

July 2014

Issues Brief

City of Yakima e-Newsletter

✦ Yakima's Population Pushes Past the 93,000 Mark

After breaking the 92,000 barrier last year, now, for the first time in its history, Yakima has more than 93,000 people living within its city limits.

The most recent estimate from the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) puts the current population of Yakima at 93,080. That represents an increase of 460 people (.50%) from the 2013 OFM estimate of 92,960 and an increase of 1884 residents (2.07%) above the 2010 U.S. Census count.



The latest estimate from the Washington State Office of Financial Management puts Yakima's current population at 93,080, keeping it the 9th largest city in the state. Since the 2010 U.S. Census count, Yakima's grown almost 1,900 people.

In between each U.S. Census count, which occur every 10 years, the OFM produces population estimates annually. The estimates are critical because the allocation of state and federal financial support for local governments is based in large part on the OFM numbers. Population estimates from the OFM also affect business recruitment and economic development because the numbers are used to establish potential market size.

Based on the 2014 OFM estimate, Yakima retained its 2014 ranking as the 9th largest city (by population) in Washington State.

Although all of the top 10 most populated cities in Washington State experienced some growth over the past year, their order in rank did not change from 2013. Seattle (640,500) remains the largest city in the state by population followed by Spokane (212,300), Tacoma (200,900), Vancouver (167,400), Bellevue (134,400), Kent (121,400), Everett (104,900), Renton (97,130), Yakima, and Spokane Valley (92,050).

According to the 2014 OFM estimates, Yakima County also increased its population slightly since last year from 247,250 to 248,800.

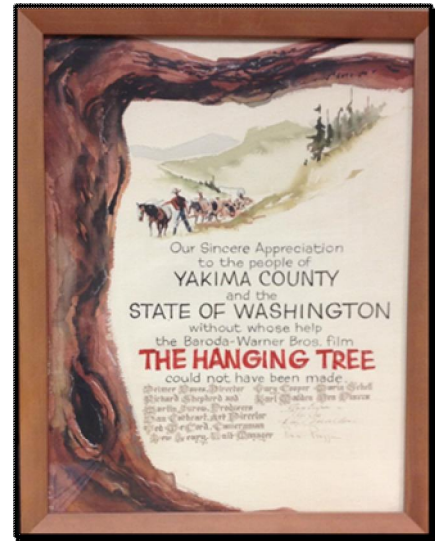
Yakima remains the largest of the 14 cities and towns in the county by far. Sunnyside (16,230) is next on the list followed by Grandview (11,170), Toppenish (8,955), Selah (7,395), Union Gap (6,140), Wapato (5,040), Moxee (3,655), Granger (3,495), Zillah (3,140), Mabton (2,310), Tieton (1,255), Naches (805), and Harrah (645).

Memento from Movie Shot in the Yakima Area Donated to Museum

For the briefest of moments in the late 1950s, the bright lights of Hollywood shown on the Yakima area during the filming of *The Hanging Tree*, a western that starred Gary Cooper. The movie was shot during the summer of 1958 at locations including Bumping Lake, Goose Prairie, the Nile and Ahtanum valleys, and in the fictional Montana gold rush town of Skull Creek.

Several years ago, City of Yakima employee Jerry Robertson came across a unique memento from *The Hanging Tree* in the basement of City Hall . a poster expressing thanks to the people of Yakima County and the State of Washington without whose help the Baroda . Warner Bros. film *The Hanging Tree* could not have been made.+ The poster includes the signatures of Cooper and co-stars Karl Malden and Ben Piazza. The movie also starred Maria Schell, an Austrian/Swiss actress who was popular at the time, and featured the film debut of George C. Scott, who would go on to become one of our country's most revered movie actors.

Now, after having hung in Robertson's office for many years, the poster will have a new home. Robertson thought it would be appropriate for the keepsake to be donated to the Yakima Valley Museum, which boasts several other pieces of *The Hanging Tree* memorabilia, including a full-length print of the film, in its collection. The poster will be formally donated to the museum during the Yakima City Council's August 5th business meeting.



