

Appendix A. Overburdened Community Assessment

As part of the SWCP, the City seeks to establish an engagement process inclusive of overburdened communities, who may experience disproportionate environmental harms and risks. Many of these communities face high flooding risks in the downtown basins and along Mill Creek.

This chapter details the methodology for the overburdened community assessment and identifies community engagement opportunities for stormwater planning, flood outreach and capital improvement. The results from this assessment will support external funding applications for the City of Cosmopolis.

A.1 Assessment Objectives and Scope

The overburdened communities are defined as minority, low-income, tribal, or indigenous populations or geographic locations in Washington State. These communities often suffer most from infrastructure failure and unintended consequences of environmental disasters. Although the City is not covered by Ecology's MS4 Permit, the Permit serves as a framework for including overburdened communities in engagement activities around stormwater planning. This is particularly salient for the lower Chehalis basin, as communities in the City has faced flooding concerns along Mill Creek and in downtown area, and as capital investments outpace the rate at which infrastructure degrades. A well-informed engagement process could create opportunities for public involvement and help shape the identity of Cosmopolis, and revitalize the sense of community in Cosmopolis.

The permit defines overburdened communities as:

...minority, low-income, tribal, or indigenous populations or geographic locations in Washington State that potentially experience disproportionate environmental harms and risks. This disproportionality can be a result of greater vulnerability to environmental hazards, lack of opportunity for public participation, or other factors.

Increased vulnerability may be attributable to an accumulation of negative or lack of positive environmental, health, economic, or social conditions within these populations or places. The term describes situations where multiple factors, including both environmental and socio-economic stressors, may act cumulatively to affect health and the environment and contribute to persistent environmental health disparities.

This overburdened community assessment for Cosmopolis was also developed concurrently for the cities of Aberdeen and Hoquiam.

A.2 Indicator Development

On June 24, 2025, community representatives from the cities of Aberdeen, Hoquiam, and the City met to determine the barriers to community engagement that are most relevant to their cities. The following eight potential barriers were identified and used to complete a detailed demographic analysis:

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Economics | 2. Seniors | 3. Health |
| 4. Language | 5. Mobility | 6. Tribal |
| 7. Digital Usage | 8. Community Facilities | |

Findings from the community assessment informed recommended outreach strategies.

A.3 Community Assessment and StoryMap

To accomplish an engagement process inclusive of overburdened communities, a community analysis was performed to better understand Cosmopolis at the citywide and Census Tract levels of detail.

This analysis, which is hosted in a publicly available [Esri StoryMap](#), provides statistical and spatial analyses of the Cosmopolis community. This interactive format allows users to explore information relevant to the eight themes or potential barriers to participation listed above. With this approach, users can better understand *where* overburdened communities are most likely to live and *why* they are overburdened. The StoryMap includes introductory information, a four-page infographic PDF summarizing the City, and detailed descriptions of the eight indicators, which are listed below.

A.3.1 Community Demographics Overview

The City is home to approximately 2,301 residents. The average household size in Cosmopolis is 2.4 people. There are 895 total housing units, 86% of which are detached homes, and six percent are mobile homes. Nineteen percent of housing units are renter-occupied, with a countywide median rent of \$846. Approximately 81% are owner-occupied, with a median home value of \$280,700. Most households moved into their current homes between 2000 and 2009.

The median age is 44.0, with about one third (34%) of households including a person under the age of 18, and one third (33%) including someone age 65 or older. Of the 778 households, 30% include at least one person with a disability.

Within Cosmopolis, 8% of households live below the poverty level, and the median household income is an estimated \$80,132. Additionally, 8% of households do not have internet access and 10% of renter households do not have a vehicle.

1. Economics:

1A. *Employment*

Data Source: [2023 \(5-yr\) ACS Employment Status](#)

Understanding employment trends helps identify if communities are facing ongoing challenges with unemployment. Populations facing unemployment are overburdened and should be particularly targeted for messaging.

Among the three cities, Cosmopolis faces the highest percentage of unemployed residents at 9%. There are approximately 612 employees and 31 businesses within Cosmopolis. Manufacturing, retail trade, and healthcare/social assistance are the top three employment industries.

Top employers include the Cosmopolis School District, Highland Golf Course, NOR-CAT and Advanced Heating and Air.

