



## 2025 REPORT

### Overview

This year marked the second joint Tacoma - Pierce County Climate Leadership Cohort, and the fourth year of the program. The program was first organized by the Tacoma Tree Foundation (TTF) on behalf of the City of Tacoma Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability in 2022. As of 2024, the program has been co-funded and co-led by Pierce County Sustainability 2030, City of Tacoma, and the Tacoma Tree Foundation.

This training emerged from community input and the City of Tacoma's 2030 Tacoma Climate Action Plan (CAP). Applications prioritize frontline community members. The program is an educational opportunity to learn about climate change impacts and emissions sources in Pierce County and Greater Tacoma, and to consider and help generate solutions through a social justice lens, as well as providing participants with the means to become engaged in public decision-making processes and community-building. Selected cohort members develop and present a capstone project and receive a \$595 stipend for completion of the program.

The program is led and offered by the Tacoma Tree Foundation through a collaborative process that involves a Planning Committee composed of City of Tacoma and Pierce County staff: Nicole Avendaño (Pierce County, Equity and Engagement Associate Planner), Kristi Lynett (City of Tacoma, Chief Sustainability Office), Rob McGehee (Pierce County, Environmental Education Supervisor, ORCA), and TTF staff, Adela Ramos (Director of Partnerships and Communications), Julia Wolf (Communications Coordinator), and Lowell Wyse (Executive Director).

By integrating Cohort member feedback each year since its first iteration, we have found a program length and configuration that has proven successful. The program begins with an Orientation or Q&A Social held the Thursday before the formal training. At Orientation, Cohort members learn about the program and what to expect, meet each other over dinner, and an invited speaker helps us set a collaborative and welcoming tone for the multi-day training. The multi-day training takes place the following weekend, beginning on Friday afternoon and ending on Sunday afternoon. After each panel, Cohort members have the opportunity to follow up with speakers in a "Mentor Mingle" session that lasts 15 minutes.

This year's changes and additions according to feedback from last year's Cohort included:

- Integrating additional time for Cohort members to get to know each other both at meals and during the breaks.
- Outdoor activities to discuss the topics at hand in combination with indoor panels.

Once Cohort members have completed the training, they develop a Capstone for which they receive mentorship throughout the following two months. The entire program culminates in a graduation event where members present on their projects.

This year, the 2025 Tacoma-Pierce County Climate Leadership Cohort program took place on the following dates:

- Orientation Dinner, September 4 from 5-8pm.
- Training: Friday, September 12 from 4-8; Saturday 13 - Sunday 14 all day.
- Graduation, December 6, from 1-4pm.

All of these events took place at the Parkland Community Center. This is the first year the program is hosted outside of City of Tacoma boundaries. The Center's history as a fixture of Parkland and the result of civic engagement that advocated for its preservation represents the kind of community collaboration and advocacy that the program itself aims to cultivate.

Throughout the fall, Cohort members met with TTF staff for two required capstone mentorship meetings and were offered ongoing support via email and phone.

## Orientation and Program



2025 Cohort on the final day of the training with TTF Staff. Photo Credit: Julia Wolf.

This year, we received 26 applications from a diverse group of prospective Cohort members. Through a blind review process, the Planning Committee selected a cohort of 18 members. All but one of the selected members was able to accept, and one member who attended Orientation was unable to continue with the training due to health issues. Out of the 16 Cohort members who completed the training, only one was unable to graduate due to unforeseen issues at work. The graduating Cohort included 15 members representing both the City of Tacoma and Pierce County: 8 residents from City of Tacoma, and 7 residents from Pierce County.

The Cohort first met on Thursday, September 4 from 5-8pm for a dinner, which opened with a County and City welcome offered by Councilmembers Ayala and Díaz, respectively. Their welcome was followed with an introduction to the program, schedule and expectations, and a mapping ice-breaker activity that asked each Cohort member to place a profile photo of themselves on a Pierce County map. Then, the Cohort members had time to socialize over dinner.

To close orientation, Pastor Shalom Agtarap offered a presentation centered on the metaphor of the olive tree, which must be left alone to grow for 15 years, and which is resilient to fire, as a way of emphasizing that the pace of change is slow and requires time for rest, time for challenges, and time to recover.



