

# Issues Brief

City of Yakima e-Newsletter

## City of Yakima Projects Receive Prestigious Engineering Award

The City of Yakima was honored by the American Council of Engineering Companies of Washington (ACEC Washington) with two *Best in State Silver Awards* as part of the organization's 49<sup>th</sup> annual Engineering Excellence Awards ceremony that took place in January.

The City's Water/Irrigation Division and the private engineering firm Golder Associates received a *Best in State Silver Award* in the social/economic sustainability category for an aquifer pilot project that is a predecessor to a much more ambitious water resources project. A *Best in State Silver Award* in the future value to the engineering category was also presented to the City's Utilities and Engineering Department and the private engineering firm BergerABAM for two underpass projects.

We are very grateful to have been recognized by ACEC Washington for the aquifer pilot project, said Water/Irrigation Manager Dave Brown. We have been working on the aquifer project for a long time and to be singled out for contributing to the social and economic sustainability of our area is truly appreciated.

The aquifer pilot project tested the viability of storing water underground so it could be used during times of drought or other water shortages. Completion of an actual aquifer project may be two to four years away.

The underpass projects on Lincoln Avenue and MLK, Jr. Boulevard took more than a decade to plan and construct. The Lincoln Avenue underpass opened in May 2012. The MLK, Jr. Boulevard underpass was opened to traffic in July 2014.

The Lincoln Avenue underpass and the MLK, Jr. Boulevard underpass projects broke new ground, both literally and figuratively, said Director of Utilities and Engineering Debbie Cook. The lessons learned on the two projects have been of value to the future of the engineering profession and the award we received from the ACEC Washington underscores that.

The ACEC Washington's Engineering Excellence Awards are regarded as the Academy Awards of the engineering industry in the state. The top five award winners from this year, which include those receiving platinum or gold awards, will compete in the council's national competition in Washington, D.C. in April.



A caravan of City of Yakima vehicles, led by an antique police patrol cruiser and an antique fire pumper, helped to kick off the official opening of the MLK, Jr. Boulevard underpass in July 2014. A nearly identical underpass on Lincoln Avenue opened in May 2012. The underpass projects received a *Best in State Silver Award* from the American Council of Engineering Companies Washington in January.

## **Hotel Maison Builds on Downtown Yakima Momentum**

After about two years of planning and construction, Hotel Maison celebrated its grand opening in early February and became part of the ongoing revitalization of Downtown Yakima. The boutique hotel now occupies five floors of a historic building that originally housed Yakima's Masonic Temple.

In more recent years, the building at 321 East Yakima Avenue had been known as the JEM Building. Yakima-based JEM Development purchased the building several years ago. The building has sat mostly empty for many years, with the exception of parts of a few floors having been used by call centers.

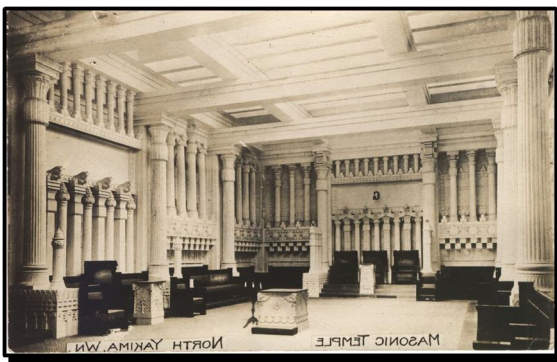


***A February 2<sup>nd</sup> ribbon cutting ceremony marked the grand opening of Hotel Maison, Yakima's newest hotel and part of the ongoing revitalization of Downtown Yakima.***

Now, after an investment by JEM Development in the building of around \$4 million, Hotel Maison boasts 36 rooms and a lobby-level art gallery featuring the work of local artists. Photos and paintings of the Yakima area also hang in the hotel's hallways and guest rooms.

Hotel Maison is a truly unique property in the Yakima hospitality industry, said City of Yakima Communications & Public Affairs Director Randy Beehler. That's true not only because it is located in one of our community's most historic buildings, but also because of its comfortable, intimate environment. To have such a wonderful hotel right in the heart of Downtown Yakima is a boost to the ongoing revitalization of our community's core, said Beehler.

JEM Development says work on the building is still not finished. The former meeting room of the Yakima Freemasons, which is located on the sixth floor of Hotel Maison, remains largely intact, but needs some renovation. JEM Development says that when that work is done, the space, which features multiple decorative columns, 26-foot-tall ceilings, and other amenities familiar to Masonic meeting halls, will be used as a banquet hall and ballroom.



***The sixth floor of what is now Hotel Maison features a former Masonic meeting hall that is still largely intact. The space will eventually become the hotel's banquet hall and ballroom.***

Construction of the building that is now home to Hotel Maison began in 1907 and was completed about four years later. In addition to serving as the headquarters for Yakima's Freemasons, in its early years the building housed the Yakima City Council Chambers along with several City offices. By the mid-1960s, the Freemasons had outgrown the space and moved to a larger building. In the mid-1970s, Great Western Savings and Loan purchased the building and occupied the lower floors for several years.

In 1998, JEM Development bought the mostly vacant structure and, for a time, considered demolishing it. Community members encouraged the company to preserve the building and, fortunately, the historic structure was saved.

One of the area's most iconic buildings, so important to the community's past, is now a critical piece of the community's future as a key element in the ongoing revitalization of Downtown Yakima.

## Help Create a Vision for the Future of the Yakima Area

A key piece of the sweeping Growth Management Act (GMA) adopted by the Washington State Legislature in 1990 required local governments to create and regularly update a wide-ranging development document called a Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan). The core purpose of a Comp Plan is to help define, through goals, objectives, and policies, how communities should accommodate forecasted household and job growth, provide open space and recreational opportunities, and best manage traffic and other vital services over a 20-year period.

Throughout 2016, the City of Yakima will undertake the intensive task of updating its Comp Plan. One of the first steps in the lengthy process will be a *We Are Yakima* Community Vision Open House that will take place on Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Yakima Valley Technical Skills Center located at 1120 S. 18<sup>th</sup> Street. Doors will open at 6:00 pm and the presentation will start at 6:30 pm. The event, which is being hosted by the Yakima Planning Commission, is scheduled to last until 8:00 pm.




*Yakima as seen from Lookout Point on the ridge between Yakima and Selah (Union Gap can be seen in the distance). Updating Yakima's Comprehensive Plan, which helps guide development, will begin with a We Are Yakima Community Vision Open House on February 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Yakima Valley Technical Skills Center.*

We encourage everyone in the community to come and be part of planning Yakima's future, said City of Yakima Senior Planner Valerie Smith. The *We Are Yakima* Open House will provide the opportunity for a broad cross section of our community to have a say in how we develop over the next two decades. The open house is a unique chance to weigh in on the vision for Yakima and to have a real influence on how we manage growth, said Smith.

Comp Plans help local communities ensure that regulations are designed to meet the goals of the GMA, which include reducing sprawl, concentrating urban growth, encouraging an adequate supply of affordable housing is available,

developing regional transportation capabilities, protecting property rights, and preserving historic lands and buildings. The GMA-required Comp Plan update process also requires local governments to take a close look at open space and recreation, permit processing, public facilities and services, and environmental protection.

To learn more about the City of Yakima's Comp Plan process, click on the following link to the City's Planning Division's webpage - <http://bit.ly/1Kg5rFr>.



### Be Part of the Solution!

*Help reduce panhandling. Instead of giving money directly to panhandlers, donate to local agencies and organizations that provide services to people who are low-income or homeless.*

**Yakima is our community – Be Part of the Solution!**