



## 4 Historic Preservation

### 4.1 Introduction

Yakima is one of the oldest communities in Washington. Its downtown and surrounding neighborhoods boast dozens of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). It is also home to the Yakima Valley Museum, one of the premier history museums in the state.

The purpose of a Historic Preservation Element is to help local governments direct the historic preservation programs of their communities. The basic elements of preservation planning are identification, registration, and protection. Within those elements, the subtleties and quirks of each individual community are considered. The historic preservation goals of this element are consistent with the Historic Preservation Plan (Preservation Plan). The Preservation Plan was developed in 2016 and was adopted in 2017 as part of this Historic Preservation Element.

#### **Housing Goal – Growth Management Act**

The GMA lists a Historic Preservation goal to “Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.” (RCW 36.70A.020(13))



## 4.2 Our Past, Today and Tomorrow

### Archaeological Resources

Yakima began as a Euro-American agricultural community on lands historically owned by local indigenous communities, including the Yakama Nation. The Yakama Nation is closely associated with this city, both because of the shared name and the adjacent tribal reservation (created in 1855). The Yakamas and other regional tribes have a long history of making seasonal camps, fishing, gathering, and hunting in the area. Evidence of Native American presence prior to Euro-American arrival is generally restricted to archaeological sites.

Historic resources after the 1850s may also include a wide variety of residential, industrial and agricultural resources owned by Native Americans, since Yakima's farms, factories and canneries reportedly employed Yakama people. In addition to Native American heritage, the presence and contributions of other ethnic groups are observed in the community, including but not limited to Spanish Basques, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Latino.

### Euro-American Settlement

Besides farming and agriculture-related industries, the city has been most significantly shaped by the introduction of railroads, irrigation, significant roads, and mostly single-family residential neighborhoods. Most of the city's development happened between the late 1880s and 1930. Post-World War II, decades have brought additional changes and modernization to the City.



Source: City of Yakima



February 11, 2017

-  Survey Contingent Upon Project Parameters: Low Risk
  Survey Highly Advised: High Risk  
 Survey Contingent Upon Project Parameters: Moderately Low Risk
  Survey Highly Advised: Very High Risk  
 Survey Recommended: Moderate Risk

Source: Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, 2017



## Survey and Listing

The Historic Preservation Plan includes a survey as part of the inventory. This 2016 survey and listing efforts have produced the following:

- Over 16,000 properties surveyed; though the majority of this stem from the 2011 upload of assessor data for planning and modeling purposes, and have little significant information.
- There are 11 properties determined eligible by the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) for listing to the NRHP, but are not currently listed in any historic register.
- There are four properties listed only to the Yakima Register of Historic Places, including a historic district.
- There are 12 properties listed in either the Yakima Register of Historic Places or the National Register of Historic Places.
- There is one property listed in both the Yakima and National registers of Historic Places and the Washington Heritage Register, including a historic district.
- There are three properties listed to the Washington Heritage Barn Register.

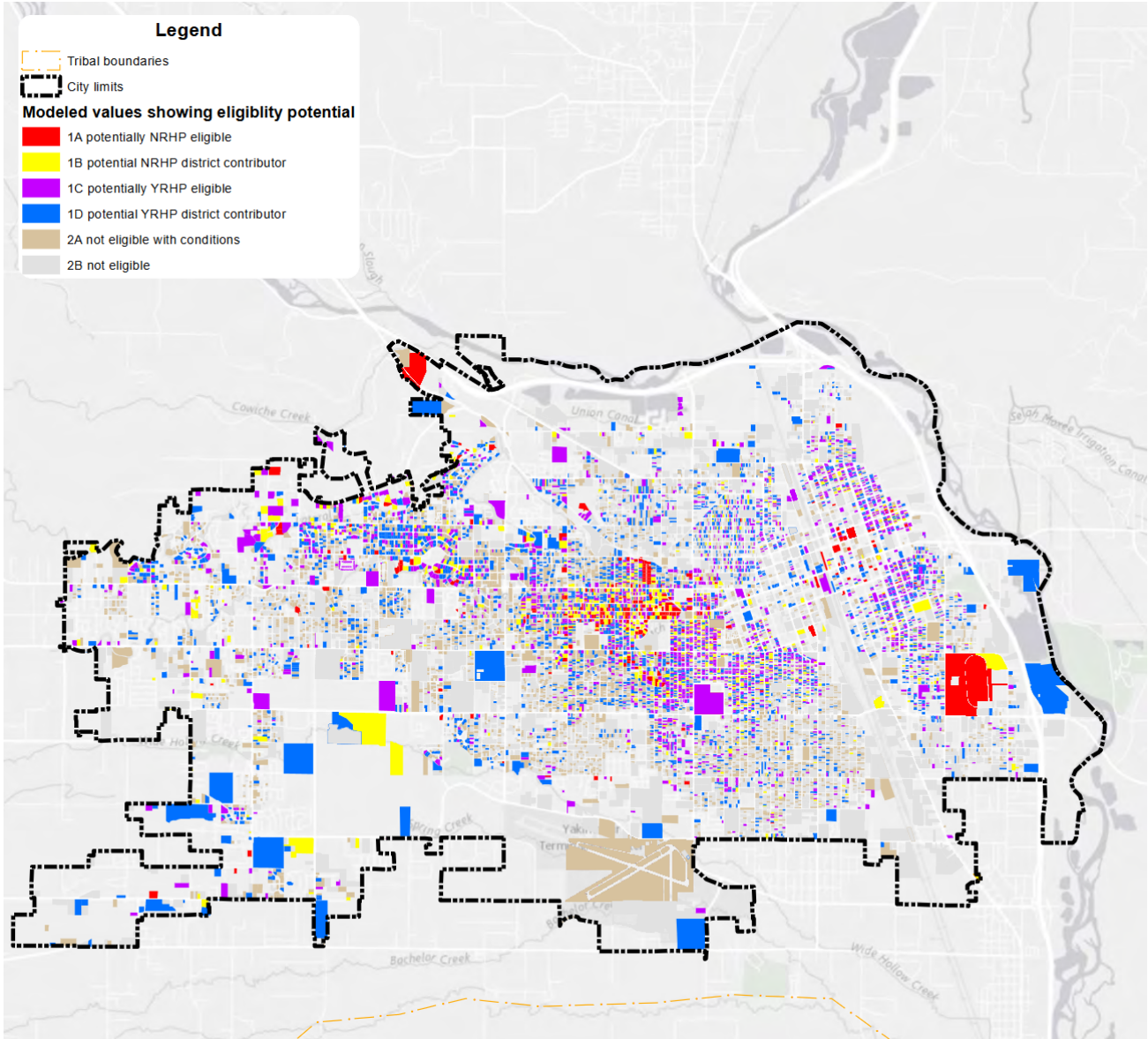
The following are major survey projects conducted in Yakima:

- Barge-Chestnut Neighborhood
- Yakima Downtown
- Yakima Fairgrounds

The Historic Preservation Plan incorporates a geographic information system (GIS)-based evaluative model of properties built in the city prior to 1980. This model was developed to support this preservation plan and to provide a reference tool for the city as it proceeds with additional surveys. Potentially eligible properties based on a predictive model are shown in Exhibit 4-2.



