

July 2013

# **Issues Brief**

*City of Yakima e-Newsletter*

## **Yakima's Population Pushes Past the 92,000 Mark**

For the first time in its history, Yakima has more than 92,000 people living within its city limits, and the community's population is fast approaching 93,000.

The most recent estimate from the Washington State Office of Financial Management ("OFM") puts the current population of Yakima at 92,620. That represents an increase of 690 people (.75%) from the 2012 OFM estimate of 91,930 and an increase of 1424 residents (1.56%) above the 2010 U.S. Census count.



***The latest estimate from the Washington State Office of Financial Management puts Yakima's current population at 92,620, keeping it the 9<sup>th</sup> largest city in the state. Since the 2010 U.S. Census count, Yakima's grown by almost 1,500 people***

In between each U.S. Census count, which occurs 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 2013 OFM estimate, Yakima retained its 2012 ranking as the 9<sup>th</sup> 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 2012. Seattle (626,600) remains the largest city in the state by population followed by Spokane (211,300), Tacoma (200,400), Vancouver (164,500), Bellevue (124,600), Kent (120,400), Everett (104,200), Renton (95,540), Yakima, and Spokane Valley (91,940).

According to the 2013 OFM estimates, Yakima County also increased its population slightly since last year from 246,000 to 247,250.

Yakima remains the largest of the 14 cities and towns in the county by far. Sunnyside (16,200) is next on the list followed by Grandview (11,010), Toppenish (8,950), Selah (7,340), Union Gap (6,110), Wapato (5,035), Moxee (3,655), Granger (3,315), Zillah (3,115), Mabton (2,305), Tieton (1,235), Naches (805), and Harrah (645).

## ◆ Second Annual Yakima Citizen Survey Process Underway

The results of the 2012 Yakima Citizen Survey, which was conducted in July and August of last year, played a key role in the creation of a roadmap for the City to follow as it began to redesign its programs and services so they are better aligned with the needs of the community. The survey results led the City Council to establish new priorities and spurred the development of a Strategic Plan, a Financial Plan, and a Business Plan that have been used to focus City resources, enhance productivity of City staff, and increase accountability related to policy decisions.

After the success of last year's survey, the City Council committed to doing follow-up surveys annually for the foreseeable future so that progress could be tracked and the Council's priorities, as well as the Strategic Plan, the Financial Plan, and the Business Plan, could be adjusted based on feedback provided by community members.

In early June of this year, Phase 1 of the 2013 Yakima Citizen Survey, which involved mailing surveys in both English and Spanish to 3000 randomly-selected local households, was launched. The deadline for returning the mail-in survey was July 11<sup>th</sup>.

National Research Center, Inc. ("NRC"), which conducted the 2012 survey, is also overseeing this year's survey. The NRC is currently validating and tabulating the mail-in surveys that were returned. Results from the mail-in surveys are expected to be available in late July or early August.

Phase 2 of the 2013 Yakima Citizen Survey provides an opportunity for anyone in Yakima to fill out a questionnaire online. The online survey is available in both Spanish and English. The link to the Spanish version of the survey is [www.n-r-c.com/survey/2013yakima.htm](http://www.n-r-c.com/survey/2013yakima.htm). The link to the English version of the survey is [www.n-r-c.com/survey/yakima2013.htm](http://www.n-r-c.com/survey/yakima2013.htm).

The links to the online versions of the survey will remain active until August 2<sup>nd</sup> and can also be found in the *Points of Interest* section of the City's website at [www.yakimawa.gov](http://www.yakimawa.gov).

This year's survey contains virtually the same questions as the 2012 version. Last year, survey takers were also asked three "custom" questions concerning car tab fees, potential property tax and sales tax increases, and recycling. Two custom questions are being asked in the 2013 survey. Responses to one of this year's custom questions will help determine which, if any, of several programs and services the City should invest in over the next year. The other custom question in the 2013 survey asks how much citizens might be willing to pay for a City-operated recycling program.

About 840 people returned mail-in surveys as part of the 2012 Yakima Citizen Survey and almost 600 people filled out a questionnaire online last year. City officials are hopeful that participation in this year's survey will be even greater.



***Results of the 2013 Yakima Citizen Survey will help establish priorities for the City of Yakima as it continues to redesign programs and services to better meet the needs of the community.***

## Construction Continuing on MLK, Jr. Blvd Underpass

Construction activity is on the rise for the MLK, Jr. Boulevard railroad underpass project following completion of a temporary track by BNSF crews in June. The temporary track, most commonly referred to as a "shoo-fly", serves as a detour for mainline train traffic through Yakima. Its completion has cleared the way for major excavation and drilling activity to begin on the underpass.

Mowat Construction Company, the Woodinville-based firm serving as the project's primary contractor, is now primarily focusing construction work in the area west of the railroad tracks. Current activities include additional excavation, construction of retaining walls, and preliminary work on the bottom seal of the underpass, which will help to keep groundwater from seeping into the underpass.

A yellow, 70-foot-high drill rig is currently being used to punch more than 180 shafts into the ground for reinforced concrete columns that will become part of the retaining walls. Some of the columns will be four feet wide and go as deep as 28 feet below the surface of the underpass. A white, 70-foot-high continuous flight auger is currently being used to dig hundreds of unreinforced concrete shafts for the retaining walls and the bottom seal.

When completed, the underpass will be 900 feet long.


The roughly \$10.6 million underpass project is expected to continue until late summer or early fall of 2014 and will eventually take MLK, Jr. Blvd traffic below BNSF tracks near North Front Street. Until then, motorists on MLK, Jr. Blvd are being encouraged to turn right on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and use Yakima Avenue to continue traveling east. Local access is being maintained on MLK Jr. Blvd between 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue.



*A continuous flight auger (in background) is being used to drill shafts for retaining walls and the underpass bottom seal and fill them with concrete.*

You can watch progress on the underpass project by visiting a page on the City of Yakima website - <http://bit.ly/12q70a8>. Two cameras are focused on the construction site and pictures are updated every 30 seconds.

Both the MLK, Jr. Blvd underpass and the Lincoln Avenue underpass, which opened in May 2012, have been designed to improve driver and pedestrian safety, reduce exhaust emissions from cars waiting for trains to pass, and speed the response times for police, fire, and other emergency services providers.



**Help  
Wanted**

### Be Part of the Solution!

*If you see an area in Yakima hit by graffiti, call the City's Graffiti Hotline at 575-3550 or report it using the Yak Back portal on the City's website.*

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