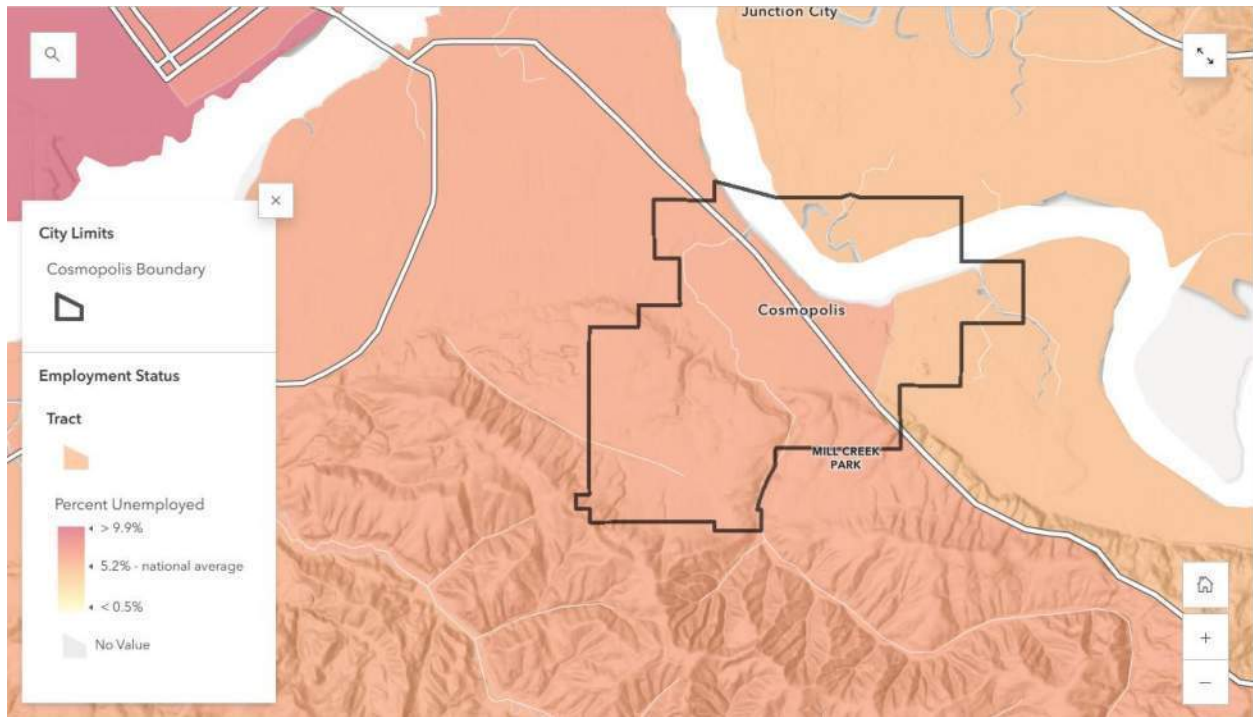


Figure A-1. City of Cosmopolis 2023 (5-year) ACS employment status

1B: Poverty

Data Source: [2023 \(5-yr\) ACS Poverty Status](#)

Identifying low-income communities is important to target messaging to those populations.

In Cosmopolis, the median household income is \$80,132. For householders age 65 and older, the median income drops by 39% to \$54,167.

Approximately 8% of households have incomes below the poverty level. Census Tract 9 has the highest poverty rate at 8%; Tract 8 has the lowest rate at 4%.

An estimated 2% of households receive public assistance income, and 13% are enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

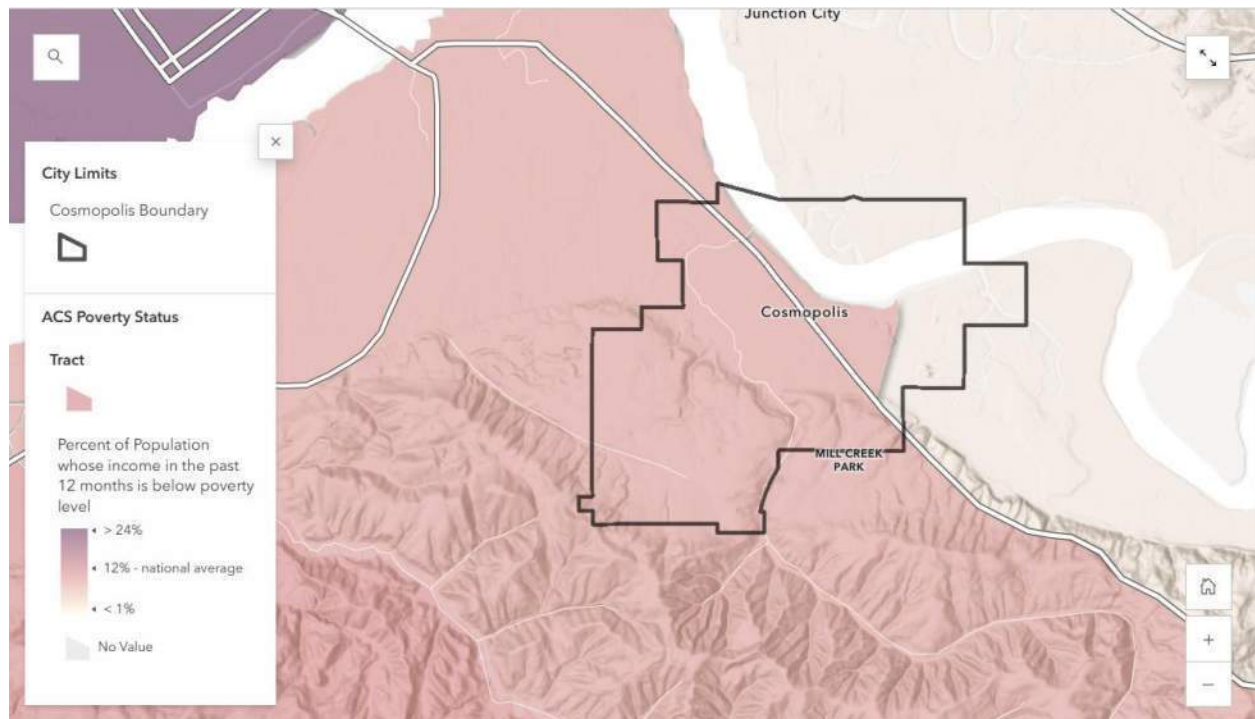


Figure A-2. City of Cosmopolis 2023 (5-year) ACS poverty status

2. Seniors

Data Source: [2023 \(5-yr\) ACS Context for Senior Well-Being](#)

Understanding the age distribution of a community is an essential first step in identifying its challenges and needs. It is also critical for informing an effective issue-focused engagement strategy. When evaluating age, it is also important to consider complimentary metrics such as health, mobility, income, and employment. These variables can help determine whether or not older populations are overburdened.