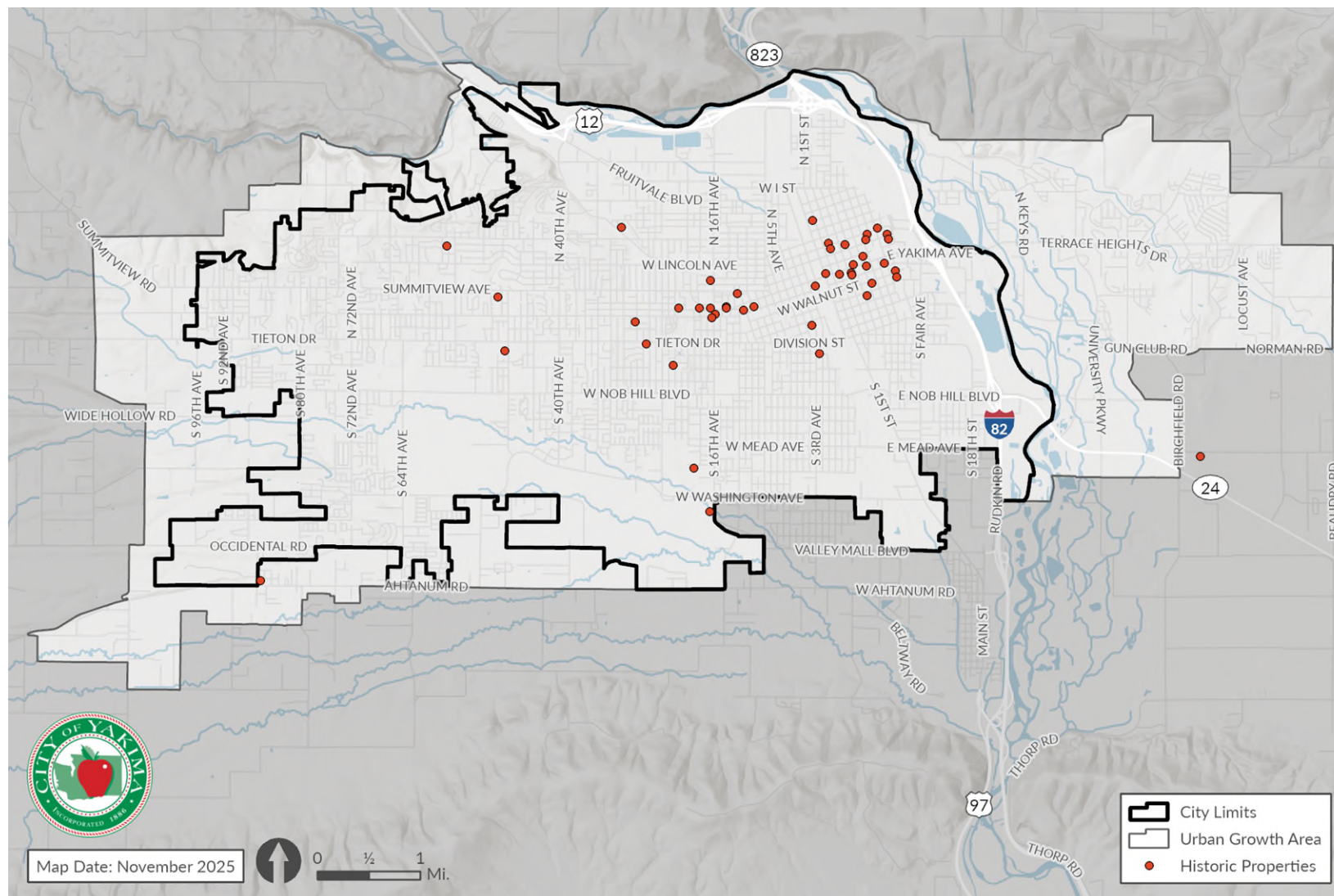
Exhibit 4-2. Potentially Eligible Properties



Source: Historic Preservation Plan 2016, City of Yakima



**Exhibit 4-3. DAHP Officially Inventoried Historic Properties**



Source: City of Yakima, 2025; BERK, 2025.



## Needs and Opportunities

### *Historic Value*

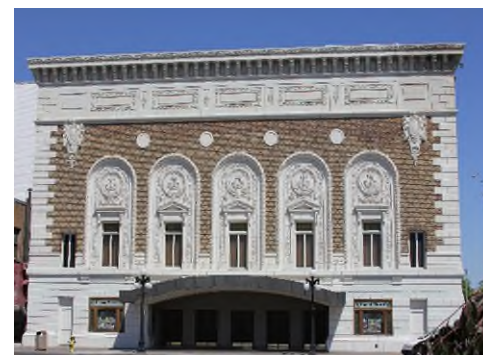
When communities don't understand and value their heritage, historic preservation becomes perceived as a "frill," an annoyance, or even an obstruction to progress. Changing that perception is more difficult in rapidly growing, changing communities. Finding ways to systematically insert heritage messages in various ways, such as in conventional and social media, special events, curriculums, tours, lectures, graphics, and children's activities, creates an informed citizenry that values the important places and buildings that embody their community's heritage.

Yakima has begun to acknowledge that its physical heritage is also a great asset. As a historic preservation ethic takes root, downtown is seeing a growing movement for rehabilitation. The surrounding neighborhoods are poised to see similar activity as interest in historic preservation expands.

Historic preservation, as a value and a strategy, is sometimes an afterthought in the planning and development processes of local governments. Understanding its role in attracting investment and adding to quality of life allows full engagement with agencies and departments that may not appear to have any relationship to historic preservation. Land use, housing, code enforcement, economic development, transportation, parks and recreation, and education all influence—and are influenced by—historic preservation.

### *Residential Neighborhoods*

Yakima's Northeast and Southeast neighborhoods retain some of the most important historic housing stock in the city and have a rich multi-cultural population. Both neighborhoods appear to contain eligible properties and potential historic districts. New approaches that encourage rehabilitation and appropriately designed infill housing could help stabilize the neighborhoods and position them for growth. Retention strategies should be a priority,



Source: City of Yakima



especially if historic district designation is sought. Further loss of buildings to demolition for code enforcement purposes should be avoided if possible. Concerns about gentrification should be addressed early so that long-term residents are afforded the first opportunities for new and rehabilitated housing.

