INTRODUCTION, CITY VISION, AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK BACKGROUND REPORT

CHAPTER 1

CITY OF SEATAC

ENVISION SEATAC 2044

TABLE OF CONTENTS

URBAN GROWTH AREA AND URBAN CENTER.....IF-BR-3

GMA REQUIREMENTS.....IF-BR-4

COMMUNITY PROFILE IF-BR-6

Tables

Table BR1.1 GMA Requirements IF-BR-4

Table BR1.2 Relationship between GMA and Plan IF-BR-5

Figures

Figure BR1.1 Annual Population Growth (%) 2011-2023. .....IF-BR-6

Figure BR1.2 Race Distribution in SeaTac. IF-BR-7

Figure BR1.3 Foreign Born Population in SeaTac. IF-BR-7

Figure BR1.4 Languages Spoken in SeaTac. IF-BR-8

Figure BR1.5 Median Age Over Time (2010-2021). IF-BR-8

Figure BR1.6 Renters vs Owner-Occupied. IF-BR-9

Figure BR1.7 Housing Size in SeaTac. IF-BR-9

Figure BR1.8 Housing Burden by Income Bracket. IF-BR-10

Figure BR1.9 Educational Attainment (Age 25). IF-BR-10

Figure BR1.10 Annual Household Income. IF-BR-11

Figure BR1.11 Median Household Income and Population with Income below the Poverty Level by Block Groups. IF-BR-11

Figure BR1.12 Population Driving Alone Over Time. IF-BR-12

Figure BR1.13 Means of Transportation to Work. IF-BR-12

Figure BR1.14 Healthcare Insurance Coverage. IF-BR-13

The Comprehensive Plan has been developed in accordance with Section 36.70A.070 RCW of the Growth Management Act (GMA), Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC's) Vision 2050 Regional Growth Strategy, and King County Countywide Planning Policies.

URBAN GROWTH AREA AND URBAN CENTER

The GMA's overall goal is to "encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner" (RCW 36.70A.020(1)). A major component of the State, regional, and County goals and policies is to reduce the conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development. Under the GMA, the primary means to achieve this objective is through the designation of urban growth areas at the County level, within which growth shall be encouraged, and outside of which growth can occur only if it is not urban in nature (RCW 36.70A.110). Land within the Urban Growth Area must accommodate projected 20-year growth. Development must coordinate with infrastructure and promote efficient land use.

Cities are also required to designate "urban growth boundaries" if they abut unincorporated land they would like to annex. SeaTac has no potential annexation areas. The land within SeaTac's current corporate boundary constitutes the City's Urban Growth Area.

Within the Urban Growth Areas, King County Countywide Planning Policies call for the designation of a limited number of "Urban Centers." Urban Centers are designated where a City's commitments will help ensure the success of that Center by adopting a map, housing and employment growth targets for that Center, and policies to promote and maintain quality of life in the Center through:

- A broad mix of land uses that foster daytime and nighttime activities and opportunities for social interaction;
- A range of affordable and healthy housing choices;
- Historic preservation and adaptive reuse of historic places;
- Parks and public open spaces that are accessible and beneficial to all residents in the Urban Center;
- Strategies to increase tree canopy within the Urban Center and incorporate low impact development measures to minimize stormwater runoff;
- Facilities to meet human service needs;
- Superior urban design which reflects the local community vision for compact urban development;
- Pedestrian and bicycle mobility, transit use, and linkages between these modes;
- Planning for complete streets to provide safe and inviting access to multiple travel modes, especially bicycle and pedestrian travel; and
- Parking management and other strategies that minimize trips made by single-occupant vehicle, especially during peak commute periods.

The City of SeaTac has accordingly designated a section of its land area as an Urban Center. This Urban Center designation has been approved by the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) and the King County Council, and is a regional growth center under PSRC's Vision 2050.

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GMA REQUIREMENTS

The GMA requires comprehensive plans to include the following mandatory elements. It also allows cities and counties to add other elements in their comprehensive plan, including but not limited to the following optional elements .

Table BR1.1 GMA Requirements

Mandatory Comp Plan Elements (RCW 36.70A.070)	Optional Comp Plan Elements
• Land Use • Housing • Capital Facilities Plan • Utilities • Rural Development (counties only) • Transportation • Climate Change and Resiliency* • Ports (mandatory for cities with annual maritime port revenues exceeding $60 million, RCW 36.70A.085)	• Economic Development** • Parks and Recreation** • Conservation (RCW 36.70A.080) • Solar Energy (RCW 36.70A.080) • Recreation (RCW 36.70A.080) • Subarea Plans (neighborhoods, rural villages, urban growth areas, tribal areas, etc.) • Ports (optional for cities with annual maritime port revenues of $20 million to $60 million, RCW 36.70A.085)

** The Climate Change and Resiliency element was added in 2023 as a mandatory element per RCW 36.70A.070(9).*
*** These elements are listed as mandatory in RCW 36.70A.070(7) and (8), but they are actually optional because funds have not been appropriated to help pay for preparing them, per RCW 36.70A.070(9).*

(Table and information above from the Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC)).