In Cosmopolis, 33% of households include someone aged 65 or older – 9% lower than the county average - and 15% of single-person households are seniors.

Tract 8 has the highest proportion of residents aged 65 and older (43%). 25% of these seniors live alone.

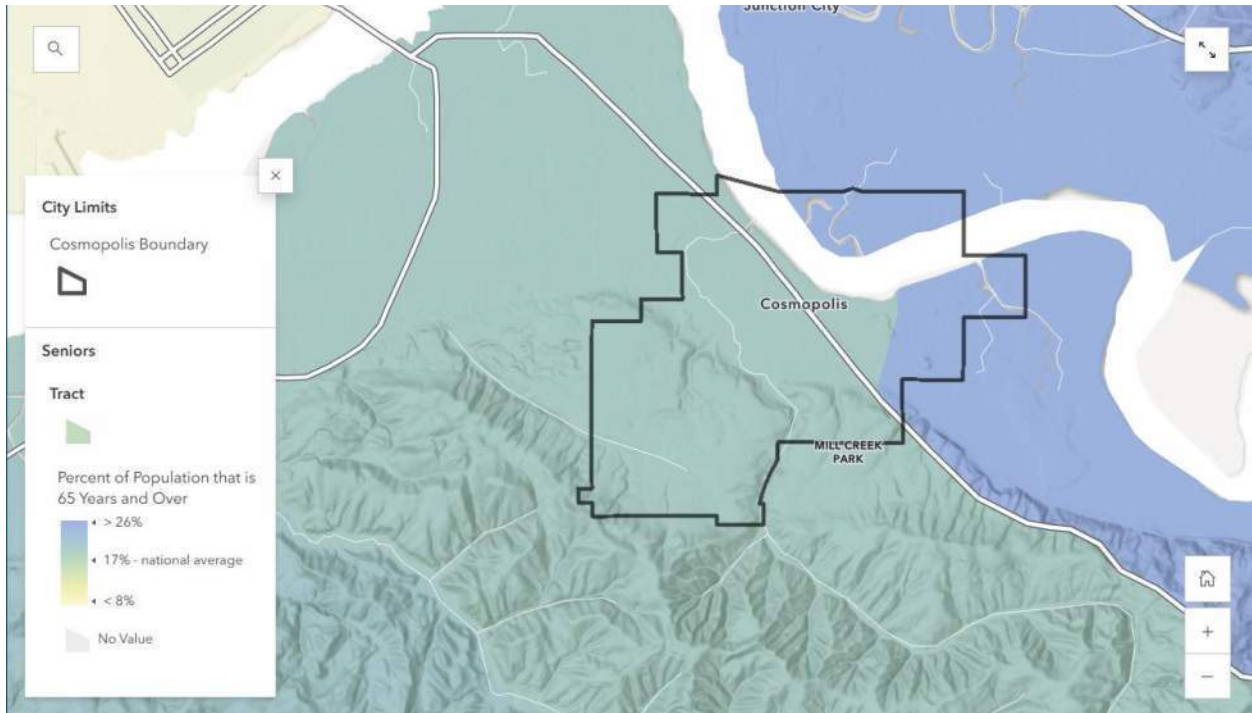


Figure A-3. City of Cosmopolis 2023 (5-year) ACS senior wellbeing status

3. Environmental Health

Data Source: [2022 WA Department of Health: Environmental Health Disparities Index](#)

Identifying populations disproportionately affected by environmental health impacts is important to message helpful information to them. The Washington Environmental Health Disparities Index helps identify areas experiencing disproportionately high cumulative environmental health impacts.

Risk is calculated by the formula: Risk = Threat x Vulnerability. This measures the cumulative effect of environmental exposures (threat) and socioeconomic or health factors (vulnerability).

Index values range from 1 (least impacted) to 10 (most impacted). The higher the index value, the more exposure areas have to toxins harmful to human health.