Pastor Shalom Agtarap. Photo Credit: Julia Wolf

As they have done each year, on the first training day of the Cohort, members meet and get to hear from local officials in the City and County 101 panel. Then, they participate in a networking and learning activity led by Kate Waind (City of Tacoma, Waste Management). This activity introduces Cohort members to and illustrates the many ways in which climate change impacts Pierce County and Tacoma.

The rest of the weekend covers a range of topics (listed below in order). In between each session, Cohort members were offered the opportunity to get to know the speakers, ask questions, and receive input on their possible Capstone topics through Mentor Mingle sessions.

Panels were offered in this order:

- City and County 101
- Climate Change in Our Region
- Sustainable Transportation panel and Parkland walking tour
- Introduction to Capstone Projects with 2022 and 2024 alumni
- Project Development Session 1
- Food Justice
- Parkland Tree Walk
- Local Ecosystems
- Civic Engagement, Advocacy, and Organizing
- Project Development Session 2



Cohort members and Sustainable Transportation panelists take a walk in Parkland to consider transportation, emissions, and climate change issues. Photo Credit: Julia Wolf.

Civic Engagement is a central component of the Climate Leadership Cohort program. To address it more directly, this year, we framed the panel as a comparative discussion of civic engagement, advocacy, and organizing to better support Cohort members in their choice of project. The discussion was rich and it alerted us to the benefit of revising next year's programming to begin the entire program with this panel paired with the City and County 101 panel, and follow with an introduction to the Capstone Projects.



Nicole Avendaño (Pierce County), Elly Claus-McGahan (Climate Pierce County), Evlondo Cooper (Climate and Sustainability Commission) on the Civic Engagement Panel. Photo Credit: Julia Wolf.

By the end of the weekend, Cohort members had met and learned from a total of 29 speakers representing City of Tacoma and Pierce County departments and programs, elected officials, and local community organizers and leaders.



A full list of speakers has been included in Appendix 1. Attachment A offers a full view of the program and speakers.



Mentor Mingle after the City and County 101 Panel. Photo Credit: Julia Wolf.

## CAPSTONE PROJECTS



Graduating Cohort with their certificates at Parkland Community Center on December 6, 2025. Photo: Julia Wolf.

### Capstone Projects: Topic and Scope

The Planning Committee suggested the creation of a Digital Exhibit and Resource Library to showcase the capstone projects to the general public. Making these available is both a way for the Cohort members to share their work and for the public to learn from their projects. In addition, this allows us to open up possibilities to strengthen the climate change network since sharing the Resource Library allows other leaders in the community to tap into the resources that this year's Cohort benefited from.

The [Digital Exhibit and Resource Library can be found here](#).

Presentations can be viewed by the public on the [Tacoma Tree Foundation's YouTube channel](#).

Below, we provide the summaries for each capstone project as written by each cohort member.

### Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainability

**Chase Hovinga** (he/him), Pierce County

#### **Planting a Resilient Community Ecosystem**

In the long term, my project has the goal to increase Midland's tree canopy by planting native Garry oaks in backyards and available large open spaces. The area of Midland sits along highway 512 and has now largely been developed for industrial, agricultural, and residential uses. While

the area does contain some scattered canopy, many of the street trees have damage from poor pruning, utilities, and high wind from lack of a robust canopy. In addition, due to the lack of tree canopy our community deals with the heat island effect, lower air quality (air pollution from the highway and industrial use), poor stormwater drainage, and overall lower quality of life.

I have chosen the Garry oak for its resilience. It is resistant to drought due to a deep taproot that prefers well draining glacial till that Midland is on. They can live up to 500 years and can serve as a dedicated green space because of their protected status both statewide and locally. Garry oaks are also considered a keystone species supporting moss, lichen, fungi, smaller shrubs and many species of animals.

To begin the project, I have germinated about 45 oak acorns in tree pots. These saplings will develop in these containers for 1-2 years. While they are growing, in spring, I plan to introduce myself to new community members and collect a list of people interested in planting these trees and or other natives. When the trees have matured enough I will distribute or help plant them around the community.

