



CITY OF TACOMA

A ROADMAP TO CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON TACOMA
URBAN STUDIES PROGRAM

TCMP 590/591: M.A. IN COMMUNITY
PLANNING STUDIO PRACTICUM PROJECT

INSTRUCTORS
ANNE TAUFEN
JENNIFER ARNOLD

CITY OF TACOMA PROJECT LEAD
DAVID NASH-MENDEZ

REPORT AUTHORS
LAUREN MILES
MARIE HOFMANN

WINTER - SPRING 2018





LIVABLE CITY YEAR 2017-2018
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
CITY OF TACOMA

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Students in the inaugural Master of Arts in Community Planning degree from the University of Washington Tacoma would like to thank all of the City of Tacoma and Tacoma Public Utilities staff who supported this project through interviews, feedback sessions, and coordination.

In particular, we would like to thank the City's project lead, David Nash-Mendez, for his central role in helping to ensure that this project was possible. His assistance with the logistics and organization of the interviews, as well as his support with navigating our data and refining our findings, was invaluable.

We are also grateful to City Manager Elizabeth Pauli and her team, who supported and pushed for this project, and for the support of Interim Director of Tacoma Public Utilities Linda McCrae. Thank you for believing in this important investment in civic engagement and in the promise of Tacoma 2025.

CREDITS

For this report

City of Tacoma Project Lead
David Nash-Mendez
Instructors
Anne Taufen
Jennifer Arnold
Report Authors
Lauren Miles
Marie Hofmann

For the City of Tacoma

Mayor (2018 - Present)
Victoria Woodards
City Manager: Elizabeth Pauli
LCY Program Managers
Tanisha Jumper
Stephen Atkinson
Lauren Flemister
LCY Liaison: Chris Bell

For the University of Washington LCY Program

LCY Faculty Co-Directors
Branden Born
Jennifer Otten
Anne Taufen
Program Manager: Teri Thomson Randall
Editors
Anneka Olson
Liza Higbee-Robinson
Graphic Designer: Caroline Le
Communications
Daimon Eklund
Claudia Frere-Anderson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT LIVABLE CITY YEAR	01
ABOUT TACOMA	02
ABOUT UW TACOMA AND URBAN STUDIES	03
ABOUT THE M.A. IN COMMUNITY PLANNING	04
TACOMA 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN	05
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	07
INTRODUCTION	15
METHODS	23
PURPOSEFUL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	27
CHALLENGES IN PRACTICE	39
OPPORTUNITIES	59
RECOMMENDATIONS	63
CONCLUSION	71
REFERENCES	73
APPENDIX A: DEPARTMENTAL INTERVIEWEES	77
APPENDIX B: SURVEY TOOL	81
APPENDIX C: BIOGRAPHIES	82
APPENDIX D: OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS	84
APPENDIX E: STATEMENT OF VALUES	85
APPENDIX F: APPROACHES	86
APPENDIX G: DESIGNING PURPOSEFUL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	87

Permission to use: This report represents original student work and recommendations prepared by students in the University of Washington's Livable City Year Program for the City of Tacoma. Text and images contained in this report may be used for not-for-profit purposes. Please credit the University of Washington Livable City Year Program.

Recommended citation: Livable City Year 2017. *A Roadmap to Civic Engagement*. University of Washington, Seattle, WA. Prepared for City of Tacoma.

ABOUT LIVABLE CITY YEAR

The University of Washington's Livable City Year (LCY) initiative enables local governments to engage UW faculty and students for one academic year to work on city-defined projects that promote local sustainability and livability goals. The program engages hundreds of students each year in high-priority projects, creating momentum on real-world challenges while enabling the students to serve and learn from communities. Partner cities benefit directly from bold and applied ideas that propel fresh thinking, improve livability for residents and invigorate city staff. Focus areas include environmental sustainability; economic viability; population health; and social equity, inclusion, and access. The program's 2017–2018 partner is the City of Tacoma; this follows a partnership with the City of Auburn in 2016–2017.

