

Fall 2024

Cushman and Adams Substations Future Use Study

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES SURVEY AND MULTILINGUAL ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

About the Cushman and Adams Substations Future Use Study

The City of Tacoma is studying potential future uses for the historic Cushman and Adams Substation sites and buildings. Tacoma City Council placed the Cushman and Adams Substations on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places in 2017. In 2018, a City Council resolution directed the City to engage the community on the future redevelopment of these historic properties. These efforts were paused in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the summer and fall of 2024, the City of Tacoma conducted citywide engagement—including workshops and outreach events—to gather input on the vision and potential future use scenarios in recognition that this is a unique opportunity to develop future uses for these sites that serve the whole City.

Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU) is still actively using and maintaining the building and site, and plans to vacate and surplus it by 2027 following construction of an off-site replacement facility. During the next few years, TPU will continue to identify alternatives for the equipment repair and storage currently taking place at Cushman Substation and identify environmental clean-up needs.

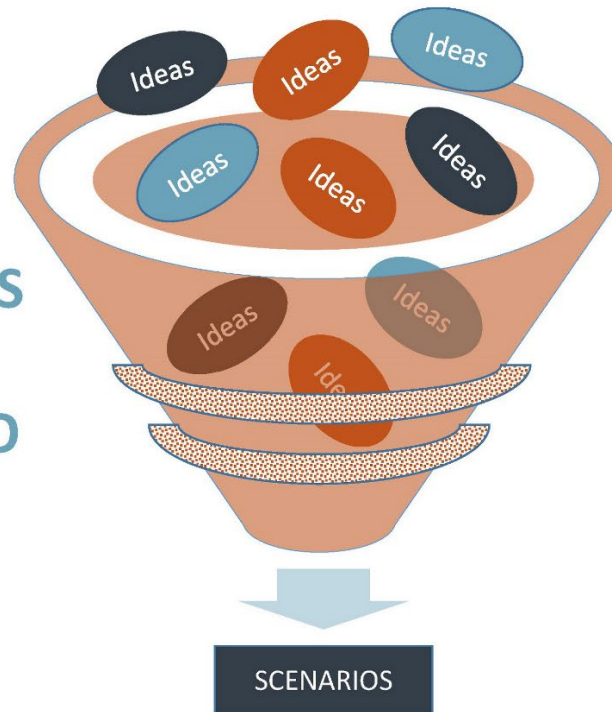
To see more on the history of the site or past project documents, navigate to the [project webpage](#). To find more ways of getting involved, visit the [engagement hub](#).

About the VISIONING Survey

The VISIONING Survey was open from May 31 until September 9, 2024 on the Social Pinpoint engagement hub, and received 613 responses. The survey was shared on City of Tacoma social media, project website, online engagement hub, and via QR code at in-person engagement and tabling outreach at more than 10 citywide events. Other engagement opportunities included two “VISIONING workshops” held in June 2024 to share ideas for the future of the Cushman and Adams substations. The VISIONING survey builds on past feedback we’ve heard from the community and will help to inform the SCENARIOS that we study in the next phase of the project.