**Connar Mon**, City of Tacoma; **Ruffaro Guzha**, City of Tacoma

#### **Air Quality Monitoring in Lakewood's Tillicum and Springbrook Neighborhoods**

Overall, the most valuable lesson we learned was how environmental inequities shape daily life in Pierce County, and how essential community relationships are for building a healthier neighborhood.

The Tillicum and Springbrook neighborhoods of Lakewood, Washington, face significant air quality concerns due to their proximity to major pollution sources, including Interstate 5, Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), and McChord Air Force Base. Residents of Tillicum and Springbrook, many of whom are low-income, older, and already vulnerable to pollution-related health conditions are directly affected by the lack of localized air quality data that reflects their lived experiences. Despite these environmental risks, there is currently a lack of localized air quality monitoring in these communities.

Our project sought to address that gap by deploying PurpleAir sensors to measure particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) concentrations. The primary goal was to collect pilot data that will define the extent of air quality issues in the area and inform future community and policy actions. The pilot data gathered will provide a clearer understanding of existing environmental conditions and help identify specific sources and patterns of pollution.

After looking through the data, we found from Oct 16th and Dec 5th, there were 12 unhealthy air days in Tillicum according to the air quality index. These insights will support community advocacy for improved air quality measures, such as increased



monitoring, strategic tree planting, and depaving initiatives. These monitoring efforts aim to establish a foundation for sustained environmental assessment and encourage long-term involvement from governmental agencies, including the Washington State Department of Ecology, to ensure ongoing protection of community health and environmental equity.

**Ella Guilford** (she/her), Pierce County

### **A Dedicated Green Space**

This project began with challenges from extensive foliage on private property, which created high maintenance demands and recurring expenses. A reassessment of tree management practices led to selective removals and a broader exploration of sustainable approaches. It centers on community and individual solutions to climate change, encouraging sustainable behaviors and environmental education. Its vision is to create a dedicated green space that expands the urban tree canopy, improves ecosystem health, and enhances communal environments. By utilizing municipal and private properties, the project aims to increase shaded areas, strengthen resilience, and elevate quality of life for residents.

To develop the green space, I reached out to University Place City Planning to clarify procedural requirements. I completed a Tree Stewards training with the Tacoma Tree Foundation, and learned about tree biology and tree care. Then I verified the boundaries of the property with the Tacoma Auditor, reviewed by HOA bylaws, and identified opportunities for green space integration. Consultations with Deputy Director Debra Kelly-Sage focused on canopy expansion and required a visual presentation for feasibility review. Regulatory authority was confirmed to reside with the HOA.

**Gabrielle Irle**, Pierce County

### **Closing the Loop on Christmas Tree Waste**

Why should Christmas trees be cut and sold, only to end up in a landfill, producing methane gas? Could I reinvest the energy of that tree in a way that led towards a more climate-just world?

Our linear economic system often encourages us to produce items, use them, and discard them. “Closing the loop” refers to a circular economy where waste is reinvested in the system. As a Christmas tree farmer, I wanted to apply this circular system on a small scale on my Christmas tree farm. My capstone project seeks to provide information directly to those who buy a Christmas tree from my business, giving them flyers to tell them about yard waste bins and local transfer stations.

There are several systems in place that help with this problem in Pierce County. Yard Waste Bins are an easy way for consumers to transport their trees to a commercial composter. Many transfer stations (waste centers) also accept trees for free. For those who have access to them, these are great solutions that result in reinvestment in farms/land instead of methane production! However, many consumers do not know about these options, electing to burn their tree or throw it out with their garbage, instead.

I know that the more convenient you make something, the more likely people are to engage with it. This is why we're offering our farm, a place our customers know and may live close to, as a dropoff point for a day in January. We decided to make this a dropoff for cardboard as well, as many households will have an abundance of boxes leftover from the holidays.

The trees that come to our personal tree drop off will not *just* get commercially composted and redistributed to the system at large. We plan on using the chipped wood (and cardboard) to help us sheet mulch parts of our land overgrown by invasive plants. These areas will be *replanted* with native plants and edibles to get redistributed in our community, creating pockets of climate resilience in our area.

