July 2016

Issues Brief

City of Yakima e-Newsletter

Yakima's Population Estimate Inches Up to Just Over 93,400

After breaking the 93,000 barrier two years ago, an estimate from a State of Washington agency shows Yakima now has just over 93,400 people living within its city limits.

The most recent estimate from the Washington State Office of Financial Management (ñOFMò) puts the current population of Yakima at 93,410. That represents an increase of 190 people from the 2015 OFM estimate of 93,220 and an increase of 2,214 residents above the 2010 U.S. Census count.

The latest estimate from the Washington State Office of Financial Management puts Yakima's current population at 93,220. Since the 2010 U.S. Census count, Yakima's population has grown by more than 2,400 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 2016 OFM estimate, Yakima dropped from its 2015 ranking as the 10th largest city (by population) in Washington State to the 11th largest city in the state.

Seattle (686,800) remains the largest city in the state by population followed by Spokane (214,500), Tacoma (206,100), Vancouver (173,500), Bellevue (139,400), Kent (124,500), Everett (108,300), Renton (101,300), Spokane Valley (94,160), and Federal Way (93,670).

According to the 2016 OFM estimates, Yakima County also increased its population slightly since last year from 249,970 to 250,900, breaking the quarter-million mark for the first time in its history.

Yakima remains the largest of the 14 cities and towns in the county by far. Sunnyside (16,540) is next on the list followed by Grandview (11,160), Toppenish (9,050), Selah (7,530), Union Gap (6,200), Wapato (5,040), Moxee (3,955), Granger (3,880), Zillah (3,145), Mabton (2,315), Tieton (1,285), Naches (845), and Harrah (650).

National Night Out Set For August 2nd

Throughout the Yakima Valley and across the nation, communities will be throwing a ñgoing away party for crimeò during the annual National Night Out on Tuesday, August 2nd. In addition to numerous neighborhood block parties, several organizations and businesses will be sponsoring National Night Out events.

National Night Out was started in 1984 and is the brainchild of Matt Peskin, who was the executive director of the National Association of Town Watch (ñNATWò) at the time. The NATW is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the development and growth of crime and drug prevention programs nationwide. NATWôs membership now includes now more than 6,500 crime, drug, and violence prevention organizations.

In the early 1980s, the NATW estimated that in a typical community, only 5% to 7% of residents were actively engaged in crime prevention. Peskin was convinced that more people would become involved in fighting crime if given the opportunity. He believed that in order to heighten awareness and strengthen participation in local anti-crime efforts, a high-profile, high-impact type of event was needed on a national scale. Peskinôs idea grew to become National Night Out.

National Night Out activities will take place across the Yakima Valley and throughout the nation on Tuesday, August 2nd. The annual event, which has taken place since 1984, includes block parties like the one pictured above at the City of Yakima Richard A. Zais Law & Justice Center and many other "going away party for crime" events.

In its first year, about 400 communities participated in National Night Out activities. The 33rd annual version of the event this year is expected to include more than 16,000 cities and towns and an estimated 38 million people.

While the traditional ólights onô and front porch vigils remain a part of National Night Out, the variety of events that take place in communities has expanded considerably over the years to include block parties, cookouts, parades, visits from police, festivals, neighborhood walks, safety fairs, contests, rallies and meetings.

ñNational Night Out is a wonderful opportunity for communities nationwide to promote police-community partnerships, crime prevention, and neighborhood camaraderie,ò said Peskin. ñWhile the one night is certainly not an answer to crime, drugs, and violence, National Night Out does represent the kind of spirit, energy and determination that is helping to make many neighborhoods safer places throughout the year. Itôs a night to celebrate safety and crime prevention successes and to expand and strengthen programs for the next 364 days,ò said Peskin.

Help Wanted

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).

Yakima is our community – Be Part of the Solution!

New System to Make Utility Services More Customer Friendly

The City of Yakimaõs Utility Services Division will soon be implementing a new management and billing system that will make it easier and more convenient for customers to request services, change services, cancel services, pay bills, and manage their accounts.

Beginning in late August, the Cityõs Utility Services Division will start transitioning to a new system operated by software developed by Cayenta, a division of N. Harris Computer Corporation. The City uses software developed by Cayenta to manage other administrative and financial functions. That means the new utility management and billing system will fit seamlessly into the Cityõs operations.

The City of Yakima's Utility Services Division will begin implementing a new billing and management system in late August that will help to make the process of requesting services, paying bills, etc. more customer friendly.

ñWe are constantly looking for opportunities to improve the customer experience,òsaid Utility Services Manager James Dean. ñThe new system developed by Cayenta will provide our customers with more options for interacting with the Utility Services office and will give them better access to their accounts. The new system will help to streamline the whole process and make it more customer friendly,ò said Dean.

The new system includes online features that allow customers to set up a recurring payment schedule, utilize a ñbudget billingòoption that makes it possible to catch up on underpayments or receive credit for overpayments, and view their account details to better manage usage. The new system also will make requesting, changing, or canceling services simple.

ñCustomers do need to be aware that their utility account numbers will be changed as part of the implementation of the new system,òsaid Dean. ñChanging account numbers may cause some short-term confusion, particularly for those customers who pay utility bills online using their own bank payment systems. Those customers need to make sure they enter the new account number in their bank payment system,òsaid Dean. ñBut weõre confident the long-term benefits will outweigh any short-term issues that may arise during implementation of the new system.ò

Work on the new system started about a year ago. The $1.7 million cost of developing the new system has been paid from the Utility Services Division reserve fund.

The free, family-friendly Downtown Summer Nights Concert Series is back for its fourth year. Shows take place every Thursday night through August 18th from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm in the Historic North Front Street District. To see a complete list of performers, go to www.downtownsummernights.com.

Brought to you by Stewart Subaru, Townsquare Media, Chinook Entertainment, and the City of Yakima