### ***City Facilities***

The City of Yakima is steward of two significant properties: The Capitol Theatre and the Yakima Valley Trolley, which includes associated buildings and track, are important as anchors for downtown and a growing tourism market. In each case, non-profit organizations manage day-to-day operations, while the City is responsible for capital needs. Uneven funding over the years has made it difficult for both properties to keep up with maintenance and rehabilitation needs. Both continue to function with the help of dedicated volunteers. The City and private entities continue to seek grant funding and partnership opportunities

### ***Risk to Historic Structures and Practices from Natural Hazards***

As noted above, there are risks to preserving historic structures related to cost of maintenance and modern development pressures. Alongside these economic risk factors there are also natural risks that can hurt both historic structures but also cultural resources and practices such as indigenous food traditions, sometimes referred to as “first-foods”, and other at-risk practices and resources that help to bolster Yakima’s sense of community. These historic structures, practices, and resources can remain resilient to the impacts of wildfires, drought, heat, and flooding through retrofitting, stewardship, and coordination with experts.

## **4.3 Our Historic Preservation Plan**

It is important for Yakima to retain its historic character and resources. Yakima’s Historic Preservation Element and associated Historic Preservation Plan provide paths to preserve the community’s history and culture. The Historic Preservation Plan creates a detailed inventory to identify what to preserve, integrates preservation into the overall development process and emphasizes rehabilitation and heritage projects in downtown Yakima. Overall, the plan aims





to protect Yakima’s historic character in downtown and older neighborhoods along with maintaining their economic benefits.

## 4.4 Goals and Policies

These Goals and Policies compliment the Yakima Historic Preservation Plan.

### **GOAL 4.1      PROMOTE BROAD AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION OF YAKIMA’S HERITAGE.**

- Policy 4.1.1      Develop a broad understanding of the city’s history, including the roles and contributions of various ethnic groups.
- Policy 4.1.2      Cultivate an appreciation of the city’s unique history and how it is represented by extant historic properties.
- Policy 4.1.3      Foster partnerships between heritage organizations.
- Policy 4.1.4      Utilize Certified Local Government (CLG) grants, potential tax revenue sources, or other sources to fund specific projects.

### **GOAL 4.2      INTEGRATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND TRIBAL COORDINATION INTO YAKIMA’S PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES.**

- Policy 4.2.1      Identify historic preservation as a city-wide priority.
  - a) Review the city’s Capital Improvements Plan annually for potential effects on historic properties
- Policy 4.2.2      Identify historic preservation issues early in the permitting process.
- Policy 4.2.3      Utilize code enforcement activities to protect historic properties and neighborhoods.
- Policy 4.2.4      Encourage the mutual reinforcement of sustainability and preservation.
- Policy 4.2.5      Clarify and strengthen the Yakima Historic Preservation Commission role and functions.





- Policy 4.2.6 Maintain active communication with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation and formalize a consultation process for archaeological reviews through a mutually agreeable memorandum of agreement.
- Policy 4.2.7 Identify areas classified as “high risk and/or very high risk” for archaeological resources based on the Washington State Department of Historic Preservation (DAHP) predictive model and require a site inspection or evaluation by a professional archaeologist.
- Policy 4.2.8 Require the protection and restoration of areas and site in the City of Yakima having historic, archaeological, cultural, educational or scientific value consistent with local, state, and federal laws as well as a mutually agreeable memorandum of agreement with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.
- Policy 4.2.9 Development permits should contain conditions of approval which require developers to immediately stop work and notify local governments, the DAHP, and the Yakama nation if any archaeological or historic resources are uncovered during excavation.
- Policy 4.2.10 Development that might destroy archaeological, cultural, and/or historic sites or data will be delayed for an appropriate amount of time as determined by the City in consultation with interested parties that would allow an appropriate entity to protect or mitigate the affected resource.
- Policy 4.2.11 Establish and implement procedures that protect cultural and historic resources by designing projects to avoid impacting resources to the greatest extent possible or identifying and implementing mitigation measures when avoidance or preservation is not possible
- GOAL 4.3 IDENTIFY, REGISTER, AND PROTECT HISTORIC BUILDINGS, PLACES, LANDSCAPES, AND TREES.**
- Policy 4.3.1 Increase the number of inventoried properties in Yakima.





- a) Identify survey priorities and conduct survey and inventory work within the city limits.
- b) Apply for Certified Local Government (CLG) grants to conduct survey and inventory work per the survey recommendations for agricultural, industrial, transportation-related, ethnic, and mid-century properties

Policy 4.3.2 Encourage designation of inventoried properties recommended as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and/or the Yakima Register of Historic Places.

**GOAL 4.4 ENCOURAGE BUILDING AND CULTURAL RESOURCE REHABILITATION IN DOWNTOWN YAKIMA.**

Policy 4.4.1 Stimulate downtown rehabilitation activity.

- c) Encourage nominations to national and local historic registers to qualify for rehabilitation incentives.
- d) Develop design guidelines for the central business district to identify character-defining features and guide compatible infill development and signage.
- e) Prioritize upper floors for housing and office use, with ground floor focused on commercial use.

Policy 4.4.2 Enhance historic downtown amenities.

- a) Include an assessment of the effects of the proposed projects on historic buildings as part of project undertakings in downtown.
- b) Develop long-range capital improvement plans with the Capitol Theatre (Capital Theatre Committee)

Policy 4.4.3 Prioritize the adaptive reuse of historic buildings, recognizing the emission-reduction benefits and cultural importance of retaining existing buildings while also balancing the need to increase the resilience of these buildings to certain hazards.





Policy 4.4.4      Ensure that cultural resources and practices including significant historic sites and culturally important traditional foods and natural resources are resilient to the impacts of extreme weather and other natural hazards.

**GOAL 4.5      ENCOURAGING THE PROTECTION OF THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF YAKIMA'S OLDER NEIGHBORHOODS**

- Policy 4.5.1      Strengthen historic neighborhoods.
- a) Target survey and inventory work in the northeast and southeast residential neighborhoods.
  - b) Encourage northeast, southeast, and Barge-Chestnut neighborhood district nominations to national and local historic registers. CLG grants may be utilized.
  - c) Develop neighborhood-specific design guidelines identifying neighborhood character-defining features to guide new construction and rehabilitation.

Yakima's Comprehensive Plan is implemented through the actions and investments made by the City with the support of its residents and stakeholders. Some of these actions include regulatory changes, partnerships, coordination, administrative acts, policy changes, and capital investments. The following implementation items aid in this process.



Source: City of Yakima

**Exhibit 4-4. Historic Preservation Element Implementation**

| Implementation Item        | Action Type                                                                | Results                                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Historic Preservation Plan | Long Range Plan<br>List of actions are identified in the Preservation Plan | ▪ Inventory and best practices                     |
| Fire Code                  | Regulatory law                                                             | ▪ Rehabilitation<br>▪ Removal of debris after fire |



|                                |                |                                                      |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Building Code                  | Regulatory law | ▪ Certificate of Appropriateness                     |
| Zoning Code                    | Regulatory law | ▪ Land use                                           |
| State Environmental Policy Act | Regulatory law | ▪ Environmental review considers historic properties |
| Energy Code                    | Regulatory law | ▪ Character defining features may be exempted        |



# 5 Economic Development

## 5.1 Introduction

A thriving economy benefits people of Yakima with a variety of job opportunities, goods and services, entertainments, and the overall quality of life. Yakima's economy is built by the people who live and work here - small business owners, farmers and packers, tradesmen, manufacturers, retailers, and workers they employ. The City's role is important in areas such as keeping fees and taxes affordable, keeping regulations predictable, protecting private properties, and providing the basic public services (roads, water, sewer, public safety) that let private investments flourish.