**Hope Springer** (she/her), City of Tacoma; **Kath Ross** (she/they), City of Tacoma

### **North End Fruit Survey**

"We learned that a surprising number of fruit trees can be found in an urban setting, as well as a large variety of fruits, including cherries, figs, quince, green, red, & yellow apples, plums, pears!"

We set out to find a solution to prevent fruit from rotting on the ground or on trees when homeowners choose not to pick it. This rotting fruit can contribute to climate change through the release of methane when it breaks down. Additionally, any unpicked fruit that is left to rot is fruit that is not going into someone's hungry belly.

This is a city-wide problem. For this project, we focused on the North End neighborhood. We began our work in the North End where the issue impacts homeowners who are left with rotting fruit on their lawns, and community members who are interested in picking fruit from trees but are not sure if they are allowed to. Our goals were to add North End fruit trees to the citizen science database, [FallingFruit.org](https://fallingfruit.org), educate homeowners about fruit tree harvest and care resources from the Pierce Conservation District, and find out if neighborhood trees are harvestable by the general public by sharing a survey that would allow us to connect with homeowners.

To this end, we walked the North End neighborhood to identify all visible fruit trees, created the survey, and fliered to call for submissions. We successfully added available trees to

the [FallingFruit.org](https://fallingfruit.org) database. However, we were unable to reach our other goals because only 1 out of 30 homeowners replied to our survey.

**Kalika Carver-Cox** (she/her), Pierce County

### **PNW Flora Garden Tower**

“I look forward to further developing this blueprint and collaborating with the Pierce County community to improve accessible gardening and urban green spaces!”

My capstone project is an educational display planter. The “anthropocene”, regarding all humans, is often blamed for modern climate change. Some declare addressing root causes at all is “hopeless”. An alternative term, the “capitocene”, addresses political and economical causes (Kotsila et al., 2020, p.6). Climate change needs to be addressed at its root causes of capitalism, materialism, asymmetrical power relations, and exploitative extractive systems (Morrison et al. 2022 p.1100). Acknowledging community vulnerability factors during climate planning (Erekson et al, 2015, p.9) is recommended to stay innovative.

To this end, my garden tower is constructed from upcycled materials, and is installed on a base with wheels for ease of transportation. In general, cities lack portable green infrastructure that is budget, disability, and renter friendly. I kept local disparities, politics, and environmental challenges in mind while curating this PNW garden tower project.

I filled the tower with organic soils and an array of plants native to Western Washington. The final prototype provides an accessible blueprint for Pierce County residents to utilize, and symbolizes the need for urban green spaces. I used elements of green infrastructure, regenerative gardening, and material upcycling. This model offers pollinator and bird habitats, pollution filtering, seasonal temperature regulation, space maximization, regionally-adapted plants, ethnobotanical potential, and year-round beautification.

## **Climate Coalitions and Networks**

**Houstan Vassel**

### **Supporting Food Justice on the Hilltop**

“Intentional communities cultivate a sense of collective responsibility, motivating people to help their neighbors.”

For my project, I aimed to increase food sovereignty, decrease food insecurity, and educate others about food and the climate by assisting the staff of Hilltop Urban Gardens (HUG). HUG is a community-led, Afro-Indigenous, racial, environmental, reproductive, and queer justice organization based in the Hilltop neighborhood of Tacoma. To this end, I assisted HUG with the organization and maintenance of their Artivism Storefront Center (ASC), which hosts vendors, workshops, and community events.

I contributed approximately 20 hours of service at the ASC, performing tasks such as supply inventory, organizing the mutual-aid donations, cleaning, and rearranging the space.

Through this work at the ASC, I was able to support HUG's mission because staff were able to allocate their time to other duties, such as grant work and workshop planning, which support HUG's mission (developing systems for food sovereignty) and vision (inspiring our community to live with abundance).

I was able to build community during my time at HUG, and have begun working for HUG as the Urban Food Network Land and Community Outreach Steward, which will allow me to address the food needs of Hilltop and the greater Tacoma area.

**Jeremy Otero**, City of Tacoma

### **Increasing Awareness of Hilltop Urban Gardens at UWT**

"Storytelling and local engagement can strengthen climate resilience."

