035) and develop a Community Safety Action Strategy. All three plans require community engagement to inform policies and strategies and, locally, it is a long-standing priority of the City of Tacoma to invest in engagement in service of equity and empowerment in all policies. For example, RCW 36.70A.140 of the Growth Management Act requires local jurisdictions to provide for “early and continuous public participation.” However, beyond the regulatory public comment and hearing, much is up to local jurisdiction to decide how much to invest in ensuring *equitable* and *inclusive* public participation.

The Tacoma community has been extensively engaged in recent years for many intersecting initiatives. Several partner agencies are planning community engagement on a similar timeline. However, there are likely to be remaining gaps. This community engagement strategy is intended to maximize leverage of existing data and existing engagement efforts to minimize respondent burden and confusion. Additional resources or “new engagement” should be focused on thematic gaps and/or gaps by community group. This plan also anticipates leveraging external partner engagement opportunities to inform all three plans.

2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT GOALS AND VALUES

The following goals and values shaped the public engagement plan:

- Focus on populations impacted most by public investment/disinvestment
- Use a targeted universalism approach in communications and outreach
- Build capacity among communities and in neighborhoods that have historically been marginalized in public processes.
- Build trust between the government of Tacoma and communities and neighborhoods that have historically been marginalized in public processes.
 - Transparently share data and recommendations.
 - Demonstrate how community feedback was used—or why it was not used—when creating the Plan.
 - Schedule and plan engagement activities to make efficient use of community members’ trust and time.
- Develop findings that are meaningful for equitable policy development in the Comprehensive Plan
 - Develop findings to inform the 2035 Strategic Plan
 - Develop findings to inform the Community Safety Action Strategy
- Meaningfully resource community ambassadors and community partners to engage their constituents and demonstrate accountability to their input.
 - Use clear, open, and consistent communication regarding the Neighborhood Planning Program to ensure the engagement process, decisions made, and protocols are understood by all stakeholders.
 - Sustain stakeholder engagement throughout the NPP plan development and implementation.
- Make materials more accessible to a diverse audience, including those with disabilities and speakers of other languages.
 - Translate materials into the five most commonly spoken languages.
 - Use graphics and photos in project materials.
 - Make in-person and online meetings more ADA accessible.

3 PROJECT CONTEXT

3.1 Stakeholder Identification

The Comprehensive Plan has many stakeholders, including neighboring governments, communities within Tacoma, and agencies with planning efforts that also impact Tacoma. We will be conducting interviews, coordinating, and engaging with these stakeholders throughout the process in addition to the broader community engagement described in this plan. Within the City of Tacoma alone there are several concurrent planning efforts to coordinate as shown in the following graphic.

Figure 1 2023-2025 Tacoma Planning Efforts Centered on Community Feedback



- **Planning Commission.** The Tacoma Planning Commission is a nine member citizen’s advisory body responsible for advising the City Council on all land use matters. They are responsible for making a recommendation on the draft plan to Council. The Commission’s meetings are open to the public and advertised on the City’s [website](#).
- **City Council.** The Tacoma City Council is comprised of nine elected officials serving four year terms, including the mayor. It is the primary governing body of Tacoma with law-

making, budgeting, and decision-making power. City Council conducts public hearings and accept comments prior to any decision, including plan adoption. Information about the study session for the plan and how to comment will be available on the City's [website](#).

- **Neighborhood and Business Groups.** The project team will meet with Neighborhood Councils, Business Districts, and other neighborhood and business groups over the course of the project to discuss issues that most affect their constituents.
- **Adjacent Jurisdictions.** The project team will coordinate planning with adjacent jurisdictions including the Cities and Towns of Fife, University Place, Ruston, Lakewood, Parkland, as needed.
- **Committees, Boards and Commissions.** The City of Tacoma utilizes a diverse set of citizen committees, boards (CBCs), and commissions to advise on topics ranging from land use issues to transportation, landmarks, the arts, parking, human rights and human services, among many others. These CBCs are comprised of volunteers who commit their time and expertise to serving the City and the residents of Tacoma.
- **Partner Agencies.** The City of Tacoma is not the sole provider of services within the City of Tacoma. We work collaboratively with multiple agencies to ensure that plans, investments and actions are aligned and that all of the needs of our citizens are met. City Departments and partner agencies include entities such as the Mayor's Office, Office of Strategy, Office of Equity, Metro Parks Tacoma, Pierce Transit, Pierce County, Pierce Transit, Sounf Transit, the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, and the Port of Tacoma.