FUTURE USE STUDY PROCESS

FROM IDEAS TO SCENARIOS



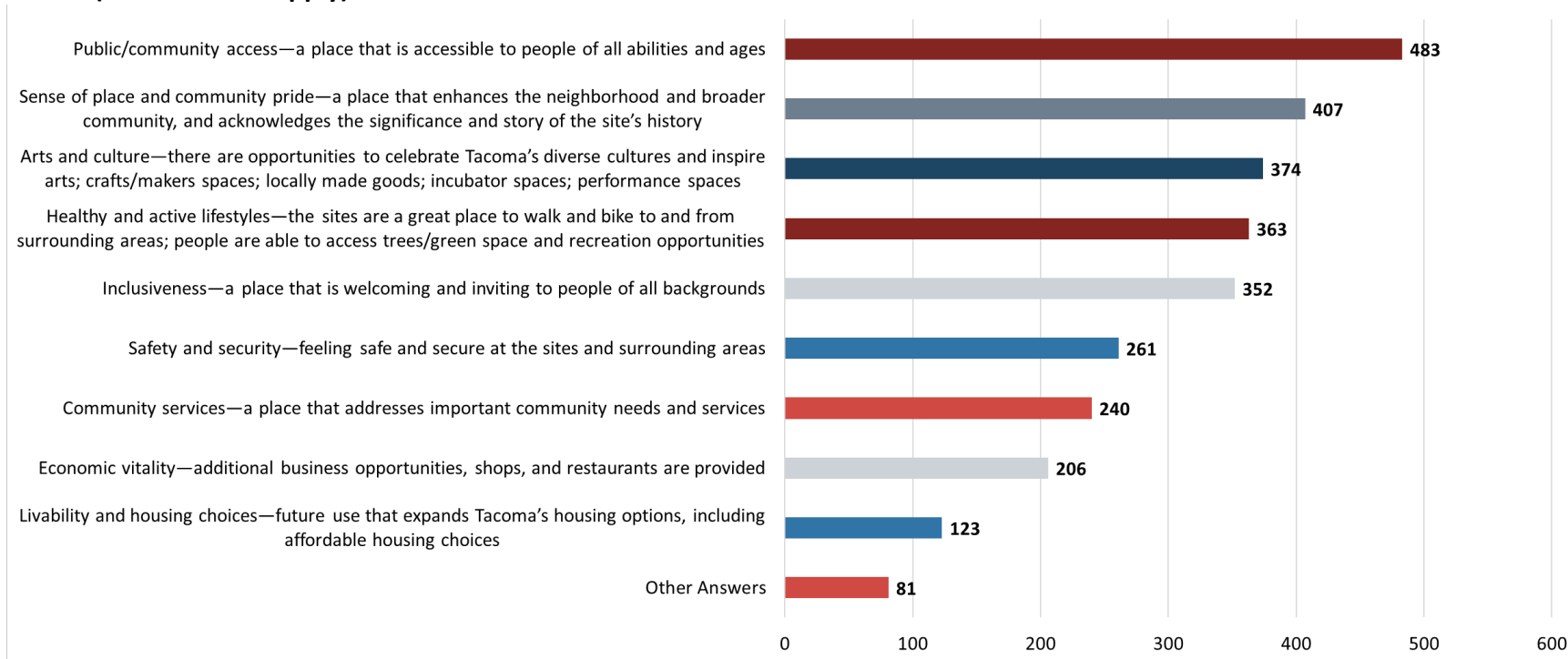
1. **VISIONING WORKSHOPS:**
Ideas and opportunities generated
2. **SCENARIOS WORKSHOPS:**
Scenarios shaped from ideas
3. **FILTERING:** Market analysis and technical evaluation of scenarios
4. **OUTPUTS:** Short list of future use scenarios to inform decision-making and additional feasibility analysis

In addition to public feedback, the Future Use Study will be rooted in existing City of Tacoma and Tacoma Public Utilities policies. For example, the study assumes that the historic buildings will be adaptively reused and that the site will need to undergo environmental remediation before it can be used for other purposes. The surplus policy requires first right of refusal to Native American tribes and prioritizing affordable housing.

Below is a summary of what the City and lead consultant, Otak, heard through the VISIONING survey. The survey included one multiple-choice question and four open-ended questions, as well as nine optional demographic questions. The summary below reflects the variety and diversity of perspectives we received. The responses to this survey, as well as other feedback from community engagement opportunities are integral to informing the Cushman and Adams Substations Future Use Study.

VALUES: WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

1. As you think about possible future uses for the Cushman and Adams Substations buildings and sites, what are the most important values you would like to see guiding this work?
(Select all that apply)¹



Choice	Responses	
Public/community access—a place that is accessible to people of all abilities and ages	483	78.92%
Sense of place and community pride—a place that enhances the neighborhood and broader community, and acknowledges the significance and story of the site's history	407	66.50%

¹ Note: "Select all that apply" questions have totaled responses that do not add up to 100%.

Arts and culture—there are opportunities to celebrate Tacoma’s diverse cultures and inspire arts; crafts/makers spaces; locally made goods; incubator spaces; performance spaces	374	61.11%
Healthy and active lifestyles—the sites are a great place to walk and bike to and from surrounding areas; people are able to access trees/green space and recreation opportunities	363	59.31%
Inclusiveness—a place that is welcoming and inviting to people of all backgrounds	352	57.52%
Safety and security—feeling safe and secure at the sites and surrounding areas	261	42.65%
Community services—a place that addresses important community needs and services	240	39.22%
Economic vitality—additional business opportunities, shops, and restaurants are provided	206	33.66%
Livability and housing choices—future use that expands Tacoma’s housing options, including affordable housing choices	123	20.10%
Other Answers	81	13.24%
Answered	612	
Skipped	1	

“Other” answers included the following topics:

- Park space (greenspace, dog park, skatepark)
- A “community center” and/or a “center” of the community
- If the site includes commercial, maintain public access
- Childcare
- Space for/serves people experiencing homelessness
- Historic preservation and storytelling
- Small businesses, café-sized, affordable
- Indoor farmers’ market
- Sustainable design—tree canopy, low-water uses, etc.

Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space for artists/makers and featuring public art (including indigenous art, live music) • Museum(s) and historic storytelling, sometimes combined with other uses (e.g. public gathering space, small retail, cultural spaces, housing, etc.) • A “Community Center” (facility) • A community “center” (e.g. small retail mixed-use; some including residential) • Community services • Small businesses, small business incubation, not large chains • Affordable housing (often combined with other uses, e.g. public gathering space, small retail, cultural space, etc.) • A park/public plaza/greenspace (skatepark; dog park) • Indoor farmers market • Athletic space (ballcourts/sports courts, competitive swimming, etc.)
Illustrative quotes	<p>Historic preservation and adaptive reuse (interior and exterior)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The historical aspects of the building are intact and improved.”</i> • <i>“History of the land, water, utilities, significant buildings and people are showcased...Honoring and healing legacy of resource extraction and displacement, and also city building and renewable energy through interpretive and site features.”</i> <p>Community space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Meeting spaces where neighbors can hold book groups, playtimes, classes for arts and crafts, seminars on various topics; An independent coffee shop with some food choices, makers markets...”</i> • <i>“The buildings would be used to support and engage the community... the possibilities are endless as long as the focus is on creating a community space - not one closed off...”</i> • <i>“I would love to see a combination of a park, with green space and a community center that has rooms for classes, a small performance stage, and perhaps space for people to participate in art”</i>

	<p>Mixed-use: housing, retail, and services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I could see the lower level of the Cushman Substation used as an indoor market space for events such as farmers markets, night markets, etc. Upper floor could be used for community services or upstart business office space... Adams site could potentially provide a space for lower rise housing development.”</i> • <i>“...Build high density housing at the southern "edge" of Proctor that incorporates ground-level retail and affordable housing. Stop building high density in Proctor and put it at the edge to bring these two important locations (Proctor and the substation site) together.”</i> • <i>“Unique mixed-income housing with a balance of common and private spaces.”</i> • <i>“Mixed-use building with potential for community gatherings, farmers/night markets, restaurants, small businesses...and a playground and skatepark outdoors.”</i>
Answered	552
Skipped	61

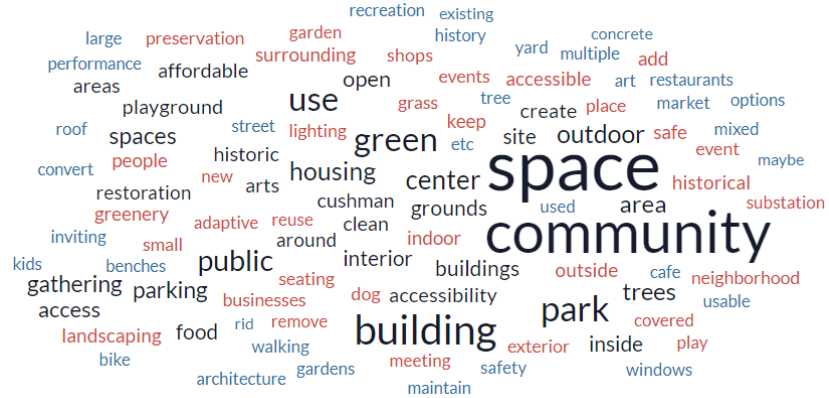
POSITIVE CHANGES AND CONCERNS

3. What top three improvements or positive changes would you like to see implemented at the Cushman and Adams buildings and sites as part of future uses?

