

INDICATORS

for a healthy community



Indicators for a Healthy Community is part of a volunteer citizen effort to measure the well-being of the communities within Pierce County. It is hoped that these indicators of well-being will contribute to making informed decisions to improve community life.

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INTRODUCTION



Indicators for a Healthy Community, a follow-up to the 1996 *Vital Signs* publication, is a benchmarking report that provides citizens with clear and honest information about past trends and current realities.

We hope it assists in steering Tacoma-Pierce County communities on their

desired course. Indicators are necessary because we cannot see the condition of our whole community without them. Just as the gas gauge in your car makes your fuel level visible, community indicators make our existing conditions visible.

Communities need measures that help strike a balance between economic, environmental and social concerns. They also need to find ways to integrate these concerns, so that they are no longer viewed as competing interests.

The purpose of this report is to monitor progress and to inspire us to act as a community. Ensuring a bright future for the residents of our area requires continued support for our educational system and local economy, and dedication to our natural environment and community issues.

Our vision of long term goals offers a framework for understanding community concerns, prioritizing issues, determining action steps and identifying new measures of progress. We need vision to inspire us, and by opening our imagination to look beyond our current reality to a place where we would like to go, we will sustain our hope and determination.

Finally, these indicators are available to be translated into policy and action by the individuals, groups and organizations, businesses, institutions and agencies that make a difference in our community. Whether you use these indicators to educate yourself, examine your own choices and actions, or assess the policies and actions of others, the main objective is to identify an area where you feel most connected and can make a positive difference. Your actions today will benefit Tacoma-Pierce County and beyond for generations to come.



“Sustainability” is a word that is growing in use and popularity around the world. For our purposes, it means long term health and vitality - cultural, economic, environmental and social. It points toward a new way of thinking about how we live, about where our past has brought us, and about what kinds of progress we need and want to make in the future.”

-Sustainable Seattle Indicators 1995

COMMUNITY CONDITIONS

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

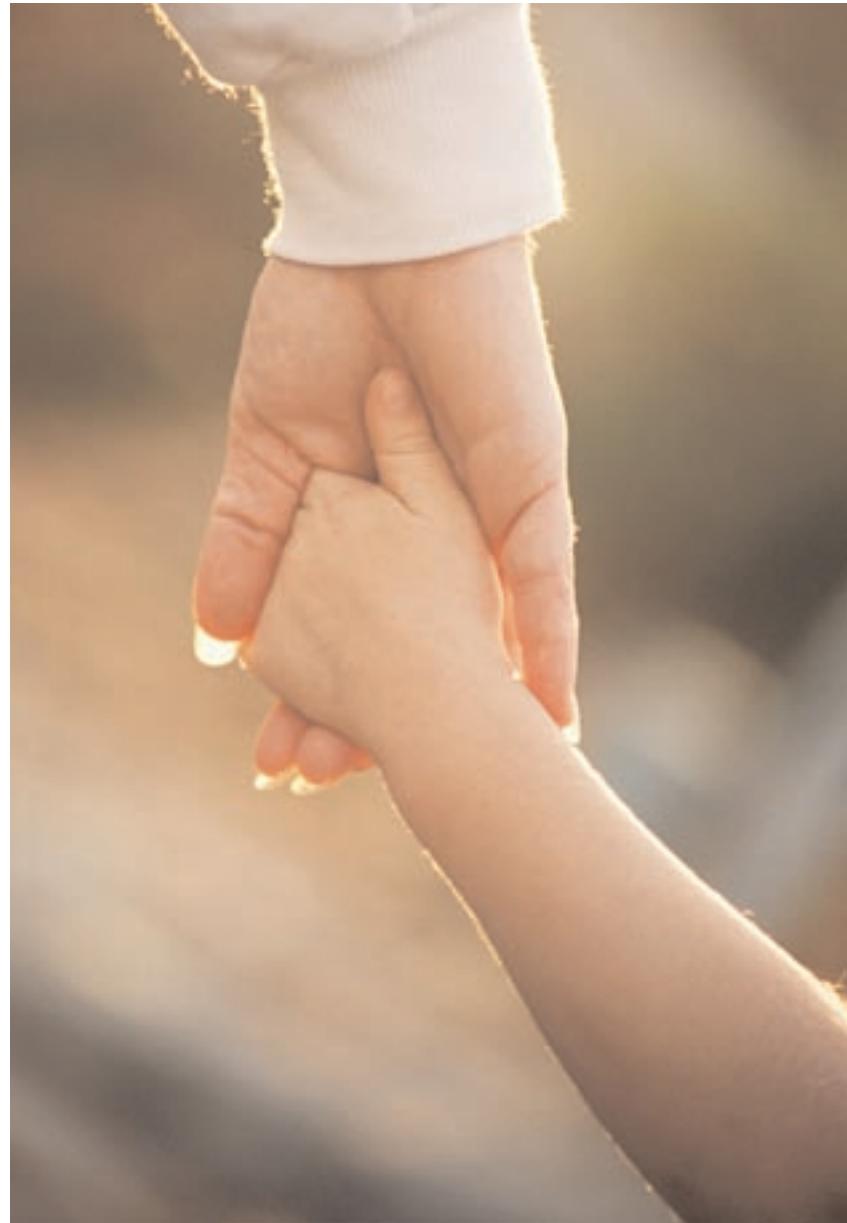
Community indicators reflect issues that matter at the neighborhood level. A neighborly attitude is a cornerstone of a sustainable society. Caring relationships enhance cultural and economic health, contribute to reducing crime and increase civic participation.