This thank you poster from the movie *The Hanging Tree*, which was shot in the Yakima area, was found several years ago in the basement of Yakima City Hall.

The thank you poster represents an interesting part of the history of the Yakima area,+said Communications & Public Affairs Director Randy Beehler. Not a lot of people who live here today know that a major motion picture was shot in our backyard. *The Hanging Tree* might not be among the first Hollywood classics that come to mind, but it was well regarded in its time,+said Beehler. It was a notable movie because of its unusually sinister plot and because it was one of the last films Gary Cooper ever made.+



The set of the fictional town of Skull Creek was built in the Nile Valley a few miles from the Wood Shed Restaurant.

Cooper, who was a two-time lead actor Oscar winner, died at the age of 60 in 1961 of prostate cancer. In *The Hanging Tree*, Cooper played Dr. Joseph Frail, a man with a checkered past who rescues a two-bit criminal named Rune (Piazza) from a Skull Creek lynch mob but in turn makes Rune his indentured servant. Dr. Frail secretly helps Elizabeth Mahler (Schell), whom he has fallen in love with, start a successful gold mine. Healer and preacher George Grubb (Scott), a raging alcoholic, tries to disparage Dr. Frail by telling townspeople he is a gambler and gunfighter, but to no avail. When the unscrupulous Frenchy Plante (Malden) tries to forcibly seduce Elizabeth Mahler, Dr. Frail kills him. Sentenced to immediate death among the limbs of the movie's namesake, Dr. Frail is saved when Elizabeth Mahler gives the town of Skull Creek her prized mine.

MLK, Jr. Blvd Underpass to Open Earlier Than Expected

The wait is nearly over for drivers wanting to use the new MLK, Jr. Boulevard underpass in Yakima. A ribbon cutting ceremony scheduled for July 23rd will officially mark completion of the project and the removal of detour signs around the construction area.

Construction of the underpass was expected to last through late summer or early fall this year, but relatively mild winter weather and the efficiency of contractor crews allowed the project to be completed ahead of schedule.

Local, state, and federal officials, representatives from the Yakima business community, and other project partners have been invited to attend the **11:00 am ribbon cutting on July 23rd** at the **intersection of 1st Avenue and MLK, Jr. Blvd.** Following the dedication ceremony, a caravan of City vehicles will take the first official trip on the underpass. Yakima community members are also invited to follow the caravan on foot to get a firsthand look at the new underpass.

Mowat Construction Company, a Woodinville-based firm, served as the project's primary contractor. Work began in March 2013 on the roughly \$10.6 million underpass project.

Reopening MLK, Jr. Blvd will restore a primary link to Downtown Yakima and relieve traffic congestion caused by detouring vehicles around the construction area while the underpass was being built. The part of Downtown Yakima that is home to the MLK, Jr. Blvd underpass has seen plenty of construction over the past few years. Work on the Lincoln Avenue underpass, located a block away from its MLK, Jr. Blvd sister underpass, began in 2010 and was finished in the fall of 2012.

Installation of an art piece called the **Bins of Light** on the Lincoln Avenue underpass is scheduled to take place in 2015. The artwork will replicate rows of fruit bins that will be illuminate at night with lights that will change colors as trains pass by. Whether or not similar art will be installed on the MLK, Jr. Blvd underpass is still under consideration.

Numerous underpasses or other **grade separations** have been built in cities across Washington State since the late 1990s when train traffic to and from Western Washington ports began to significantly increase, including along BNSF Railway's **Stampede Pass** line, which runs through Yakima.

The two Yakima underpasses had been in the planning stages for more than a decade. The Washington State Congressional delegation (spearheaded by U.S. Senator Patty Murray), the 14th District state legislative delegation, and current and past Yakima City Council members played key roles in securing the majority of the needed funding from state and federal sources for construction.

BNSF also contributed more than \$1.5 million toward completion of the two underpasses.



Signs of construction will soon disappear from the MLK, Jr. Blvd underpass when the roadway is opened to traffic on July 23rd. The project began last spring and was expected to take until late summer or early fall of this year to complete.