

MYCT 4th Annual Report

June 2022–June 2023

Prepared by Chair Tara Ryan and Vice Chair Tara Zolfaghari

Please contact us with questions at taragrace@gmail.com or tarazolfa@gmail.com

Dear Mayor and Council,

After a long and exciting year, we officially present our fourth annual MYCT report for the 2022 - 2023 year! Established in 2019, the Mayor's Youth Commission of Tacoma has grown alongside Tacoma and its youth for the past four years. We have navigated our community in the midst of social and political changes and we have grappled with health and safety within our community. It was incredibly exciting to have our first full year in-person this year as a Commission! While still offering virtual options for accessibility, we were able to work face-to-face, to make genuine connections within our community (and eat some delicious food).

I am incredibly proud of our team and the many accomplishments we have made this year. We held a successful Youth Summit with record attendance here in Tacoma. We made our voices heard by taking stances on issues important to us. We held community bonding events like movie nights and a clothing swap. We focused on caring for our community to make change.

This year, we were lucky to expand our reach and work across the city, state, and country. One notable and exciting experience we had was attending the National League of Cities conference in Kansas City, Missouri. We also attended the annual Legislative Youth Advisory Council Youth Action Day in Olympia. We were able to meet youth who advocate for other youth voices from across the state and country, inspiring us to push forward with our work.

As Vice Chair of the Commission for the past two years, I have been lucky to learn so much about our Tacoma community. I have learned the importance of cherishing and fostering the youth voices in this community because youth have the bravery to speak about and advocate for the things important to our hearts, our families, and our community. I implore you to continue to reach out, establish connection, and show the youth in this community that you care. When we have adults that listen, support, and encourage us, we are able to reach our goals. There is still so much work left to do, but I am excited and confident for the future of the youth of Tacoma.

Thank you to the MYCT admin team, thank you to the General Assembly members, thank you to Graduate Tacoma, and thank you to the City of Tacoma. A very special thank you to my friend and partner, Chair Tara Ryan, for being the most passionate and kind person I could ask to work with these years. Also, thank you to Mayor Woodards and the City Council. Thank you to every person, organization, and group that we collaborated with. I feel lucky and privileged to have so many to thank because it means we were able to reach and connect with so many people. I am so excited for the future of this Commission and grateful for the lessons I have learned here.

Kindly,

Tara Zolfaghari and Tara Ryan

Commission Achievements

What we did as a whole commission:

1. 3rd Annual Youth Summit

- a. Our 4th annual Summit theme was Joy and Action
- b. Our commission held 4 different youth centered sessions at our Youth Summit which was in collaboration with Graduate Tacoma for their Charting Our Future Conference.
- c. We collaborated with over 12 community organizations and experts in the designated topic for our sessions. Additionally, we had over 45 students from across Tacoma attend our summit.

2. Camping Ban Stance

- a. As of September 29th, 2022, the Commission leadership team voted to take a stance against the City of Tacoma's proposed ordinance prohibiting camping around temporary shelters.

3. Attended the National League of Cities

- a. Our Commission leadership team attended the National League of Cities conference in Kansas City, Missouri in November 2022.
- b. We supported Mayor Woodards becoming president of the League.
- c. We participated in the Youth Delegate Session for the conference and gave our input on conversations happening nationwide. We hope to continue our work and discussion on a larger, nationwide scale moving forward as well.

4. Tenants Bill of Rights Stance

- a. At our January General Assembly meeting, the Commission as a whole unanimously voted to take a stance to support the Tacoma for All, Tenants Bill of Rights.
- b. The Commission decided to continue to support the Tenants Bill of Rights and sign onto a letter asking that the City of Tacoma not run a competing ballot initiative in November.

Committee Projects

The exciting achievements and projects of your four Commission committees.

1. Social Health - Presented by Leo Maffei and Beyla Kisebo:

- a. Collective Care Fest Planning
 - i. Bringing together food, community organizations, music, other art, and community members to organize around collective care
 - ii. Met with Erica Edmonds to discuss how she made one happen in her Texas community
- b. Housing Justice Youth Information Meeting
 - i. Offering a safe environment for youth to discuss housing insecurity, learn more about the tenants bill of rights, and become directly involved in the process.