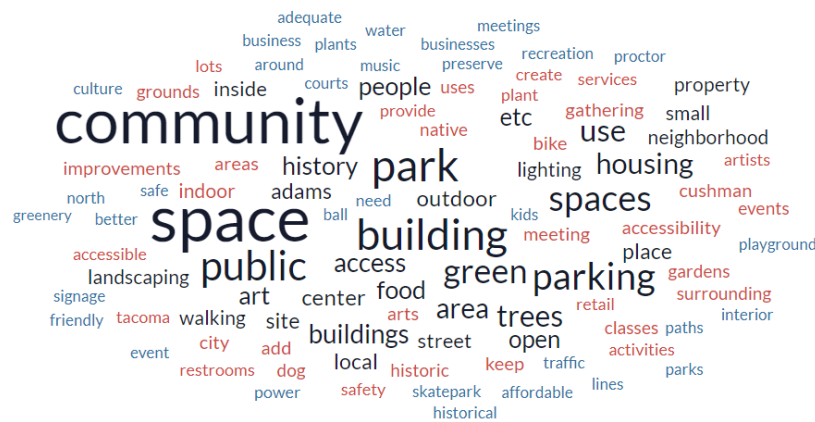
Improvement #1



Improvement #2



Improvement #3



<p>Themes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation of the buildings and historic character, interior and exterior • Adaptive reuse of the buildings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mixed-use inside; open space outside ○ Mixed-used inside; new development around the site (in complementary style) ○ Historically contextual and sustainable design for any new development or reuses • Both passive and active spaces like farmers’ markets, festival streets, artist or historical works, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dedicated art-making and art-showing space ○ Music • Green space • A community “center” with services and activities for all ages • Several respondents mentioned a desire for housing—including many indicating a need for affordable housing and/or multi-family housing; some referring specifically to the size, ranging from townhouses/co-op housing to “mid-size” or “dense” housing • Some respondents specifically noted that they do not want housing, including some specifying that they don’t want to see more apartments in the neighborhood
<p>Illustrative quotes</p>	<p>Historic preservation and adaptive reuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Restoration and preservation of facade and key interior elements such as lighting fixtures/stairs”</i> • <i>“Somewhere where the local community is coming together. Sensitive, but creative, use of the historic buildings and things that complement but do not compete with the adjacent Proctor Business District.”</i> • <i>“Multi-use spaces that prioritize community accessibility to the arts and continued education; Activating the space for the community as a place people gather for food, art, music, etc.”</i> <p>Gathering and community spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Have the Saturday market inside the building in inclement weather.”</i> • <i>“Public spaces, preferably some outdoor, for people to gather. Perhaps some art installations and small coffee shop. Outdoor seating.”</i> • <i>“Redesign of Adams Street to form a weekend festival street and the planting of street trees.”</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I see the paved areas largely removed and replaced with green spaces, complete with trees and walking paths, benches and picnic tables, a playground or skatepark for kids. I see the bottom floor of the Cushman substation housing businesses like a corner market/deli, a cafe, a yoga or Pilates studio, a bookstore, a clothing store...”</i> <p>Mixed-use and housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Mixed use, dense, affordable development.”</i> • <i>“I love the old building [and] this location would be great for a few affordable family or senior housing units...I would love to see community spaces (meeting rooms, classes), a play area, picnic tables. There are many places to wander Proctor but very few to sit that aren't inside businesses.”</i>
Answered	520
Skipped	93

4. Do you have any concerns about the future use of the Cushman and Adams Substations Sites?

<p>Themes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the site would be predominantly housing • That if there is housing, it may be turned into solely expensive rentals or condominiums • The site would not have enough variety of public uses, with concerns including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ That there will be too much private commercial and/or residential ○ That the site will be sold to a private developer that ignores public input ○ That the site would be single-use and not mixed-use • That the development may be too influenced by immediate neighbors, instead of considering the needs of the wider city • That the historic buildings on the site would be torn down • That the project won't be viable, or that what may become promised on paper or in designs is not delivered • That there will not be enough green space in a new development, and/or that green space would be threatened by parking
<p>Illustrative quotes</p>	<p>Housing and inclusivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"...While we certainly need more housing, the Proctor area has already added more than 400 new housing units in the past 7 years, with no new open space...Housing should be concentrated in the Proctor business district. The Cushman site should be a community space for the occupants of those new units."</i> • <i>"I don't want this process to be hijacked by anti-density and anti-housing advocates...Tacoma is in a housing crisis and Proctor is the most walkable and desirable neighborhood...The site is large enough to include public spaces and play areas for children and even opportunities for small businesses and also include a major housing component."</i> <p>Safety and activation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Just that it not be torn down it should be preserved"</i> • <i>"I want it be a safe for my kid to hang out."</i> • <i>"This space should be thriving. Not a space that's just used once in a while for a performance."</i> • <i>"Parking needs to be provided. Glad the building is being saved. Maintenance of the facility is important."</i>
<p>Answered</p>	<p>481</p>

Skipped	132
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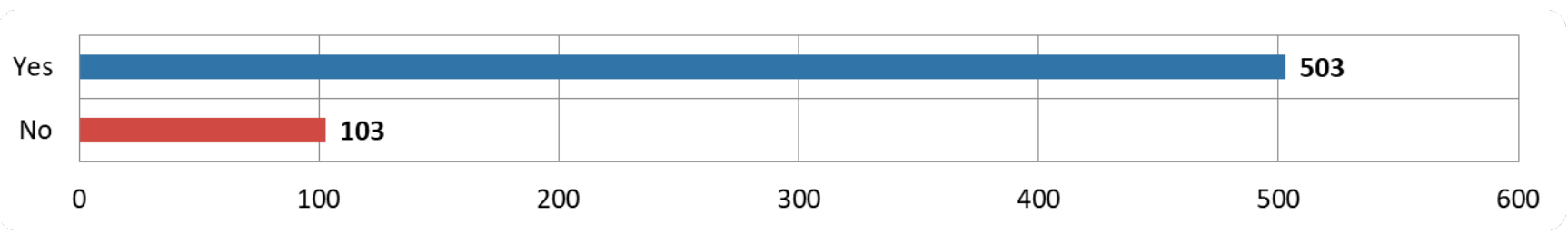
WHAT ELSE?