Economic Development Element provides an overview of the City's economy and the City's potential to support job growth. The inventory includes information on the City's population, employment, and commercial land capacity based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Washington Office of Financial Management, and local assessor data. The intent of this Element is to provide policy direction for maintaining, expanding, and attracting economic activity across the City.

### **Economic Development - Growth Management Act and Key Components**

An economic development element establishing local goals, policies, objectives, and provisions for economic growth and vitality and a high quality of life (RCW 36.70A.070(7)).

The element includes: (a) A summary of the local economic conditions such as population, income, employment sectors, market; (b) challenges and opportunities of the local economy (c) policies, programs, and projects to foster economic growth and development and to address future needs; and (d) Implementation.



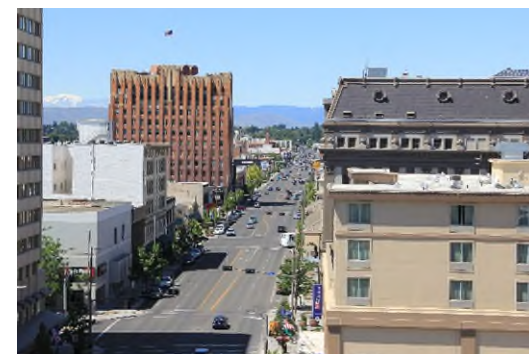
## 5.2 Today and Tomorrow

### Conditions and Trends

#### *Demographics*

Yakima is the largest and most populous city in Yakima County and is the County Seat. As discussed in the Plan Foundation Chapter, the City reached an estimated population of 100,000 residents in 2025 (OFM, 2025), the threshold at which Yakima formally becomes a "large city" for state purposes. The City's population is up from 93,410 in 2016, and 71,845 in 2000. Yakima's population has grown roughly 2.4% per year between 2000 and 2010, and well under 1% per year in the years since. As a major City, Yakima is expected to take 36% of the Countywide future population growth.

The City retains a relatively young population (median age 34) with a high share under age 18 (27.8 percent of its population), this means a large number of future workers and consumers is already in schools. Yakima's median age of 34 is lower than the State at 38.2 but higher than Yakima County as a whole as well as several nearby communities as shown in **Exhibit 5-1**.



Source: City of Yakima

**Exhibit 5-1. Age Profile of Yakima , Yakima County, Washington State and nearby Communities**

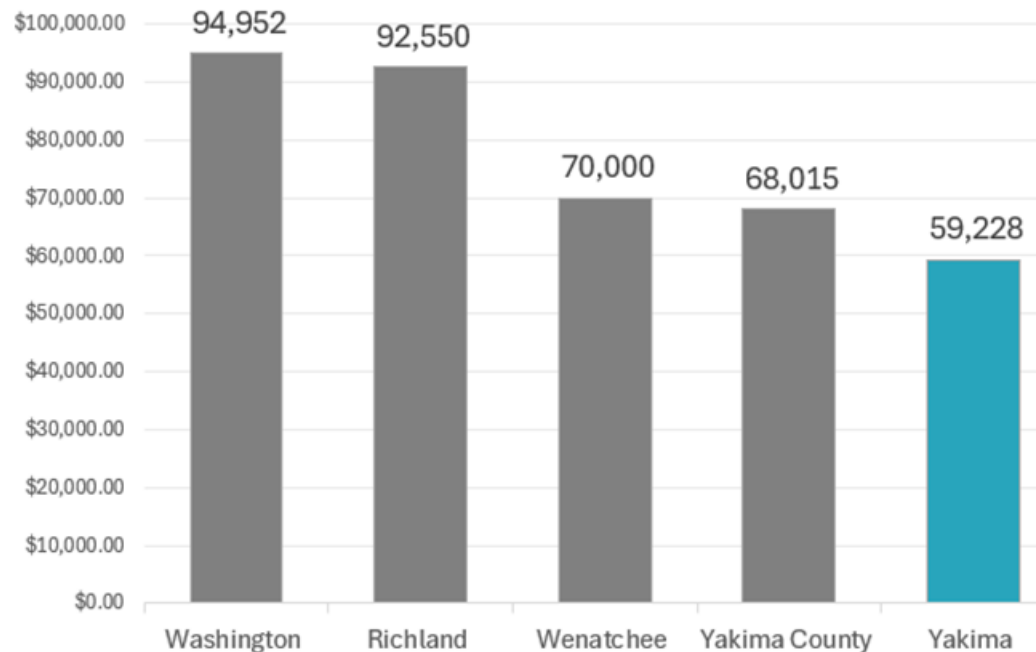
| Geography           | Median Age | Percent Under 18 |
|---------------------|------------|------------------|
| State of Washington | 38.2       | 21.6 %           |
| Yakima County       | 33.2       | 29.3 %           |
| City of Yakima      | 34.0       | 27.8 %           |
| City of Grandview   | 28.1       | 38.6 %           |
| City of Moxee       | 34.2       | 27.3 %           |
| City of Selah       | 34.2       | 26.3 %           |
| City of Union Gap   | 32.7       | 26.3 %           |

Source: ACS 2023 5-year Estimates, Table S0101; BERK 2025.

Educational attainment remains low in Yakima. High-school completion in Yakima still trails the state, and bachelor's-or-higher attainment is roughly half the statewide rate. Although majority of the City's residents above 18 years have achieved a high school diploma or higher at 78.0 percent, this is lower than the state at 91.7 percent. In terms of higher education for residents above 25 years of age, about 20.8 percent of residents have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 38.8 percent at the State level and 35.0 percent nationally (ACS 2023 5-year Estimates, Table S1501).



**Exhibit 5-2. Median Household Income, Yakima, Yakima County, Washington State and nearby Communities**



Source: ACS 2023 12-month 5-year income estimates (2023), BERK 2025

### ***Income and Cost of Living***

The City of Yakima has lower median incomes than other comparable communities. See **Exhibit 5-2**. The 2024 American Community Survey estimates median household income in the City at roughly \$62,800. Median income was \$59,228 in 2023. About 17.0% of the City's population earns incomes below the federal poverty level, higher than the County and State which are 15.4% and 9.9% respectively (ACS 2023 5-year Estimates). According to 2024 Census data, about 16.6% persons in Yakima are in poverty which is similar to Yakima County poverty rate at 16.7% (well over the Washington statewide rate of about 9.9%). Yakima's housing cost has caused about one in three households being cost burdened. Yakima strives to strengthen the local economy by targeting strategic areas such as cultivating new



opportunities for family-wage and private-sector jobs, aligning zoning and capital investments to attract commercial growth, streamlining the permitting process to actively support entrepreneurs and small businesses, partnering with regional agencies to expand workforce training and reducing tax and utility burdens on working households.

