



CITY OF TACOMA

BUSINESS RECRUITMENT:
A MILLENNIAL PERSPECTIVE

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
EVANS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY
AND GOVERNANCE

PUBPOL 566
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INSTRUCTOR
JOAQUIN HERRANZ JR.

CITY OF TACOMA PROJECT LEAD
INDIA J. ADAMS

STUDENT AUTHORS
KELLY BUETHE
DOUGLAS MINKLER
BUCODA WARREN

LIVABLE CITY YEAR 2017-2018
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
CITY OF TACOMA

FALL 2017





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CREDITS

For this report

- City of Tacoma Project Lead: India J. Adams
- Instructor: Joaquin Herranz Jr.
- Student Authors:
 - Kelly Buethe
 - Douglas Minkler
 - Bucoda Warren

For the City of Tacoma

- Mayor (2010 - 2017): Marilyn Strickland
- City Manager: Elizabeth Pauli
- LCY Program Managers:
 - Tanisha Jumper
 - Stephen Atkinson
 - Lauren Flemister
- LCY Liaison: Chris Bell

For the University of Washington LCY Program

- LCY Faculty Co-Directors:
 - Branden Born
 - Jennifer Otten
 - Anne Taufen
- Program Manager: Teri Thomson Randall
- Editor: Anneka Olson
- Graphic Designer: Ka Yan (Karen) Lee
- Communications:
 - Daimon Eklund
 - Claudia Frere-Anderson

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ABOUT LIVABLE CITY YEAR

The University of Washington's Livable City Year (LCY) initiative enables local governments to engage UW faculty and students for one academic year to work on city-defined projects that promote local sustainability and livability goals. The program engages hundreds of students each year in high-priority projects, creating momentum on real-world challenges while enabling the students to serve and learn from communities. Partner cities benefit directly from bold and applied ideas that propel fresh thinking, improve livability for residents and invigorate city staff. Focus areas include environmental sustainability; economic viability; population health; and social equity, inclusion, and access. The program's 2017–2018 partner is the City of Tacoma; this follows a partnership with the City of Auburn in 2016–2017.

The LCY program is led by faculty directors Branden Born (Department of Urban Design and Planning), Jennifer Otten (School of Public Health) and Anne Taufen (Urban Studies Program, UW Tacoma), with support from Program Manager Teri Thomson Randall. The program was launched in 2016 in collaboration with UW Sustainability and Urban@UW, with foundational support from the Association of Washington Cities, the College of Built Environments, the Department of Urban Design and Planning, and Undergraduate Academic Affairs.

LCY is modeled after the University of Oregon's Sustainable City Year Program, and is a member of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network (EPIC-N), the collection of institutions that have successfully adopted this new model for community innovation and change.

For more information, contact the program at uwlcy@uw.edu.



ABOUT TACOMA

The third largest city in the state of Washington, Tacoma is a diverse, progressive, international gateway to the Pacific Rim. The port city of nearly 210,000 people has evolved considerably over the last two decades, propelled by significant development including the University of Washington Tacoma, the Tacoma Link light rail system, the restored urban waterfront of the Thea Foss Waterway, the expansions of both the MultiCare and CHI Franciscan health systems, and a significant influx of foreign direct investment in its downtown core.

Washington State's highest density of art and history museums are found in Tacoma, which is home to a flourishing creative community of writers, artists, musicians, photographers, filmmakers, chefs, entrepreneurs, and business owners who each add their unique flair to the city's vibrant commercial landscape. The iconic Tacoma Dome has endured as a high-demand venue for some of the largest names in the entertainment industry.


A magnet for families looking for affordable single-family homes in the Puget Sound area, Tacoma also draws those seeking a more urban downtown setting with competitively priced condos and apartments that feature panoramic mountain and water views. The city's natural beauty and proximity to the Puget Sound and Mount Rainier draws hikers, runners, bicyclists, and maritime enthusiasts to the area, while its lively social scene is infused with energy by thousands of students attending the University of Washington Tacoma and other academic institutions.


The City of Tacoma's strategic plan, Tacoma 2025, was adopted in January 2015 following unprecedented public participation and contribution. The plan articulates the City's core values of opportunity, equity, partnerships, and accountability, and expresses the City's deep commitment to apply these values in all of its decisions and programming. Each Livable City Year project ties into the principles and focus areas of this strategic plan. The City of Tacoma is proud of its 2017–2018 Livable City Year partnership with the University of Washington and of the opportunity this brings to its residents.





TACOMA 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN


The *Business Recruitment: A Millennial Perspective* project supports the Livability goal and the Economy and Workforce goal of the Tacoma 2025 Strategic Plan and was sponsored by the City's Community and Economic Development Department.

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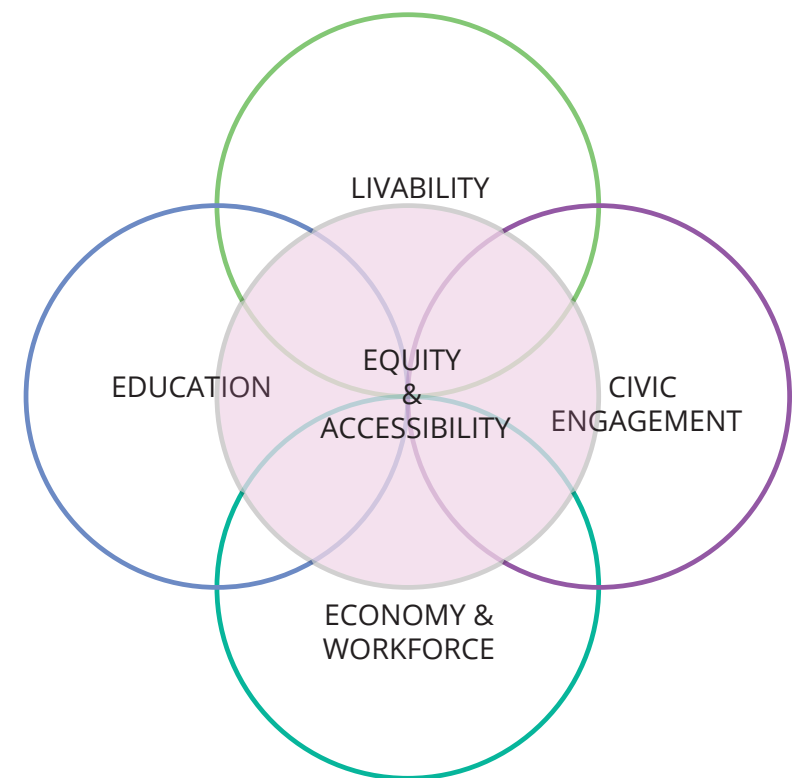
Goal #1 Livability
The City of Tacoma will be a city of choice in the region known for connected neighborhoods, accessible and efficient transportation transit options, and vibrant arts and culture. Residents will be healthy and have access to services and community amenities while maintaining affordability.
- 

Goal #2 Economy and Workforce
By 2025, Tacoma will be a growing economy where Tacoma residents can find livable wage jobs in key industry areas. Tacoma will be a place of choice for employers, professionals, and new graduates.
- 

Goal #3 Education
Tacoma will lead the region in educational attainment amongst youth and adults. In addition to producing more graduates from high school and college, more college graduates will find employment in the region. Lifelong learning and access to education will be prioritized and valued.
- 

Goal #4 Civic Engagement
Tacoma residents will be engaged participants in making Tacoma a well-run city. The leadership of the city, both elected and volunteer, will reflect the diversity of the city and residents and will fully participate in community decision-making.
- 

Goal #5 Equity and Accessibility
Tacoma will ensure that all residents are treated equitably and have access to services, facilities, and financial stability. Disaggregated data will be used to make decisions, direct funding, and develop strategies to address disparate outcomes.



RESOURCES

Tacoma 2025: https://www.cityoftacoma.org/tacoma_2025

Department of Community & Economic Development: https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/community_and_economic_development

Livable City Year: <https://www.washington.edu/livable-city-year/>

Evans School of Public Policy & Governance: <https://evans.uw.edu/>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Purpose of the Study

In the fall of 2017, as part of the Livable City Year program, the City of Tacoma’s Community Economic Development Department (CEDD) partnered with three University of Washington graduate students from the Evans School of Public Policy and Governance to uncover millennial perspectives and help shape strategies for attracting and keeping millennials in Tacoma. As the baby boomer generation retires, millennials (individuals aged 18 to 35) have become a critical component of sustainable economies in communities across the country. Therefore, like many cities in the U.S., Tacoma is seeking new ways to secure millennials’ place in the city’s growth.

The overarching research question driving this report is: *How does Tacoma attract and keep millennials in their city?* In particular, CEDD was interested in learning about the following research question: What amenities or retail destinations are missing in downtown Tacoma that would attract millennials?

Methodology

To answer these questions, the researchers conducted two semi-structured focus groups composed of young professionals and college students between the ages of 18 and 34. Analysis of focus group responses took place within the framework of the Quadruple Bottom Line (QBL), a model that considers financial, social, environmental, and cultural bottom lines as critical components to community economic development (Herranz Jr., 2016). Used to both inform and evaluate prospective community development initiatives, the QBL served as an important tool for building recommendations based on millennial perspective. The QBL also helped to illuminate the role that jobs, affordable housing, and public transit play in millennial attraction. Notably, while recommendations on the latter economic factors are outside the scope of this report, researchers did acknowledge and consider how the many elements of financial prosperity, equity, environmental sustainability, and culture determine millennials’ living and consumption preferences.