3.2 Tribal Consultation

The Puyallup Tribe of Indians is a sovereign nation, neighboring jurisdiction, and federally recognized Indian tribe whose ceded lands include the City of Tacoma. The Puyallup Tribe completed their first Comprehensive Plan in 2022. The City of Tacoma will conduct a Tribal Consultation as part of this process, including early formal notice of the plan and ongoing involvement to align Comprehensive Plans in accordance with SHB 1717.

3.3 Past Public Feedback

Seva Workshop sourced existing engagement reports from the City of Tacoma, relevant partners, and internet research. Over fifty documents were coded in Max QDA to conduct a gap analysis to determine which planning themes and which communities have not been addressed in recent years. Each document was reviewed and coded for the topics related to Comprehensive Plan Chapters, neighborhoods within Tacoma, group demographics and identities, engagement methods used, and Tacoma 2035 Goal Areas.

See **Recent Engagement Gap Analysis** for more details about past public feedback.

Takeaways From Gap Analysis

- **In recent years, the City of Tacoma and partners have not conducted intentional community engagement for the following Comprehensive Plan topics:**
 - historic preservation
 - economic development
 - downtown

- **Each report treated disaggregation of groups differently and many did not provide disaggregated results. A comprehensive and comparable analysis across documents is therefore limited. However, the following gaps by neighborhoods and group identities were found through analysis or highlighted in reports. These gaps were further validated through conversations with engagement practitioners:**
 - The 8 percent of the Tacoma population that speaks a language other than English at home and speaks English less than “very well.” This includes Pacific Islander languages (Chukcese), Asian languages (Vietnamese, Korean, Khmer, Tagalog, Mandarin Chinese), Russian and Ukranian (in West End), and Spanish (Eastside and throughout Tacoma).
 - Relative to their share of the population, Hispanic/Latine residents and Asian residents are consistently the least connected to engagement efforts. Black residents – outside of Hilltop – also have been less likely engaged in recent efforts.
 - Renting households are also typically underrepresented (when data is available disaggregated).
 - There has not been any explicit effort to collect data from seniors and LGBTQIA+ populations though data shows seniors are one of the fastest growing populations in Tacoma in recent years. LGBTQIA+ population is infrequently disaggregated in engagement and has not been a focus of recent engagement reviewed.
 - South Tacoma and South End residents (especially residents in the Tacoma Mall area) and Central Tacoma (outside of Hilltop) have been identified by staff as focus groups for engagement.
 - Disabled populations were well engaged during Vision Zero outreach but continue to be a priority for Comprehensive Plan engagement.