This Plan includes all mandatory the elements (though a few have modified names), except the new Climate Change and Resiliency Element which SeaTac and other central Puget Sound cities are required to adopt by 2029. The City has also chosen to adopt optional and SeaTac-specific-elements that address the Urban Center, SeaTac's neighborhoods, and other priority topics. The GMA requires specific information to be addressed in each element. For example, the transportation element must include level of service standards, the utilities element must include an inventory of existing facilities, and housing must include provisions for the needs of all economic segments of the community. Additional elements may be included per RCW 36.70A.080. All elements must be coordinated and consistent with each other. The plan responds to specific Growth Management Act requirements as noted in the table below.

Table BR1.2 Relationship between GMA and Plan

RCW	GMA REQUIREMENT	WHERE ADDRESSED IN THE PLAN
37.70A.070(1)	Include a land use element designating the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the uses of land, including population densities, building intensities, and estimates of future population growth.	Land Use Element and Background Report
36.70A.070(1)	Review drainage, flooding and stormwater runoff in the area and provide for the protection of the quality and quantity of public water supplies.	Capital Facilities Element and Background Report and Land Use Element
36.70A.150	Identify lands for useful public purposes such as utility corridors, transportation corridors, landfills, sewage treatment facilities, stormwater management facilities, recreation, schools, and other public uses.	Multiple Elements and Background Reports
36.70A.160	Identify open space corridors to include lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat and trails.	Land Use, Urban Center, Neighborhoods, and Parks, Recreation, Open Space Elements and Background Reports
36.70A.200	Develop a process for identifying and siting essential public facilities, such as airports, State education facilities, State and local correctional facilities, solid waste facilities and State and regional transportation facilities (see also WAC 365-195-340).	Land Use Elements and Background Report and City of SeaTac Comprehensive Plan EIS (August 26, 1994)

COMMUNITY PROFILE

In the context of the Seattle Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which is a conglomeration of all jurisdictions within King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties, the City of SeaTac's (the City's) residential population has significantly more racial and linguistic diversity, proportionately more renters, more challenges paying for housing or healthcare, less educational attainment, and lower household incomes. The purpose of this section is to highlight these and other demographic traits that differentiate SeaTac's residents from those of the region. The primary source of these statistics is the five-year estimate of the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS).

City of SeaTac Key Statistics:

- White alone population: 32%
- Speak English less than very well: 24%
- Persons per household: 2.7
- Age 25+ with no high school diploma: 16%
- Foreign born population: 39%
- Residents who live alone: 33%
- Renters: 51%
- Housing Cost Burdened: 40%

Introduction

The City's population, as of April 2023, was approximately 31,740, according to the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM).[1] This was the second consecutive year of a marginal population decrease, though it has increased by about one percent overall since 2020. And while the average household sizes are similar between the two geographies, the City has higher proportions of single-person households (33 percent, compared to 27 percent) and households of four or more (28 percent, compared to 23 percent).[2] SeaTac's average household size increased slightly, from 2.53 to 2.66 people per household, proportionally similar to an increase seen throughout the region. Households featuring married couples are significantly less common in SeaTac, with 39 percent identifying as such, compared to 50 percent in the MSA.[3]

Annual Population Growth (%) 2011-2023

As of 2023, SeaTac has approximately **31,740 residents.** The population has decreased marginally for the last 2 years, though the City's population has **increased** by about **1% overall since 2020.**