To sustain a community, citizens must care for and look out for their neighbors, make healthy lifestyle choices and work together to solve their own problems. A commitment to these actions will result in greater citizen control over the direction and destiny of each community in our area.

Domestic violence and child abuse are two issues that require serious community attention. An effective system that combats family violence must offer communities access to family support and educational services, and must address the physical and emotional needs of the victims.

Fears about personal safety deeply affect the public's opinion on the quality of life in their community. Crime inflicts a wide range of both direct and indirect costs: fear and anger, personal injury and property losses and threat of violence. Crime prevention measures, such as law enforcement, non-violent resolution and community organization, contribute to offset these problems and protect the general public.

Support of arts and cultural organizations creates employment, provides educational opportunities, and presents an array of tourist activities and entertainment. Attendance at local cultural events indicates the level of public concern for social activity, and a diverse spectrum of accessible cultural activities contributes to our community's quality of life.



Home Delivered Meals and In-Home Care Hours

	1993	1994	1995	1996
Number of Home Delivered Meals	132,401	112,298	107,089	90,053
Number of In-Home Care Hours	450,045	505,466	538,435	743,534

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Family Violence. The rate of reported child abuse or neglect in Pierce County declined slightly from 1991 to 1996. The rate of children (ages 0-7) referred to Child Protective Services in 1996 was 6:1,000. This compares to a statewide rate of 5.7:1,000. In 1991, the rate per 1,000 in Pierce County was 7.2 and the statewide rate was 6.1. This represents a 16% decrease in Pierce County and a 6.5% decrease statewide. Approximately 20% of adults in Pierce County personally know an adult who was abused by a family member or intimate partner in the last year. Younger adults reported higher rates than did older adults, as approximately one-quarter of adults under age 34 reported personally knowing a victim. Over one-third of Hispanic adults reported knowing a victim, significantly more than any other racial/ethnic group.

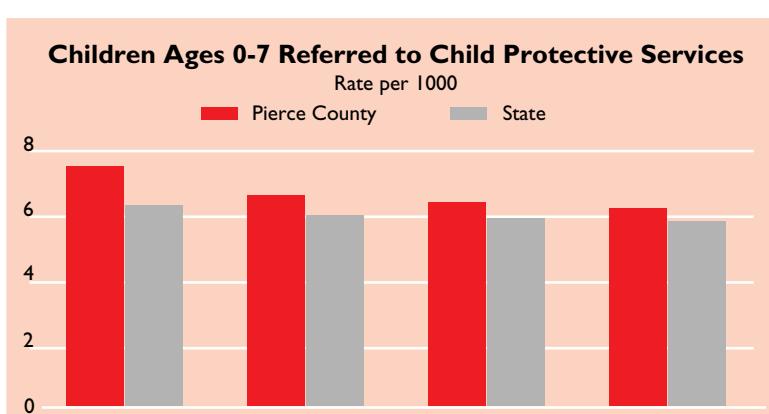


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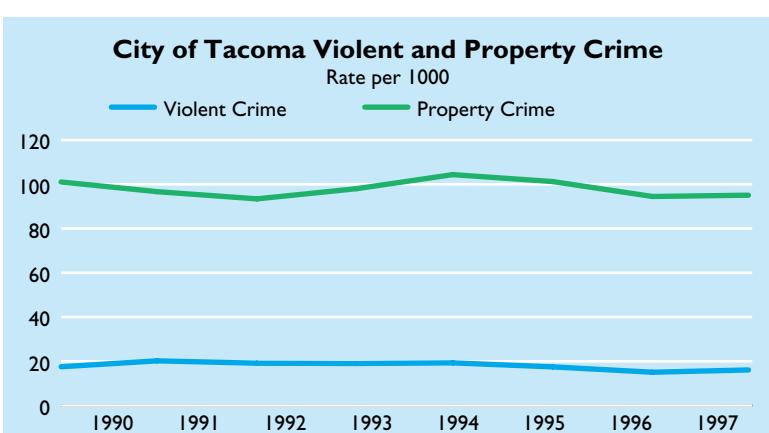
Safety and Crime. Violent and property crimes remained relatively level from 1990 to 1996, indicating the continued importance of preventive measures. The rate of

juvenile arrests for violent crimes in Pierce County for 1995 was 4.9 per 1,000 juveniles. This rate has remained relatively steady since 1989. Juvenile arrests for property crimes have increased by 26% since 1989, with the rate in 1995 at 40.1 per 1,000 juveniles. 15% of Pierce County's residents felt that their neighborhood was "extremely safe" from crime. Less than 4% felt their neighborhood was "not safe at all." Older respondents, those with higher household incomes and whites typically felt a high sense of neighborhood safety.

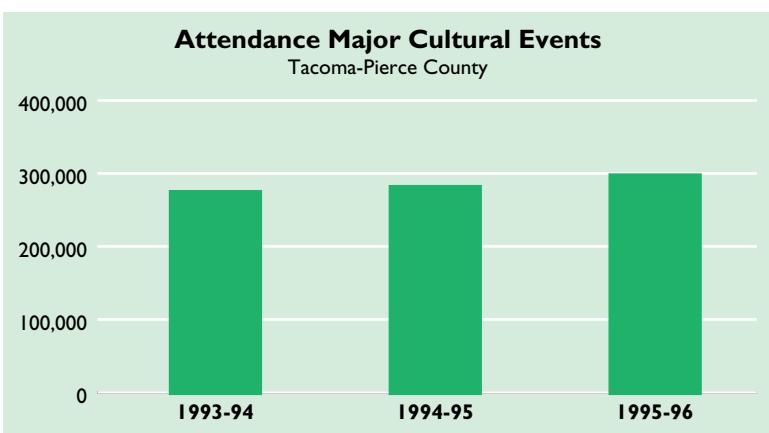
Arts and Culture. Between 1990 and 1992, dollars generated by local arts and cultural activity doubled from \$6 million to over \$12.1 million. Attendance at major Tacoma-Pierce County cultural events showed a slow, steady increase of nearly 8% between 1993 and 1996.