## ***Employment***

Across Yakima County, the 2024 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) reports approximately 116,553 covered jobs with total payroll exceeding \$6 billion and an average annual wage of about \$52,100. The largest single sectors countywide are agriculture/forestry/fishing (roughly 29,200 jobs), government (roughly 18,800), healthcare and social assistance (roughly 18,400), retail trade (over 11,000), and manufacturing (close to 8,000). The City of Yakima holds a large share of the healthcare, retail, government, and office employment. The agricultural and food-processing employment is dispersed across the valley but anchored to shipping, packing, and processing operations whose corporate addresses are often inside the City. Currently, the City has 46,295 primary jobs (US Census Bureau, 2023) as shown in Exhibit 5-4.

Yakima's civilian labor force<sup>2</sup> is roughly 43,580 people with an estimated 40,081 employed individuals and 3,499 (~8.0% of labor force) unemployed.

Yakima has a smaller percent of individuals above the age of 16 in the labor force and higher unemployment percentage both the State and Yakima County as noted in Exhibit 5-3.

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<sup>2</sup> The civilian labor force is a metric of non-institutionalized individuals above the age of 16 who are either employed or seeking employment

**Exhibit 5-3 Employment Percentages Relative to Labor Force in Yakima**

|               | In Labor Force (16+) (%) | Employed (%) |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Washington    | 65                       | 94           |
| Yakima County | 63                       | 93           |
| Yakima City   | 60                       | 92           |

Source: US Census Bureau, Table DP03, 2023

**Exhibit 5-4. Counts and Share of Primary Jobs in Yakima**

| NAICS Industry Sector                                      | 2023 Count | Share |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------|
| Health Care and Social Assistance                          | 11,230     | 24.3% |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting                 | 5,666      | 12.2% |
| Retail Trade                                               | 5,573      | 12.0% |
| Educational Services                                       | 3,454      | 7.5%  |
| Accommodation and Food Services                            | 3,409      | 7.4%  |
| Manufacturing                                              | 3,269      | 7.1%  |
| Public Administration                                      | 3,181      | 6.9   |
| Wholesale Trade                                            | 1,681      | 3.6%  |
| Construction                                               | 1,530      | 3.3%  |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services           | 1,407      | 3.0%  |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration)           | 1,182      | 2.6%  |
| Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation | 939        | 2.0%  |
| Finance and Insurance                                      | 878        | 1.9%  |



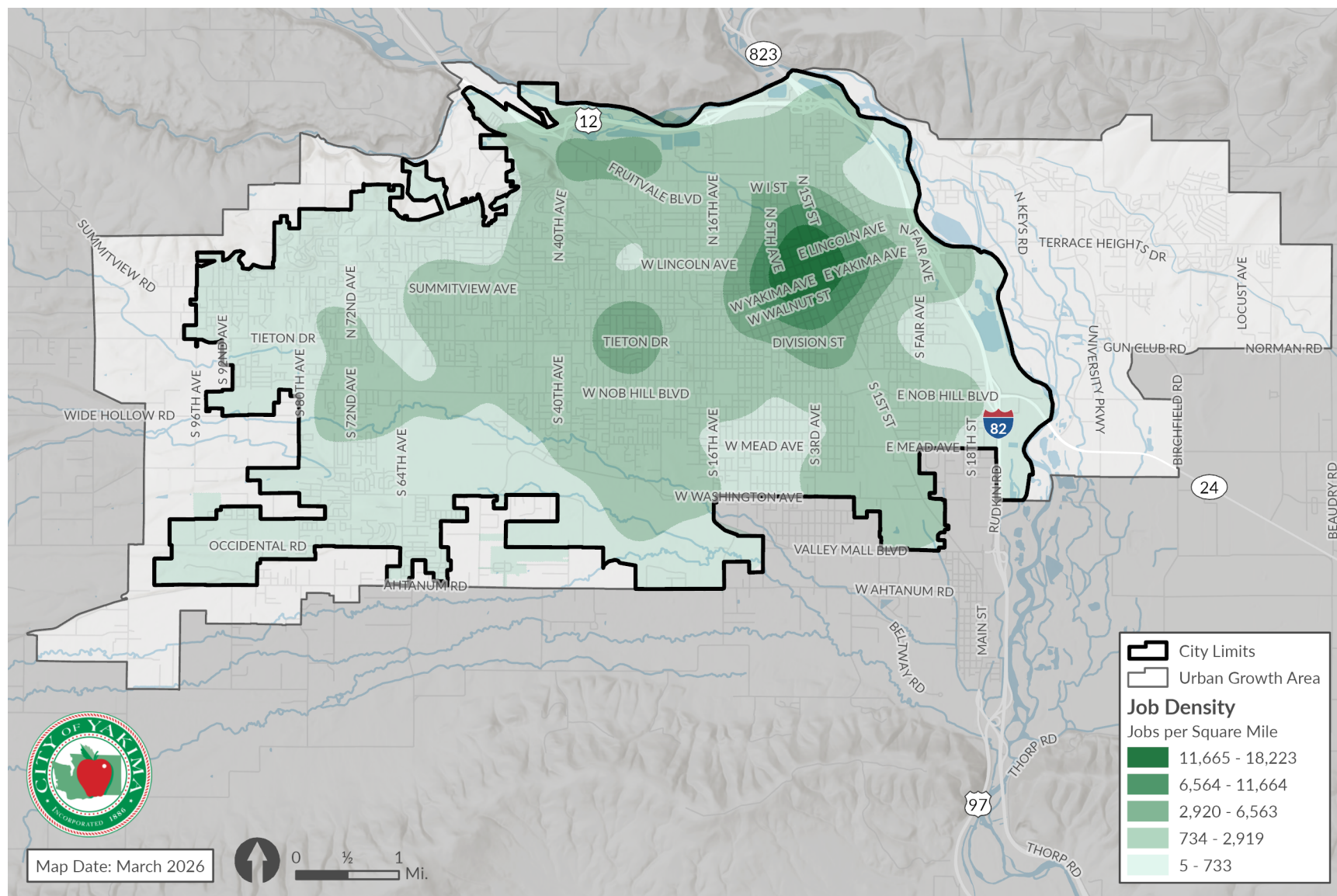
| NAICS Industry Sector                         | 2023 Count    | Share |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Transportation and Warehousing                | 864           | 1.9%  |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation           | 673           | 1.5%  |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing            | 579           | 1.3%  |
| Information                                   | 415           | 0.9%  |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises       | 191           | 0.4%  |
| Utilities                                     | 172           | 0.4%  |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction | 2             | 0.0%  |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>46,295</b> |       |

Source: (US Census Bureau, 2023)

Jobs are concentrated in the Downtown area and near US 12, with greater jobs in eastern and central Yakima than western Yakima which contains largely residential development and vacant land. See Exhibit 5-5.



Exhibit 5-5. Job Density, City of Yakima, 2023



Source: US Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, 2023; BERK, 2025.