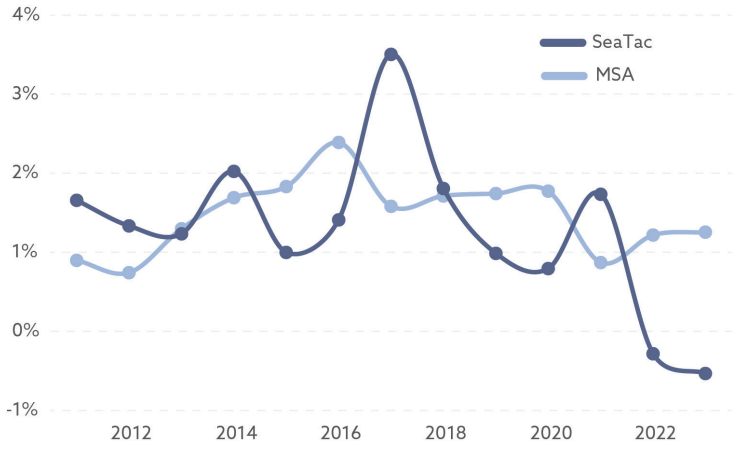


Figure IF-BR-1.1 - *Annual Population Growth (%) 2011-2023.*

1 Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM), April 1 official population estimates, April 2023, retrieved from <https://ofm.wa.gov/washington-data-research/population-demographics/population-estimates/april-1-official-population-estimates>.
2 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Table B25010: Household Size, April 2021.
3 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Table B11012: Household Type, April 2021.

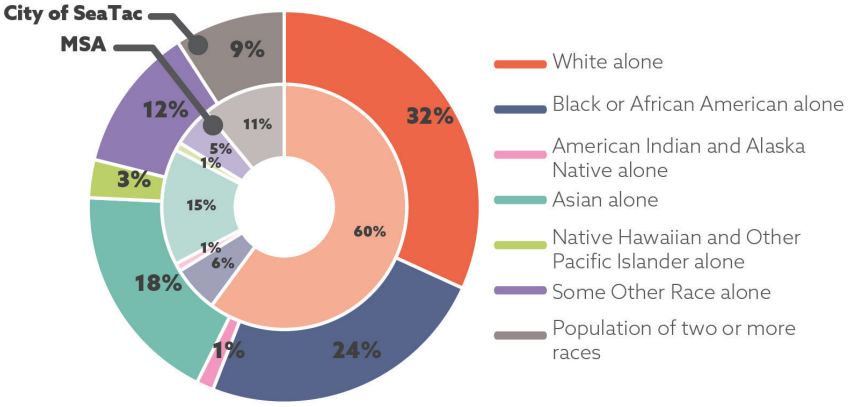
Race and Ethnicity

The City stands out in the region as particularly diverse in terms of race and ethnicity. While the majority of MSA residents are white and not Hispanic or Latino (about 61 percent), the same can be said of only 33 percent of SeaTac residents.[4] Conversely, City residents are about 22 percent Black or African American and 22 percent Hispanic or Latino, proportionately much higher than that of the MSA (six and 11 percent, respectively). The City also has higher proportions of Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, and residents of "some other race."

Nearly 39 percent of SeaTac's residential population is foreign born, roughly double the proportion of foreign born residents throughout the MSA.[5] Many of these residents were born in Ethiopia (seven percent of all residents), Somalia (four percent), and Mexico (six percent).

Race Distribution in SeaTac and the Metropolitan Statistical Area

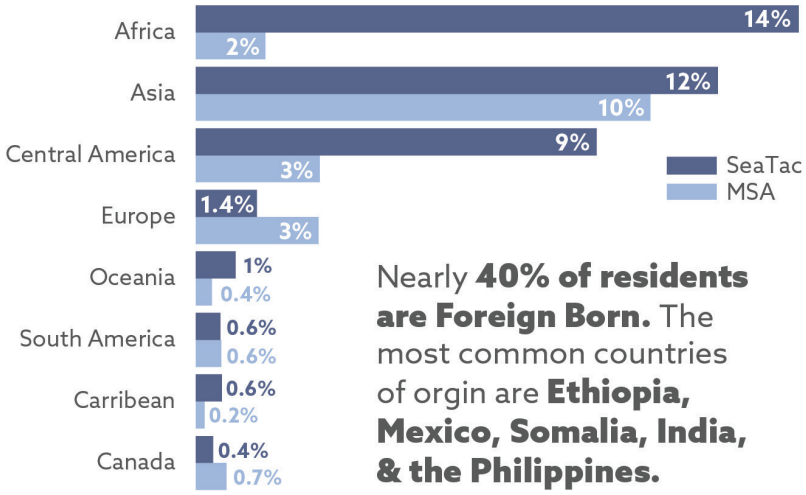
There are **far fewer** residents in SeaTac who identify as **White alone** than in the Metropolitan Statistical Area.



Nearly **a quarter** of residents identify as **Black or African American alone.**

Figure IF-BR-1.2 *- Race Distribution in SeaTac.*

Foreign Born Population in SeaTac and the Metropolitan Statistical Area



Nearly **40% of residents are Foreign Born.** The most common countries of orgin are **Ethiopia, Mexico, Somalia, India, & the Philippines.**

Figure IF-BR-1.3 *- Foreign Born Population in SeaTac.*

4 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Tables B02001 and B03002: Race and Ethnicity, April 2021.
5 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Table B05002: Place of Birth, April 2021.