Source: UW Human Services Policy Center, Graduate School of Public Affairs



Source: Tacoma Police Department



Source: National Association of Local Arts Agencies

EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The economic and social health of Tacoma-Pierce County requires a strong commitment to first-rate educational opportunities for all citizens. Equal access to quality schools and job-training programs helps to better equip the work force for employment and provides people with the resources to explore and strive for personal goals.

The strength and diversity of an educational system is measured by the wellness of its public and private schools, colleges and universities, libraries and literacy and job-training programs. These components provide the residents of our area a lifelong learning network that is stable and challenging, and is attractive to individuals and families who are considering relocating to the south Puget Sound area.

Most important is that by adequately serving our youth, we are preparing the next generation to assume full citizenship in our society with the basic skills necessary for full participation.

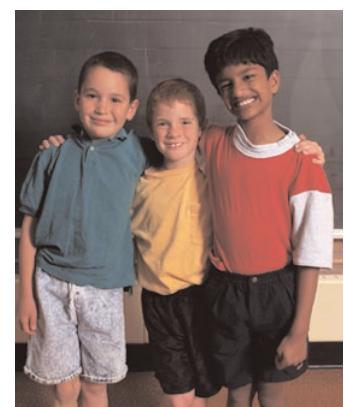
Approximately 130,000 children are enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade in Pierce County today, and with steady population growth in the Puget Sound area, the demand to facilitate our youth with excellent educational opportunities shall certainly remain as a primary focus to the structuring of our communities.

The communities of Pierce County are served by five library systems: the Milton Public Library, The Pierce County Library, the Roy City Library, and the Tacoma Public Library. These libraries provide residents of all ages with resources to supplement formal course work and to contribute to lifelong learning efforts.

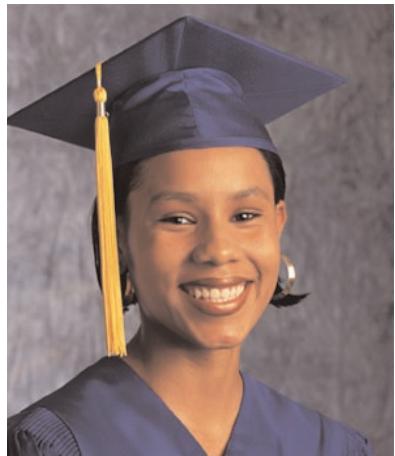
HOW ARE WE DOING?

Public K-12 Education. The Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS), given to public school students in grades 4 and 8, measure Reading, Language Arts and Math skills, as compared to a national median score of 50.

Grade 4. CTBS scores in Reading and Language Arts have remained relatively stable from 1991 through 1996 at or slightly above the national average of 50. Math scores have steadily risen over the last five years, with 1996 scores surpassing any other year. The 1996 score of 52 is above the national median.



Grade 8. Reading scores have remained relatively level since 1991. The 1996 score of 52, though lower than any in the last six years, is only two points less than the 1993 high of 54, and is above the national median. Language Arts and Math scores have increased since 1991. Language Arts scores have risen from 49 in 1991 to 54 in 1996. Math scores peaked at 57 in 1994 and in 1996 were 55, still well above the 1991 score of 49.



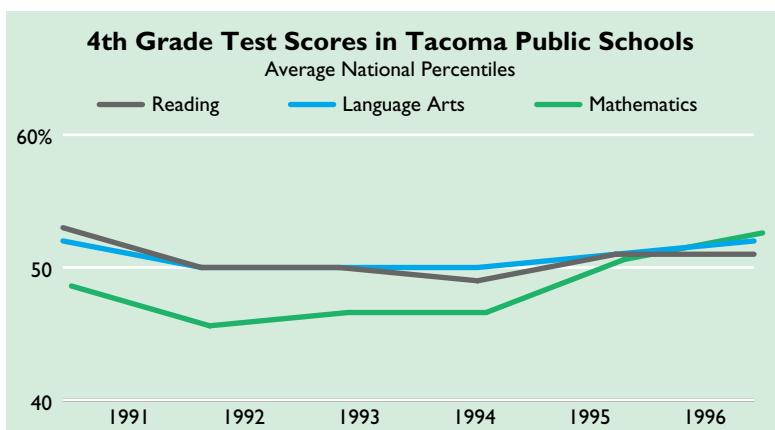
Grade 11. The Curriculum Frameworks Assessment System (CFAS) is administered to students in grade 11. Only state percentiles are available for 11th grade performance. The CFAS measures students in four areas: English/Language Arts, History and Social Studies, Mathematics and Science. In each of these

areas, the State Percentile scores of Tacoma students have increased. The most notable increase is in Math, climbing from 47 in 1992 to 53 in 1996. In 1992, the average Tacoma junior scored below counterparts across the state, but since that time, scores have risen above the 50th percentile in all areas except for History and Social Studies, where the 1996 score was 49.