3.4 Community Demographics

See **Tacoma Community Profile** for more details

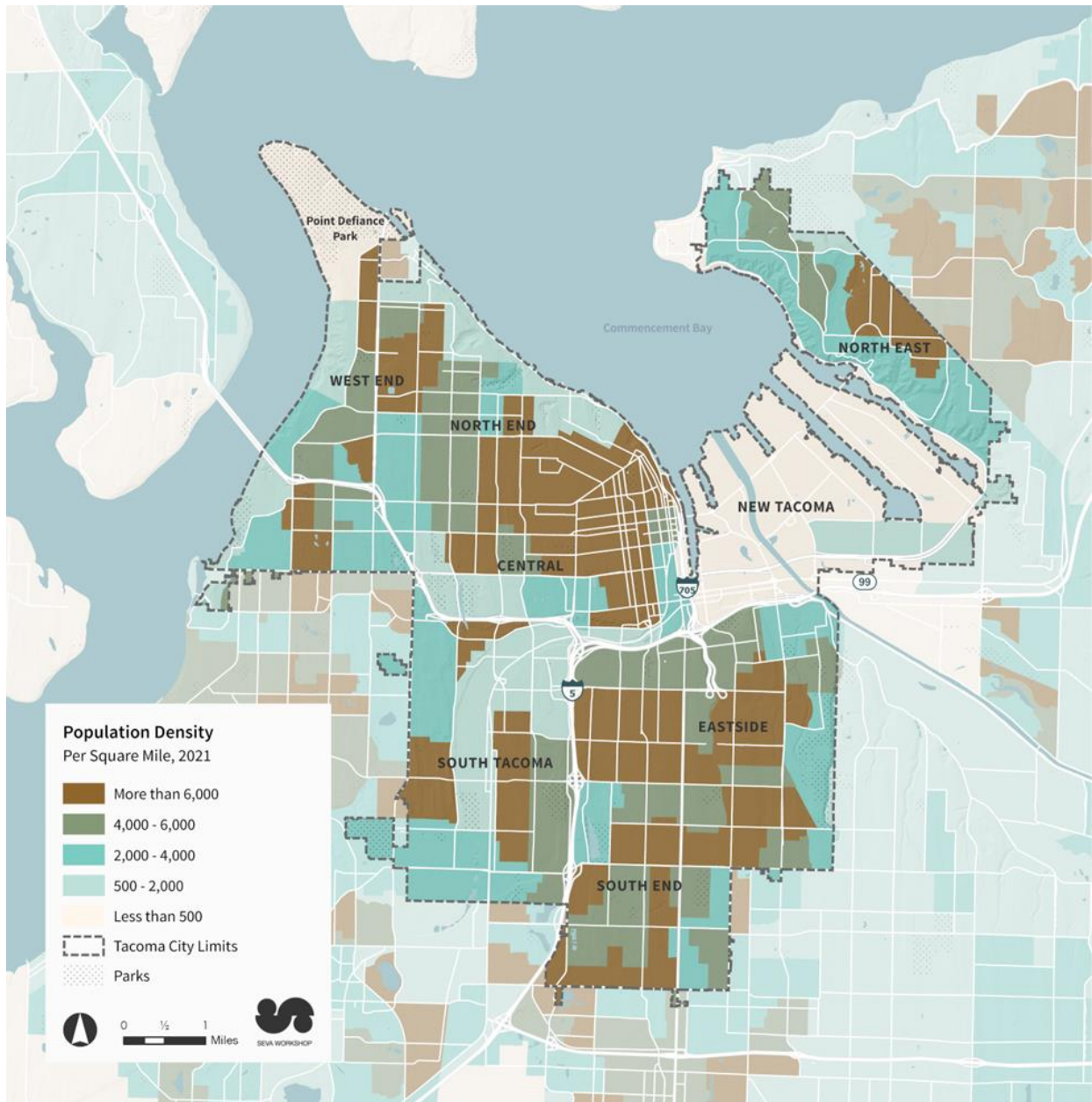
Takeaways from Community Profile

In the most recent decade Tacoma has experienced demographic shifts. While the City has been growing, outlying suburban areas have been growing more rapidly. 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 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.