Language

About 52 percent of SeaTac residents speak English at home, far less than the rest of the region with about 76 percent doing so throughout the MSA.[6] The second most common language in the City is Spanish, with 17 percent of residents speaking it at home, compared to only seven percent in the MSA. Nearly 15 percent of City residents speak languages that fall under the Census Bureau's "other" category (only two percent in the MSA). Looking at recent microdata from West Central King County (SeaTac, Burien, Tukwila, and White Center), it appears likely that Somali and Amharic are among the most commonly spoken languages in SeaTac that fall under this category.[7,8] Approximately 24 percent of SeaTac residents identify themselves as speaking English "less than 'very well,'" more than double that of the MSA (nine percent).

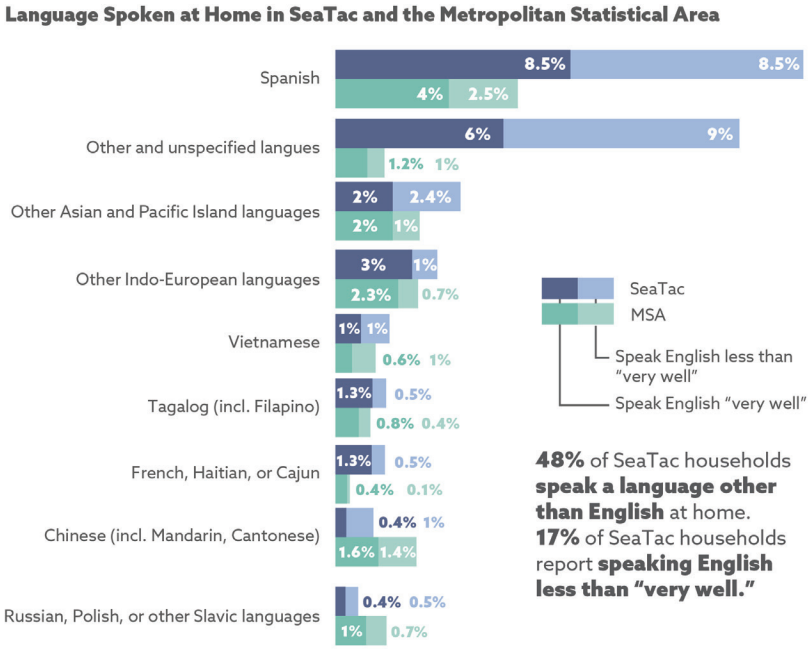


Figure IF-BR-1.4 - *Languages Spoken in SeaTac.*

Age

The City's age distribution is similar to that of the MSA. SeaTac's median age is 36, compared to the MSA's 37.[9] The City has marginally higher (less than one percent higher) proportions of children and residents between the ages of 18 and 34, while the MSA has a just over one percentage point higher proportion of residents over the age of 64. Notably, the City's median age has increased by nearly two years since 2010, while that of the MSA has increased by less than one.

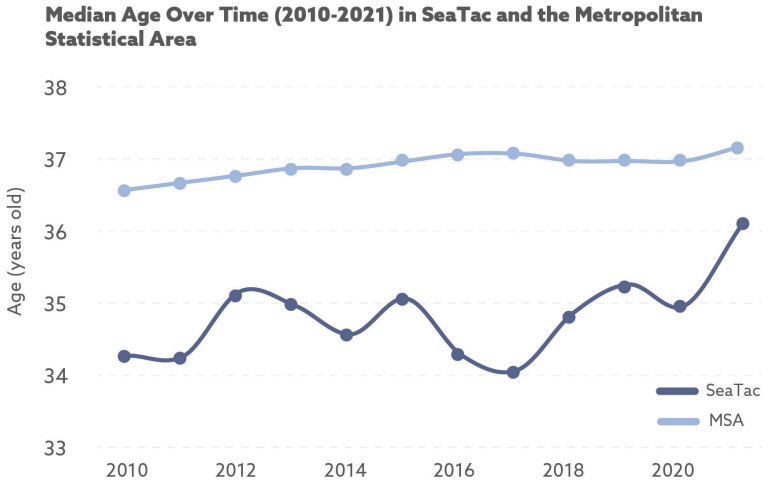
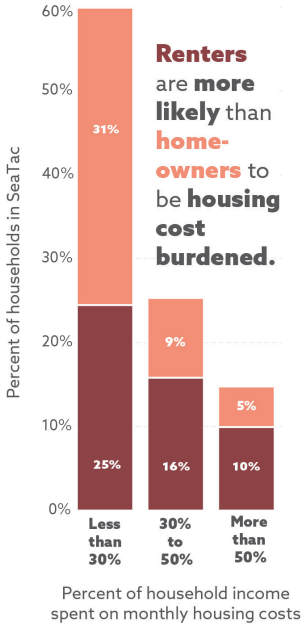