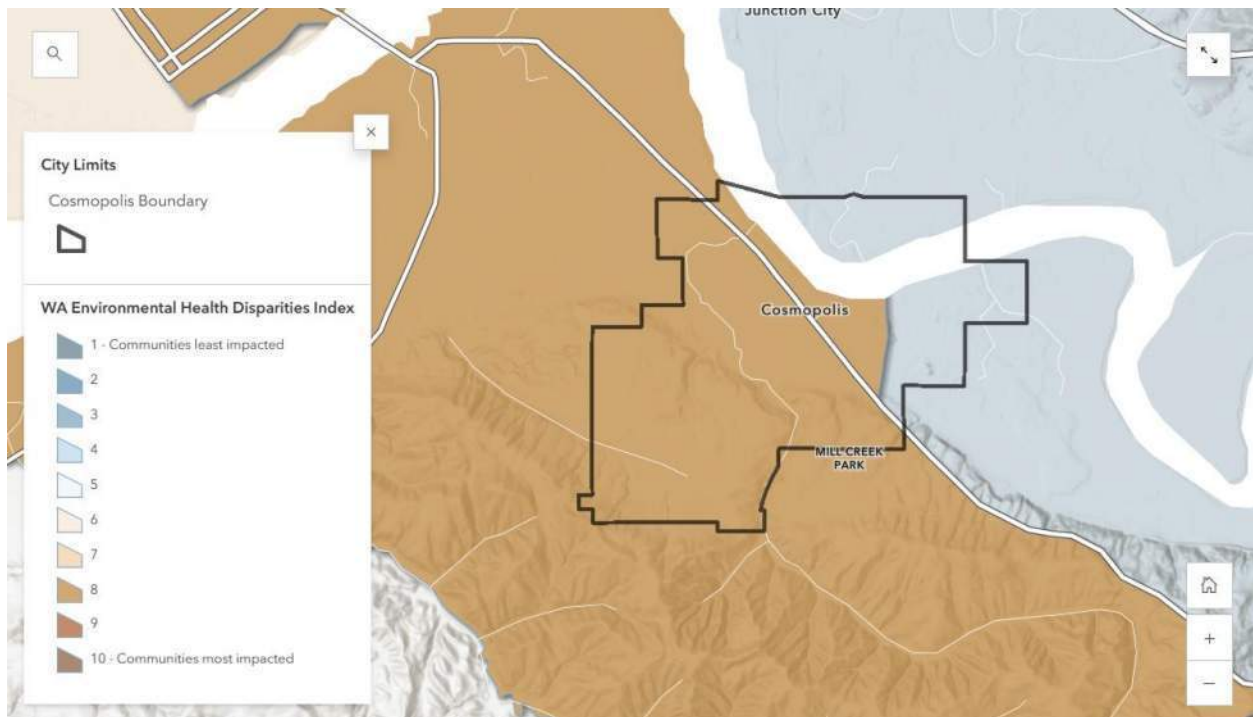


Figure A-4. City of Cosmopolis 2023 (5-year) ACS environmental health disparities index

4. Language Ability

Data Source: [2023 \(5-yr\) ACS English Ability and Linguistic Isolation](#)

Identifying areas of linguistic isolation and the predominant language spoken at home is essential for projects that rely on public input and participation. Beyond providing information in all necessary languages, identifying communal spaces where information can be shared – such as places of worship and cultural centers –will help strengthen two-way communication.

Cosmopolis is largely an English-speaking community, but there are several populations that speak Spanish or Asian Pacific languages which should be considered when planning community engagement.

In the City, there are only an estimated 17 people (less than 1% of the population age 5+) who speak Spanish and English less than “very well”. Of the 17 people with limited English proficiency, only 9 people speak Spanish and no English (none are age 65+).

The largest English-limited proficiency population speaks Asian Pacific languages and English less than “very well”, with an estimated 51 people (2% of the population age 5+). Of those 51 people, 41 speak an Asian Pacific language and no English (28 are age 65+).

Tract 9 has the highest percentage of Spanish speakers at home, with 11% of its population (age 5 and older) – a total of 659 people – speaking Spanish at home.

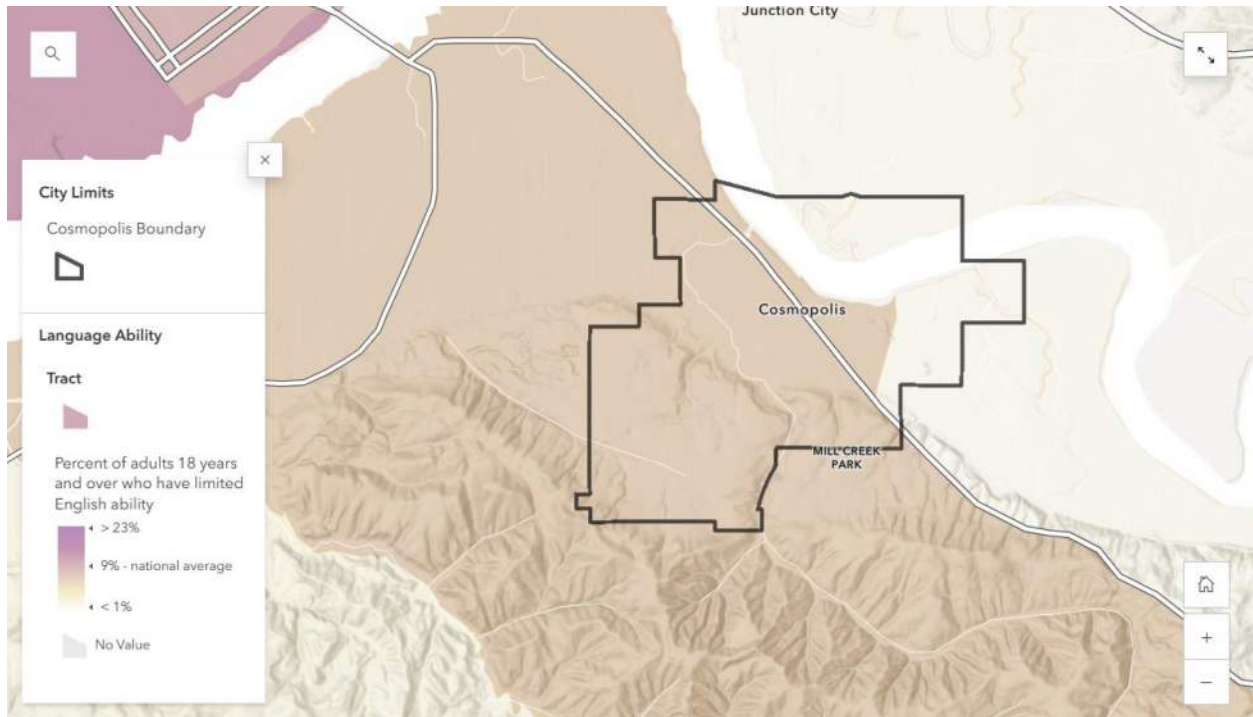


Figure A-5. City of Cosmopolis 2023 (5-year) ACS English ability and linguistic isolation

5. Mobility

Data Source: [2019 EPA Smart Location Database](#)

Mobility (access to public or private transportation options) is a potential barrier to participation in public engagement.