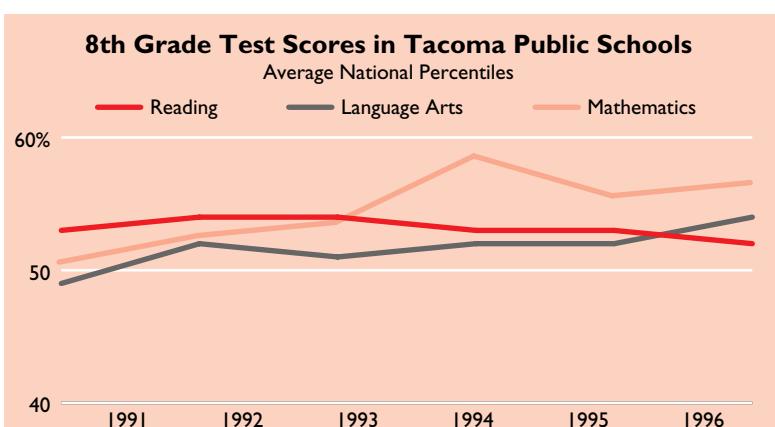
Public Library Circulation. The Tacoma Public Library has had the highest circulation per capita in each of the five years, but because of population growth, has declined from 16.1 per capita to 13.5 in 1995.

The Pierce County Library, which has the largest population base of the five libraries, has led in the total count of materials circulated each year. The Puyallup Public Library has shown the strongest growth, spurred by population growth and a healthy materials budget. The Milton Public Library has remained stable with a narrow range since 1991. The Roy City Library, with a small collection and population, has been subject to great variation from year to year.

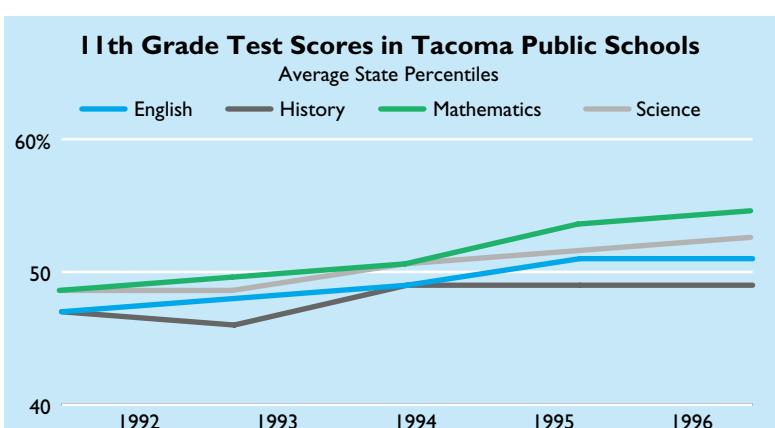
Head Start Program. The number of Pierce County children eligible for the Head Start program has risen steadily since 1991. Currently, about six of ten children who are eligible for the program are being served.