Thematic Analysis

To further distill focus group responses examined through a QBL lens and to inform recommendations, researchers identified major themes: *cultural vibrancy and engagement, diversity, convenience, and marketing improvement*. These themes were evident across many participant responses and emerged as a unifying thread running through each of the four bottom lines, setting context for the study’s recommendations.

Recommendations

Because this study set out to provide actionable recommendations for the CEDD, researchers compiled an expansive list of possible retail options that the City of Tacoma may consider as part of their business attraction programs. This full list of recommendation can be found in Appendix F. Of the total recommendations, this report elaborates upon three options in particular: *food trucks, supermarkets, and lounges*. These recommendations are featured due to their alignment with the QBL criteria, connection to the major themes, and potential for short-term implementation. While this report does not include specific suggestions on marketing strategies, the findings indicate that effective advertising will be critical to drawing millennials to both current and prospective attractions in downtown Tacoma.



A view from the Bridge of Glass looking northwest towards Union Station in downtown Tacoma.

Photo Credit: City of Tacoma.

Background

Tacoma experiences an ebb and flow of millennials each day, many leaving to work, dine, and recreate outside of the city. But like many cities in the United States, Tacoma hopes to attract millennials that will stay in their city. In the words of India Adams, a management analyst with the City of Tacoma's Community and Economic Development Department (CEDD), "A lot of millennials commute back and forth between Tacoma and Seattle. We want to figure out how to get more young people to stay in Tacoma." As the City of Tacoma works to continue to develop an attractive and sustainable local economy, the City of Tacoma has partnered with the University of Washington's Livable City Year program, a collaboration that pairs University of Washington students and faculty with City departments to identify strategies to meet the City's sustainability and livability goals.

In the fall of 2017, as part of the Livable City Year partnership, the City of Tacoma's CEDD connected with three UW graduate students from the Evans School of Public Policy and Governance to conduct two focus groups for formative data on potential business development strategies to attract and retain millennials. This report summarizes the study's methodology, findings, analysis and recommendations. Throughout the report, we refer to millennials as young people 18-34 years of age, and this report focuses specifically on college students or young professionals that study, live, and/or work in Tacoma. Through focus groups comprised of these millennials, the study sought to uncover gaps in the kinds of amenities and retail

"A lot of millennials commute back and forth between Tacoma and Seattle. We want to figure out how to get more young people to stay in Tacoma." - India J. Adams

opportunities available in downtown Tacoma. This report is intended to help the City of Tacoma gain a better understanding of what could make downtown Tacoma a more vibrant and desirable place for millennials to live and play.

The Importance of Millennial Attraction

Throughout the country, millennials are a driving force in the revitalization of cities and economies. For this reason, this generation of educated young professionals and graduates can be particularly important to community economic development and to recruitment analysis. *Figure A* shows workforce population trends for the different generations and illustrates the rapid rate at which millennials are replacing baby boomers in the workforce. For instance, in 2016, millennials, Generation X, and baby boomers each comprised roughly one-third of the labor force, but it is predicted that within the next 10 years millennials will preponderate, comprising 44% of the labor market. As more baby boomers are retiring and more millennials are graduating college and entering the workforce, cities are eager to attract millennials to their economies and communities (Fry 2015; BLS 2017). Attracting millennials has become a top economic development priority for elected officials. For example, mayors all over the country are looking to recruit millennials: 85% report that millennial attraction is a top-ten priority, and 41% report that recruiting millennials is a top-five priority. Of all Mayors surveyed, 81% stated that millennials were important for the economic health of their respective cities. Many cities have tried to draw in millennials

As more millennials are entering the workforce, cities are eager to attract millennials to their economies and communities.

US Labor Forces by Generation, 1995 – 2015

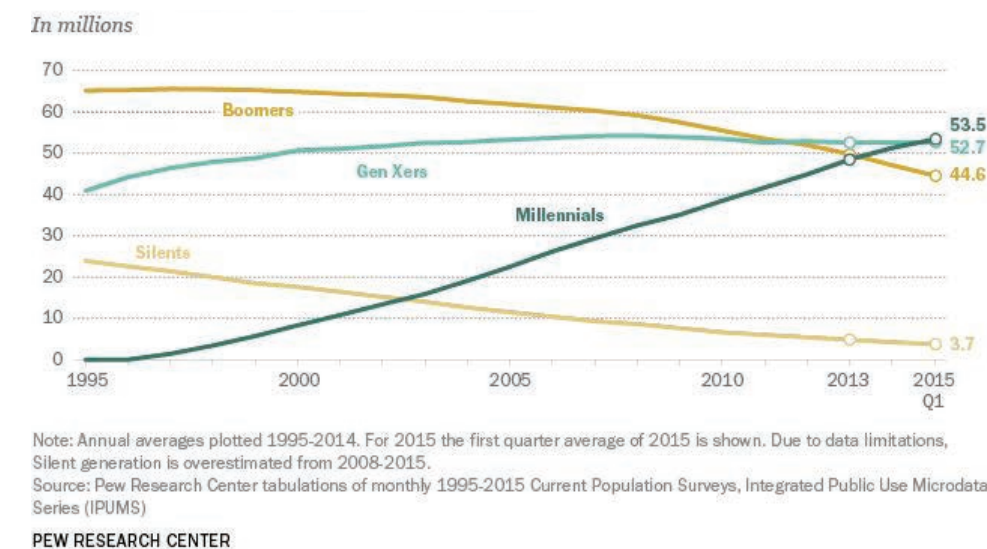
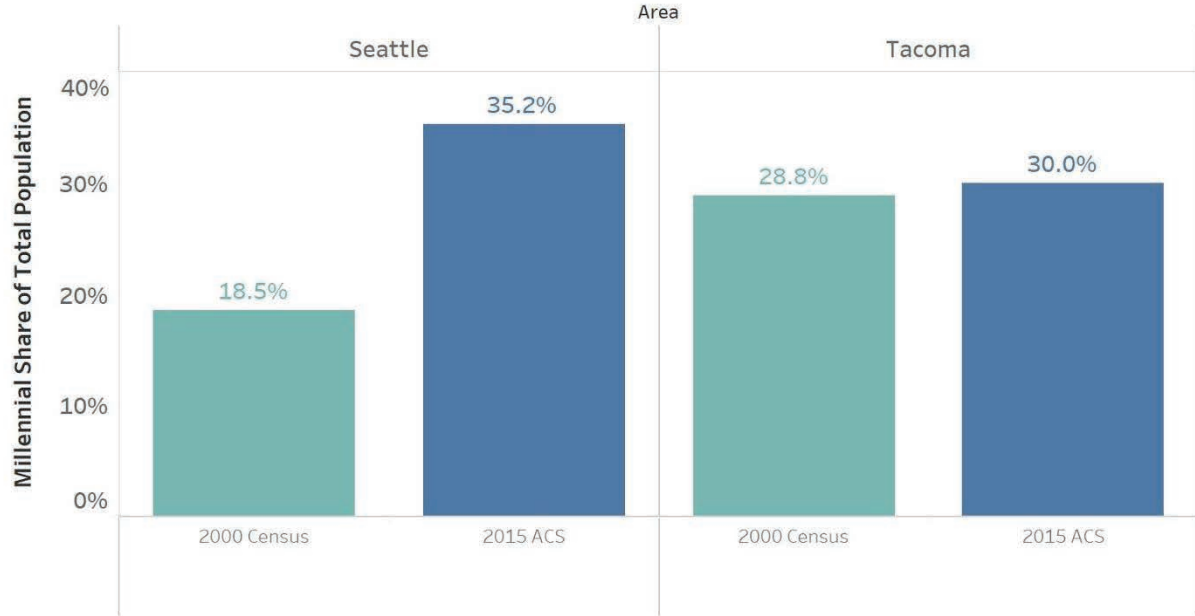


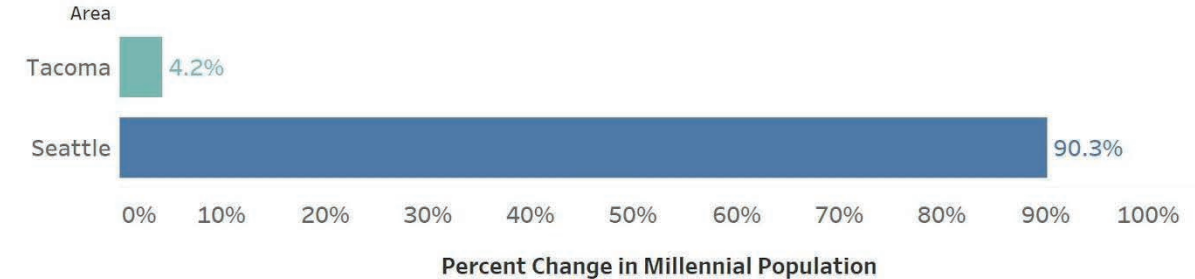
Figure A: Trends indicate shift in labor force age demographics.

by developing new amenities such as breweries and shopping destinations, but these still often fail to attract and retain millennials. This is because most young adults are looking for jobs, affordable housing, and reliable transportation in the communities to which they are moving (Robertson 2017). With new projects in the downtown Tacoma core, including mixed-use development and new apartments, there is an opportunity for Tacoma to include many of the attractions that millennials desire. However, in tandem with new amenities, the challenge will be to also develop the job opportunities and affordability that millennials seek. The U.S. cities that are most popular with millennials offer density and a variety of retail and food options in close proximity while simultaneously providing high-paying jobs and affordable housing to support living in the city. Tacoma's relative lack of density and affordable housing have also contributed to poor millennial recruitment and retention. According to Zillow, rent in Tacoma for a one-bedroom apartment—the most common housing choice for working millennials—increased 16% from 2015 to 2016, one of the highest single-year jumps in the region (Martin 2017). Within a national context, that means Tacoma is competing for educated talent with a weaker position for recruitment. This lack of affordable housing impacts Tacoma's millennial recruitment and, while outside of the scope of this report, should be considered in addition to Tacoma's retail and business development opportunities.