The LCY program is led by faculty directors Branden Born (Department of Urban Design and Planning), Jennifer Otten (School of Public Health) and Anne Taufen (Urban Studies Program, UW Tacoma), with support from Program Manager Teri Thomson Randall. The program was launched in 2016 in collaboration with UW Sustainability and Urban@UW, with foundational support from the Association of Washington Cities, the College of Built Environments, the Department of Urban Design and Planning, and Undergraduate Academic Affairs.

LCY is modeled after the University of Oregon's Sustainable City Year Program, and is a member of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network (EPIC-N), the collection of institutions that have successfully adopted this new model for community innovation and change.

For more information, contact the program at uwlcy@uw.edu.



ABOUT TACOMA

The third largest city in the state of Washington, Tacoma is a diverse, progressive, international gateway to the Pacific Rim. The port city of nearly 210,000 people has evolved considerably over the last two decades, propelled by significant development including the University of Washington Tacoma, the Tacoma Link light rail system, the restored urban waterfront of the Thea Foss Waterway, the expansions of both the MultiCare and CHI Franciscan health systems, and a significant influx of foreign direct investment in its downtown core.

Washington State's highest density of art and history museums are found in Tacoma, which is home to a flourishing creative community of writers, artists, musicians, photographers, filmmakers, chefs, entrepreneurs, and business owners who each add their unique flair to the city's vibrant commercial landscape. The iconic Tacoma Dome has endured as a high-demand venue for some of the largest names in the entertainment industry.

The city's natural beauty and proximity to the Puget Sound and Mount Rainier draws hikers, runners, bicyclists, and maritime enthusiasts to the area, while its lively social scene is infused with energy by thousands of students attending the University of Washington Tacoma and other academic institutions.

The City of Tacoma's strategic plan, *Tacoma 2025*, was adopted in January 2015 following unprecedented public participation and contribution. The plan articulates the City's core values of opportunity, equity, partnerships, and accountability, and expresses the City's deep commitment to apply these values in all of its decisions and programming. Each Livable City Year project ties into the principles and focus areas of this strategic plan. The City of Tacoma is proud of its 2017–2018 Livable City Year partnership with the University of Washington and of the opportunity this brings to its residents.



ABOUT UW TACOMA AND URBAN STUDIES

The vision of the University of Washington Tacoma (UW Tacoma) is to foster a thriving and equitable society by educating diverse learners and by expanding knowledge through partnership and collaboration with all our communities.

As an urban-serving university, UW Tacoma is dedicated to expanding access to higher education in an environment where every student has the opportunity to succeed; fostering scholarship, research, and creativity to address the challenging problems of our time and place; partnering and collaborating with our community partners for common good; and catalyzing the economic and social vitality of our region.

Founded in 2001, the Urban Studies Program exemplifies UW Tacoma's urban-serving mission: teach to engage; research to advance knowledge; act to promote social justice and equitable development.

The program currently offers undergraduate degrees in Urban Studies (BA), Sustainable Urban Development (BA), and Urban Design (BS); a Certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS); undergraduate minors in Urban Studies and Sustainable Urban Development; and graduate degrees in Community Planning (MA) and Geospatial Technologies (MS).



UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON | TACOMA
URBAN STUDIES

ABOUT THE M.A. IN COMMUNITY PLANNING

The Master of Arts in Community Planning at UW Tacoma is designed to develop civic leaders who are equipped to make change in networks of public and private actors, helping to create more just, sustainable, and livable urban futures.

The degree culminates in a two-term practicum project in collaboration with a community partner. Based on a studio model, the community planning practicum foregrounds the needs and interests of the partner organization, and enlists M.A. students in a sustained team project emphasizing group process, milestone definition and goal-setting, shared outcomes, and ongoing social learning among all involved.