Figure IF-BR-1.5 - *Median Age Over Time (2010-2021).*

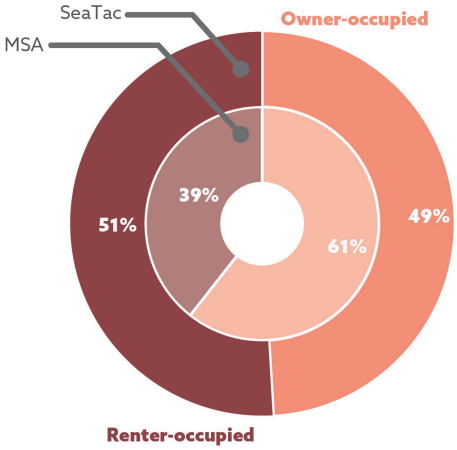
6 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Table C16001: Language Spoken at Home, April 2021.
7 U.S. Census, PUMS Microdata 2021, April 2021.
8 As of the 2020 ACS, 3.2% of West Central King County residents spoke Somali at home, and 2.0% spoke Amharic.
9 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Table B01001: Age, April 2021.

Housing

SeaTac's housing statistics are different from those of the region is several ways. A majority of the City's households rent their housing (51 percent) while only 39 percent are renters in the MSA.[10] The City's households also more frequently experience housing cost burden, defined by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as spending more than 30 percent of their gross income on housing costs. About 40 percent of SeaTac households experience this condition, while only 34 percent do so throughout the MSA.[11] Roughly 73 percent of households earning less than the median household income experience housing cost burden in SeaTac, while the same can be said for roughly 60 percent in the MSA.



Renters are **more likely** than **home-owners** to be **housing cost burdened.**



SeaTac has an **equal split** of **renter** and **owner** occupied-households, but a **larger portion of renters than the MSA.**

Figure IF-BR-1.6 *- Renters vs Owner-Occupied.*

Housing Size for SeaTac and the Metropolitan Statistical Area

SeaTac residents are **more likely to live in a 4 or more person household** when compared to the rest of the MSA.

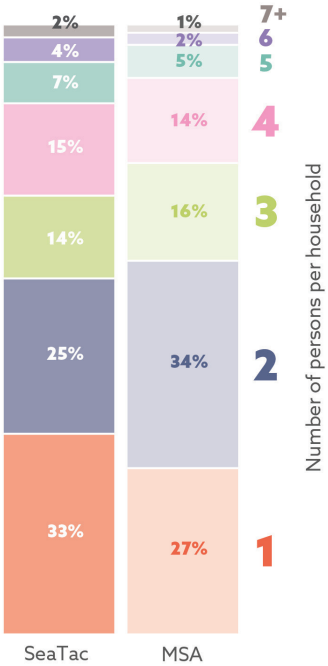


Figure IF-BR-1.7 - *Housing Size in SeaTac.*

10 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Table B25003: Housing Tenure, April 2021.
11 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Tables B25074 and B25095: Household Income by Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income and Household Income by Selected Monthly Owner costs as a Percentage of Household Income, April 2021.