Millennial Population as a Share of Total Population 2000 to 2015



Relative Change in Millennial Population as Share of Total Population 2000 to 2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2000 Census and 2011-2015 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates; tables DP-1 and S0101; author's calculations

Note: Millennial cohort in year 2000 measured as those between ages 0 and 19; millennial cohort in 2015 measured as those between ages 15 and 34.

Figure B: While the share of millennials in Tacoma's population is increasing, the rate at which millennial population growth is occurring is modest in comparison to Seattle, a nearby city to which many Tacoma millennials are attracted. Graphics and data from the US Census Bureau, 2017.

The Importance of Millennial Retention

Millennial retention is perhaps equally as important as efforts to recruit new millennials. Tacoma not only seeks to attract millennials, but the city also hopes to keep the millennials already here. This is especially relevant with regards to the college students attending school at the four universities in Tacoma. Many students are selecting to study in Tacoma because of the relatively lower regional living expenses, but due to a lack of job and internship opportunities, they are completing internships in other cities and staying to work in those cities after graduation. Since 2000, Tacoma's population has increased by 12,000 people (ACS 2010, 2016). Some of Tacoma's population growth is likely attributable to the universities around Tacoma: in 2000, the UW Tacoma campus had only 1,690 students; by 2016, enrollment reached 5,185 (Burkhardt 2017). Other universities in Tacoma saw similar increases in enrollment, but those increases are not reflected in the city's overall population, which suggests that many educated millennials are leaving Tacoma after graduation. Below, Figure B shows Tacoma compared to Seattle in terms of millennial cohort retention.

Research Question

The City of Tacoma Community and Economic Development Department (CEDD) asked the researchers to conduct two focus groups to gain insight about the following question: What amenities or retail destinations are missing in Tacoma that would attract millennials? This question fits within the overarching research question driving this report: How does Tacoma attract and keep millennials in their city? Notably, while this study focused on potential development opportunities in Tacoma's downtown core, consideration was also given to broader opportunities for development in Tacoma as a whole.

Quadruple Bottom Line Framework

Research design and analysis took place within the framework of the quadruple bottom line (QBL), a model that considers financial, social, environmental, and cultural bottom lines as critical components to

How does Tacoma attract and keep millennials?



Photo Credit: City of Tacoma.
A winter night in downtown Tacoma along Pacific Avenue. To the left is the Pacific Plaza building and to the right is the Wells Fargo building.

community economic development (Herranz Jr., 2016). The Quadruple Bottom Line is an effective tool that can be used to both inform and evaluate prospective community development initiatives. Below, we highlight a few key criteria used for each bottom line.

Financial Bottom Line

The financial bottom line reflects fiscal prosperity. In this study, the financial bottom line is considered through the following criteria: quantity, variety, and growth of businesses and job opportunities in Tacoma.

Environmental Bottom Line

The environmental bottom line reflects environmental impact and sustainability. In this study, the environmental bottom line is evaluated through the following criteria: reduction of carbon emissions and fossil fuels, preservation and protection of nature, and little to no pollution externalities.

Social Bottom Line

The social bottom line reflects equity. In this study, the social bottom line is weighed using the following criteria: equal access to opportunities, proportional participation in the local economy, and affordability (i.e., housing, cost of living).

Cultural Bottom Line

The cultural bottom line reflects creative vitality, arts, and culture. In this study, the cultural bottom line is examined through the following criteria: community sense of purpose, engagement in arts, quantity and variety of creative spaces (i.e. museums, music venues, art installations).

As the City of Tacoma assesses which amenities and retail destinations can help to permanently bring millennials to their local economy, the quadruple bottom line can illuminate the critical role that factors such as affordable housing and transportation should also play in Tacoma's development strategy. While recommendations on affordable housing and transit solutions are outside the scope of this report, we acknowledged and considered how the many elements of financial prosperity, equity, environmental sustainability, and culture determine millennials' living and consumption preferences.

Sampling and Recruitment

This study's target demographic consisted of millennials aged 18-34 who live, work, or study in and around Tacoma. Due to their likelihood to contribute to Tacoma's economy, recent college graduates and young professionals were of particular interest, which is why recruitment efforts heavily relied upon advertising the focus groups through networks at the University of Washington Tacoma and University of Puget Sound.

India Adams, our point of contact at the City of Tacoma's CEDD, distributed the focus group recruitment flyer (Appendix A) across the two campuses. We also advertised the focus groups on Facebook. To incentivize participation, two \$25 Starbucks gift cards were raffled to one participant from each focus group. The CEDD also provided free pizza for each focus group.

Baseline Survey

Prior to the start of each focus group, participants completed an anonymous baseline survey that collected demographic information (Appendix C). Questions in the baseline survey pertained to items that included (but were not limited to) age, income, and consumption habits. Results from the baseline survey helped confirm that the focus group participants were indeed representative of the target demographic, and they provided context for the data collected during the focus group.

Demographics

A total of fourteen millennials participated in this study. Age, education, and employment data confirmed that participants fit well within the study's target demographic.

Age

Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 34. Most participants were in their 20s and the median age for the focus groups was 26.5 years old. The distribution of ages reflected the diverse but cohesive millennial perspectives captured through the focus groups.

Education

All but three participants possessed a college degree; 21% of participants (3 of 14) reported a high school diploma as their highest degree received, 36% (5 of 14) reported associate degrees, 29% (4 of 14) reported bachelor degrees, and 14% (2 of 14) reported advanced degrees.

Employment

A significant majority (79%, or 11 of 14) reported that they were employed, while 21% (3 of 14) reported being unemployed. (Notably, some participants were full-time students which may limit their capacity to work.)

Gender and Race

This study achieved equal gender representation, as seven participants identified as female and seven participants identified as male. Focus groups also included a diverse range of cultural and racial diversity with about 71% of participants (10 of 14) identifying as people of color and 29% of participants (4 of 14) identifying as white. Of the 10 participants who identified as people of color, the following ethnic backgrounds were represented: Hispanic or Latino, Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and black or African American.

Residency

While all participants either lived, worked, or attended school in Tacoma, not all reported Tacoma residency. About 64% of participants (9 of 14) lived in Tacoma at the time of the study and about 36% of participants (5 of 14) lived outside of Tacoma. Of the participants who reported Tacoma residency, the following neighborhoods (as defined by the neighborhood council districts) were represented: Central, New Tacoma, North End, West End, South End, and South Tacoma (City of Tacoma, 2017).

Focus Groups

Exploratory data collected from two focus groups informed the findings and recommendations for Tacoma’s business development strategies outlined in this report. The first was held on Tuesday, November 14 at the University of Washington Tacoma campus, and had five participants. (Notably, one of the five participants arrived to this focus group about 20 minutes after it had begun, meaning that some data from the first focus group is not comprehensive.) The second focus group was held on Thursday, November 16 at the University of Puget Sound campus and included nine participants. We developed a semi-structured focus group format with eight open-ended questions (Appendix D), encouraging flexibility and organic responses.

Dynamic questioning was especially critical during the second focus group, which allowed the facilitator to further explore, develop, challenge, or confirm the response trends that emerged in the first focus group. The focus group sessions were audio recorded, and participants were reminded of this before each session began. Kelly Buethe facilitated each focus group while Doug Minkler and Bucoda Warren recorded notes of participant responses. Note-taking and follow-up questions were guided by our QBL research framework.

Location and Time

The focus groups took place 6 – 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 14, and Thursday, November 16 at the University of Washington Tacoma (UWT) and the University of Puget Sound (UPS), respectively. These times and locations were chosen to best accommodate the schedules of our target demographic.

Disclosure and Consent

Before engaging in the focus groups, participants reviewed and signed a consent form (Appendix B). The consent form was distributed between 6 – 6:30 p.m. at the beginning of each focus group session. During this time, we encouraged questions and clarified any points of confusion for focus group participants.

The following section provides a synopsis of focus group responses according to the four bottom lines, reflecting the use of the QBL framework in the design of our focus group format. Given the interconnected nature of the QBL framework, many participant responses spoke to more than just one bottom line. For the sake of clarity, we did our best to feature individual responses under the bottom line that most appropriately matched the tenor of what was being said. However, this does not mean that all respondent answers are exclusive to just one of the four bottom lines, since the four bottom lines are, by definition, interrelated.

All quotes featured below are taken directly from comments made by focus group participants. For an expanded list of responses organized into a table format, see Appendix E.

Financial Bottom Line

Business Quantity

One of the most conspicuous themes to emerge from the focus group sessions was the lack of business variety and quantity in downtown Tacoma. All of our respondents indicated that it is easy to “max out a lot of things to do in Tacoma.” This was especially pronounced given Tacoma’s proximity to Seattle. One respondent pointed out that, when visiting some Seattle neighborhoods, they do not need an itinerary and can occupy their entire day with the many retail opportunities available. The overwhelming abundance of retail opportunities in Seattle was so pronounced that the same respondent went as far to say that he, “would never go to Tacoma for anything. Seattle has it all.”