Within Cosmopolis, 9% of renter households do not have a vehicle, while less than 1% of owner households do not have a vehicle.

Fortunately, Cosmopolis receives an above average score from the EPA National Walkability Index. Additionally, transit stops are less than ¼ mile from any location within the city.

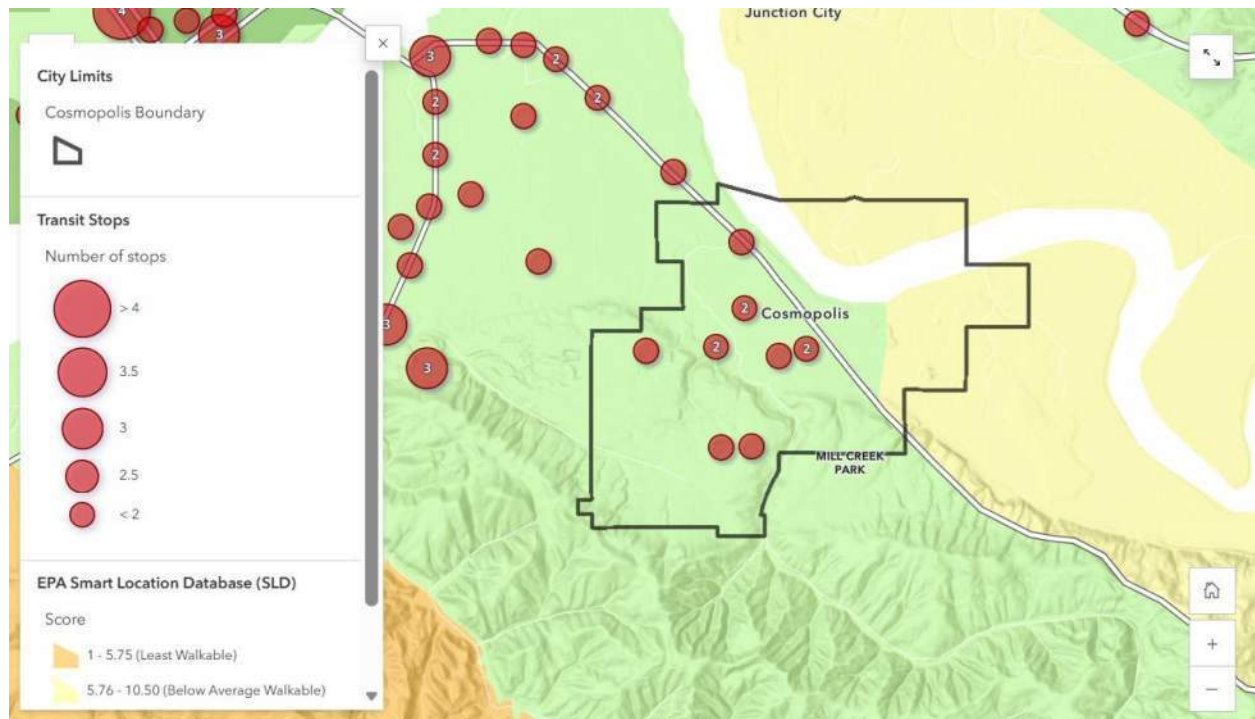


Figure A-6. City of Cosmopolis 2023 (5-year) ACS transit status and EPA smart location database

5A Disability

Data Source: [2023 \(5-yr\) ACS Disabilities by Type](#)

Recognizing a community's unique health needs and abilities allows agencies to anticipate and prioritize public concerns and engagement challenges. Exploring the map to the left allows users to review the range of disabilities in Cosmopolis.

Thirty percent of households have at least one person with a disability, which is 75% higher than the state of Washington average.

Tract 9 has the highest percentage of individuals with a disability (17%). An estimated 377 individuals have two or more types of disabilities, with ambulatory difficulties being the most prominent.

