What is Opportunity?

"Opportunity" is a situation or condition that places individuals in a position to be more likely to succeed and excel.

Why Map Opportunity?

Opportunity mapping is a research tool used to understand the dynamics of "opportunity" within metropolitan areas. The purpose of opportunity mapping is to illustrate where opportunity rich communities exist, assess who has access to these communities, and understand what might be done to improve outcomes in opportunity poor communities. Planners, service providers, advocates, and the general public can use the maps as a tool to understand how investments, programs, and services align with different neighborhoods and the life outcomes in those areas.

Opportunity Mapping

Opportunity maps assess the conditions in neighborhoods (Census tracts) across a region. With origins in social science research, the indicators of opportunity for a region are defined by broad categories like education, economy, transportation, housing, environment, and health. Indicators for each tract are combined to create an overall "Opportunity Index," sorted into categories of very low, low, moderate, high, and very high access to opportunity. Maps are shaded with colors that correspond to the opportunity categories and data is overlaid on the opportunity map for analysis.

PSRC first created Opportunity Mapping as part of a report, *Equity, Opportunity, and Sustainability in the Central Puget Sound Region* (2012), developed in collaboration with the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. Since then, the demographics of the region have changed, with significant shifts in racial populations and concentrations of poverty and an evolution of the data within indicators. To help assess potential equity outcomes using more current neighborhood conditions across the region, PSRC updated the data used in the Opportunity Index. Recent demographic assessments of the central Puget Sound region show:

- Communities of color are concentrated in the more urban areas of the region
- Concentrations of poverty exist in the region's urban core; shifts in poverty to more suburban areas follow a national trend of suburbanization of poverty
- 80% of King County residents are in moderate to very high opportunity areas; outside of King County, most residents are in very low to low opportunity areas
- 65% of residents in neighborhoods with majority low income households are in very low to low opportunity areas; 48% of residents in neighborhoods with majority people of color are in very low to low opportunity areas

Puget Sound Regional Council

Opportunity Indicators and Composite Regional Index

Education

- Reading test scores
- Math test scores
- Student poverty
- Teacher qualifications
- Graduation rates

Economic Health

- Access to living wage jobs
- Job growth
- Unemployment rates

Housing & Neighborhood Quality

- Housing vacancy rates
- Housing stock condition
- Crime index

Mobility & Transportation

- Drive commute cost
- Access to transit
- Transit fare cost
- Walkability

Health & Environment

- Proximity to park/open space
- Proximity to toxic site release
- Access to healthy food

For more information:
Please visit psrc.org/opportunity-mapping

Sources: Puget Sound Regional Council, 2017-2018; American Community Survey, 2012-2016; Environmental Protection Agency, 2016; Tetrad, Inc. PCensus Dbx, 2010; Washington State Report Card, 2016-2017; MIT Living Wage Calculator, 2017

Federal Parks/Forest, Military Bases, and Missing Data Areas
Urban Growth Area

Access to Opportunity
Very low
Low
Moderate
High
Very high

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