Cuisine Diversity

Other respondents provided some specific suggestions on what Tacoma currently lacks, especially in comparison to Seattle and other millennial-friendly cities. For some respondents, the lack of authentic ethnic cuisine meant patronizing businesses outside of Tacoma for dishes such as dumplings or Korean food. Others pointed out that Tacoma lacks a dedicated food truck district. On this point, some respondents were quick to note that even when Tacoma does have food trucks, such as during the annual Mobile Food Festival, many residents find the offerings unimpressive compared to what can be found on a typical weekend in Portland, for instance.



Photo Credit: Apothecary social media promotion
The Apothecary at Brent's Drugs is a socially vibrant gathering space in Jackson, Mississippi.

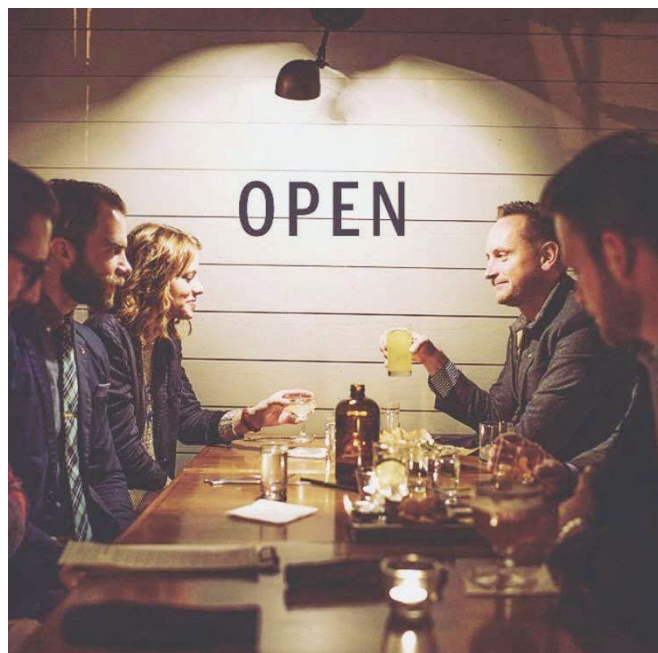
Participant interest in increased cuisine diversity at brick-and-mortar restaurants and food trucks in Tacoma’s downtown was also aligned with participant support for small business opportunities, and especially the chance for immigrant and ethnic business owners to connect with downtown patrons.

Nightlife Attractions

In addition to food, most respondents agreed that Tacoma could use more nightlife amenities such as clubs and live music. One of the respondents complained that while Tacoma had numerous bars that younger people frequent, there are many fewer opportunities to dance and participate in other social activities at night. This sentiment was captured aptly in one participant’s response: “If there were a better mesh of buildings that attract people during the day and during the night, it would be a lot better.”

Some respondents returned to the idea of nightclubs more than once. When asked what could be done to make Tacoma more vibrant, one newcomer to the Tacoma area chimed in, “More clubs. I have been here for two months. I want to do something fun. All I have done so far is go to the mountains and bike.”

In both focus groups, respondents indicated that they were only aware of one nightclub downtown. When asked



The Apothecary Bar at Brent's Drugs in Jackson, Mississippi, offers a community gathering space in addition to serving as a bar.



Photo Credit: Apothecary social media promotion.

The Apothecary

"I don't feel like Tacoma needs to throw in a bunch of bars. It's not necessarily what I feel Tacoma's culture is. In Jackson, Mississippi there is a place called The Apothecary with low lighting and lots of seating. Different members [of government] at the state and local levels often come in. It is a place where young professionals can gather and seem decent. Once a month there will be a book club in the back so you can grab a drink in the front and have a meaningful conversation with someone in the back."

- Focus Group Participant

**For millennials, experiences,
not material possessions,
were viewed as the more
valuable investment by far.**

about the sorts of retail amenities and services that are needed in Tacoma, one focus group member suggested, "More nightclubs because you get different varieties of music. We only have one and it plays the same stuff, so it gets old."

To others, increasing the nightlife options is an issue in need of a nuanced approach. While many participants agreed with the statement that "Tacoma is traditional and very boring," and that "we need a venue for live music, drinks, or a lounge because we don't have any of those," they also caution against simply adding too many of the same types of establishments. Indeed, when asked whether they would like a more robust evening scene in Tacoma, one participant replied, "Yes—but not bars. There are a lot of bars."

This response proved popular with the other participants, who agreed that Tacoma could use a semi-professional space to serve as an acceptable gathering place for friends, colleagues, and/or associates during the night hours. In more general terms, a lounge or lounge-like space for both daytime and nighttime use was a popular suggestion in the focus group where this possibility was brought up.

There was also agreement that Tacoma would benefit from nighttime opportunities that do not revolve around alcohol. In one of the focus groups, nearly everyone agreed that a late-night option such as an adult arcade could help attract younger crowds that may not otherwise be engaged in the downtown nightlife. (It seemed that Tacoma's current arcade bar was not known to focus-group participants). The desire of one participant for "something that stays open late night and that doesn't revolve around alcohol" was also echoed by other participants.

In both focus group sessions, the desire for nightlife and dining options prompted the following question: "Given a choice, would you rather spend your money on things or experiences?" With the exception of one individual who pointed out that "things can be experiences," everyone in our focus group was quick to reach unanimity: acquiring experiences, not material possessions, was viewed as the more valuable investment by far. This indicates the importance of business offerings that transcend traditional retail. In other words, millennial attraction must integrate opportunities for new experiences.

Business Variety

Apart from food and nightlife, focus group participants also agreed that downtown Tacoma lacks businesses of various sizes and varieties. “There are different types of shops in Seattle that make it more interesting,” replied one participant. Others seemed to agree that novelty and density of business offerings are what make a retail location desirable. As one participant mused, “if you want things to do downtown, they need to be concentrated.”

Out of these general preferences for density and novelty, participants also brought forward more specific suggestions for retail amenities. In both focus groups, participants indicated frustration with the inability to meet all of their daily needs with downtown’s current business amenities. As one individual ruefully noted, “You used to be able to grab groceries and hit the Y[MCA]. Now you can’t live a full life in downtown. Now you need to travel outside to meet all your needs.” On this point, most all participants agreed that a grocery store downtown could spur more investment. Winco, Whole Foods, and Trader Joes were all mentioned as desirable grocers for the downtown area.

While many respondents seemed apprehensive to name big-box retailers, brand names were occasionally cited in the focus groups. As one individual revealed, “I like chains, but I don’t know if I should.” A separate respondent added, “I don’t really like big box, but I would like a Target downtown.” Yet another had the following to suggest: “I like clothing shopping. If there were a district or an area that had decent men’s clothes, I would totally see myself going downtown. Not just clothes though, it can be shoes, too. It can be unique. It can be a box store too like J Crew or Banana Republic.” Several others added to the list. “A Pier 1 would be nice,” exclaimed one participant. A final participant added, “the only place where I can buy outdoor gear is REI [in the Tacoma Mall] or online. For how outdoorsy the city is, it’s hard to buy gear here.”

Although focus group participants did not object to the idea of bringing in national retailers, they did indicate that small businesses and business incubators would be desirable additions to the downtown area. Respondents also agreed that commercial vacancy rates are too high in downtown, leading to a feeling that a lot of the neighborhood’s potential is still unrealized.

Jobs and Labor Retention

Many participants indicated that Tacoma would need more than retail attractions and amenities to draw them in. They wanted job opportunities. Specifically, jobs for local college-graduates were viewed as important to the growth and prosperity of Tacoma, and participants felt that area businesses could do a better job of providing living-wage jobs for highly skilled workers. Similarly, participants also felt that there was a lack of internships in Tacoma for locals, and several participants expressed that college students expect to leave after graduation to find relevant work. In the words of one respondent, “many have to go outside of Tacoma” to find a decent internship and break into the upper echelons of the workforce. Most tellingly, when asked whether they thought there was opportunity for millennials in Tacoma, all respondents abruptly agreed with a unanimous “no.”

Small Businesses

Many focus group members noted the importance of small businesses to provide employment opportunities to keep college students in Tacoma post-graduation. They expressed a strong preference for adding small, local businesses over big-box retailers to help foster job opportunities for Tacoma residents.

Environmental Bottom Line

Desire for Density & Walkability

The need for greater retail density was a point of emphasis in both focus groups. On this topic, one participant provided the following insight: “The sprawl here in Tacoma was created for the old auto era. When I speak about density, people say to go to 6th Ave (a neighborhood thoroughfare in Central Tacoma). But when you go to the same places over and over again, you get

Even for those who do not go to bars
or clubs, seeing people lined up on the
street for an event is an important sign
of cultural vitality.

“You really have to talk to people to get a sense of what is going on. You really need to get involved to find things to do in the city.”
- Focus Group Participant

bored of it.” Thus, even in places where there may be a concentration of retail amenities, it is not enough to sustain interest and engagement among younger crowds. Several participants agreed that businesses were spaced too far apart and expressed interest in walkability. One respondent opined that Seattle is a better place to recreate because one can simply start walking from Pike Place Market and find things to do; choosing to recreate in Tacoma, on the other hand, means having to map out an itinerary.