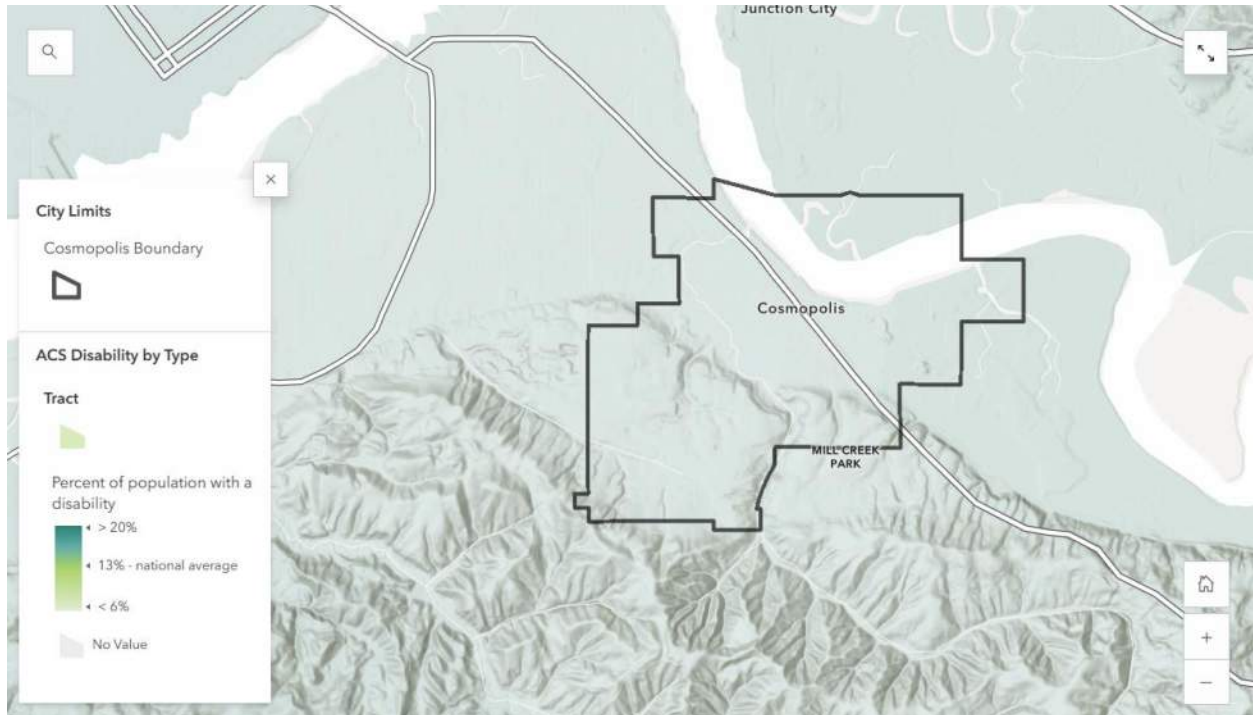


Figure A-7. City of Cosmopolis 2023 (5-year) ACS disability status by type

6. Tribal

Data Sources: [2023 \(5-yr\) ACS Race and Hispanic Origin](#); [Native Land Digital](#)

Special care should be taken to outreach to tribal communities. Approximately 470 Native Americans¹ reside in Cosmopolis, or about 5% of the total population. Cosmopolis occupies the ancestral lands of the Chehalis and Quinault tribes. Residents of the Federally recognized Quinault Native Reservation to the north may also obtain services in Cosmopolis. However, no Bureau of Indian Affairs boundaries and land area representations were present in the city limits.

7. Digital Usage

Data Source: [2023 \(5-yr\) ACS Internet Connectivity Variables](#)

Across Cosmopolis, 9% of households do not have internet access, which is 77% higher than average for the state of Washington. Among residents aged 65 and older, 1% do not have access to a computer, which is consistent with the Washington state average.

Since internet service is widely available in Cosmopolis, lack of connectivity is more likely related to economic or educational factors.

¹ U.S. Census classifies tribal populations as “American Indian or Alaska Native alone”.

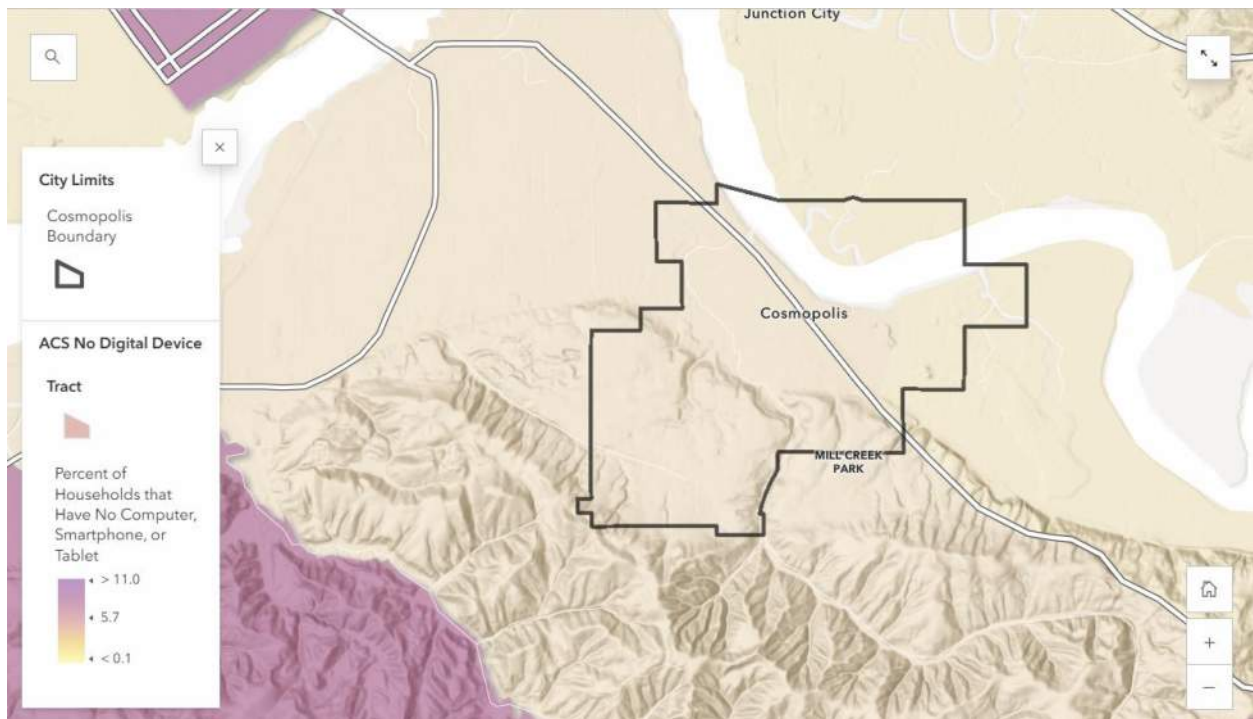


Figure A-8. City of Cosmopolis 2023 (5-year) ACS digital usage status

8. Community Facilities

Data Sources: Esri, Grays Harbor County Parcels, Public Libraries Survey, National Center for Educational Statistics.

