



City of Yakima

NEWS RELEASE

Subject: Downtown Police Bike Patrol

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Survey Results Prompt Revival of Downtown Police Bike Patrol

One of the key findings of the 2012 Yakima Citizen Survey that the Yakima City Council focused on during its retreat in late August showed that some Yakima residents don't feel as safe as they would like to in the downtown area, particularly after dark. During the August 28th retreat, Council members expressed concern that the negative perception that some people have of Downtown Yakima may be hurting business development as well as attendance at nighttime special events in the commercial core of the city.

In response to that concern, and in an effort to enhance the sense of safety downtown, the Yakima Police Department ("YPD") will launch a pilot bike patrol program for this month's First Friday event during the evening of September 7th.

"Simply having officers on bikes patrolling the downtown will establish a more visible police presence, and that in itself will create a greater sense of safety," said YPD Captain Rod Light. "The survey results indicated that we needed to put together a plan to help people feel confident that they can come downtown and enjoy themselves. Initiating a bike patrol is something we were able to do quickly in order to help kick off that effort," said Light.

This Friday's bike patrol will include two YPD officers. City Manager Tony O'Rourke also plans to tag along with the bike patrol officers for part of the evening.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the YPD operated a bike patrol unit which specifically focused on the downtown area. The unit was particularly effective in stemming criminal activity related to drugs that was going on in Downtown Yakima at the time and in dealing with issues that resulted from people who were "Cruising the Ave" in cars. However, the YPD bike patrol unit was disbanded several years ago due to a shift in focus by the department coupled with a lack of funding.

The renewed pilot program for the bike patrol will include the September 7th First Friday event and likely another First Friday event later this fall. If the pilot program proves successful, it may return as a regular service provided by the YPD in the spring of 2013.

"We looking forward to seeing what the reaction is by the public to the bike patrol during the pilot program and then determine if it should be initiated on a more regular basis and in what form," said Light. "We'll make those decisions after we see how it goes this fall."

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