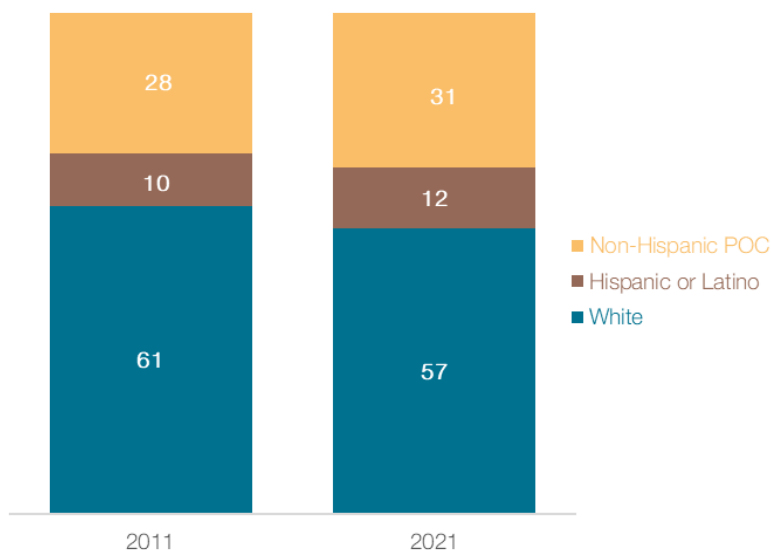
Exhibit 2 Tacoma Population Density, 2021



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

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 3 Race and Ethnicity in Tacoma, White and People of Color 2011 & 2021



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

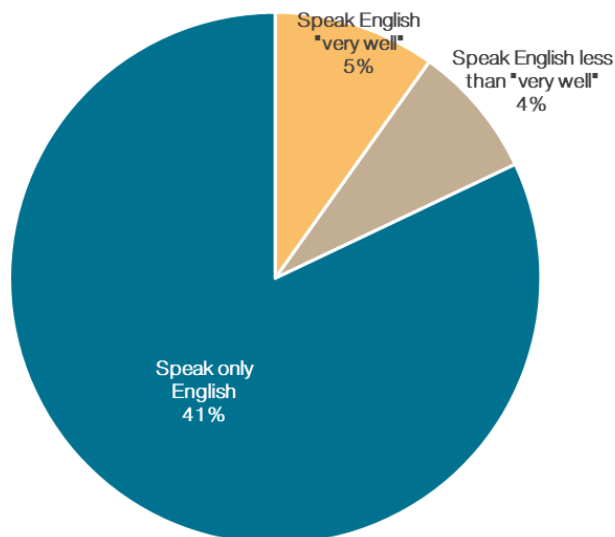
With significant proportions of Hispanic or Latino, Black, and Asian residents, as well as those of two or more races, Tacoma is home to a diverse population of people of color and has been so for the last decade. Relative to their share of the 2011 population, those with a multiracial identity (6% to 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.

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 addition 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 4 Language Spoken at Home among Population aged 5 and older, 2021



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

Exhibit 5 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
Total Population, 5 years and older				203,842