Source: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

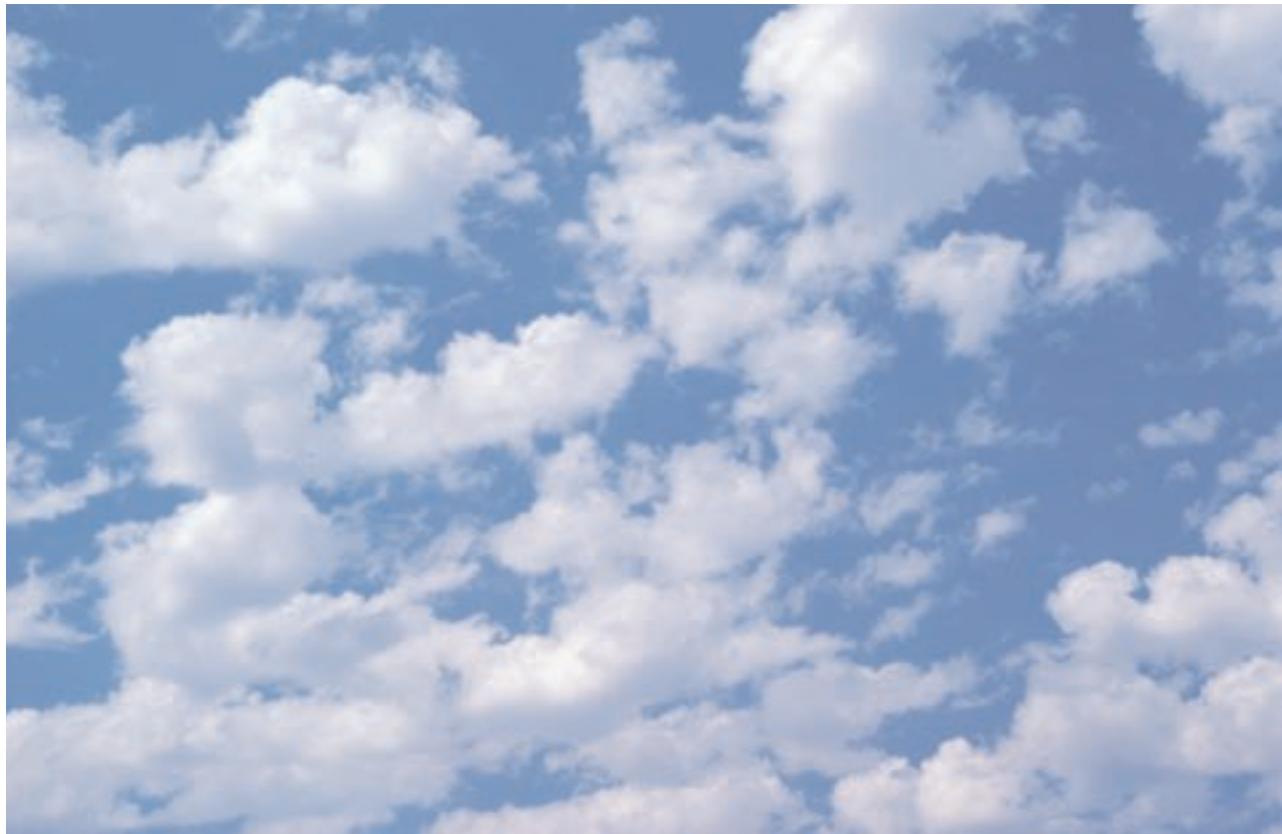


Source: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction



Source: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

As we move into the twenty-first century, quality of life in our region will depend greatly on the health of our surrounding environment. Clean air and water, the preservation and restoration of the area's natural habitat and improved waste management systems are essential to create and sustain a healthy community.

Today, the link between economic development, the environment and our quality of life requires an effective plan to promote community sustainability. By educating ourselves and encouraging others to support creative ways to use available resources, the citizens in this community can meet our goals for environmental preservation and protection.

Air quality, waste management and water quantity are three components of the environment that require our attention.

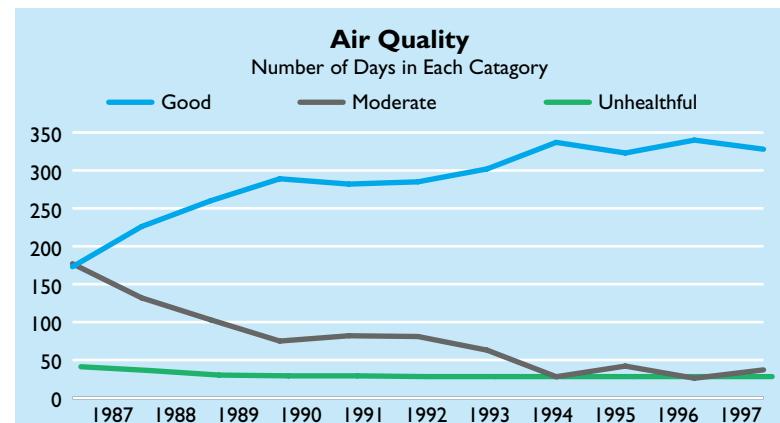
- *Locally, air pollution is caused mainly by carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, suspended particulate matter and ozone.*
- *Local refuse programs that promote reuse, waste reduction and recycling offer the most practical approach to minimizing hazards.*
- *Our community's water supply must be reliable for the long term, and as more people arrive, the demand on the water supply increases greatly.*

HOW ARE WE DOING?

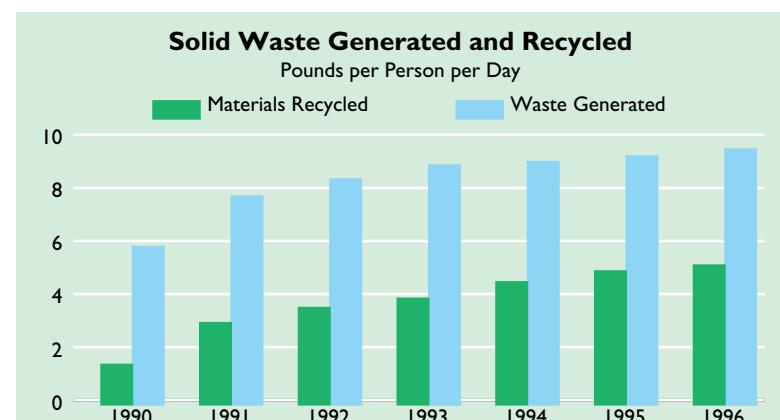
Air Quality. Tacoma-Pierce County continues to improve air quality. Significant improvement of air quality for our region has resulted in the Tacoma Tide Flats area being redesignated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as an area which is now “in attainment” of the National standards for Carbon Monoxide and Suspended Particulate Matter. EPA and the State are now working on a plan to improve the visibility in our region.

Waste Generation and Recycling. As our community grows, we generate more solid waste. An average of 1 ton of solid waste per household is generated each year with 120lbs. of that being recycled. Through local programs that promote reuse, reduction and recycling, our community will move toward a more sustainable community and begin to see waste generation and recycled materials grow closer together.

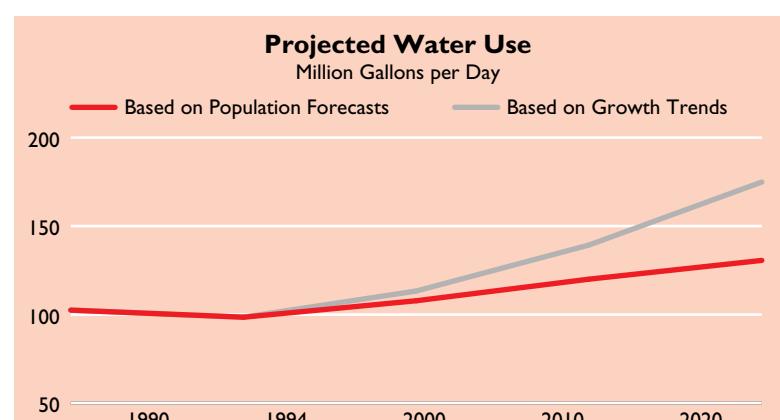
Water Quantity. Our community’s water supply must be reliable for the long term. As our area attracts new people, the demand on our water supply increases greatly. A number of jurisdictions are in the process of planning for the future to meet tomorrow’s needs, but that will have impacts on rates and conservation/ reuse. As displayed in the graph on “Projected Water Use,” conservation is critical in helping to preserve this natural resource.