I chose to increase awareness of Hilltop Urban Gardens (HUG) across the University of Washington Tacoma (UWT) community. HUG plays a vital role in advancing food justice and climate resilience in Tacoma by promoting urban farming and mutual aid. While UWT students and staff are part of the broader Tacoma community, many are not actively engaged with local sustainability initiatives. My project aimed to bridge that gap by highlighting HUG's work and encouraging participation.

My main goal was to amplify HUG's mission and opportunities for involvement. I achieved this by conducting an interview with *The Ledger*, UWT's student newspaper, resulting in a published article that showcased HUG's programs and volunteer pathways. Additionally, I began assisting with HUG's online gift shop, which is designed to serve as an added revenue stream to help fund the garden. Moving forward, I plan to continue promoting HUG's initiatives on campus and explore partnerships for service-learning projects. This experience deepened my understanding of Tacoma's food justice movement and the power of community-driven solutions.

**Nekaycha Cavil**, City of Tacoma

### **What's Next?: Civic Pipeline Network**

"Grand gestures don't create transformation, but the accumulation of small, faithful choices does."

At the Tacoma Pierce County Climate Leadership Cohort training, speakers highlighted a common problem: the disconnect between agencies and the community. They discussed how this impacts collaboration, community engagement, and closing the loop. This is why I decided to spend my Capstone project addressing the "broken bridge" that separates agencies, organizations, and the community. It is a statewide problem. But my project begins by tackling the issues in the Pierce County/Tacoma area. The broken bridge impacts communities of color,

underserved and disadvantaged individuals, and families that are the most affected by climate and social issues. My goal is to create a streamlined digital ecosystem that reduces information overload and removes gatekeeping of pertinent information, making profiles of climate professionals, ongoing projects that could use support, related work opportunities, as well as ways for climate professionals to connect, accessible to everyone. I reached this goal by consulting with Kate Waind (Waste Reduction Specialist, City of Tacoma), Robb Krehbiel (Environmental Planner, Puget Sound Partnership), and TaNeashia Sudds (Hilltop Urban Garden, Executive Director). The network will live on Notion, a project management resource used for planning and website development. I will continue refining the site, gathering resources, conducting outreach, and applying for funding to contract help and keep the momentum going.

## Climate Resilience

**Anna Czarnik-Neimeyer** (she, her), Pierce County

### Climate Coworking

“This is actually Climate Resilience work: the work of building social & relational resilience!”

For climate and sustainability professionals, the work can sometimes feel isolating and lack a sense of hope. Remote work, federal cuts, and the visible effects of climate catastrophe add up to become overwhelming, and we might struggle with completing work. But climate organizing works best when people are connected by relationship, share resources, and support each other through mutual accountability, and by building trust. Because of all of the above, the idea for “Climate Coworking” was born! I had three main purposes for this event series:

- **Support** (and caffeinate!) climate professionals, making work feel more connected + sustainable.
- Create low-barrier **access** to relationship and community building opportunities. I chose The 15% Boardgame Cafe in Tacoma, a bus and wheelchair accessible location, which is community-oriented, Woman & BIPOC owned, inclusive, and free. All of this is important as we build community.
- **In-person meetings** to strengthen networks of trusted support, which is the groundwork for civic action.

I piloted two “mini” coworking sessions with our Climate Leadership Cohort in September and October. In November, I made a public invitation relying on the TPCCLC Planning Committee networks and online media. With my capstone stipend I bought coffee for attendees. A total of 11 people from two different Counties, and State and regulatory bodies, nonprofits, and religious institutions showed up. I learned from them how “in flux” and grueling work can be,



and how it's deeply affected by funding cuts. It's more important than ever to be connected as people do "more with less."

**Jackie Kaiser** (she/her)

### **How to Connect to the Land**

"How do we connect to land? "What impact does a name have on a place?" "Who decides what a place should be called?"

Currently, the average American spends 6.5–7 hours a day looking at a screen. Personally, I work in front of a computer and spend an additional 2–3 hours a day on my personal phone. One of my goals in this project, and in joining the Cohort, was to connect more deeply with my neighbors and community members. Through the capstone project, I explored the Tacoma Pierce County region, and held spaces with others to explore how naming can be used to strengthen place-based connection.