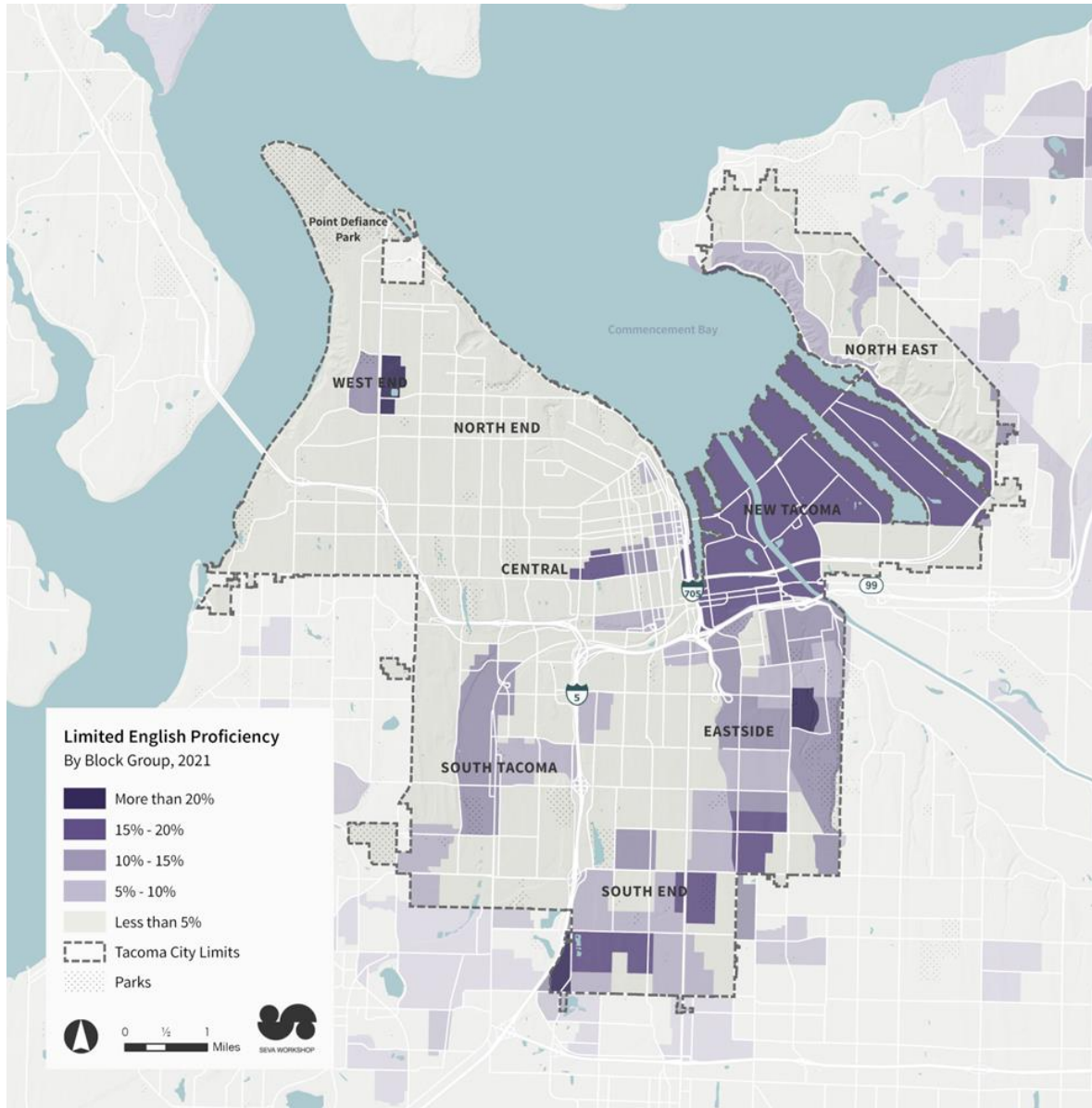
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017-2021).

The map in Exhibit 5 captures the geographic distribution of those who speak English less than “very well.” **The residential communities located in the Eastside and South End neighborhoods 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 Northeast.

Exhibit 6 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 ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE & DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Community Engagement

Phase 1: Priority Setting (First Half 2024)

Objectives:

- Listen deeply to focus community priorities on comprehensive plan topics not already addressed in recent engagement.
- Leverage strategic plan survey for a few broad points of input.
- Broadly socialize the planning effort at existing community events and online.

Phase 2: Community Check in (Summer 2024)

Objectives:

- Connect with communities to update on policy development progress and initial policy ideas based on their priorities.
- Broadly socialize the planning effort at existing community events.

Phase 3: Draft Plan (First Half 2025)

Objective:

- Gather broad input on draft policies.

Decision Making Process

Community engagement is a crucial input to the development of the draft plan. Once a draft plan has responded to community voice, the formal decision-making and adoption process is dictated by the Growth Management Act and local ordinance and includes additional opportunities for comment.

- **Planning Commission.** The Commission will make a formal recommendation to the City Council. All Commission meetings are open to the public and advertised on the City's [website](#).
- **City Council.** Final decisions regarding outcomes of the planning process will be made by the Tacoma City Council based on recommendations from staff, Project Advisory Committees, Planning Commission and public input. The City Council will review and discuss any recommended revisions at a study session. The study session meetings are open to the public. In addition, the full Council will hold at least one public hearing to receive further public comment before adopting any revisions to SMP policies and regulations. Public testimony will also be accepted at first and second reading of adopting ordinances.

