



Issues Brief

City of Yakima e-Newsletter

Dulce Gutiérrez Finds City Budget Decisions Hard But Necessary

** Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of articles written by Yakima City Council members that are being published each month in the City of Yakima Issues Brief e-Newsletter.*

I was truly honored when I was chosen by District #1 voters in November 2015 to represent them and the entire community on the Yakima City Council. The faith shown in me by constituents is humbling. I feel blessed to be able to witness firsthand the passion and commitment the people of Yakima demonstrate day after day and to see the multiple ways they contribute toward creating a vibrant and progressive community.

In my first year in office, the Council was faced with many difficult decisions, none more so than those related to the City's budget. However, in the face of increasing costs and relatively flat revenue, by increasing taxes on utilities and phasing out a tax break for large businesses, the Council was able to protect the City's reserves, which helps in securing low interest rates on bonds, and set the stage for a citywide recycling program to begin a few years from now.

The challenging budget decisions the Council made in late 2016 did allow the City to avoid any reductions to parks and recreation programs or streets and traffic operations, both core service areas for the City. Additionally, with Council approval, fees for some City services, like building plan reviews, were increased slightly after having remained unchanged for many, many years. That has allowed the City to reduce its subsidy of those services and devote resources to other community needs.

Tough choices made by the Council have also allowed improvements to be made in community safety. The purchase of a new fire truck to replace outdated equipment, replacement of all street lights with energy-conserving LED technology, efforts to address homelessness, and increased domestic violence prevention awareness have all been made possible through the Council's efforts.

The Council is currently debating imposing a car tab fee. While new fees are rarely popular, investments in roads, sidewalks, and other critical infrastructure in Yakima neighborhoods have been deferred for too long. Money generated by a local car tab fee will allow the City to begin to address a large backlog of projects that are crucial to keeping Yakima safe and moving ahead.

I look forward to tackling more tough issues that are important to the Yakima community. I've learned that the job of a Council member isn't always easy and is certainly not a popularity contest. I'm grateful for the confidence voters have in me and my fellow Council members to carefully evaluate challenging choices and continue to keep Yakima moving forward.



Dulce Gutiérrez was elected in November 2015 from District #1 to serve on the Yakima City Council.

Old Building in Downtown Yakima Getting a New Lease on Life

A lot has changed since Hotel Tieton was first built in Yakima in 1910. Located at the corner of 1st Street and East Chestnut Avenue in Downtown Yakima, the three-story structure has been known by many names over the years.

The building has been the home to restaurants and night clubs, but in recent years it has sat empty and its fate remained uncertain. However, that changed last year when the building was purchased by One Chestnut, LLC for \$762,500.



An artist's conception, created by lenity architecture, a design and planning firm based in Salem, Oregon, shows what the building originally known as Hotel Tieton may look like once a roughly \$2 million renovation project is completed. When renovations are done, the building will include retail space on the ground floor and residential units on the upper two floors.

The development company is planning to invest \$2 million to transform the 107-year-old structure into modern housing, retail and restaurant space.

The former night club building next to the old hotel will be converted into 7,000 square feet of modern office space that can handle up to four new businesses.

The ground floor of the old hotel building is being developed into space for a new restaurant, and the entire project is located just one block from the proposed Yakima Central Plaza.

Construction and demolition work began last fall at the site.

"This is exactly the kind of development we need downtown," said City of Yakima Economic Development Manager Sean Hawkins. "This is an absolutely amazing project."

Plans call for converting the upper two floors of the brick building into 16 residential units. There will be four two-bedroom units and twelve one-bedroom units for housing individuals and small families.

The developer is participating in the City of Yakima's Downtown Redevelopment Tax Incentive Program, which would provide a property tax exemption on the housing improvements for up to 8 years.

This last time the tax incentive program was used in Downtown Yakima was in 2009, when the former Bon Marche building on North 3rd Street was turned into condominium units known as "The Lofts."

"Downtown housing is a great redevelopment tool," said Hawkins. "Hopefully this project will spur others to look at doing the same thing."



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!

Yakima Wastewater Treatment Plant Achieves Perfect Performance

The Yakima Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant has been recognized by the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) for having achieved full compliance with all clean water requirements during 2015. The City of Yakima-owned plant processes wastewater from homes, businesses, and industrial facilities in Yakima, Union Gap, Terrace Heights, and Moxee. This is the sixth time the Yakima plant has won the award.

The Yakima plant is one of 119 facilities in the state to receive the DOE's 2015 Wastewater Treatment Plant Outstanding Performance Award. The award signifies that the Yakima plant had perfect compliance with strict federal standards that ensure waterways are not being polluted. The federal standards are enforced by the DOE.

The Yakima Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant processes wastewater through multiple stages including grit removal, clarifiers, digesters, aeration basins, and ultraviolet disinfection. Once the water has been treated to meet the federal standards, it is returned to the Yakima River.

The talents of our professional operators are critical to successful plant operations and protecting the health of Washington's waterways, said DOE's Water Quality Program Manager Heather Bartlett. It is an honor to recognize their contributions with this award.



The Yakima Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant has won the 2015 DOE Outstanding Performance Award.

The DOE's Wastewater Treatment Plant Outstanding Performance Award program was created in 1995 to serve as an incentive for facilities to work toward full compliance with the federal standards, which are part of the Clean Water Act. In the awards program's first year, only 14 of the wastewater treatment plants in Washington State achieved perfect compliance. In 2015, more than a third of the plants (119) met the mark.



The Yakima plant processes wastewater from homes and businesses in Yakima, Union Gap, Terrace Heights, and Moxee.

To receive the DOE's Wastewater Treatment Plant Outstanding Performance Award, a facility must be in full compliance with effluent (water discharged into the river) limits, monitoring and reporting requirements, spill prevention planning, pretreatment standards, and overall operational demands of its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for an entire year.

The DOE appreciates the extraordinary efforts of the plant operators in Washington State, said Bartlett.

Be Part of the Solution!

You can serve your community by becoming part of a citizen board, committee, or commission. To learn more, contact the City of Yakima Clerk's office by phone (575-6037) or e-mail (sonya.claartee@yakimawa.gov).