In 2018 the City of Tacoma's *Roadmap to Civic Engagement* project presented an excellent opportunity for the first cohort of Community Planning graduates. Defined by city leaders to further the aims of the "Tacoma 2025" Vision and Strategic Plan, the project aligns closely with the M.A. curriculum, highlighting the need for equity and empowerment across all neighborhoods, communities, and publics. Furthermore, it embraces a multi-disciplinary approach to planning, where people and programs are the lifeblood of the built spaces they inhabit.

M.A. in Community Planning, Class of 2018 Roadmap to Civic Engagement researchers, writers, project analysts

Ben Fincher
Karina Haaseth
Marie Hofmann
Sarah Koestler
Eric Lane
Lauren Miles
Anneka Olson
Garrett Stone
Jeremy Trenhaile
Ed Winkley



M.A. IN COMMUNITY PLANNING
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON | TACOMA

TACOMA 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

The *A Roadmap to Civic Engagement* project supports the Civic Engagement and Equity and Accessibility goals of the *Tacoma 2025 Strategic Plan* and was sponsored by the City Manager's Office.



Goal #1 Livability

The City of Tacoma will be a city of choice in the region known for connected neighborhoods, accessible and efficient transportation transit options, and vibrant arts and culture. Residents will be healthy and have access to services and community amenities while maintaining affordability.



Goal #2 Economy and Workforce

By 2025, Tacoma will be a growing economy where Tacoma residents can find livable wage jobs in key industry areas. Tacoma will be a place of choice for employers, professionals, and new graduates.



Goal #3 Education

Tacoma will lead the region in educational attainment amongst youth and adults. In addition to producing more graduates from high school and college, more college graduates will find employment in the region. Lifelong learning and access to education will be prioritized and valued.



Goal #4 Civic Engagement

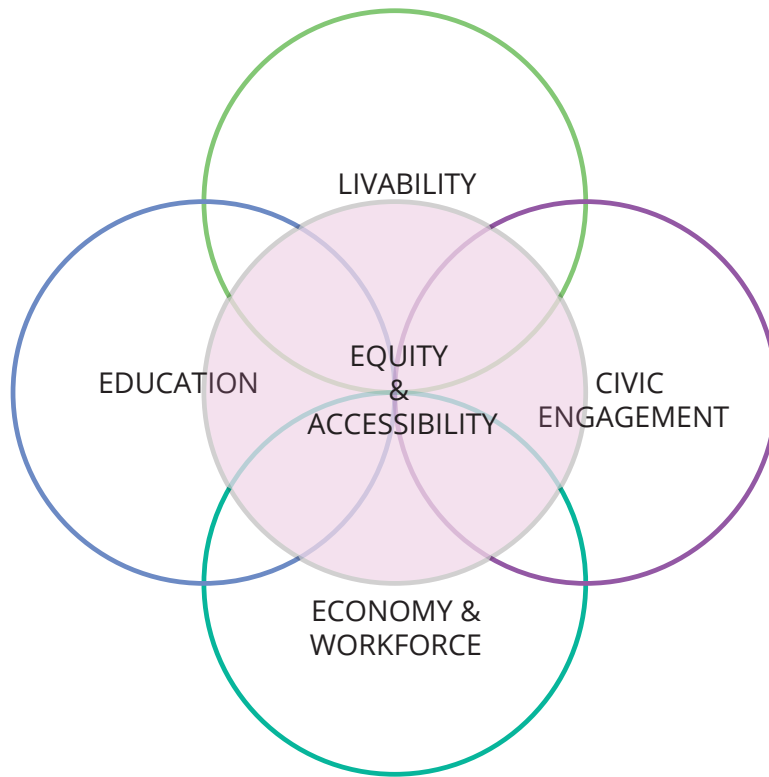
Tacoma residents will be engaged participants in making Tacoma a well-run city. The leadership of the city, both elected and volunteer, will reflect the diversity of the city and residents and will fully participate in community decision-making.



Goal #5 Equity and Accessibility

Tacoma will ensure that all residents are treated equitably and have access to services, facilities, and financial stability. Disaggregated data will be used to make decisions, direct funding, and develop strategies to address disparate outcomes.