- **Plan Certification.** The Puget Sound Regional Council will review and certify the plan to ensure alignment with Multicounty planning policies. Plan certification is necessary to ensure ongoing eligibility for regional transportation funds.

5 ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

5.1 Translation

The City of Tacoma will facilitate materials translation into top languages throughout the listed tools. Priority languages are Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Khmer, Tagalog, and Mandarin Chinese.

5.2 Street Team and Artists

The City of Tacoma has an existing language and cultural ambassador program with strengths in engaging the Slavic, Korean, Vietnamese, and Spanish language speaking communities. This team has been highly successful in making public engagement more relevant and inclusive, including with the recent and ongoing Participatory Budgeting work.

For the Comprehensive Plan, we plan to expand the ambassador concept to include team members with strengths in engaging the Black community. This “street team” will be a core resource in the execution of many of the following engagement tools to co-create materials so that they are culturally and linguistically relevant and to identify and implement engagement strategies that will work with focus communities. The street team role is compensated at \$75/hour and street team members are a primary audience for capacity building.

An art-forward approach is also woven throughout the engagement tools. We plan to work with artists in the development and design of communication materials and engagement activities.

5.3 Community Capacity Building

The City of Tacoma will host Comprehensive Planning informational workshops for street team ambassadors, CBO partners and other interested parties. A deeper understanding of the planning process, the requirements, and the opportunities to influence policy will not only benefit this planning process, but also support future engagement.

5.4 Summary of Engagement and Communication Tools by Phase

Phase 1 Confirming Vision Tools

The table below summarizes the engagement tools and communication tools that will be used in phase 1. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are subject to budget availability. The objective of Phase 1 is to broadly socialize the planning effort and attend to gaps in existing engagement to be able to inform initial policy development.

	Description and Purpose (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, defer)	Timeline/ Frequency
Engagement		
Community survey	Consult The Office of Strategy conducts a biannual community survey to assess performance against the strategic plan. We will leverage this opportunity to add a high level comprehensive plan vision question to the survey.	April 2024
Interviews	Consult Targeted interviews (1-3 people) with community leaders and groups. Interviewees may be compensated if they are participating outside of a paid role.	March to June 2024
Road show briefing sessions	Inform and Consult Staff to present planning topics and hold listening sessions at existing group meetings such as neighborhood councils and City boards and commissions (CBCs) in focus areas.	March to June 2024
Pop-up/tabling at existing community and neighborhood events with brief discussion*	Inform and (light) Consult Attending community events to promote the planning efforts and specific engagement opportunities. Light input is also possible. The Street Team will lead the selection of pop-up opportunities.	March to April 2024 (5 to 8 events)
Tailored listening sessions*	Consult, Involve, Collaborate Tailored listening sessions involve recruiting participants or asking to adapt an existing meeting or venue that is not typically used for planning and policy discussions (in contrast to Road Show listening sessions). The Street Team will lead the development of listening session opportunities.	May to June 2024
Policy workshops: city hosted events and workshops*	Consult, Involve, Collaborate Custom events designed in partnership with community groups such as CBOs and schools to create in-depth community input. City to design and invite community. Art forward, include language access, family friendly, trauma informed- one per part of town (8 total) and potentially one virtual.	May to June 2024 (8 workshops)