Source: Puget Sound Air Pollution Agency



Source: Pierce County Department of Public Works and Utilities



Source: Puget Sound Air Pollution Agency

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

In a healthy economy, personal income is distributed equitably among the population, and economic diversity is valued. Economic measures directly reflect the area's job market, accounting for how easily residents can find work, how easily employers can find workers, what kinds of jobs are available, how much people are earning, and how far their paychecks are going.

Communities that have strong quality of life factors will in turn have a more robust economy.

Indirectly, an area's economy can be far more telling. An economy reflects the level of activity people are willing and able to undertake, the quality of education available in the community, the presence and availability of cultural resources, the health of the environment, the level of public safety, and other such "quality of life" factors.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

One way of looking at our economy is to lump together many different factors to come up with a single number. The Pierce County Economic Index (PCEI) is one such number. Individual factors, such as unemployment rate, specific job growth, wage levels, and buying power can also be traced and evaluated.

As measured by the PCEI, the economy in Pierce County has continued to grow in the last two years, but at a rate slightly below the average for the years 1984 through 1996.

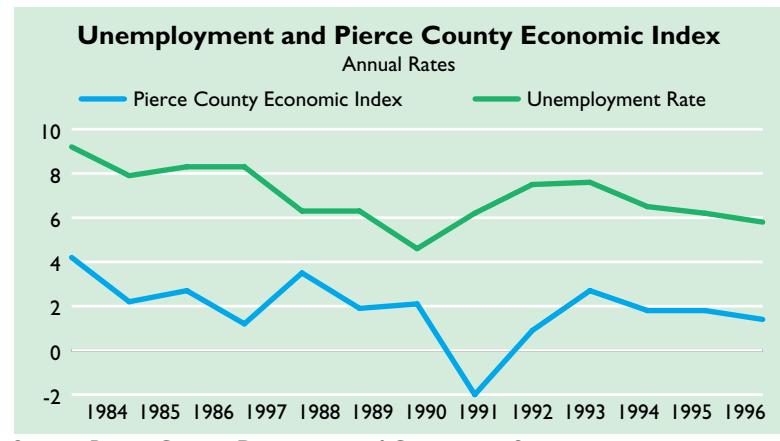


From 1989 through 1996, approximately 42,000 new jobs were added to the Pierce County economy, resulting in unemployment in 1996 to hit its lowest rate in six years.

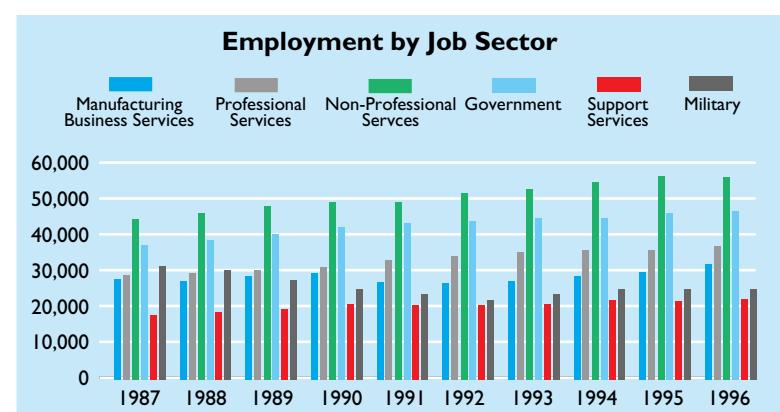
Non-professional services, which include wholesale and retail trade as well as guest services (hotels, boarding houses, etc.), have become an increasingly prominent area of employment. Government and professional services have also experienced growth, though at a slower rate, and employment in manufacturing, business and support services has shown modest yet unsteady progress.



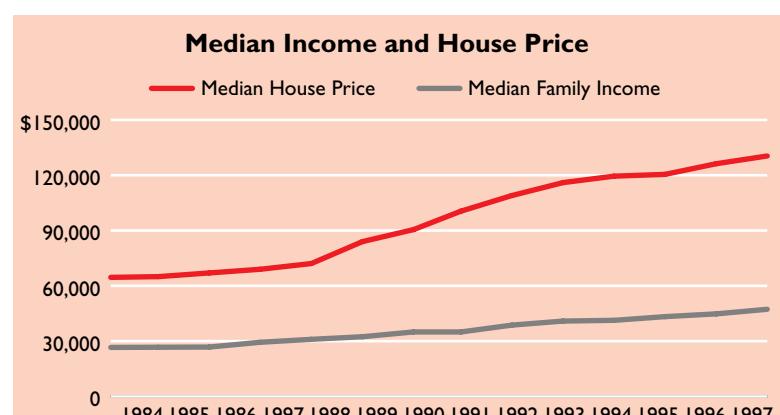
Per capita income (total income divided by total number of people, adjusted for inflation) in Pierce County increased by 11.5% from 1984 through 1995. However, the average increase for the United States as a whole was 15.2%. During that period, incomes did not keep up with housing costs, as the median family income increased 62.8% from \$26,000 to \$43,000 and the median price for a single family home increased 86.5% from \$64,000 to \$120,475.