Top private employers in the County include Washington Fruit & Produce, Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, MultiCare Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital, and Borton Fruit. See **Exhibit 5-6**. Healthcare and tree-fruit remain the two core areas for private employments. The fruit industry in particular is internationally competitive and water-, land-, and labor-sensitive, meaning state and local water policy, ag-overtime rules, and land-use regulations matter to Yakima's wage base.

#### Exhibit 5-6. Top Private Employers in Yakima County

| Employer                                 | Employees |
|------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Washington Fruit & Produce               | 3,800     |
| Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic        | 2,518     |
| MultiCare Yakima Memorial Hospital       | 2,500     |
| Borton Fruit                             | 2,500     |
| Walmart – Yakima/Sunnyside/Grandview     | 1,950     |
| Zirkle Fruit                             | 1,500     |
| Monson Fruit                             | 1,437     |
| Allan Bros., INC.                        | 1,300     |
| Yakima Nation Government Operations      | 1,289     |
| Astria Health-Yakima/Sunnyside/Toppenish | 1,200     |

Source: New Vision Yakima County Development Association, 2025



Source: hectre.com



Source: City of Yakima



**Employment Capacity**

The City of Yakima has conducted a land capacity analysis illustrating that there is greater capacity for employment under the current zoning than needed to accommodate the City’s allocated employment through 2046. The land capacity analysis has identified nine (9) parcels within the entire Yakima UGA that are zoned industrial and are 20 acres or larger, suitable for industrial development. Similarly, the City has ample capacity for residential growth and associated population with the current zoning. Exhibit 5-7 shows overall population and job capacity.

**Exhibit 5-7. Population and Jobs Capacity**



Source: Chmura JobsEQ, 2025; BERK Consulting 2025

Note: Projections are based on 10-year forecast and compounded annual growth rate to extrapolate out to 20 Capacity refers to buildable land capacity only and does not incorporate economic conditions



### ***Market Position for Commercial and Industrial Development***

The City of Yakima is the largest community in Yakima County and the center of an agricultural economy. Its 300 days of sunshine per year make it an attractive place to live and work.

Background data from the 2017-2020 Economic Development Strategic Plan examined several criteria to assess Yakima's competitiveness.

Yakima received good ratings in Utilities and Infrastructure, Permitting and Regulatory Environment, and Human Capital; but ranked low in categories such as Real Estate, Transportation, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Sustainability, Incentives, Convention Center, and Business Climate. Yakima's low ranking areas can be the outcome of Yakima's focus on specific areas of strength. The Goals and Policies are intended to continue ongoing positive efforts and stimulate further engagement in those areas that need improvement.



### ***Possible Environmental Risks to Outdoor Workers and Employment Centers***

As seen in Exhibit 5-4, Exhibit 5-6 and Exhibit 5-6, outdoor workers including those working in fruit and produce make up a large portion of the workforce in Yakima. Although the processing facilities are mostly indoor, some of these workers are exposed more directly to extreme heat and wildfire smoke than those who work indoors and have access to filtration or cooling systems. While there are some protections for outdoor workers, worsening and more frequent heat and smoke events may hinder their ability to make a living in the short term or decrease the number of years that they may be able to work in the long term.



Source: City of Yakima

Aside from the possible economic losses from this, there are health impacts from prolonged exposure to smoke and extreme heat that may disproportionately impact lower-income outdoor workers. Flood and wildfire damage to employment centers located near the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) or near floodplains may also adversely impact the economic opportunities and employment of workers and business owners in Yakima. See the Climate Vulnerability Assessment Memo in Appendix A for further analysis.



## Challenges and Opportunities

### *Key Investments and Projects*

- **Sites for Business.** Businesses need a place to call home. Yakima is well-positioned with available industrial and commercial sites. By identifying and readying sites for business development, the City can preserve land for economic opportunities, increase the tax base, and improve its image as a vibrant place for business with desirable curb appeal. The City will need to work with these private land owners to make this happen.
- **Mill Site Redevelopment.** The location of the mill site, at Yakima's northeast boundary, has potential to improve the first impression of the community and will have excellent transportation access when a proposed interchange with I-82 is developed. Yakima has limited lands for job creation. The site needs environmental cleanup which can be costly for the City. The City intends to bring this site to productive private use as quickly as the environmental cleanup would allow. The City can work to secure various economic development and infrastructure grants for environmental cleanup and future planning. Due to deed restrictions, any development would be limited to non-residential uses. Changes in the office and retail sector post Covid mean limited opportunity for that type of development. The land is also privately held and the motivation and desire of the land owners may be different than that of the community. A market analysis and strategic development plan is essential for long-term and quality economic development for Yakima.
- **Public Authority District.** A public authority district, such as a Port or Public Development Agency can be an effective resource for supporting strategic initiatives, such as operation of a business accelerator and/or business development at the Mill Site and Airport. A variety of benefits can be structured with the mechanism of a public authority district, such as property ownership and development, incentives, investment in infrastructure, and funding of dedicated staff for specific development projects.
- **SIED, TIF and Targeted Incentives.** Communities that provide incentives demonstrate they are business friendly, and if used wisely, can be effective tools for inviting new businesses. Incentives are valuable to expanding local businesses so that they choose to expand locally instead of expanding/relocating elsewhere. Washington State limits many traditional incentives provided in other states. The primary incentive is the development and public funding of public infrastructure to encourage development. Yakima County administers a



Source: City of Yakima



Source: Yakima Valley College



Supporting Investments in Economic Development (SIED) program that funds public infrastructure (water, sewer, road, rail) tied to private job creation. Washington's 2021 tax-increment-financing (TIF) statute allows the City to capture future incremental property tax revenue to repay infrastructure that enabled the increment. These tools can fund public infrastructure that pays itself back through private investment that would not otherwise have occurred. Incentive package should pass a return-on-investment test, monitor job and investment targets, sunset on a date, and be approved in a public process. Broad-based tax and fee reductions remain the preferred lever, but targeted tools should be available where they are economically viable.

- **Educational Alignment.** Access to talent is the leading factor for business growth, productivity, and viability. Competitive communities stay on top of matching needs of local employers with skills to advance quality business services and production. As educational attainment remains a challenge in Yakima, the City can address this with strategic measures such as employers offered training and educational support. With the retirement of Baby Boomers, it is important to fill these openings. By enhancing skills, workers have access to greater opportunities to increase earnings. Yakima benefits from local training of residents so that youth stay in the community because they are skilled for living-wage jobs. Existing employment provides limited opportunities for living-wage jobs.
- **Air Service and Airport Business Growth.** The Yakima Air Terminal is an asset for the city. To competitively meet the travel needs of business and residents, Yakima needs to continue efforts to expand air services – both frequency and additional destinations. Quality air service is critical to growing both the economy and local tourism. An active airport generates funds for airport operations, maintenance, and capital expenditures. Yakima has limited sites to house trade-sector businesses providing quality jobs. Sites near the Yakima Airport – some with direct access to runways – are even rarer, yet they offer a compelling benefit to aircraft and aerospace manufacturers.
- **Incubator.** An incubator is a resource for entrepreneurs that helps to lower the barrier to entry for business start-ups. Incubators provide workspace, permitted facilities, resources, equipment, networking opportunities etc. to support startup businesses. Locally grown businesses are more likely to stay and grow where they originate. This provides an avenue for job creation and allows business concept test that compliments local business retention, expansion, and new business attraction efforts. An incubator can also become a destination asset in Yakima (such as food focused or agricultural product focused



Source: City of Yakima



incubators), depending on the goods and services produced by target occupants. Incubators in Yakima could benefit from specialization in a single industry such as a public commissary kitchen to allow for prospective restaurateurs to lower upfront costs.