RESOURCES

Tacoma 2025 Strategic Plan: https://www.cityoftacoma.org/tacoma_2025

Livable City Year: <https://www.washington.edu/livable-city-year/>

UW Tacoma Urban Studies Program:
<http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/urban-studies/about-urban-studies>

Tacoma City Manager's Office:
<https://www.cityoftacoma.org/cms/one.aspx?pageId=11899>

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

The Roadmap to Civic Engagement project was created by the City Manager's Office, with support from the Director of Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU), to better understand how the City of Tacoma approaches civic engagement, with a focus on the organization's internal practices and values. It builds on community engagement efforts that were initiated as part of the Tacoma 2025 strategic planning process.

In this report, we present key findings and identify opportunities for further organizational investment to promote more inclusive and equitable civic engagement practices across the City of Tacoma.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ADDRESSING EQUITY AND GROWTH

As the City works to promote equity and manage anticipated growth, effective civic engagement and representation of marginalized groups is crucial.

Tacoma is experiencing major growth, with a forecasted population increase of over 60% by 2040, according to the Puget Sound Regional Council. In 2014, significant community engagement efforts aided in the development of Tacoma 2025, the City's strategic plan and vision for the future. That same year, the City Council passed the Equity and Empowerment Framework, which foregrounds the importance of civic engagement, identifying it as one of the document's five pillars.

However, the recent 2018 Community Survey indicates continued racial disparities in engagement and trust: 60% of White residents rated their confidence in government as "excellent or good" as compared to only 34% of Black residents. Additional disparities exist at the neighborhood level.

Addressing these systemic disparities and adapting for this magnitude of growth may require rapid policy change. Building an infrastructure for civic engagement is one strategy to ensure that policy solutions are effective and attentive to a wide array of resident needs.

METHODS

Using a qualitative, inductive approach, graduate students conducted, transcribed, and analyzed over 60 interviews with City staff in 18 departments across General Government and public utilities. From this, students developed initial findings and shared them with staff at two workshops.



Creating opportunities for government agencies, stakeholders, and community members to work together to co-produce outcomes is essential to promoting equity and inclusion. PMBBUN

In addition, students drew on academic literature and case examples to explore best practices in civic engagement. The following three concepts inform the analysis and recommendations of this report:

- A distinction between participation—resident input in the content of programs— and inclusion—continuous resident involvement in the creation of processes, programs, and policies
- Co-production, or actively engaging residents in the delivery of programs and policies, improving service delivery and outcomes
- Targeted universalism, which utilizes strategies to meet the needs of specific communities to achieve universal goals

FINDINGS

Developed from our analysis of qualitative data, these findings outline the core purposes of doing civic engagement within the City of Tacoma, and summarize some of the key challenges that we heard described by staff across departments.

I. Purposeful Civic Engagement

Values of Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is valued across departments as a path to building equity in Tacoma, and the City is taking steps to align practices with its commitments. Staff expressed the importance of relationships and becoming more inclusive as an institution through expanding access, connecting with community, and building trust, transparency, and accountability.



Staff from the City of Tacoma, many of whom were interviewed for the project, deliberate after being presented with initial student findings.
ANNE TAUFEN

Variation in Practice and Purpose

In practice, civic engagement varies widely across the City; accordingly, civic engagement performs different functions for each department. Recognizing this variability, uniform standardization of civic engagement across the city poses significant challenges. However, consistent support, allocation of resources, and the development of shared values can enable improved civic engagement practices.

II. Challenges in Practice

Access and Representation

Communities of color, immigrant communities, and low-income communities have been underrepresented in past City civic engagement efforts, which may skew the City's understandings of the needs of the public. The struggle to consistently have broad representation in decision-making processes may also be compounded by the City's complex structure.

Understanding Each Other

Many staff perceive a lack of public understanding of the processes and functions of City government. In efforts to be transparent and informative, resources are spent producing and distributing information, or on learning more about public preferences through surveys and other input opportunities. However, this often happens in lieu of opportunities for two-way dialogue and conversation, which can lead to misunderstandings on both sides.