There are numerous local facilities that can serve as a conduit to communities identified as overburdened. These primary categories include:

- Schools
- Libraries
- Places of Worship
- Senior Centers
- Medical Facilities
- Transportation Services
- Nonprofit, charitable, and workforce development organizations

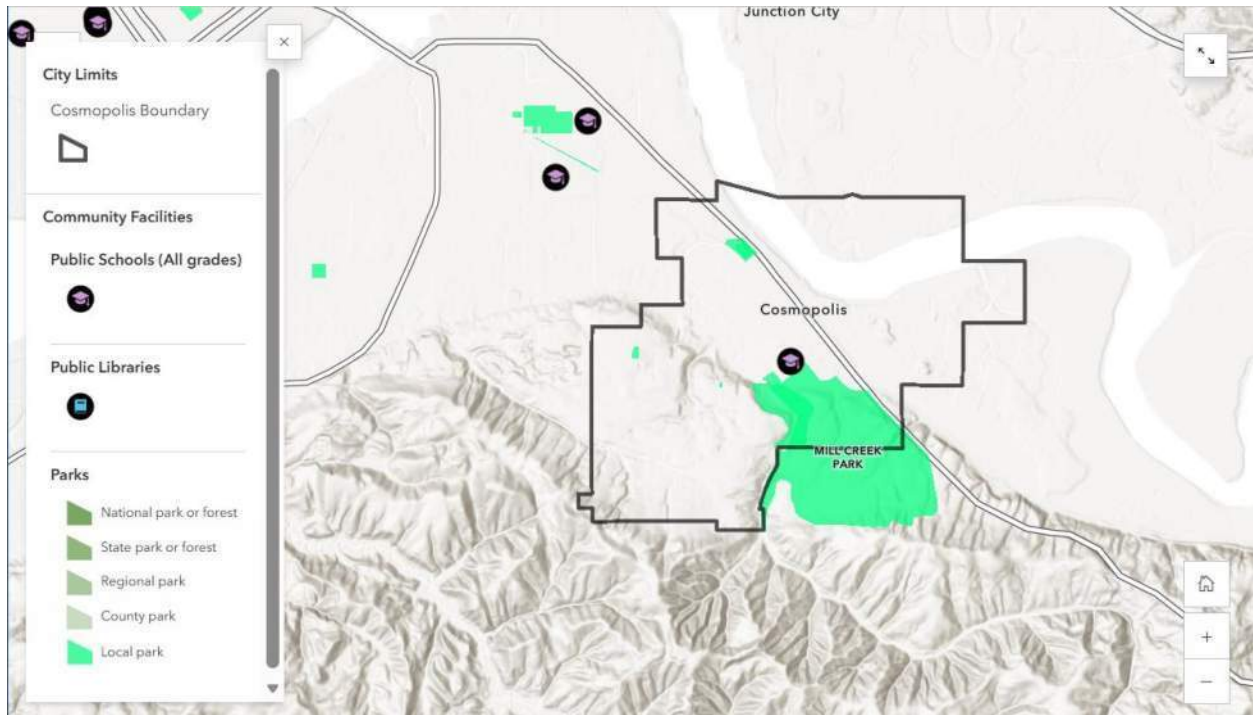


Figure A-9. City of Cosmopolis community facilities

A.4 Community Explorer Application

A Community Explorer was also developed to support the research of additional data sources related to the eight themes of study. A Community Explorer is an ArcGIS Online web map application designed to allow all team members view access to community-related geospatial data in one place. With the ability to toggle on/off or view multiple map layers at one time, this scalable tool allows engagement planners to more efficiently and effectively conduct research, discover patterns, plan, and collaborate with the team.