5. Anything else you'd like to tell us about the future of the Cushman and Adams Substations sites and buildings, or questions you'd like us to address?

Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process has been slow and restarted, it's time to move forward • Listening to all voices, the whole City • Maintain the site for creative public uses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Skatepark ○ Greenspace ○ Public art • Places for the community to come together • Maintaining the historic buildings • An extension of the already vibrant Proctor District • Personal stories of family that has worked at the site
Illustrative quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Consider building elements of Greek revival (columns) on site to anchor gardens/outdoor performance and plant large trees. Keep a harmonious feel to the grounds and building."</i> • <i>"I would like the historic character of the buildings to be honored, but not at the expense of creative uses for the land."</i> • <i>"It's beautiful and important! Thanks for saving it ♡"</i> • <i>"Do something for small start ups, especially minority owned ones."</i> • <i>"This has been stalled for years in feedback mode...Why are we still evaluating rather than moving forward?"</i>
Answered	345
Skipped	268

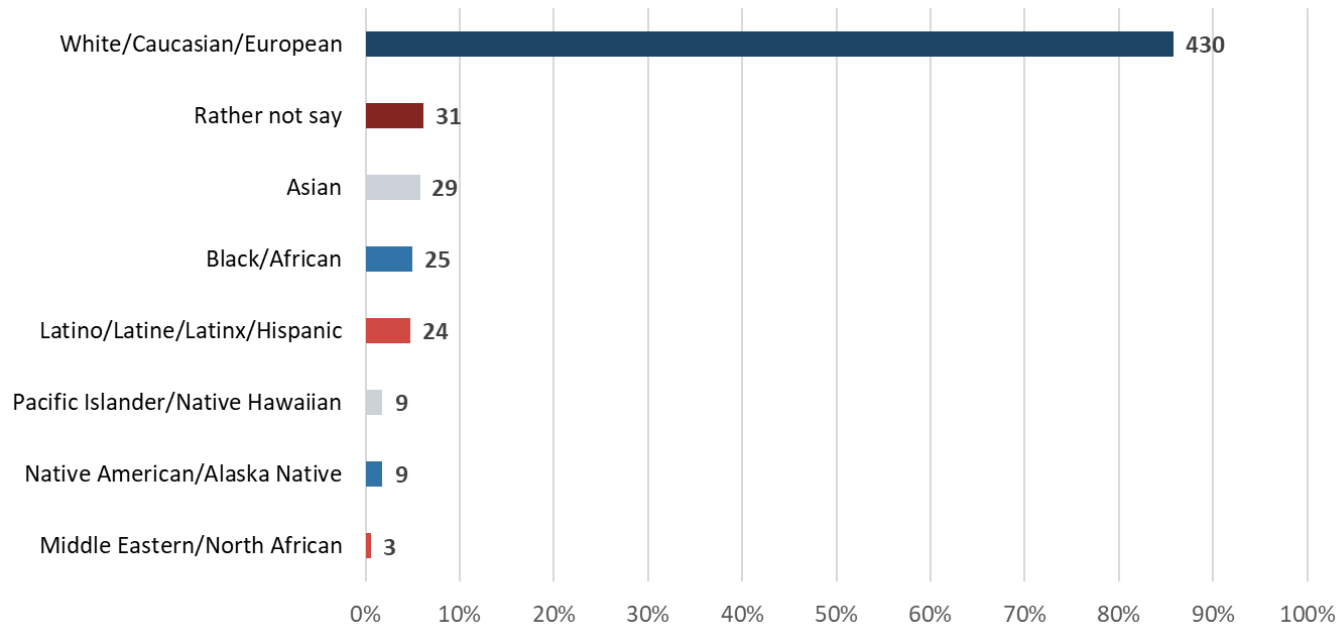
OPTIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

6. Would you be willing to share some demographic information to help us to understand how our engagement is doing at reaching the community?