- **Promote Cluster Industries.** Trade-sector businesses produce and sell products and services outside of the area, thus bringing wealth to Yakima and hiring people to living-wage, quality jobs. The City can target industries that diversify local economy, that will achieve more stability through economic cycles. Yakima's competitive advantages (agriculture, food and beverage processing, water, sunshine, an under-utilized airport, and a non-coastal cost structure) can act as benefits for these sectors.
- **Revolving Loan Fund.** Revolving loan funds are business loans distributed through eligible entities by the Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA). Eligible entities are intermediaries for Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) grant funding which funds revolving loan funds targeting businesses that cannot otherwise obtain traditional bank financing. The City of Yakima qualifies as an eligible entity and may choose to apply for EAA grant funding over the planning period to support businesses in the city and create economic opportunities.

### ***Downtown Revitalization***

Downtown Yakima's vacancy problem is real, and its historic building stock is a genuine asset. The 2013 retail market study and the Downtown Plan correctly diagnosed competition from big-box and mall formats. The plan focused on "catalyst sites." The downtown also sit inside a federally designated Opportunity Zone (Census Tract 1 is one of four OZs in Yakima County), which means private investors can defer and reduce federal capital-gains tax by deploying gains into qualified downtown projects without the City fund. A market-oriented approach can prioritize the following: removing parking minimums and use restrictions, allowing residential-over-retail in historic buildings, not charging downtown property owners higher effective rates through assessments, and treating the Yakima Plaza as an amenity to maintain. The City completed other components of the master plan such as a parking plan and Chestnut Avenue improvement. The City is discussing initiating a new strategic plan in 2026 to identify goals and actions for Yakima's downtown.



Source: Downtown Association of Yakima



Source: City of Yakima



The Downtown Association of Yakima maintains the Main Street program for downtown Yakima. Since 2015, the Downtown Association of Yakima has offered the Façade Improvement Grant Program funding 11 different projects. Multiple projects such as streetscape improvements combined with private investments, and new and renovated building projects have helped to improve the character and liveliness of Downtown.

Given the changing retail landscape, Downtown Yakima may offer an advantage in its ability to create a distinctive retail experience with its historic character, agri- and viticulture entrepreneurship, local food and beverage and community facilities, and events programming.

### ***Community Pride***

Community Pride initiatives complement economic development marketing and talent attraction/retention to draw people to live and work in Yakima. With a positive perception and experience in Yakima, people who come to visit or live here will choose to stay. If residents are vested, they will promote and invest in the community.

The 2017-2020 Economic Development Strategic Plan identified a Latino Cultural Center to honor the diverse cultural assets of the Yakima community. This inclusive venue could serve as a destination draw for visitors and symbol of pride for residents.

## **5.3 Future Needs**

One of the most significant concerns with respect to ongoing city operations is whether the city can provide services and grow its economy. The City of Yakima needs to increase its tax base for fiscal sustainability. The three fundamental revenue sources for the City are sales tax, utility tax, and property tax in that order.

The City needs to provide resources and opportunities for business and skills development. Infrastructure improvement and public safety are crucial for the City's economic development. The Downtown area has public safety concerns from Yakima residents. Strategies to promote active storefront businesses, mixed use developments, walkability, and various features and amenities in downtown are important to make Yakima downtown vibrant



Source: Downtown Association of Yakima



and safe. Additionally, focusing economic growth on manufacturing and large-scale utility intensive industries will provide the City with a significant revenue base and are needed for a robust economy.

## 5.4 Our Economic Development Plan

The 2017-2020 Economic Development Strategic Plan was published to guide the city's economic growth as the population and economic conditions change. The goals in the plan are aimed at spurring and sustaining the growth of Yakima's economy over the long-term by collectively working to grow quality jobs – those jobs that pay well, enabling resident workers to buy homes and afford a quality lifestyle. The City should take measures to improve its economic vitality such as:

- providing business ready sites.
- revitalizing downtown Yakima.
- providing education and training opportunities for workers.
- improving housing and workspace conditions.
- incentivizing startups and small businesses.
- utilizing the airport for airport related business opportunities.
- promoting Yakima's identity and heritage, and presence of Hispanic community and culture.
- Economic development plans are only good for five years. The City should update its economic development strategic plan as a follow on to the development of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).



Source: City of Yakima



## 5.5 Goals and Policies

### **GOAL 5.1 PROMOTE REGULAORY AND TAX INCENTIVES FOR PRIVATELY OWNED SITES TO OPEN AND OPERATE FOR BUSINESSES WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT UPFRONT COSTS.**

- Policy 5.1.1 Develop a system for maintaining complete information (zoning, infrastructure, planned and funded infrastructure, incentive zones, pricing, terms, etc.) online.
- Policy 5.1.2 Pursue certified sites designation for potential properties which have remediated any contamination and have some or all necessary infrastructure in place to operate after sale.
- Policy 5.1.3 For commercial and industrial zones, publish a list of uses permitted and remove uses that are not compatible.
- Policy 5.1.4 Maintain a permit process that is timely and easy for businesses.

### **GOAL 5.2 SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANUP AND REMOVE BARRIERS FOR REDEVELOPMENT OF THE MILL SITE TO ACCOMMODATE JOBS.**

- Policy 5.2.1 Provide an inventory of the remaining environmental cleanup steps at the Mill Site and publish a document showing necessary requirements for clean closure under Department of Ecology oversight, required cost and funding sources.
- Policy 5.2.2. Define desired site concept. Zone the Mill Site for the broadest reasonable mix of industrial, manufacturing, distribution, and commercial uses, consistent with adjacent uses.
- Policy 5.2.3 Make public-finance tools available such as SIED grants infrastructure, TIF authorized under RCW 39.114, special assessment districts, LIDs for the Mill Site to fund the public infrastructure needed to make redevelopment feasible.