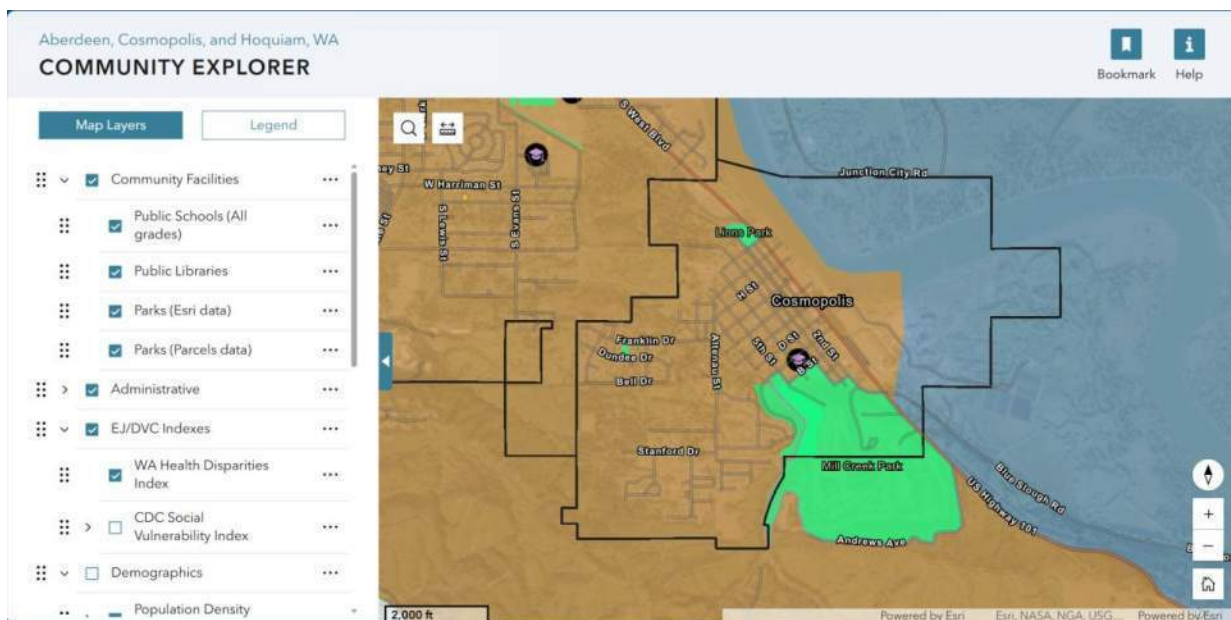


Figure A-10. An example view of the Community Explorer application

A.5 Engagement Planning Recommendations

The following section outlines a range of suggested engagement tactics. These ideas are listed in the table below with an "X" marking strategies that could support specific overburdened populations.

Table A-1 details implementation ideas, organized by theme.

Table A-1 Cosmopolis engagement planning recommendations

Engagement Tactic	Implementation	Economics	Seniors	Health	Language	Mobility	Digital Usage	Community Facilities
Direct mail outreach	Mail pre-addressed and stamped surveys; citywide postcard distribution; doorhanger bags	X		X	X	X	X	X
Community-based distribution	Provide information or meetings at local churches, the library, and through the school district	X					X	X
Pop-up/informational booths	Booths at school sporting events, farmer's market	X					X	X
Partnerships with institutions (e.g., hospitals, clinics, schools)	Flyers at churches; booths at school events; coordination with Grays Harbor Transit	X			X	X	X	X
Multilingual and accessible materials	Translated materials			X			X	
Digital access alternatives	Printed surveys, newspaper notices	X	X				X	X
Incentive-based participation	Grocery coupons and transit passes for participation; childcare at public meetings	X	X				X	

A.5.1 Implementation Ideas

1. Economics

- a. To ensure outreach to low-income households, mail pre-addressed and stamped project surveys directly to residents for easy completion.
- b. Partner with property managers at low-income residential buildings/units to share information through relevant channels, such as email newsletters, lobby postings, and printed flyers.

2. Seniors

- a. Due to the lack of facilities for senior residents in Cosmopolis, and the likelihood of residents traveling to nearby cities for services, mail materials (including project information or pre-addressed and stamped project surveys) directly to all households. Consider using large fonts, clear instructions and ensure all collateral is 508 compliant.

3. Health

- a. Due to the lack of facilities for residents with disabilities or health needs in Cosmopolis, and the likelihood of residents traveling to nearby cities for services, mail materials (including project information or pre-addressed and stamped project surveys) directly to this population.

4. Language

- a. Post English and translated (recommend at minimum, Spanish and several Asian Pacific languages) flyers in Grays Harbor Transit bus shelters.

5. Mobility

- a. Partner with Grays Harbor Transit to launch a small outreach campaign that includes placing posters in bus shelters and running advertisements on key bus routes, like Route 30 (Cosmopolis). Complement the transit outreach with coordinated posts on social media.
- b. Offer transit passes for individuals who participate in any outreach activities (e.g., completing a survey, leaving a comment, participating in a public meeting).
- c. Place yard signs with QR code/website information along 1st Street.

6. Tribal

- a. Partner with a Tribal Liaison to coordinate engagement with local Tribes.

7. Digital Usage

- a. For households without internet access, prioritize printed materials such as pre-addressed and stamped project surveys mailed directly to residents.
- b. Consider Citywide postcard distribution or placing informational materials in doorhanger bags to reach individuals directly where they live.

- c. Share public meeting notices, survey details, and/or project information in The Daily World, the county's local newspaper, to ensure readers receive timely and accessible information.

8. Community Facilities

- a. Partner with Grays Harbor Transit to launch a small outreach campaign that includes placing posters in bus shelters and running advertisements on key bus routes like Route 30 (Cosmopolis). Complement the transit outreach with coordinated posts on social media.
- b. Offer transit passes for individuals who participate in any outreach activities (e.g., completing a survey, leaving a comment, participating in a public meeting).
- c. Place yard signs with QR code/website information along 1st Street.
- d. Provide informational materials to local churches and request an announcement or distribution during service.

A.6 Chapter Takeaways

Active community engagement is vital for a successful stormwater program. The City conducted an overburdened community assessment to understand how best to reach its constituents, carefully considering eight potential barriers to participation, including: economics, seniors, health, language, mobility, tribal, digital use, and community facilities.

The following are key takeaways from this effort:

- Flooding persists as the primary stormwater concern for the community.
- Community outreach efforts can help inform constituents about flooding concerns and generate dialogue about actions the community can take, including planning emergency preparations and seeking external funding opportunities for flooding mitigation projects.
- Community engagement planning ideas were identified for each of the eight potential barriers which the City will leverage to support this work.

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