Choice	Responses	
Yes	503	83.00%
No	103	17.00%
Answered	606	
Skipped	7	

7. Race/Ethnicity (Select all that apply)



Choice	Responses	
	White/Caucasian/European	430
Rather not say	31	6.19%
Asian	29	5.79%
Black/African	25	4.99%
Latino/Latine/Latinx/Hispanic	24	4.79%
Native American/Alaska Native	9	1.80%
Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	9	1.80%
Middle Eastern/North African	3	0.60%
Answered	501	
Skipped	112	

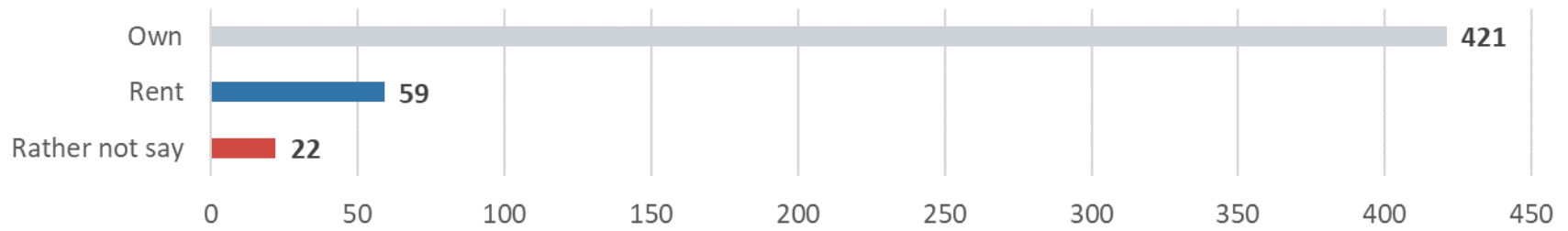
8. Please list any specific race, ethnic, and national groups, and tribal/band affiliations with which you identify:

<p>Responses</p>	<p>Unangan (Aleut) Dutch Half of our household is Latina Italian and Japanese Family of mixed Caucasian and Filipino BIPOC/Gay Citizen of Irish Republic Norway, England, Poland Judaica European with part Native American. Caucasian, Native and Mexican American Buddhist I'm white, my spouse is Black & Indigenous (Cherokee) Italian American African Americans Puerto Rican, Hispanic culture Jewish Taiwanese African American history, art Mixed White senior Mostly Western European Irish/British Isles Latino Chinese Scandinavian Colombian and Dutch Asian American</p>
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	Jewish, Russian Irish, Slavic, Colombian Guido-American Cuban Cuban-American Household is Persian and white. Colombian Jewish and Slavic Cherokee, European Korean, Filipino and white Cherokee Korean and Filipino Sephardic Jew White American Multi Racial White and Korean
Answered	78
Skipped	535

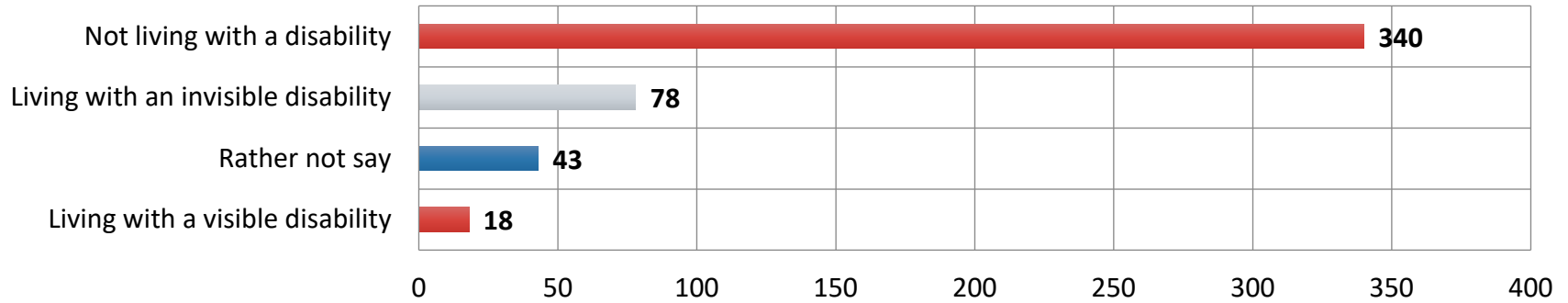
Note: This is a sample of responses we received; duplicate answers and N/A answers have been removed.