This oft-repeated criticism that Tacoma is too auto-centric brought agreement from many, but it also stimulated proactive suggestions from other participants. “If you want things to do downtown,” replied one individual, “they need to be concentrated. The businesses that do exist are spread out. A lot of them are right around 9th and 6th [Avenues], but after that there is nothing. If you could build that out, then you could get everything to follow; allow people to walk.”

Whether density was invoked as a means of illustrating Seattle’s comparatively high level of attractiveness, or more simply to point the consequences that a lack of density can have on foot traffic, the message was clear: millennials value concentration, proximity, and walkability. On this note, several respondents indicated that the higher density and multi-use development being promoted is one of things that the City of Tacoma is doing right.

Interest in Fair Trade and Sustainable Business Practices
Participants’ desire for environmental sustainability was visible in the desire for environmentally and socially sustainable business practices. Several participants agreed that this can influence their decisions to support a particular business: “I would like fair trade items. I support the concept behind it. [Supporting] establishments that are more environmentally sound is important to me. To get a restaurant that is sustainable with 80 or 90% recycled materials is something I can get behind.” A separate respondent suggested that she would be happy buying more handmade local items. “Everyone is very into the local thing right now. But Tacoma doesn’t have options for that,” she commented.



Photo Credit: Boise Fry Co., Angel Moran, Guru Donuts, LLC, 2017
Boise Fry Co. & Guru Donut signs outside of the businesses’ shared space in downtown Boise, Idaho.

Engaging Shared Space: Boise Fries & Guru Donuts

One participant offered the following experience as an example of small businesses and their ability to create a sense of place and vibrancy: “When I went to Boise, they had some cool buildings. There was one spot where four businesses were sharing one space. There was a donut shop and a burger place. They were all local shops. You can sit and eat a doughnut or eat a burger while someone else is doing their homework. It had a great energy. I feel we don’t have that kind of space in Tacoma.” In building a mixed-use space such as the one in Boise, businesses can create a sense of place and space by acknowledging people’s desire to gather and socialize.



Photo Credit: Boise Fry Co., AACngel Moran, Guru Donuts, LLC, 2017

Bustling, engaging, family-friendly space at the shared Guru Donuts / Boise Fry Company location in downtown Boise, Idaho.

Social Bottom Line

The Importance of Shared Values

Participants expressed that they value businesses that are mindful of people, as well as environmental considerations. Many participants expressed their desire to stay away from businesses that have a bad reputation for exploiting people or the environment—for example, businesses such as Walmart were unpopular, and participants cited them as examples of places they frequently avoid. Choosing where to shop, for many participants, is seen as a conscious exercise in supporting the right types of businesses. The general observation to emerge from this discussion may be as follows: to earn the countenance of millennials, retailers will be most successful if they build on the social and environmental values of their consumers.

Affordable Retail

Issues of affordability were raised throughout the focus group sessions. When discussing the advantages that Seattle has over Tacoma, one respondent pointed out that in Seattle, one can walk from bar-to-bar and enjoy small plates in between for less than \$5. The same respondent also indicated that, in addition to more ethnic restaurants, he would also like to see more affordable options. The preference for affordability was made clear when one of the focus groups was asked about how environmental sustainability influences their purchases. One individual responded candidly, “Personally, I care more about affordability.”

Many participants shared a perception that downtown Tacoma’s retail options seem to be geared to higher income brackets, which the participants described as commuters, families, and people over the age of 40. Improved affordability of retail options would make downtown Tacoma more desirable to a broader cross-section of the public, including millennials.

Asymmetric Advertising

One respondent noted that it can be hard to access information about what to do in Tacoma: “You really have to talk to people to get a sense of what is going on. You really need to get involved to find things to do in the city.” Members from the other focus group made similar comments: “The only places I learn about things is in the bathroom or a bar. I learned about this focus group through my friend.” Focus group members stated that Seattle’s website and local newspaper, *The Stranger*, were places that younger people go to for information. Tacoma, some suggested, needs an official published resource where people can go for information and events.

Homeless Services

As in many urban downtowns, Tacoma has a concentration of social services designed to serve individuals experiencing homelessness. However, as demonstrated by one respondent's comment, this can sometimes influence the perception of downtown's vitality: "We need small businesses, but if there are a lot of people [experiencing homelessness] on the street, then it might be difficult for businesses to make it." A separate respondent noted a need for more services for people experiencing homelessness as well as businesses who "support the educational aspirations of employees." This finding circles back to the importance of local employment opportunities to create a robust local economy.

Cultural Bottom Line

The Need for Vibrancy

A desire for cultural vitality was at the heart of many responses. A common refrain was to contrast downtown Tacoma's cultural atmosphere with Seattle's. As one participant put it, "Downtown Seattle is a lot more alive; there are more people. You want to be in the city, and you don't feel that in Tacoma." As another put it, "Seattle has more events, social gatherings, the Seattle Art Fair, a lot more options." A final voice went as far as suggesting that "Downtown [Tacoma] doesn't really have a culture." To many, the difference between Seattle and Tacoma was the lack of a central hub in Tacoma. Downtown Seattle was viewed by many respondents as a central node that effectively connects the fragmented cultures of Seattle's neighborhoods together. Tacoma, on the other hand, has neighborhood identities, but no central hub.

Seeking a Sense of Place

The previous discussion reveals that creating a sense of space and identity may be particularly important for downtown Tacoma. One respondent who had grown up and lived in Puyallup for most of her life revealed that she never really got to explore downtown Tacoma until her boyfriend showed her around many years later. "Trying to navigate things in Tacoma can be a challenge," she mentioned.

As focus group participants repeatedly suggested, one way to help overcome these challenges and create a sense of place may be through the attraction of cultural establishments such as ethnic restaurants, live music and entertainment venues, bars, clubs, and, more generally, small businesses

that provide a unique atmosphere or identity. One participant observed that Tacoma needs small businesses because, "these are the places that give people roots." The same respondent added that "finding that experience [of place] in Tacoma is difficult."

As many of the focus group responses have indicated, experiences and social interactions may be more important to millennials than acquiring new things. The example from Boise (see sidebar) both reaffirms and builds upon this notion by indicating that small businesses can bring people together and facilitate social interactions through intuitive design. These kinds of development also provide an opportunity to integrate environmental features. In short, by attracting the appropriate concentration of businesses into an area, cities can build a vibrant social and cultural atmosphere while also achieving environmental goals such as density and walkability.

Community Events

Community activities are another way that Tacoma could augment its cultural bottom line. On this topic, respondents indicated that, while there are a number of community events, they are often not very well advertised and lack the flair or variety many seek. One respondent repined, "Events like Taste of Tacoma are predictable and often need to be marked months in advance in order for you to attend." Participants largely felt that community events can be bland and predictable, indicating that spontaneous and vibrant community gatherings may be missing from Tacoma's cultural offerings.

Activating the Streets

The importance of small businesses and nighttime amenities was a point of emphasis even for those who don't patronize these businesses. One focus group was in unanimous agreement—even for those who do not go to bars or clubs, seeing people lined up on the street for an event was an important sign of cultural vitality. The interest many participants had in street crowds reflected their desire for a lively, bustling downtown scene.

Furthermore, many participants reported that they felt Tacoma is "dead," and "boring," and they expressed that they wanted more action downtown. In the words of one participant, "I think that Tacoma should focus on the nine months that matter. I see announcements applications for events from April through September, but after that it's crickets. Tacoma in the summer

is really cool. There are barbecues and you can go out and travel. But during the school year, there is very little going on. Tacoma could do more to enhance activities during this time.”

Leveraging the Tacoma Art Scene

While some lamented the lack of visibility and flair of local cultural events, some had proactive suggestions for enhancing cultural vibrancy. One individual appreciated the murals in downtown, but wished that the City of Tacoma would do even more to promote the arts: “When I used to live in Kansas City there was an event on Friday in which they would close down the streets and there would be a warehouse with galleries; each week it was a different theme.” At this comment, another respondent quickly added, “But working with what we have—our art galleries can help draw in crowds towards downtown.” Others seemed to agree that art galleries could do a better job of making themselves available to younger crowds. “One of the art galleries downtown is only open 1–5 p.m. during the day. If you work and have a job downtown, you miss the opportunity to attend.” (Tacoma does currently have a monthly third Thursday art walk that happens downtown, but this event was not well-known among participants.)

Historic Architecture

Many participants indicated that the historic buildings in downtown Tacoma are one of Tacoma’s best cultural assets, and many suggested that the many historic buildings add character and bring value to the downtown area. Though some of these storefronts are currently vacant, many respondents felt that these buildings present a latent opportunity for future business growth.

The previous section outlined several themes that emerged from our two focus groups, but a few of them deserve particular attention: cultural vibrancy and engagement; diversity; convenience; and marketing improvement. These themes came up frequently in focus group responses and served as a unifying thread running through each of the four bottom lines. They also informed and set context for this report's recommendations, which are found after the thematic analysis.

Cultural Vibrancy and Engagement

Whether respondents were asked to consider how they enjoy spending their free time, why they prefer some neighborhoods or cities over others, or how they would improve downtown Tacoma, respondents emphasized the importance of experiences. It is telling that focus group respondents, most of who currently reside in Tacoma, often find themselves spending their leisure time not in Tacoma, but rather in the neighborhoods of Seattle. For many, this decision needed no justification; there are simply more things to do in Seattle than there are in Tacoma. Furthermore, doing things in Seattle did not necessarily mean engaging in the conspicuous consumption of goods. In fact, quite a few respondents indicated that they found enjoyment walking the streets of Seattle and being a participant or observer in what many viewed as a vibrant cultural space. Vibrant culture and arts were critical to participants, but to them, arts and culture are more than a museum. To them, arts and culture are often everyday experiences.