- ii. Planned with Ty Moore and Zev Cook from Tacoma 4 All, who we connected with through the rallies at City Council meetings around the Camping Ban
 - iii. Thy Nguyen from The People's Assembly led discussions around restorative justice and community care
- c. Teen Community Involvement Surveys
 - i. Collecting information from local young people about how youth-serving organizations can best serve their needs
 - ii. [Link](#) to results
 - iii. The responses show:
 1. Young people do want to be involved in their community, especially through volunteer work focused on mental health and financial instability, activism, care of animals and children, environmental work, and art
 2. Young people have ideas of how to improve it
 - a. We mainly got responses about housing justice, walkability & transportation, and a kinder, more diverse community
 3. Young people struggle to feel included in community activities
 4. The main barriers are transportation, time, finding things they would enjoy being a part of, and social issues
 5. Young people get involved mainly through friends
 - iv. In February, Beyla Kisémbó, Ellana Meas, Ashley Brewster, and Hanaia Finch served as a panel at an event for youth-serving organizations, talking about the results of the survey and their personal experience regarding how organizations can better serve youth
 1. [Link](#) to the outline for their answers to panel questions
- d. Youth Summit Session
 - i. We worked on a session of the youth summit focusing on Joy and Action
 - ii. Our session was discussion groups around different elements of community
 1. A community approach to Mental health with Vanessa Adams
 2. Preventative and Restorative Justice with Thy Nguyen
 3. Housing and Neighborhood with Zev Cook
 4. Unionism and Collective Action with Michael Whalen
 5. Joy - Community/Cultural events and gathering spaces with Meagan Kula and Antonio McLemore
 - iii. We wrote discussion questions, which are in the MYCT Canva, but the group was small enough that we just formed one discussion group and talked about community and its elements as a whole.
- e. **Organizations, offices, and city collaborations the committee had**
 - i. Tacoma 4 All
 - ii. Tacoma Democratic Socialists of America
 - iii. Erica Edmonds
 - iv. Serve The People

- v. The People's Assembly
- vi. Kids Mental Health Pierce County
- vii. United Food and Commercial Workers
- viii. Metro Parks
- ix. Cocreate to Recreate

2. Education, Arts, and Culture - Presented by Ellana Meas and Ava Sims:

- a. Collaboration with Tacoma creates
 - i. Committee Chair, Ellana Meas, was appointed to the Youth Seat of Tacoma Creates Advisory Board.
 - ii. Continued relationship with Tacoma Creates Advisory Board and collaborated to allow them to present at the Mayor Youth's admin meeting to discuss youth engagement in the program.
- b. Youth Summit
 - i. Presented at the Charting Our Future hosted by Graduate Tacoma. As a session we focused on exploring three different ways youth can express themselves with art.
 - ii. Partnering with Write 253, Asian Pacific Cultural Center, Khmer Language Arts & Culture Academy, and with Tacoma's Poet Laureate, Christan Paige.
 - iii. Our lessons included learning how to printmake, learning the process of poetry, Cambodia's history of art and dance, and the meaning of each hand gesture of a Khmer Apsara Dance.
- c. **Organizations, offices, and city collaborations the committee had**
 - i. Tacoma Creates Advisory Board
 - ii. Tacoma Creates
 - iii. Write 253
 - iv. Asia Pacific Cultural Center
 - v. Khmer Language Arts & Culture Academy
 - vi. Tacoma City Laureate - Christan Paige
 - vii. Tacoma Public Schools
 - viii. Graduate Tacoma

3. Environmental Health - Presented by Anastasia Markham and Theo Wygle:

- a. Clothing Swap
 - i. In June 2023, hosted a clothing swap open to all youth in Tacoma to improve access to sustainable fashion and reduce clothing waste. Advertised this clothing swap in person and online using social media in May 2023.
 - ii. From January to April 2023, the committee explored the possibility of hosting clothing swaps and/or organizing a clothing pantries at SAMI High School.
- b. Youth Summit

- i. In May 2023, Partnered with Food is Free Washington and Harvest Pierce County to hold a panel on the connection between food sustainability and food justice at the Annual MYCT Youth Summit at the Charting Our Future's conference. Within this panel, guests and commissioners were also able to plant microgreen seeds and provided seed packets.
- c. Community Conversations
 - i. Researched possibilities of improved access to recycling and composting in Tacoma Public Schools and began to communicate on the topic with school administrators.
 - ii. Researched ways to improve food sustainability in Tacoma.
- d. Organizations, offices, and city collaborations the committee had**
 - i. Food is Free Washington
 - ii. Harvest Pierce County Program
 - iii. Tacoma Public Schools

4. Justice and Safety - Presented by Chloe Mau:

- a. Youth Summit
 - i. Partnered with Seeds of Peace members to host a panel on youth safety and community.
 - ii. Asked panelists questions and led a group discussion with youth audience participants.
- b. Greentrike Back to School Event
 - i. Participated in the 2nd annual Tacoma Greentrike Back to School Festival
 - ii. Gave students in need supplies, backpacks, and necessities for back to school at this community wide event
- c. Organizations, offices, and city collaborations the committee had**
 - i. Greentrike**
 - ii. Project Teens Across Tacoma**

Thank you so much for your support to the Commission and the youth of your city. Please reach out with any questions you may have. I look forward to the future of the Commission and the City of Tacoma.