Flashpoints and Catalysts

Flashpoints, or high levels of participation that are passionate or urgent in nature, can emerge around controversial issues. This can cause the City to invest considerable energy on specific decisions and can sometimes come at the expense of more sustained, relationship-building work. However, these moments can also be catalysts for more meaningful engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our interview data demonstrated that City staff view civic engagement as an important opportunity to build continuous improvement into their work and to strengthen relationships with residents. Across departments, staff voiced interest in increasing the impact of their programs, supporting and coordinating with one another, and operationalizing the Tacoma 2025 values of Opportunity, Equity, Partnerships, and Accountability. However, many departments noted that they require additional support and resources to accomplish these goals.

Our research suggests that the following investments can further strengthen a culture of universal responsibility for civic engagement within the City of Tacoma:

Tools

- A **Civic Engagement Statement of Values** can provide clarity and direction for all City of Tacoma departments. This report offers a preliminary statement, based on our interviews; however a statement of civic engagement values will be most effective if it is revised and adopted by City staff.
- A **Civic Engagement Design Tool** that helps staff and managers in departments across City government reflect and plan for more equitable civic engagement practices.
- A **Typology of Civic Engagement Approaches** that illustrates, describes, and categorizes the different engagement methods we heard described in interviews, aligned along a spectrum from participation to inclusion.

Steering Group

- A Citywide civic engagement team would serve as both an internal learning community and as an institutional group to provide leadership for organization-wide civic engagement work and investments.

Resources

Organizational Support: The use of existing institutional mechanisms to prioritize continuous improvement in civic engagement.

- Increased training opportunities to improve staff confidence around civic engagement practices, including conflict resolution, cultural competency, and facilitation.
- Staff or consultant capacity for qualitative data analysis, to interpret large amounts of public input in ways that illuminate a breadth of community perspectives, including specific feedback on limitations of current or planned civic engagement investments.
- Creation of participatory budgeting with a percentage of the City budget, empowering residents to engage fully and directly in the decision-making around resource allocation.

Funding: Increased resourcing at the organizational level to fund civic engagement work within departments.

- A dedicated budget line item for civic engagement, accessible to all departments through a budget justification process.
- A system of justification and prioritization for civic engagement investments in the budget allocation process, potentially managed by the Steering Group and enlisting one or more of the Tools described above.
- A catalyst fund to support innovative proposals in civic engagement that address an existing challenge, build new relationships with residents, encourage risk-taking or experimentation, and/or create cross-departmental collaboration.
- The creation of a city-wide civic engagement position/centralized department within the City itself.

