What is the Equity Index?
The Equity Index is a mapping tool that shows us where there are areas of higher opportunity and where there are areas of lower opportunity. This mapping tool allows us to see where we should focus effort and resources to improve outcomes and support equitable outcomes in our city. The index is built off of 27 social, economic, and environmental indicators (or data points) across the goal areas of Tacoma 2025, the City’s strategic plan.

Why did the City create an Equity Index?
Achieving equity in our community is essential to our mission, both as a City government and as a city at large. The Tacoma community has consistently made it clear that equity and racial justice need to be prioritized, including through doing equity analyses of programs and policies at the City of Tacoma. This guidance helped establish the goals and analysis to create the Equity Index.

Working to achieve equity requires tools and skills that allow us to better understand the outcomes and conditions across our community, identify where focused effort and resources are needed, and taking action. Using data such as the Equity Index is an essential tool in taking those steps and making equity real.

How did the City create the Equity Index?
Working with Ohio State University’s Kirwan Institute of Race and Social Justice, the City compiled the Equity Index to help facilitate data-driven decision-making processes to better focus resources and plan funding of programs and services to minimize inequities and maximize opportunities.

Data based decision making is an important part of Tacoma’s framework, and being able to overlay data with the color-coded geographic equity index helps us to direct more resources to areas of the city that need it most.

The indicators displayed in the Equity Index have been shown to have a direct correlation to equity. For more information, please reference the additional document on the evidence based research determinant categories. The information is measured granularly by census block group.

Accessibility:
- Average Road Quality
- Internet Access
- Parks & Open Spaces
- Transit Options & Access
- Voter Participation

Livability:
- Unemployment Rate
- Life Expectancy
- Cost Burden
- Tacoma Crime Index
- Tacoma Nuisance Index
- Urban Tree Canopy

Education:
- 4 Year High School Graduation Rate
- 25 Age+ with Bachelors’ Degree or More
- Average Test Proficiency
- Average Student Retention Rate

Economy:
- Households at 200% of the Poverty Line or Less
- Median Household Income
- Tacoma Jobs

Environmental Health:
- Ozone Concentration
- Pm2.5 Particles
- Diesel Emissions
- Heavy Traffic Roadways
- Toxic Risk
- Toxic Substances
- Superfund Site Proximity
What does Very High or Very Low Opportunity mean?

Very High Opportunity represents locations that have better outcomes because of access to better opportunities to succeed and excel in life. These better outcomes include things like high performing schools, access to adequate transportation, safe neighborhoods, livable wage employment, good health outcomes such as higher life expectancies, and safe and healthy environmental conditions. In contrast, Low Opportunity areas have worse outcomes because they have more obstacles and barriers to opportunity within the area. These communities have limited access to institutional and societal investments that limit their quality of life.

Why is the North and West End labeled Red?

When looking at data related to equity and social justice, we want to be mindful not to reinforce historical representations of low income or communities of color as bad or negative. To do this, the Equity Index shows darker colors for areas with more opportunity rather than showing darker colors for worse outcomes. This helps to visualize the areas of high opportunity by using red and lighter colors in areas of lower opportunity to call out the need for more investment and opportunity. This “flipped” gradient does not use green, or “positive” colors, when referring to historically high investment (white) communities.

Can I add more data and indicators to the Equity Index?

In a way yes. By downloading the file and uploading it to ArcGIS you can add your data and indicators to the Index, and you can import the shape files into your own data base. The indicators and standard deviations are available on ArcGIS online. This allows you to layer your own data with the index to do your own analysis, but it does not change the base indicators of the index. You can contact us at the email below to learn how to overlay your data with the equity index, or to suggest future indicators to be included.

Can I see additional or multiple map layers?

Within the navigation panel on the left side of the screen, you can aggregate the index layers by social determinant categories: Accessibility, Education, Economy, Livability, and Environmental Health. This is also where you will find the toggle switches to switch between the Tacoma, TPU Water/Power, TPU Water, and TPU Power layers.

How do I get more information?

Please send all inquiries to bwarren@cityoftacoma.org