I created a survey form to have greater understanding of others around me and their connection to land, read four books to foster my own connection to land, and held a neighborhood "coffee and connection" gathering where I talked to new neighbors about their favorite places and their connection to each place's name. Seventeen neighbors completed the survey.

Ultimately, this experience has left a lasting impact on my life. It strengthened my connection to the land, deepened my ties to the community, and showed me that even small, deliberate actions can contribute to meaningful change. Most importantly, it reminded me that building relationships and listening to others are at the heart of creating a stronger, more connected community.

**Kath Ross** (she/they), City of Tacoma

### **Power of Music to Inspire Climate Action**

"A community that sings together is a community that can tackle climate issues together."

My goal for participating with the Climate Leadership Cohort (CLC) is to integrate climate change action into the organizations I currently support. One of my passions is singing with the Tacoma Refugee Choir (TRC). TRC provides community outreach through musical performances. Usually each performance includes songs and speakers. The choir encourages the audience to join in singing to help build the community bonds. Before each performance there are organizations and vendors that set up tables in the lobby. Tailoring a future performance to address issues surrounding climate change is a great way to leverage TRC's platform to spread awareness. This awareness of climate change can also apply more directly to TRC's mission to support refugees and immigrants who are frequently most impacted by climate issues. This

project outlines a proposal for a climate change focused performance with songs, presenters, and organizations speaking to the issues of climate change. I identified potential songs for suitable messaging. The performance proposal will need to be reviewed by the choir committees and further iterated, with the goal of scheduling a climate focused performance sometime in the future. Coming together as a community is one of the most powerful actions we can take. Appealing to the community at an emotional level as well as at an educational level is key to motivating and engaging others to take action.

### **Nadine Shaw-Nabass**

#### **Mitigating Climate Despair**

A big part of Pierce County's Climate Resilience preparedness relies on community-driven efforts. In exploring this, I identified an opportunity to support community engagement in climate initiatives through discussing and mitigating climate despair. For my project, I developed a writing workshop to tackle feelings of hopelessness using tangible tools rooted in liberatory, anti-colonial history, and spend time imagining how we would build the world we hope to live in. It proved to be valuable to spend time acknowledging the devastating climate impacts to our community locally and how overwhelming it feels to engage with the tangle of institutions and systems that insufficiently address these very real problems.

#### **RADICAL HOPE:**

- Goes beyond optimism and is a strategic re-imagining, adapting, and re-building in the face of uncertainty, disaster, and dissolution of a way of life.
- Addresses the root of unjust systems by constructing sources of hope outside familiar patterns and recognizable ways of living.
- Courage to envision and work towards a future fundamentally different from the past, even without a clear path forward.

This workshop was one way to inspire local climate action by using artmaking as a pathway to radical hope. I think there is a genuine opportunity to facilitate more spaces for communities to imagine together and take that imagination seriously as part of a climate resiliency strategy for city and county climate initiatives.

## FEEDBACK

I genuinely feel more connected to people who share my values right here in my community more than I ever have in the last 15 years of living here. I cannot thank you enough for this experience and I am so excited for the new friendships, allies, and community advocates I can get to know and lean on. Thank you! – Climate Leadership Cohort Member.

To improve our feedback gathering process, this year, we provided surveys at the end of each training day, rather than asking participants to account for the entire experience at the end of a very long training session. Cohort members were asked to reflect on the panels, activities, food, logistics, timing, and additional program details they wanted to highlight.

### Orientation

A majority of the Cohort agreed that ice-breakers and time to get to know each other, including during dinner, were helpful to setting the kind of tone they needed to start collaborating with people they hadn't met before. One participant noted that Pastor Agtarap's welcome "introduced the necessary 'zoom out' of why climate justice is necessary, critical, and a lifelong commitment." In response to the entire evening, one participant stated that they "feel closer to [their] peers" after they shared stories and got to know each other.

Suggestions for improvement included adding more time for hard questions during the welcome, and setting up dinner in a way that allowed for even more engagement among participants.