	Description and Purpose (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, defer)	Timeline/ Frequency
Engagement		
	These events may include interactive stations, such as a design your neighborhood game.	
Communications		
Project Website	Inform Introduce the project and provide background information	Ongoing (1x/week updates)
Outreach email to City of Tacoma staff	Inform Email all City of Tacoma staff who have public engagement responsibilities, or who are leading aligned planning efforts, to summarize the One Tacoma engagement plan, timing, and available materials for distribution	February 2024
Listserv (project e-news via GovDelivery)	Inform Share project information and opportunities for public input via a monthly project e-newsletter.	Ongoing (1x/month at end of month)
Social Pinpoint and other online activities	Inform and Consult Landing Page with project information, link to engagement events calendar, Community Survey, and Ideas Wall with prompting questions.	March 15 launch Ongoing (1x/2 weeks updates)
Targeted Mailing	Inform Project “kick-off” mailing will be sent to a ZIP-code segmented target list based on audience priority groups with website and call to action. Translated in priority languages.	March 2024
Postering Campaign	Inform Create a project information poster that includes a call to action, link to website, QR code, and contact email. Translated in priority languages. Street team will support distribution.	March 2024
Grassroots event promotion	Inform Use direct email and online event calendar listings to promote upcoming events via community partners and media outlets.	End of February and end of March
Social media	Inform Share project information via the City of Tacoma Facebook, X/Twitter, and Instagram accounts.	Ongoing (1x/week starting March 2024)

Phase 2 Feedback Loop Tools

The objective of Phase 2 is primarily to inform the community of the Comprehensive Planning process, leveraging summer events to build interest.

	Description and Purpose (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, defer)	Timeline/ Frequency
Engagement		
Pop-up/tabling at existing community and neighborhood	Inform and (light) Consult	August 2024

	Description and Purpose (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, defer)	Timeline/ Frequency
Engagement		
events with brief discussion*	Attending community events to promote the planning efforts and specific engagement opportunities. Light input is also possible. The Street Team will lead the selection of pop-up opportunities.	
Communications		
Listserv (project e-news via GovDelivery)	Inform Share project information and opportunities for public input via a monthly project e-newsletter.	TBD
Social Pinpoint and other online activities	Inform and Consult Landing Page with project information, link to engagement events calendar, Community Survey, and Ideas Wall with prompting questions.	TBD
Grassroots event promotion	Inform Use direct email and online event calendar listings to promote upcoming events via community partners and media outlets.	TBD
Social media	Inform Share project information via the City of Tacoma Facebook, X/Twitter, and Instagram accounts.	TBD

Phase 3 Draft Plan Tools

The objective of Phase 3 is to gather broad input on draft policies.

	Description and Purpose (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, defer)	Timeline/ Frequency
Engagement		
Road show briefing sessions	Consult and Collaborate Staff to present policy proposals and hold listening sessions at existing group meetings such as neighborhood councils in focus areas and existing committees such as the TOD committee.	TBD
Tailored listening sessions*	Consult, Involve, Collaborate Tailored listening sessions involve recruiting participants or asking to adapt an existing meeting or venue that is not typically used for planning and policy discussions (in contrast to Road Show listening sessions). The Street Team will lead the development of listening session opportunities.	TBD
Policy workshops: city hosted events and workshops*	Consult, Involve, Collaborate Custom events designed in partnership with community groups such as CBOs and schools to create in-depth community input. City to design and invite community. Art forward, include language access, family friendly, trauma informed- up to one per part of town (8 total) and potentially one virtual.	TBD
Public Comment and Public Hearing	Consult	TBD

	Description and Purpose (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, defer)	Timeline/ Frequency
Engagement		
	Invite written comments on draft policies and hold public hearing in compliance with RCW 36.70A.140. All comments will be compiled, and response recorded.	
Communications		
<u>Project Website</u>	Inform Introduce the project and provide background information	TBD
Listserv (project e-news via GovDelivery)	Inform Share project information and opportunities for public input via a monthly project e-newsletter.	TBD
Targeted Mailings	Inform Citywide. Drive participation in events.	TBD
Social Pinpoint and other online activities	Inform and Consult Landing Page with project information, link to engagement events calendar, Community Survey, and Ideas Wall with prompting questions	TBD
Grassroots event promotion	Inform Use direct email and online event calendar listings to promote upcoming events via community partners and media outlets.	TBD
Social media	Inform Share project information via the City of Tacoma Facebook, X/Twitter, and Instagram accounts.	TBD