Source: Pierce County Department of Community Services



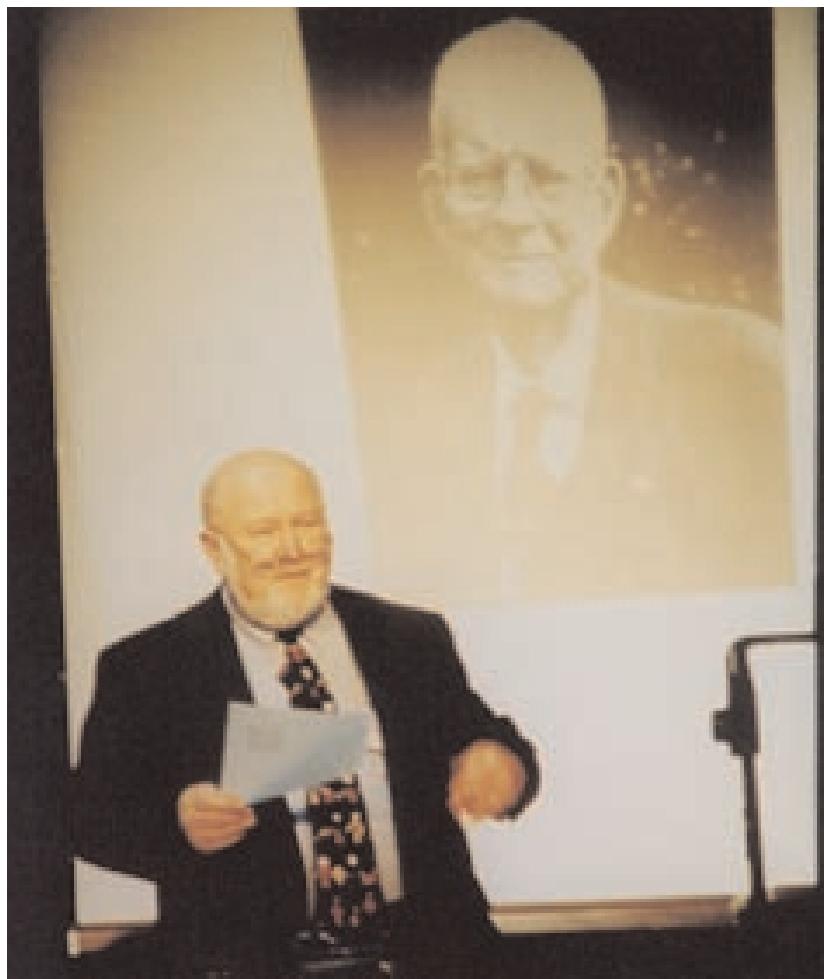
Source: Pierce County Department of Community Services



Source: Pierce County Department of Community Services



DEMING PARTNERSHIP PROJECT



Photos by Pat Flynn

In 1996, when *Vital Signs*, the precursor to *Indicators for a Healthy Community*, was printed, it represented a new way of viewing our community. It asked us to think about how our actions of today affect the conditions of the future.

In the fall of 1996, a project was commenced in Pierce County that is also asking us to view our community in a new way. This project is the Deming Partnership Project.

The Deming Partnership Project is an effort to improve the quality of life in Tacoma and Pierce County.

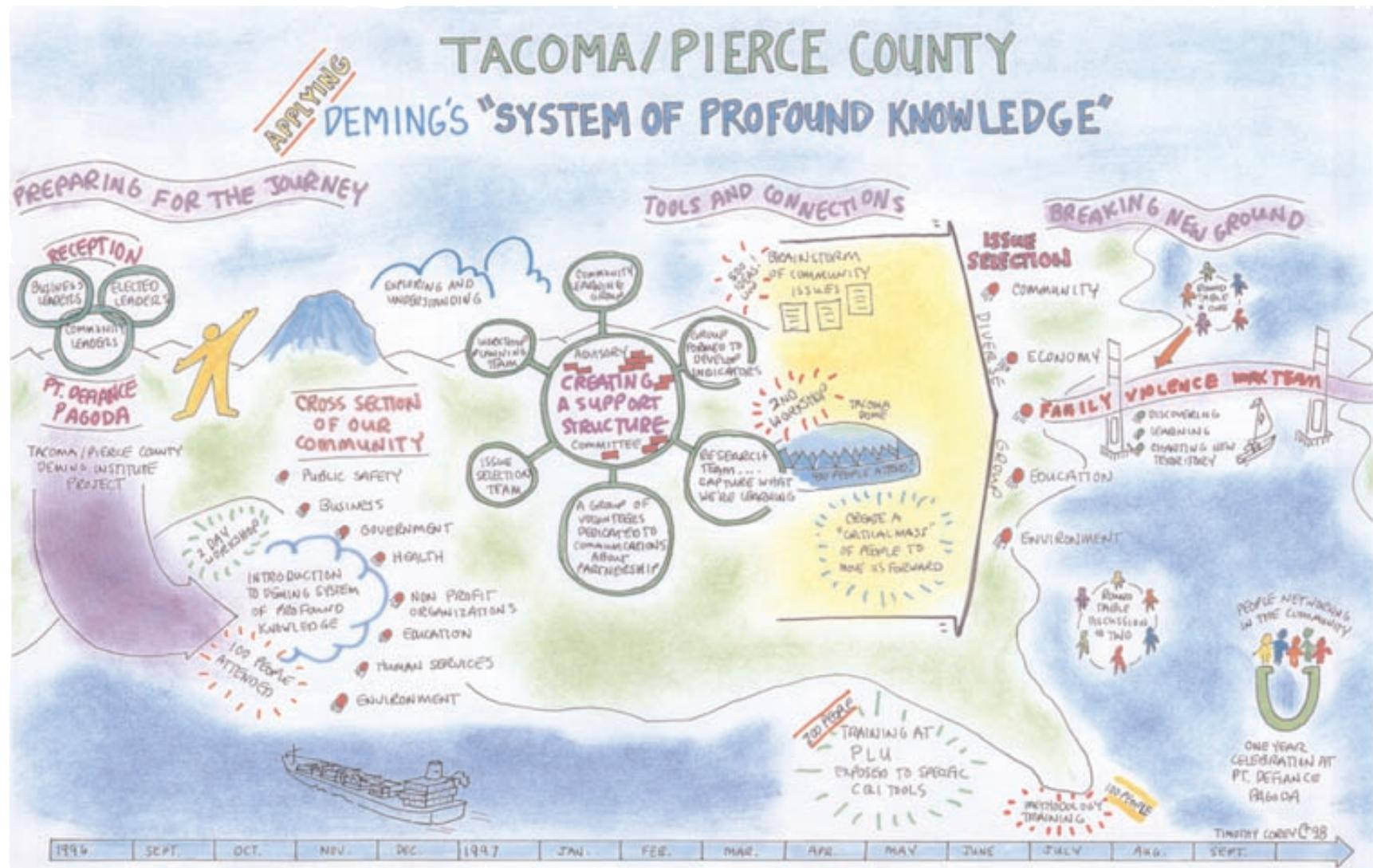
The Deming Partnership Project is an effort to improve the quality of life in Tacoma and Pierce County by applying the principles and philosophy of Dr. W. Edwards Deming, an American statistician whose new problem solving philosophy brought post-World War II Japan back from economic ruin.