9. Do you own or rent the place where you live?



Choice	Responses	
	Own	421
Rent	59	11.75%
Rather not say	22	4.38%
Answered	502	
Skipped	111	

10. Disability Identity (Select all that apply)



Choice	Responses	
	Not living with a disability	340
Living with an invisible disability	78	16.32%
Rather not say	43	9.00%
Living with a visible disability	18	3.77%
Answered	478	
Skipped	135	

11. Please list ADA accommodation requests:

<p>Responses</p>	<p>We are both seniors and my 81 year old husband is disabled. Wheelchair I am seriously visually impaired. So, please take that into account. Wheelchair accessible We love the wheel chair ramps at corners with no sidewalks. Help the disabled and elderly immensely. Quiet / Low Sensory room, childcare space, and use principles of Universal Design Childcare, written materials in multiple languages (or a translator for commonly spoken languages in Tacoma), and public bathroom access. I would hope that the whole area would accommodate anyone with visible and invisible disabilities Quality graphics and fonts to make it easier to see and read. Wheelchair accessible and braille for the blind Entrance for people with walkers. Ramps and elevators I specifically do not have a disability, but I live with someone who does. ADA accommodations for those with mobility related disabilities should be a priority. It is more difficult to design spaces that benefit all with "hidden" disabilities and so this should be considered but may be difficult/impossible to implement. ADA parking and ramps for wheel chairs Ramps, elevators, automatic doors Concern for those with PTSD/anxiety issues. Access to building on all floors Elevator. Ramps Wheel chair accessible elevators, ramps Wheelchair accessible outside I strongly support ADA mobility improvements to the streetscape: they also personally benefit me as a bicyclist Handicap parking. Access for wheelchair bound and those with walkers and canes. Accessible for all</p>
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	<p>Accessible Entrance</p> <p>Easy parking</p> <p>Required</p> <p>Ramps, elevators</p> <p>Would want the building to be ADA friendly and accessible.</p> <p>Entry without stairs. Elevator between floors. Adequate outdoor night lighting.</p> <p>Ramp and elevator access throughout</p> <p>Need seating. Cannot stand long periods of time (more than 20 minutes)</p> <p>Accessible pathways and graphics that are visually easy to read</p> <p>wheelchair accessibility</p> <p>Minimum steps for one entrance</p> <p>Elevator</p> <p>Ramps and elevators for the walking challenged</p> <p>Elevator, few stairs, railings</p> <p>I am wheelchair bound due to a spinal cord injury at T6. I require ramps and doors wide enough to accommodate my wheelchair.</p> <p>ramps not stairs</p> <p>Signs that can be read by those who have poor eyesight. I know that's not ADA-speak.</p> <p>Sensory needs</p> <p>Ensure wheelchair access</p> <p>All of them. Let everyone experience the space as equally as possible.</p> <p>Husband is disabled. Handrails needed.</p> <p>Drop off location</p> <p>Ramps- for wheelchairs and walkers, as well as for strollers</p> <p>Age which at some time will result in limited mobility</p> <p>Walking paths within the parcel responsive to less sure-footed or wheelchair dependent visitors</p> <p>I assume we would not be proud of the center if it was not accessible to all.</p> <p>ADHD - need visual aids/things in writing. Do not retain anything I hear.</p> <p>wheelchair ramp is minimum</p>
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	<p>Per federal, state and city code.</p> <p>Wheelchair accessible</p> <p>Wheels - barrier free access needed. But we don't need to get to every inch of the space.</p> <p>Wheelchair accessible</p> <p>Transit, basic ADA accessibility</p> <p>They will come with aging I am sure</p> <p>Wheelchair ramps, elevator, etc.</p> <p>Lots of benches</p> <p>elevator to upper floors</p> <p>Wheelchair accessibility</p> <p>Make the area inclusive for all.</p> <p>Spouse has physical disability; daughter has developmental</p> <p>Accessibility for seniors, wheelchairs</p> <p>Wheelchair</p> <p>If the pool is built, making it wheelchair accessible with a lift and safe locker rooms would be important. It could be a great resource for people rehabbing from injuries and fractures.</p> <p>Door, platform/patio access and lifts as needed</p> <p>I am not disabled buy wheelchair accessibility is a must.</p> <p>Wide paths for scooters and all kinds of bikes</p> <p>Parking</p> <p>Sidewalks with curb ramps</p> <p>High contrast signifiers for limited sight issues</p> <p>Benches with shade for people to be able to rest. Wheelchair playground</p> <p>Hearing</p>
Answered	90
Skipped	593

Note: This is a sample of responses we received; N/A answers have been removed.