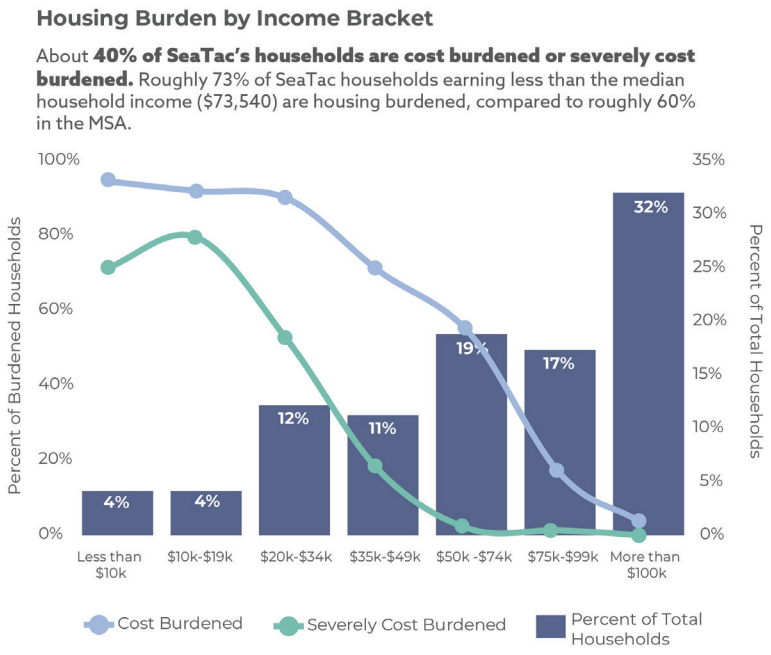


Figure IF-BR-1.8 *- Housing Burden by Income Bracket.*

Education

Educational attainment outcomes for residents aged 25 years and over are notably different between the City and the MSA. While seven percent of MSA residents in this age group don't have a high school diploma or GED, about 16 percent of City residents are in this category.[12] And while 44 percent of MSA residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, only about 24 percent of City residents have such a degree. About 20 percent of MSA residents attended some college without obtaining a degree, while about 23 percent of City residents have achieved this level of formal education.

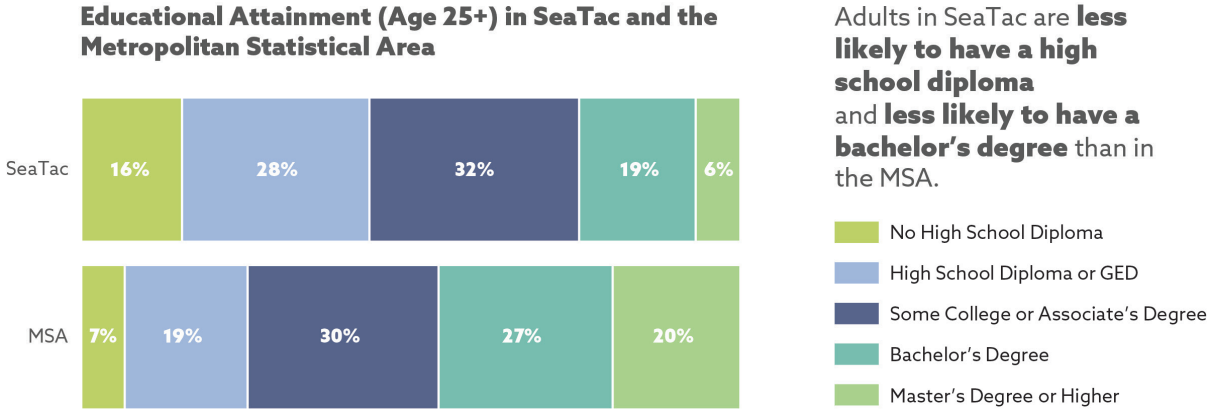


Figure IF-BR-1.9 *- Educational Attainment (Age 25).*

12 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Table B15003: Educational Attainment, April 2021.

Income

Annual household incomes in the City are generally lower than those of the MSA. The City's median income (about $74,000) is more than $20,000 less than that of the MSA ($98,000), while the City's mean ($86,000) is even further below that of the MSA ($131,000).[13] Referencing these geographies' income distributions, these gaps are primarily attributable to the fact that about 17 percent of MSA households make more than $200,000 annually, while the same can be said for only five percent of households in the City. About 11 percent of City households are below the poverty level, while about eight percent of MSA households are in this same category.[14] Approximately 24 percent of SeaTac households draw on social security income and about 12 percent receive food stamps.[15,16] About nine percent do not have internet access.[17]