The desire for engaging cultural activities was evident throughout many of the focus group responses, including recurring suggestions that downtown Tacoma would benefit from a more vibrant nightlife. Respondents made numerous proposals about the types of amenities they would appreciate. From lounges to arcades, it is often not material goods that millennials clamor for, but rather the ability to experience social interactions in shared spaces. Participants also indicated their desire to engage with arts and culture through interactive forums such as night markets, as well as jazz, comedy, and dance clubs.

Diversity

Closely related to overall cultural vibrancy, diversity of people, places, and goods is another theme to emerge from the focus groups. Further, participants seemed to interpret diversity as an indicator of opportunity, equity, and vitality—all elements they want to see in downtown Tacoma.

Vibrant culture and arts were critical to participants, but to them arts and culture are often everyday experiences.



Photo Credit: City of Tacoma.

Festivities, such as Tacoma Pride, exemplify cultural vibrancy, diversity of people and highlight Tacoma's attractions.

Many participants felt that Tacoma was for older, white, wealthier individuals, and there was common concern about gentrification and what they felt was a lack of ethnic business owners in the downtown core. Some expressed that many of Tacoma's culturally rich dining and recreation attractions were no longer in business. Specifically, one participant expressed disappointment in the displacement of African American- owned businesses in the Hilltop district and the closing of his favorite jazz club. Additionally, there was strong demand for cultural and varietal diversity in food options downtown. Participants felt strongly that Tacoma should host a wider variety of ethnic, affordable, and specialty food options, which is why food trucks and small ethnic restaurants were popular responses to questions about amenities Tacoma lacks. Like crowds and activated streets, heterogeneity is an important element to cultural vitality, engagement, and experience.

Convenience

As our respondents noted, some spatial layouts are more conducive to a positive consumer experience than are others, and business corridors can either support or hinder community engagement in a local economy. For our participants, convenience was key to attractive communities—but convenience is not driving a car from one destination to the next, but rather the ability to walk to a dense area that meets all their consumption needs. Therefore, density and walkability were top priorities

Need for Improved Marketing of Tacoma Attractions

Finally, one significant theme that emerged throughout the focus groups is the importance of improving communications and marketing in Tacoma. For instance, participants frequently expressed that Tacoma's culture, character, and best amenities were "hidden," and that locals often found exciting Tacoma events and destinations through "word of mouth." Many elaborated that, without an inside connection, non-locals were unlikely to learn about the many special attractions Tacoma has to offer.

Millennials value concentration, proximity, and walkability.



Photo Credit: City of Tacoma.
Looking down 9th Ave at the many historic buildings in downtown Tacoma. The Rialto and the Pantages signs are visible and in the distance the Port of Tacoma can be seen.

The thematic analysis reveals several striking insights. First, cultural vibrancy and engagement, diversity, and convenience seem to take priority in determining where millennials choose to spend money. Second, effective marketing is key to building business and cultural reputation. Finally, three specific amenity categories emerged from our focus group responses: nightlife, cuisine diversity, and shopping.

Each of the following recommendations was informed through the thematic analysis, and consequently each falls within one or all three of the amenity categories. As part of this analysis, we developed a full list of possible retail options that the City of Tacoma may consider as part of their business attraction program (see Appendix F).

Below, the report elaborates upon three recommendations in particular: food trucks, supermarkets, and lounges. These recommendations are featured due to their strong alignments to QBL criteria and the frequency with which they came up in focus groups. Further, we believe that these recommendations are a few of Tacoma's strongest options for millennial attraction due to their alignment with the themes (outlined in the previous section), and their feasibility (ease of implementation). Using the QBL framework, we illustrate each recommendation's strengths and trade-offs. Rounding out each recommendation are proposed initial steps that the City of Tacoma could take to catalyze implementation. While we did not include specific suggestions on marketing strategies, effective advertising will be critical to drawing millennials to both current and prospective attractions.

Food Trucks

Tacoma has already had success with the annual food truck festival in Wright Park as part of Metro Parks' summer events, and an expansion of food trucks in Tacoma would integrate them into the daily fabric of the city. Food truck festivals bring many people to one area to enjoy live music and a variety of food, but festivals are temporary and local economies may miss out on the extended economic opportunity that results from a permanent food truck district. Because food trucks embody the millennial preferences for cultural vibrancy and engagement, convenience, and diversity, we believe they have many upsides for attracting and retaining millennials to downtown Tacoma.



Food trucks add vibrancy and cultural diversity to a community.

Photo Credit: Street Food Festival, 2017.

More than just being a strong conceptual fit, our recommendation to bring in more food trucks aligns with our baseline survey data: the highest proportion of respondents (75%) indicated "food" as a typical reason for visiting downtown Tacoma. Focus group participants made it a point to suggest more affordable and diverse eateries, indicating that not only is there a strong demand for quick and affordable food options, but that there may also be a gap between supply and demand.

The QBL framework provides further clarification on the specifics of this recommendation:

Financial Bottom Line

Food trucks provide convenient and affordable food options for office workers, students, budget travelers, and anyone looking for a cheap and quick meal. When located near dense commercial districts, food trucks can produce positive spillovers by generating foot traffic that can then be captured by adjacent businesses. Food trucks can be an especially effective option if used in parallel with our third recommendation, which calls for greater nightlife amenities. Pedestrians looking for a small plate in-between destinations (bars, clubs, and arcades, for instance) will be satisfied in having an affordable, convenient, and potentially novel dining option available to them.

Compared to other retail options, food trucks are unlikely to generate the financial activity that heavier-use businesses might bring. Allocating space for food trucks therefore brings with it a mix of opportunities and opportunity costs. From the perspective of the financial bottom line, food trucks should be valued for their ability to address issues of affordability, quantity, and variety. Aggregate prosperity, on the other hand, may be an area where food trucks have significant trade-offs.

Environmental Bottom Line

An obvious advantage of food trucks is their mobility. This means that they can easily relocate to pedestrian-oriented commercial districts. It also means that they can be clustered together so that multiple dining options may be located in the footprint of what once allowed for only one or two eateries. The cumulative benefit of these attributes means a reduction in automobile miles traveled by patrons in downtown Tacoma; with food trucks, the need to drive between activities can be reduced. The potential of food trucks to address issues of density and walkability are distinct advantages that should be tallied under the environmental bottom line.

However, concentrating food trucks into an area of downtown may result in increased generator use, and therefore, localized air pollution. Furthermore, while a food truck district could represent an improvement in business density over the current status quo, there could once again be an opportunity cost if the food truck district land-use supplants opportunities for more mixed-use development. Fortunately, however, due to the mobility of food trucks, a special food truck district could be moved to a different location in the event of future development. A food truck district also has the potential to either temporarily or permanently fill underutilized spaces in downtown Tacoma. A benefit-cost analysis is recommended to more precisely weigh the environmental trade-offs of food trucks.

Social Bottom Line

Food trucks can often support small, locally-owned businesses and start-ups that might not have the capital or credit to open up their own full-fledged restaurants. Food trucks may therefore be viewed as an indirect method of supporting the growth of low-income, minority, women, and/or veteran-owned businesses. If affordable food is part of the food truck model, there is also an advantage in that community members from all income brackets can enjoy the experience of ordering from a food truck.

While food trucks may be seen favorably for their ability to grant employment to local and disadvantaged groups, it should also be noted that, if food trucks are not locally owned, they may end up remunerating their earnings outside of the local economy. Furthermore, while food trucks may help to support locals, this does not necessarily mean that these jobs will be of the type that our focus group respondents clamored for—that is, food trucks are unlikely to generate labor demand for local higher-education graduates.

Cultural Bottom Line

In addition to offering unique, convenient, and affordable dishes, food truck districts can also create a distinct sense of place. Indeed, whether food trucks have their own featured event, or they are simply advertised as part of another event, food trucks can be a recognizable cultural mainstay in community events. When crowds of pedestrians can gather around a group of food trucks, the opportunity to create a locus for social interaction becomes a real and exciting possibility.

Implementation Suggestions

1. Review current policies for truck operation downtown.
2. Conduct further research on best practices nationally.
3. Through the City of Tacoma or external partnership, designate “pods” around downtown for trucks to gather.

Supermarket

A common concern in both of our focus groups is that it can be hard to live a “full life” in downtown Tacoma without access to groceries. Therefore, the desire for a downtown supermarket was consistent across focus groups. Many mentioned both big box and smaller markets as an option. In other parts of the city where land may be a bit more open, Tacoma may have freedom to open larger grocers. However, in downtown Tacoma, compact urban grocers could also be effective, and might be best located on opposite each ends of downtown to minimize market overlap.

Financial Bottom Line

The last supermarket in downtown Tacoma operated from 2011–2014 and ran at a loss for some time. While it is difficult to prove that demand for such goods and services has grown since that time, we believe that supermarkets in the downtown area can capitalize on the increasing numbers of people living in and near downtown. Indeed, as a greater number of mixed-used projects are built downtown and as UW Tacoma and other downtown institutions grow, one can envision that a grocery store could provide convenience to consumers who must currently travel outside of downtown to fulfill their basic needs.