12. Primary language spoken at home:

Responses	
English	431
Answered	436
Skipped	177

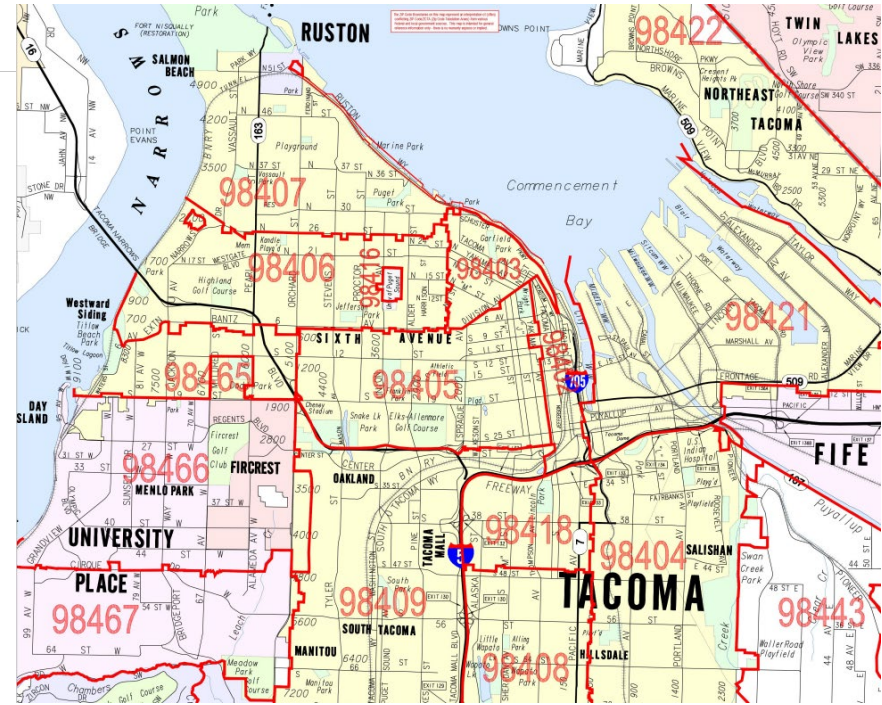
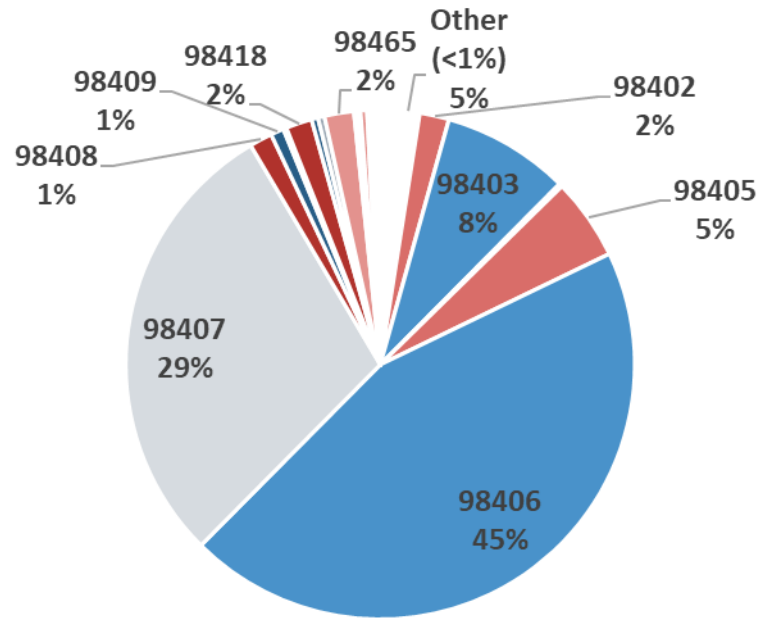
Note: This is a sample of responses we received; duplicate answers and N/A answers have been removed.

13. Additional languages spoken at home:

Responses	<p>Swedish Khmer Spanish Thai Japanese, Spanish, Russian Yoruba Spanish, French Cantonese German Mandarin, Italian Spanish, Gaelic Mandarin, Cantonese Dutch Tagalog Spanish, Gujarati Spanish and German French Japanese, Filipino Vietnamese Spanish, asl Hebrew Spanish, Puyallup Spanish, some Farsi Spanish, French sometimes and Japanese sometimes Korean and Tagalog</p>
Answered	80
Skipped	533

Note: Duplicate answers and N/A answers have been removed.

14. What is your ZIP Code?



Choice	Responses	
98406	215	45%
98407	140	29%
98403	39	8%
98405	25	5%
98402	9	2%
98465	9	2%
98418	8	2%
98408	7	1%

98409	4	1%
98422	2	<1%
98444	2	<1%
98499	2	<1%
22203	1	<1%
59740	1	<1%
85282	1	<1%
97407	1	<1%
98046	1	<1%
98303	1	<1%
98335	1	<1%
98360	1	<1%
98373	1	<1%
98374	1	<1%
98387	1	<1%
98388	1	<1%
98404	1	<1%
98416	1	<1%
98466	1	<1%
98467	1	<1%
98503	1	<1%
98505	1	<1%
98548	1	<1%
99407	1	<1%
Answered	483	
Skipped	130	