The basis of Dr. Deming's philosophy is understanding that our community is a system in which all activities and all people are connected. Effective change cannot come from isolated efforts to improve the pieces of the system. It must come from a concerted and collaborative effort that addresses the system as a whole. In the fall of 1996, The W. Edwards Deming Institute chose Tacoma/Pierce County as the only community in the United States to embark with it on this first-of-its-kind community improvement effort.

In the first phase of the Partnership, experts in the Deming philosophy came from across the nation to conduct training seminars. Over 530 Pierce County residents attended these sessions, and together they chose "family violence" as the first community issue to which they would like to apply the Deming principles.

Now, in the second phase of the Partnership, community members are merging the Deming philosophy with their knowledge and skills to uncover new ways to reduce family violence. Working together are individuals from all sectors of the community: human service professionals, government officials, neighbors, activists, business people, men and women, young and old. It is truly a community-wide effort.





Graphic by Timothy Corey

The lessons learned from this first effort will be applied to a next issue, where even more will be learned to apply to subsequent issues. Communities across America and in several foreign countries are following this groundbreaking partnership with considerable interest. It is anticipated that the findings will become a model for change that could revolutionize community building efforts.



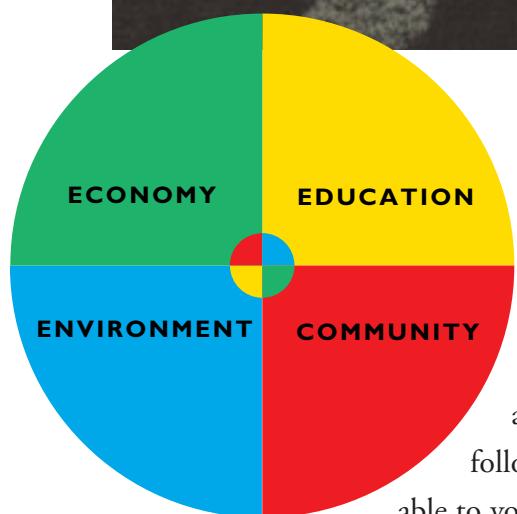


CONCLUSION



Sustainable living is essential to maintain and support the vitality of Tacoma/Pierce County communities. Sustainability comes from the Latin Root meaning to “support from below.” A true community combines the physical, cultural and spiritual characteristics that inspire people to care for each other. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.





There is no single path towards a sustainable future, as each person, community, ethnic or religious group, region, country, or culture has the right to search for its own unique approaches. But in identifying and following the path that is most suitable to you and your community, you take a step toward ensuring a bright and healthy future for your region.

We have not made an effort to interpret the data presented, and some of the statistics presented may conflict with other data sources. Our report is meant to serve the public by shedding light on the conditions that surround us.

"Start now, define some criteria, and in each and every decision, pick that option that trends toward sustainability. That way we will gradually get on a sustainable course."

-Kathy Fletcher, People for Puget Sound

By monitoring progress and helping to make progress happen, these indicators can point a community toward changes that will have an effect on our quality of life. If anyone is interested in continuing this community project, please contact Forum 21, a group of local community and business leaders dedicated to keeping the spirit of our region alive, who will facilitate your efforts to assess these critical issues. We look forward to any constructive suggestions for future reports, and hope that these indicators are used to recognize and guide change.

For more information, please contact
Alisa O'Hanlon at Forum 21, (253) 798-5711





TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY

INDICATORS

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The people that brought you this report thank the following organizations for their contributions to the publication and distribution of this document.

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