Environmental Bottom Line

Market locations, both large and small, require a great deal of land in downtown districts. Consequently, space may be prohibitive to long-term planning. For that reason, grocery stores ought to be incorporated as part of dense, mixed-use development, and if a grocer is targeted, they should build in such a way that promotes walkability, housing above the store, and connections to other businesses. Attracting grocers that have local selections could also prove popular with millennial consumers who value a retailer’s commitment to sustainability and locally-made products.

Social Bottom Line

Supermarkets provide opportunities to hire local residents at the store and allow small businesses to set up within a close proximity. This study suggests that millennials are likely to patronize businesses that are close together and offer a variety of options. This would also suggest that small local businesses, especially those that specialize in goods distinguishable from those found in grocery stores, could stand to profit from close proximity to a supermarket.

In some cases, grocery stores can also be an important contributor to the social bottom line by emphasizing community ownership in their business model. Grocers that are community-owned and source their food locally, for instance, not



Envisioning a compact supermarket in downtown Tacoma.

Photo Credit: Coop Adriatica, Admirable Journey, a travel blog.

only support other small local businesses, but they also serve as a champion of community participation. Put simply, grocery stores with these attributes could be part of a twin-pronged strategy to support local businesses while building a greater sense of community identity in the downtown area.

Cultural Bottom Line

If a supermarket is implemented as part of a compact mixed-use development and can spur other businesses to operate nearby, this new amenity could help to create a cultural gathering space around attractions such as coffee shops, diners, or other services downtown. As a grocery store promotes greater consumer activity in the downtown area, there is reason to believe that positive cultural spillovers will result. When people walk (as opposed to drive) from their homes to the grocery store and other neighboring businesses, this increased pedestrian activity boosts the street-level vitality of downtown.

Implementation Suggestions

1. Conduct a market feasibility study that a) examines why past grocers were unsuccessful, and b) explores downtown residents’ interests in a downtown grocer.
2. Identify suitable locations for a mid-sized grocer.

Lounges (Comedy and Music)

Forums such as jazz lounges and comedy clubs nurture a city's cultural vibrancy. This study suggests that comedy and music lounges are in high demand among millennials because of the opportunity they provide to engage in nightlife rich with arts and culture. Lounges that promote the arts not only facilitate entertainment, but often also facilitate space for meaningful social interactions. In short, lounges deliver a favorite consumption good of millennials: experience.

Financial Bottom Line

As focus group respondents pointed out, downtown Tacoma closes down after dark. Adding lounge spaces could help to capture an eager but currently under-supplied market.

An open lounge space with the option to host multiple styles of events to a wide range of ages can attract a large customer base. Additionally, a lounge space positioned in close proximity to popular bars could attract customers who are already out and about, and bar-crawling clients might stop by a cultural lounge for a drink but return for a show. Music lounges and comedy clubs also have the potential to be symbiotic for nearby businesses, bringing increased foot traffic through the downtown core.

Lounges and other nightlife amenities also present opportunities for innovation. The millennials we interviewed were not only enthusiastic about adding a greater number of nightlife options to downtown area, but the variety of recommendations they made suggested that millennials would be receptive to new ideas and business models that cater to the late-night crowds. Lounges that offer novel experiences outside of what many may traditionally expect from a lounge could prove effective along the financial bottom line.

Environmental Bottom Line

In close proximity to other bars and businesses, lounges would help support a walkable Tacoma, especially at night. Tacoma could see increased use of public transit and foot traffic downtown with additional attractions positioned in close proximity to downtown food and entertainment options. To realize these advantages to pedestrian access, our recommendations for food trucks and lounges could be implemented synergistically if the two recommendations shared a common location.

Social Bottom Line

As we learned from our focus groups, millennials often view experiences as more

valuable than material goods. Venues such as lounges help to create a sense of community and belonging by offering a space for social gatherings and spontaneous interactions. With the current lack of information channels in Tacoma, a lounge space could also help to centralize and connect the community to local events.

Cultural Bottom Line

Lounges foster a community's art scene, providing a space for local artists to showcase their talent. An increase in music and comedy lounges means an increase in opportunity for artists, providing an important exhibition space for them to connect with their community and expand their reach to new audiences. Employment opportunities for artists attract and keep them in cities, which results in a flourishing arts scene and cultural vibrancy, a characteristic that is valued by many millennials.

Implementation Suggestions

- 1. Identify possible locations for lounges.
- 2. Partner with a nonprofit operator to program community use of the lounge space for public events and discussions.
- 3. Find an “anchor” for the lounge, such as a popular recurring act, program, or event.



The Swiss Restaurant and Pub offers a music lounge in Tacama.

Photo Credit: Longstride band, 2015.

The exploratory nature of this study provides insight that can help inform future research and development regarding millennial attraction to Tacoma. Through qualitative research set within the context of numerical trends and a quadruple bottom line framework, we uncovered key themes that can help to illuminate millennial desires for Tacoma.

What amenities or retail destinations are missing in Tacoma that would attract millennials?

This study suggests that to attract millennials, Tacoma should consider business development initiatives that promote cultural engagement, diversity, and convenience. Amenities and retail attractions such as food trucks, supermarkets, and lounges (music or comedy) are of particular interest to millennials. This study also found that proximity of new development is especially important. Specifically, density appears to be critical to millennials as dense spaces promote lively streets, convenience, and a variety of consumption options. Lastly, it appears as though Tacoma may have room to improve the marketing strategies for their current amenities and retail attractions. It is possible that Tacoma could increase the percentage of millennials in the city through improved marketing and communications about the attractive amenities that Tacoma already possesses.

How does Tacoma attract and keep millennials in their city?

To retain the millennials who are already in the city, Tacoma must consider the critical roles that housing affordability and job opportunities play in millennial recruitment and retention. Further research should continue to explore new opportunities for Tacoma to improve its job market so that the city can compete for millennials in the current knowledge-based economy.

Tacoma must consider the critical roles that housing affordability and job opportunities play in millennial recruitment and retention.



People gathering for an event at the Tacoma Dome along East D Street in Tacoma, Washington.

Photo Credit: City of Tacoma.

Appendix A: Focus Group Recruitment Flyer

FREE PIZZA!

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS WANTED

AS PART OF THE CITY OF TACOMA'S LIVABLE CITY YEAR PROJECT

ARE YOU AN 18-34 YEAR-OLD WHO LIVES/WORKS/STUDIES IN TACOMA?

JOIN US FOR ONE OF THESE FOCUS GROUPS!

NOVEMBER 14, 2017

UW TACOMA

6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

ROOM GWP #101

NOVEMBER 16, 2017

UNIV. PUGET SOUND

6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

RENDEZVOUS ROOM

We need your voice to help shape our city. Participate in a focus group and tell us what amenities and retail destinations are missing from Tacoma. Conducted by the University of Washington in partnership with the City of Tacoma, these focus groups are part of the Living City Year Project, a study on Tacoma economic development.

TO SIGN UP OR LEARN MORE:
EMAIL KELLY BROWN AT KELLYNB@UW.EDU

First 10 participants to sign up will be eligible to receive an Amazon or Starbucks gift card (up to \$25) upon completion of one of the focus groups



W

EVANS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY & GOVERNANCE

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON



Appendix B: Focus Group Consent Form

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

University of Washington Evans School of Public Policy and Governance

In Partnership with

The Livable City Year Program and the City of Tacoma

Research Study: Tacoma Millennial Economic Gap Analysis

Researchers: Kelly Buethe, Doug Minkler, Bucoda Warren

What is the Research?

As part of the Livable City Year program (LCY) you have been asked to take part in a research study about amenities and retail opportunities in downtown Tacoma. The purpose of this study is to evaluate what amenities and retail opportunities would be most attractive to young adults (18-34 year olds) in Tacoma, with a focus on downtown. The results of this study will provide guidance to the City of Tacoma Community and Economic Development Department when considering future economic development recruitment and opportunities in Tacoma.

Voluntary Participation

This discussion is *voluntary*—you do not have to take part if you do not want to. If any questions make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. You may leave the group at any time for any reason.

Privacy

Your privacy will be protected.
Your name will not be used in any report that is published.

Audio Recording Permission

I have been told that the discussion will be tape recorded only if all participants agree.
I have been told that I can state that I don't want the discussion to be taped and it will not be.
I can ask that the tape be turned off at any time.

I agree to be audio recorded ☐ Yes ☐ No

Compensation

I am not guaranteed compensation for participation in this study beyond pizza provided prior to the focus group. I understand that if I am among the first 10 individuals who signed up for this study, I am eligible to receive a \$25 gift card, based off a random drawing upon completion of the focus group.

Questions

I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I wish regarding this evaluation. If I have any additional questions about the evaluation, I may email kellynb@uw.edu.

Please write your name below and check "yes" to confirm your participation in this study. Sign your name at the bottom.

NAME

☐ Yes, I would like to take part in the focus group.

☐ No, I would not like to participate in the focus group.

SIGNATURE

DATE

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Appendix C: Focus Group Schedule Sample

Focus group schedules were created for both the UWT and UPS sessions. Below, we include the focus group schedule for the UWT session as an example of the focus group schedules. Due to the semi-structured nature of the focus group questions, this schedule does not contain an exhaustive list of questions asked in each focus group. Instead, the scheduled questions reflect the framework used by the facilitator as she adapted questions to participant responses.