### Multi-day Training

The main suggestions for improvement included:

- Providing a summary of the City of Tacoma's CAP and Pierce County Sustainability 2030 Plan
- Providing a visual aid to understand the City and County government structures
- Including slides with presentations to support understanding of new topics
- Choosing a venue that will allow participants to sit in a circle with speakers
- Explicit acknowledgement of structural racism in the panels where it was not mentioned (e.g., Sustainable Transportation).

The Cohort agreed that the expectations, instructions, and timeline for the required capstone project were clear, and felt confident about the next steps. The majority of the Cohort indicated that they were feeling ready to begin their project, and knew how to get support.

However, they did suggest that we address the Capstone project even earlier in the multi-day training, and to include examples of projects that would not be viable. This has led us to decide to begin the

training with Capstone Project guidelines and to integrate the Digital Exhibit to resources we make available to new Cohort members.

**Highlights of their experience included:**

- Learning about the impact of transportation in emissions and how road design impacts air quality
- Learning about utilities and the cost (material and health) of utilities
- Having the opportunity to ask questions of the panelists, and then engage in conversation with them in small groups
- Including walks and time outdoors to learn with panelists
- Learning about the unique social issues that climate change is creating for different communities
- Including time to brainstorm and develop their projects in conversation with each other
- Food
- Time to reflect and take breaks

**Overall Feedback**

At graduation, Cohort members were once again asked to respond to a short survey that asked them to narrow down what they would do differently next year if they were on the Planning Committee. The themes that arose overlap with last year's Cohort in two areas: Participants would like more time to speak with panelists and to get to know each other; and they would also like more time with the TTF staff mentors. We have expanded the duration of the Cohort every year to integrate more time with speakers and for relationship building. The Planning Committee will consider how else to further revise the program to make more time for these important aspects of the Cohort experience. We will also consider how to allot more funding for staffing in our grant applications to make sure mentorship meetings can be expanded a bit.

Other feedback for improvement included adding more vegetables to the food options, and building in more social time in between the training and the graduation.

Otherwise, we were very satisfied to read that across the board, participants reported alignment between what we promised we would provide and their experience of the program from beginning to end. In fact, most participants reported that the program exceeded their expectations:

"...Prior to the program I did not understand the scope and impact of climate change. It has been a very edifying experience, and I am so glad I was chosen."

"I usually have more ideas and suggestions for this kind of thing. But honestly, the Cohort was so carefully and thoughtfully planned that I am at a bit of a loss."

"Wow! I am so blown away that it feels like what was outlined [in the outreach materials] doesn't do justice to what I have experienced. This blew my expectations and I am so thankful to be a part."

We are grateful for the funding, collaboration, and support that the City of Tacoma and Pierce County have provided the Tacoma Tree Foundation throughout the planning and execution of the program. We look forward to continue improving this program and supporting residents who are eager to be a resource for their communities as we all work together to build a climate resilient future in our region.





## Appendix 1

### Speakers

| TOPIC or ACTIVITY                                       | SPEAKER   |
|---|---|
| Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, Introductions & Overview | Adela Ramos (TTF Staff)   |
| Program Opening   | Councilmembers Rosie Ayala and Olgy Díaz  |
| “The Olive Tree”  | Rev. Shalom Agtarap<br>(Common Good Tacoma and First UMC of Tacoma)               |
| City and County 101                                     | Mac Acabado<br>Lauren Flemister<br>Kristi Lynett<br>Brian Yambe                   |
| Local Climate   | Kate Waind  |
| Sustainable Transportation                              | Carrie Wilhelme<br>Laura Svancarek<br>Leon Nettels<br>Rubén Casas<br>Shawn Phelps |
| Capstone Projects                                       | iLeana Areiza ('22), Esther Se ('24), Kris Kreiss ('24)                           |
| Food Justice  | TaNeashia Sudds<br>Ursula Thompson  |
| Built Environment                                       | Alyssa Torres<br>Denise Frakes<br>Julie Banerjee<br>Ty Moore                      |
| Local Ecosystems  | Jeanette Dorner<br>Jenny Liou<br>Michael Yadrick<br>Lowell Wyse                   |
| Civic Engagement, Advocacy, and Organizing              | Elly Claus-McGahan<br>Evlondo Cooper<br>Nicole Avendaño                           |