**GOAL 5.3. EXPLORE PUBLIC FINANCING TOOLS AND THE POTENTIAL OF A PUBLIC AUTHORITY DISTRICT AS A TOOL TO FUND PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPPORT YAKIMA’S COMPETITIVENESS TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN BUSINESSES**

- Policy 5.3.1 Research the process to establish a port district or other public development authority. Support such district for identified projects and establish limited authorities consistent with the City’s policies.
- Policy 5.3.2 Coordinate actively with the Yakima County Development Association on the County's SIED program. Pursue SIED grants and low-interest loans for City public-infrastructure projects that enable private job creation.
- Policy 5.3.3 Use Washington's tax-increment-financing authority (RCW 39.114) when: (a) the project would not occur without the public infrastructure being financed; (b) the increment area is geographically narrow; (c) impacted taxing districts (schools, fire, library) are consulted; (d) the TIF area sunsets on a certain date; and (e) the package includes claw-back if private investment targets are not met.
- Policy 5.3.4 For public-finance tools, use a public process with cost-benefit and return-on-investment analysis, list of public infrastructure assets to fund, job and capital-investment performance target with performance monitoring, and a sunset date.

**GOAL 5.4 PROMOTE REDUCTION IN THE BUSINESS COST AND TARGETED INCENTIVES THAT ENTICE BUSINESSES FROM DIVERSE SECTORS TO RELOCATE TO OR INVEST IN YAKIMA.**

- Policy 5.4.1 Find ways to reduce various fees and taxes (e.g. B&O tax) for Yakima businesses over a set timeframe.
- Policy 5.4.2 Research gaps in the process where Yakima falls behind or costs more than neighboring or similarly positioned jurisdictions.



Source: Downtown Association of Yakima



- Policy 5.4.3 Promote existing City permitting services as an incentive and examine ways to further streamline the permitting process.
- Policy 5.4.4 Develop and adopt an incentive policy to define criteria for projects that align with Yakima’s Economic Development goals.
- Policy 5.4.5 Seek Economic Adjustment Assistance grant awards through U.S. Economic Development Administration.
- Policy 5.4.6 Provide information on an estimated cost of businesses per unit area in Yakima and update it every year.

**GOAL 5.5 PROMOTE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN YAKIMA.**

- Policy 5.5.1. Support targeted at high-demand or emerging industries with shared space or permitting assistance.
- Policy 5.5.2 Encourage commissary kitchen to support prospective restaurateurs or food service providers when offered by various organizations and institutions; support private incubator or co-operative business initiatives
- Policy 5.5.2 Expand home-occupation permits that allow a diverse range of home-based businesses.

**GOAL 5.6 SUSTAIN AND PROMOTE COMMERCIAL AIRLINE SERVICE AT THE YAKIMA AIRPORT (YKM).**

- Policy 5.6.1 Leverage WA Department of Commerce marketing to aircraft and aerospace manufacturers, including relevant industry conferences and trade shows.
- Policy 5.6.2 Zone airport-adjacent parcels, including parcels with direct taxiway access, appropriate for aviation, aerospace, manufacturing, MRO, distribution, and ancillary commercial uses.



Source: City of Yakima



Policy 5.6.3      Ensure that water, sewer, and power capacity to the airport industrial area is sized for industrial-scale tenants, and publish that capacity so prospective tenants can size their projects accordingly.

Policy 5.6.4      Coordinate with the Air Terminal operator to ensure airport fees and lease rates remain competitive with comparable regional general-aviation airports, without City subsidy to make up shortfalls in airport operations.

**GOAL 5.7      LOCATE TRADE-SECTOR BUSINESSES THAT COMPLIMENT YET DIVERSIFY YAKIMA’S ECONOMIC BASE.**

Policy 5.7.1      Define requirements and priority location factors of target industries, develop outreach plans to meet with businesses of target industries, and budget the necessary funds to carry out this activity.

**GOAL 5.8      SUPPORT PROPERTY OWNERS, TENANTS, AND BUSINEESES TO REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN YAKIMA.**

Policy 5.8.1      Allow and promote residential-over-retail and small mixed-use conversions in historic downtown buildings.

Policy 5.8.2      Eliminate parking minimums in the downtown core.

Policy 5.8.3      Maintain the Yakima Plaza and existing downtown right-of-way improvements.

Policy 5.8.4      Actively market downtown Yakima's federal Opportunity Zone designation to private investors, qualified opportunity funds, downtown property owners, and the brokerage community.

**GOAL 5.9      SUPPORT PROGRAMS, PROJECTS, AND DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS THAT ENHANCE THE JOB MARKET AND PROMOTE COMMUNITY PRIDE.**

Policy 5.9.1      Support educational resources that are aligned to meet the comprehensive current and future needs of employers in Yakima.





- Policy 5.9.2 Support the Yakima Convention & Event Center through construction grants, ticket revenue, donor pledges, and admission fees; attract more events and improve the attendee experience.
- Policy 5.9.3 Support the establishment of a Latino cultural center to honor the diverse cultural assets of the Yakima community.
- Policy 5.9.4 Work with private hospitality industry and the convention/visitor’s bureau to market Yakima, enhance local pride in community and foster positive “buzz” about Yakima.

**GOAL 5.9 COORDINATE WITH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PARTNERS TO INCREASE THE RESILIENCY OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY FROM BUSINESS CLOSURES OR LOSSES DUE TO CLIMATE IMPACTS SUCH AS FIRE, FLOODING, AND EXTREME HEAT AND OTHER NATURAL DISASTERS.**

- Policy 5.9.1 Reduce workforce exposure to extreme heat and poor air quality, through best practices for outdoor work or through collaboration with economic development partners to expand indoor job opportunities for current outdoor workers.
- Policy 5.9.2 Ensure safe routes to work and safe conditions for essential workers and essential business operations during natural hazard events, prioritize businesses and workers that can support response and emergency efforts to natural hazards as part of their work.
- Policy 5.9.3 Supporting businesses in creating low-barrier, low-emissions energy back-ups to ensure businesses can bounce back in the event of a natural disaster.

## 5.6 Implementation

Yakima’s Comprehensive Plan is implemented through the actions and investments made by the City with the support of its residents and stakeholders. Some of these actions include regulatory changes, partnerships, coordination, administrative acts, policy changes, and





capital investments. The following implementation items aid in this process and can be implemented by multiple departments and partnering agencies.

### **Exhibit 5-8. Economic Development Element Implementation**

| Implementation Item              | Action Type                                                                        | Results                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Apply for EDA grant awards       | Intergovernmental grant and funding opportunity                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Create economic opportunities for businesses outside traditional financing or who need additional support.</li></ul> |
| Update 2013 Downtown Master Plan | Update of strategies implementation plan                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Encourages downtown redevelopment.</li></ul>                                                                         |
| Zoning Code                      | Clear regulatory requirements and appropriate zones.                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Zoning designations conducive to new developments.</li></ul>                                                         |
| Development Review               | Streamlined permit process; potential fast track permitting for priority projects. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Removes barriers for new developments.</li><li>▪ Promotes faster development.</li></ul>                              |
| Transportation Plan              | Transportation Improvement Plan. Secure transportation grants and funding.         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Identify key planned corridors and truck routes.</li><li>▪ Promotes site accessibility.</li></ul>                    |
| State Environmental Policy Act   | Regulations                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Environmental review that establishes different thresholds based on development.</li></ul>                           |