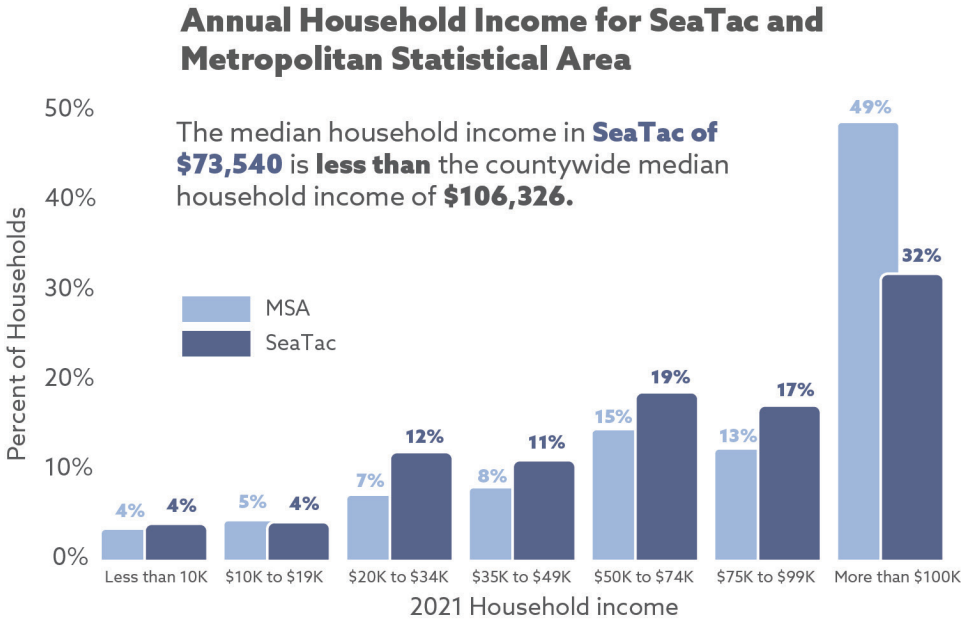


Figure FR-BR-1.10 *- Annual Household Income.*

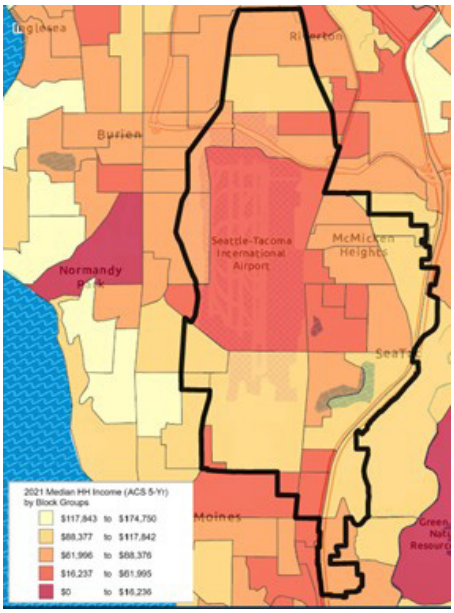
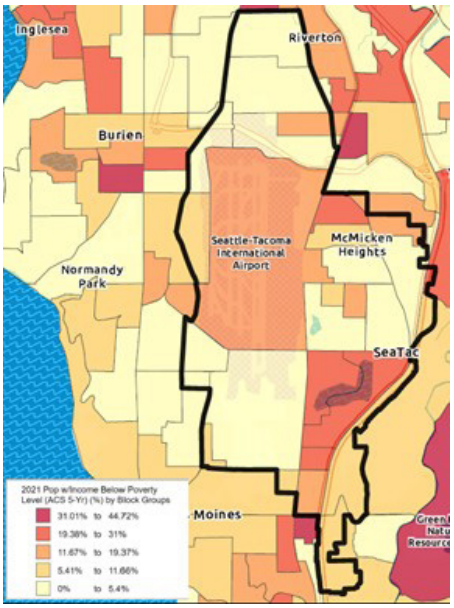


Figure FR-BR-1.11 *- Median Household Income (left) and Population with Income below the Poverty Level (right) by Block Groups.*



13 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Table B19013: Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months, April 2021.
14 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Table B19055: Population with Income Below Poverty Level, April 2021.
15 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Table B19055: Social Security Income Households, April 2021.
16 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Table B22010: Receipt of Food Stamps in Past 12 Months, April 2021.
17 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Table B28002: Internet Subscriptions in Household, April 2021.

Commute

SeaTac residents' commute habits are a slightly more diverse than those of the region, mostly due to having a significantly smaller population working from home. About 65, 12, and 10 percent of City residents drive alone, carpool, and take public transportation to work, respectively. These are each two-to-three percentage points higher than in the MSA. The most significant difference is that less than eight percent of City residents work from home, while the same can be said for nearly 15 percent of residents throughout the MSA. From 2010-2019, the rate of SeaTac residents driving alone to work increased by almost eight percentage points, while it decreased by two points in the MSA.

