

Issues Brief

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Landscaping Project to Save Water, Money

Second effort scheduled for later this summer at City's Public Works facility

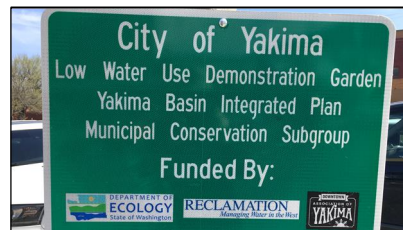
Work is now wrapping up in Downtown Yakima on a landscaping project that will conserve water and beautify the area.

It involves new soil, irrigation lines and plants requiring little water in areas around the City of Yakima's 2nd Street parking lot.

"There is a two-fold purpose: One is to conserve water and the other is to install a demonstration garden to show residents and businesses an alternative to grass and high-water-use plants," said Water/Irrigation Manager David Brown. "We are showing low-water-use gardens can be beautiful. We have focused on planting native, low-water-use species that are aesthetically pleasing.

The work will also help the City save money on watering the landscaped areas.

A total of 15 different low-water-use plants will be installed. They include Red Day Lilly, Orange Flowering Quince, Munstead Lavender, and Weeping Norway



Much of the cost for a Downtown Yakima water conservation effort is being funded through a grant from the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan. The funds were made available through the Washington State Department of Ecology.

Spruce. The project includes an area along the east side of 2nd Street from Yakima Avenue to Staff Sgt. Pendleton Way.

Costs for the Project are covered from about \$40,000 in Yakima Basin Integrated Plan grant funds through the State Department of Ecology. An additional \$20,000 is being funded from the City's Central Business District account and special project funds from the Downtown Yakima Business Improvement District account.

The Downtown Association of Yakima (DAY) partnered with the City in daily coordination of the project.

"We appreciate DAY's partnership in participating in this project," said Economic Development Manager Sean Hawkins. "This will help beautify the Downtown area while conserving water."

The project will reduce water consumption at the landscaping site by about a third, Brown said. Much of the previous landscaping around the 2nd Street parking lot had been there for 20 or 30 years or more, he said.

The Yakima City Council approved additional grant funds last month that will help cover the cost for a similar project later this summer at the City's Public Works Department facility on Fruitvale Boulevard.

Yakima Names Four Fire Chief Finalists

Community reception is 4 pm on Tuesday, May 15, in Yakima City Council chambers

Yakima City Manager Cliff Moore has announced the names of the four finalists for the Yakima Fire Chief position, which has been vacant since the retirement of former chief Bob Stewart earlier this year.

The finalist pool includes current Indian River State College (Fort Pierce, Florida) Adjunct EMS Instructor **Daniel Harshburger**, current Kittitas Valley Fire and Rescue Deputy Fire Chief **Richard Elliot**, current Yakima Deputy Fire Chief **Patrick Reid**, and current Yakima Deputy Fire Chief **Aaron Markham**.

The four finalists are scheduled to be in Yakima on Tuesday, May 15th for a round of interviews during the day and a community reception later that afternoon.

The community reception will take place in the Council Chambers at Yakima City Hall (129 N. 2nd Street) from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm and will be open to anyone wanting to meet the finalists.

Harshburger began his career in the fire service in 1994 as a firefighter/paramedic for DeSoto County Fire Rescue in Arcadia, Florida. He served as a firefighter and/or paramedic for other fire departments, including Hardee County Fire Rescue in Wauchula, Florida. He was promoted to deputy fire chief for Hardee County Fire



The City of Yakima has four finalists for the Fire Chief position vacant since former chief Bob Stewart's retirement earlier this year.

Rescue in 2003 and served in that capacity until he was hired as the bureau chief of rescue for Martin County Fire Rescue (Stuart, Florida) in 2010. In 2017, Harshburger became the Martin County Fire Rescue chief of compliance and professional standards in 2017, a position he held until February of this year.

Elliot started his fire service career in 1987 as a firefighter/shift captain for the City of SeaTac/King County Fire District #24 department. In 1996, he was hired as captain/fire chief by the Ellensburg Fire Department. Elliot became deputy fire chief of Kittitas Valley Fire and Rescue in 2007 and continues to serve in that capacity. Additionally, Elliot served as a hospital corpsman in the U.S. Navy from 1996 to 2004 and was stationed at Fort Lewis.

Reid's resume includes time as fire chief of Fort Belvoir Fire and Emergency Services in Fort Belvoir, Virginia from 1990 to 2012. From 2012 to 2015, he served as the response and

recovery bureau chief for the Utah Division of Emergency Management in Salt Lake City, Utah. In 2015, Reid was hired as division chief of training for the Fort Irwin Fire Department (Fort Irwin, California). In October 2017, Reid became a deputy fire chief for the Yakima Fire Department.

Markham joined the Sunnyside Fire Department in 1991 as a firefighter/EMT. In 2001, he was promoted to battalion chief/fire marshal for the Sunnyside Fire Department. Markham served as interim fire chief for the Sunnyside Fire Department in 2004 before being given the permanent fire chief job in 2005. In March of this year, Markham was hired as a deputy fire chief for the Yakima Fire Department.

The Yakima Fire Chief oversees a department with 137 total staff members. The department's 2018 budget is about \$19 million.

Moore expects to announce his selection for Yakima Fire Chief within the next few weeks.

Positive Trend Continues for City of Yakima

Record-low unemployment rate through first quarter of 2018

The city of Yakima's unemployment numbers continue at all-time record lows, according to figures released last month by the State of Washington's Employment Security Department.

"These latest numbers reflect a continuing, positive trend for the city of Yakima," said City Council Member and Council Economic Development Committee Chair Jason White. "It shows consistent improvement in employment opportunities for our residents."

The numbers, which are not seasonally adjusted, show an unemployment rate of 6.2 percent in the city of Yakima during the month of March 2018.

That's the city's lowest rate for the month of March since the state's Employment Security Department began implementing electronic records back in 1990. The March 2018 figure is down from the 6.4 percent rate in March 2017.



After ending 2017 with the lowest annual average unemployment rate in its history, the city of Yakima continued to set record-low unemployment rates in each of the first three months of 2018.

The city of Yakima's overall average unemployment rate for the first quarter of 2018 (January, February, and March) is 6.7 percent.

And the Employment Security Department's report revised the city's unemployment rate for February 2018.

That rate was initially pegged at 6.8 percent, but the most recent report shows the city of Yakima's unemployment rate was 6.7 percent for February 2018.

That is also an all-time record low for the city for that particular month.

"It is important to note the March 2018 unemployment rate is a full half percentage point lower than February's," said Assistant City Manager Ana Cortez-Steiner. "This shows incredible gains."

The State of Washington Employment Security Department will issue its next unemployment update on Tuesday, May 22nd.



The City of Yakima Issues Brief e-Newsletter is a monthly publication of the City of Yakima Community Relations Office. Questions or suggestions? Contact Communications & Public Affairs Director Randy Beehler at 509-575-6045 or randy.beehler@yakimawa.gov.

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