FUTURE ENGAGEMENT WORK

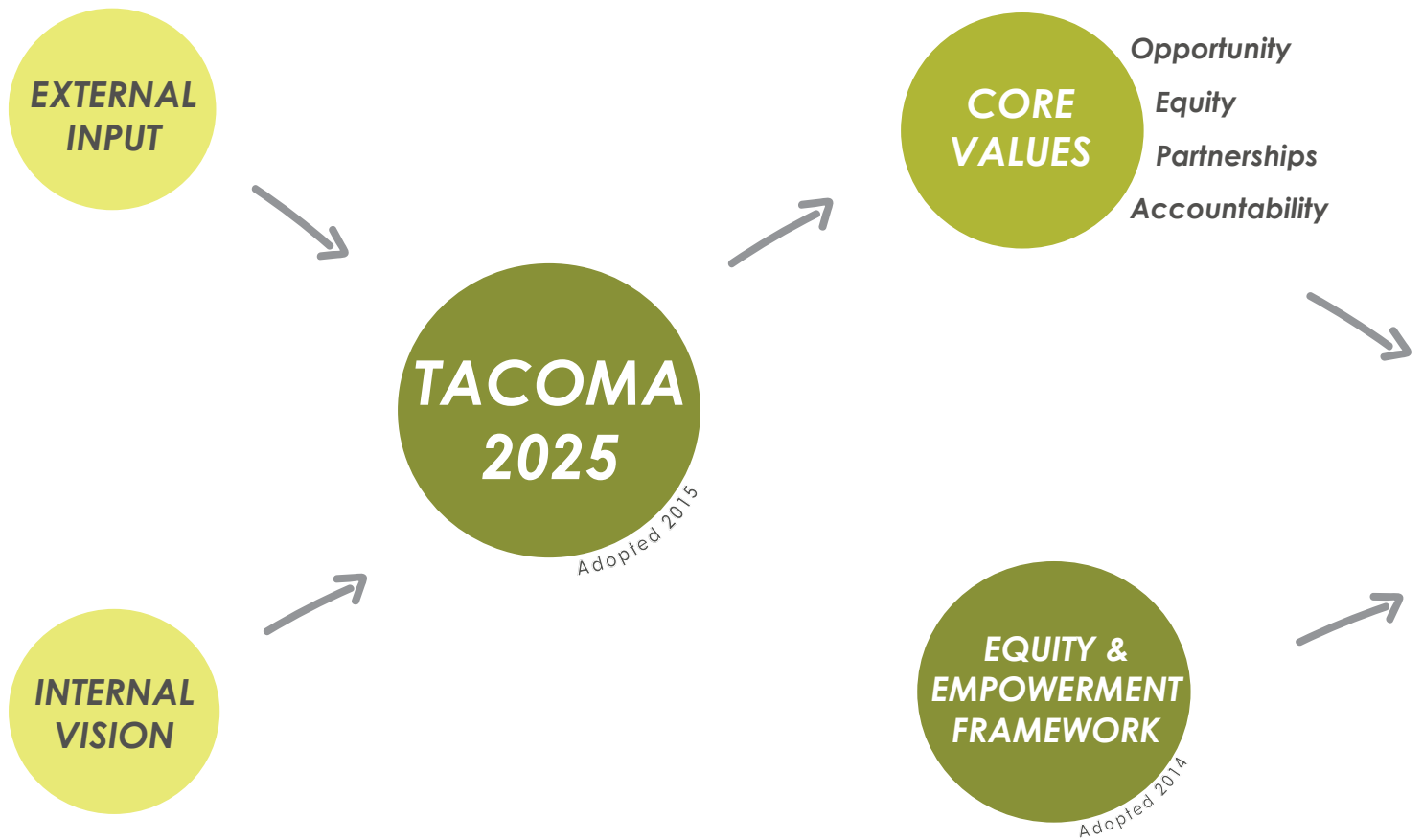
As the City of Tacoma embarks on future civic engagement capacity-building work, we recommend that the City's request for proposal (RFP) process include the following as part of a continued scope of work to be carried out by staff and/or consultants:

- Ensure broad public participation and input in this process.
This was outside of the scope of this project, but a deeper understanding of the public's experience as they engage with the City will be essential in crafting future strategies for engagement. In particular, if this work is carried out by community liaisons or consultants, City staff working alongside to gather this input will result in increased public trust in the process.
- Include the Steering Group and external stakeholders as part of forthcoming civic engagement capacity building work. Recognizing the wide array of practices happening across the City, the organization will benefit from input from staff in different departments and at different levels of organizational leadership, as well as the input of community members serving in a leadership capacity. This could be the first task of the Civic Engagement Steering Group proposed above.

Ongoing investments to develop the capacity, practices, and continuous improvement in civic engagement practices will support Tacoma 2025 implementation and enable the City of Tacoma to create shared prosperity, enhance equitable service delivery, and improve representation of marginalized communities as the city grows.

ROAD MAP

TO CIVIC



MOTIVATIONS & UNIFYING VALUES

The Roadmap to Civic Engagement builds upon existing commitments established by the City of Tacoma to engender equity and empowerment throughout City government, and reflects an investment in civic engagement to further the four core values of the Tacoma 2025 Strategic Plan.

ENGAGEMENT