Driving Alone to Work in SeaTac and the Metropolitan Statistical Area

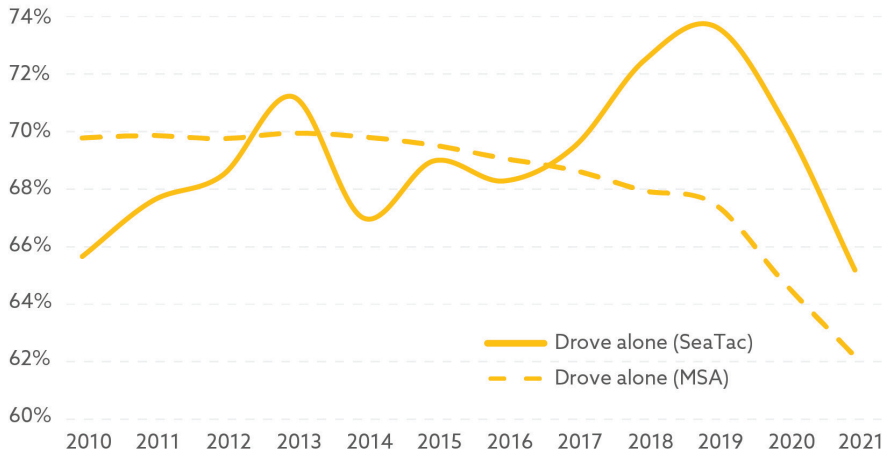
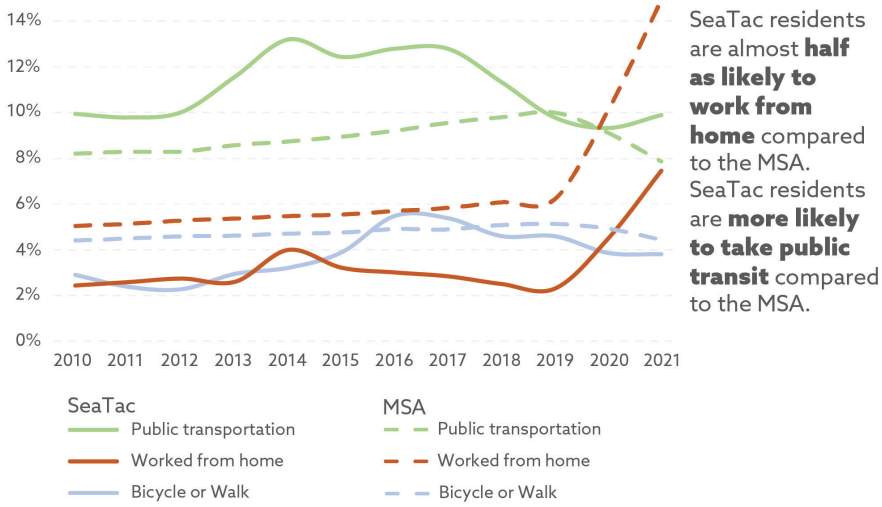


Figure FR-BR-1.12 *- Population Driving Alone Over Time.*

Means of Transportation to Work in SeaTac and the Metropolitan Statistical Area (excludes driving alone)



SeaTac residents are almost **half as likely to work from home** compared to the MSA. SeaTac residents are **more likely to take public transit** compared to the MSA.

Figure FR-BR-1.13 *- Means of Transportation to Work.*

Healthcare

About nine percent of City civilians are without health insurance coverage, a few percentage points higher than in the MSA (six percent). Public health insurance is also more common throughout the City, with about 41 percent of civilians utilizing this service, compared to 20 percent in the MSA.

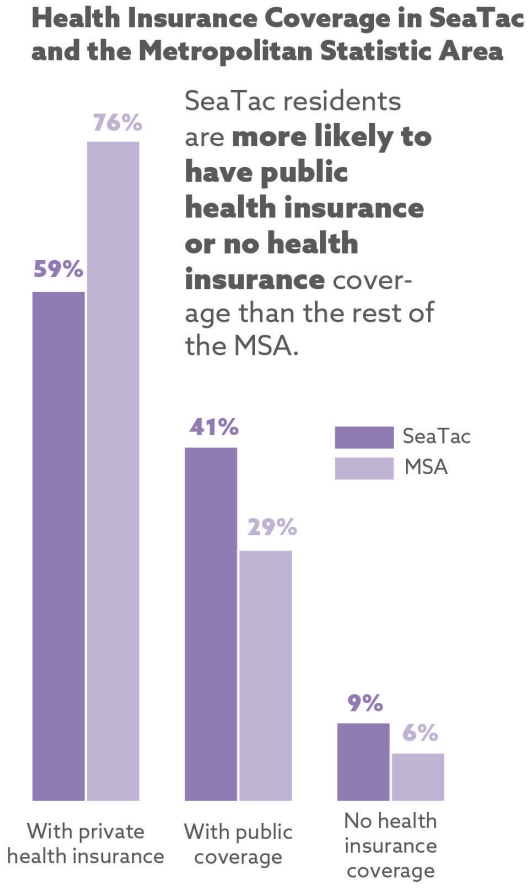


Figure FR-BR-1.14 *- Healthcare Insurance Coverage.*

18 U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates 2021 – Table B27015: Health Insurance Coverage by Income, April 2021.