Focus Group Schedule
UWT Nov 14th, 6 – 7:30pm

Research

Millennial Economic Gap Analysis

Location

University of Washington Tacoma
Garretson Woodruff Pratt (GWT) Building, Room #101

Room Reservation

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Researchers

Kelly Buethe – Facilitator
Doug Minkler – Note-taker
Bucoda Warren – Note-taker

Participants

Millennials who live/work/study in Tacoma

- I. Opening (6:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.)

a. Greetings, pizza, and surveys

i. Upon arrival, participants will be given a consent form and a demographic survey to complete before the focus group begins.

ii. While filling out the consent form and demographic survey, participants can help themselves to pizza and mingle.

iii. Researchers will be available for questions during this time.

iv. Chairs will be arranged in a circle.
- II. Focus Group (6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.)

- a. Introduction (6:30 p.m. – 6:35 p.m.): The facilitator introduces themselves and the other researchers, explaining each researcher’s role. She then summarizes focus group structure and expectations.

i. Structure and group expectations script: “There will be 8 scripted questions. All participants are invited to share their insight after a question is asked, but you do not have to respond to every question.”

ii. Facilitator will remind participants that the focus group will be audio recorded for later transcription.

iii. Participants are invited to ask any questions they may have before the focus group officially begins.
- b. Focus Group Questions (6:35 p.m. – 7:20 p.m.): The focus group will follow a semi-structured format. The facilitator will use the 8 scripted questions to guide the conversation. Follow-up questions will be formed throughout the session to explore participant responses that fit within a quadruple bottom line framework.

i. Please give your name, your connection to Tacoma, and the name of your current Netflix binge. (Introductory Question)

ii. When you are not at school or work, how do you spend your free time?

iii. Where do you spend most of your free-time?

1. Why? (What attracts you to __?)

2. Why not spend more time in Tacoma?

3. Potential follow-up questions could relate to:

a. Participants’ desire to visit Tacoma (Do they want to visit more often than they currently do?)

b. Transportation (Do they find it easy to walk, bike, or use transit in/to Tacoma?)

c. How important is it to have alternative transit-accessible amenities?)

d. Affordability

iv. What do you do in Tacoma when you’re not working or going to school?

1. Potential follow-up questions could relate to:

a. Festival and community event attendance

b. Family-oriented activities vs. individual-oriented activities

c. Retail industries (What are the popular industries they currently patronize?)

v. What types of businesses and amenities would you like to see in Tacoma?

vi. How would you describe Downtown Tacoma’s character/culture?

1. Potential follow-up questions could relate to:

a. Perceptions of Tacoma’s diversity (racial, cultural)

b. City vs. community culture

vii. Downtown Tacoma needs more ____.

viii. Downtown Tacoma needs less ____.

Focus Group Baseline Survey

As part of the University of Washington’s Livable City Year (LCY) program, the City of Tacoma has partnered with graduate students from the University of Washington’s Evans School of Public Policy and Governance. To help us understand the responses that will be provided in today’s focus group session, we ask that you please complete the following baseline survey. Answers to the baseline survey are completely anonymous and are recorded strictly for informational purposes. If you have any questions about the wording of survey questions or about how survey responses will be used, please ask one of the focus group administrators.

Your time and contributions to today’s focus group are highly valued. We thank you for your participation and ask that you respond to each of the following questions to the best of your ability.



Question	Answers							
1. What is your age?	Please list your age (in years) in the space below							
2. To which gender do you most closely identify?	<div>Please circle the appropriate response</div> <table><tr><td>Female</td><td>Male</td><td>Transgender Female</td><td>Transgender Male</td><td>Gender variant/Non-conforming</td><td>Not listed</td><td>Prefer not to answer</td></tr></table>	Female	Male	Transgender Female	Transgender Male	Gender variant/Non-conforming	Not listed	Prefer not to answer
Female	Male	Transgender Female	Transgender Male	Gender variant/Non-conforming	Not listed	Prefer not to answer		
3. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish Origin?	<div>Circle the appropriate response</div> <table><tr><td>No</td><td>Yes</td></tr></table>	No	Yes					
No	Yes							
4. If you responded 'no' to the previous question, how would you best describe yourself?	<div>Circle all that apply</div> <table><tr><td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td><td>Asian</td><td>Black or African American</td><td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td><td>White</td></tr></table>	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White		
American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White				
5. What is/are your (intended) major(s)	Please list all that apply							
6. What is your highest level of education?	<div>Please circle the highest level of education you have completed</div> <table><tr><td>High School/GED</td><td>Associates Degree</td><td>Bachelor's Degree</td><td>Advanced Degree/Ph.D</td><td>Vocational/Technical</td></tr></table>	High School/GED	Associates Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Advanced Degree/Ph.D	Vocational/Technical		
High School/GED	Associates Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Advanced Degree/Ph.D	Vocational/Technical				
7. If you are currently employed, what is your current income range? (skip question if not employed)	<div>Circle the appropriate range</div> <table><tr><td>\$25k or less</td><td>\$25-\$50k</td><td>\$50-\$75k</td><td>\$75-\$100k</td><td>\$100k +</td></tr></table>	\$25k or less	\$25-\$50k	\$50-\$75k	\$75-\$100k	\$100k +		
\$25k or less	\$25-\$50k	\$50-\$75k	\$75-\$100k	\$100k +				
8. Do you currently, or have you recently (last 3 years), lived in Tacoma?	<div>Circle the appropriate response</div> <table><tr><td>No</td><td>Yes</td></tr></table>	No	Yes					
No	Yes							

a. If answered yes, do you rent or own a home? (skip question if not applicable)		No		Yes					
b. If you are a renter and live in Tacoma, please indicate your monthly rent and current housing (i.e. studio, one-bedroom, two bedroom)		Rent (\$/month): _____ Size of Unit (# of bedrooms): _____							
9. If you answered 'no' to the previous question, where do you currently reside (city, town, etc.)?		_____							
10. If you answered 'yes' to living in Tacoma, in which neighborhood do/did you live and how long have you lived there?		Neighborhood: _____ Years lived in neighborhood: _____							
11. About how frequently do you visit downtown Tacoma (or the downtown nearest you) for either non-routine (i.e. recreational) or business/business-related visits, per week?		Please circle the appropriate response							
12. What are your typical purposes for visiting downtown Tacoma (or the downtown nearest you)?		Never	1-2 times per week	3-4 times per week	5 or more times per week	Don't know			
		Circle all that apply							
		Hang out with friends	Shop	Food	Entertain ment (movies, concerts, events, etc.)	Exercise	Study	Work/ business	
		Circle the response that best reflects your average expenditures							
13. About how much do you typically spend when in downtown Tacoma?		Less than \$10		\$10-20	\$20-\$50	\$50-100	More than \$100		
14. For those who indicated that you visit downtown Tacoma to shop, how would you rate the ability of existing amenities to meet your needs?		Circle the response that best reflects your feelings							
15. How would you rate the ability of downtown Tacoma's current retail offerings/amenities to meet the preferences of millennials, in general?		Poor	Somewhat poor		Neither poor nor good		Somewhat good		Good
		Poor	Somewhat poor		Neither poor nor good		Somewhat good		58 Good
16. For those who indicated that they do not shop in downtown Tacoma, please provide up to three reasons for your answer									

The following table contains some of the most frequent focus group responses and is organized within quadruple bottom line categories. It should be noted that many responses are relevant across the four bottom lines, and are therefore not exclusive to one category alone.

Financial Bottom Line	Social Bottom Line	Environmental Bottom Line	Cultural Bottom Line
Not enough businesses in downtown area in general (high vacancy rates) Businesses lack in variety (i.e. too little diversity in types of retailers).	Demographic diversity of Tacoma could be reflected in businesses better; more ethnic restaurants, local business owners	City's current investment into mixed-use development appreciated but would like to see more	City lacks sense of place and identity compared to cities such as Seattle
Inability to complete everyday errands in downtown (no grocery store, department store, etc.). Greater concentration and variety of dining options desired (including food trucks, hole-in wall establishments)	Information and accessibility asymmetries; those who live in Tacoma know about the City's assets, those outside of Tacoma know very little; City could do better job of advertising events	Auto-centric layout minimizes retail density, walkability	Community/cultural events are predictable and not well-advertised leading to less engagement among community members
Small business and even some big-box stores are welcome. Respondents would appreciate seeing more start-ups and business incubators downtown	Businesses that focus on workforce development, opportunities for upward career mobility needed	Foot traffic important; seeing people on the street as a means of building excitement	Pedestrian traffic as important visual signal of cultural and commercial vitality. Nightlife as important for enhancing cultural and social vibrancy downtown
Lack specific amenities for nightlife (lounges, clubs, live entertainment, non-alcohol-centric activities)	Businesses that employ local college graduates also viewed as important for retention of millennials	Avowed commitment to environmental stewardship important for gaining patronage of some millennials	Ethnic food as a means of reflecting cultural diversity of Tacoma residents/business-owners
More job and internship	Affordability a key issue to	Hand-made merchandise appreciated by	Millennials prefer spending

Appendix E: Focus Group Common Responses

Appendix F: Potential Retail Options for the City of Tacoma

The following table contains some of the most frequent focus group responses and is organized within quadruple bottom line categories. It should be noted that many responses are relevant across the four bottom lines, and are therefore not exclusive to one category alone.

Nightlife	Cuisine Diversity	Shopping
Comedy clubs Jazz clubs Music lounges and venues Dance clubs Night markets Comedy Clubs GameWorks Arcade	Food trucks Ethnic restaurants Affordable eateries Small plate restaurants	Supermarket Small, locally-owned retail Target Men’s clothing stores Affordable boutiques Clothing thrift stores

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