



COUNCIL CONNECT

OUR LEADS. YOUR OPPORTUNITIES.

The official publication of the Tri-City Construction Council

2025-2026



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in the Tri-Cities area**

**Columbia Basin College's new residential hall to
elevate student life and regional impact**

ROCKWOOL's new plant to spark jobs and green tech

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A message from the executive director of the TCCC

SCOTT HOWARD

This year, the Tri-City Construction Council (TCCC) celebrates its 75th anniversary! The association was incorporated as a not-for-profit construction association on March 7, 1950. In January 2004, the physical plan room made the jump to a virtual service. What was once a central meeting space for contractors to collaborate on bids has transformed into the digital landscape that we all navigate today. Since the plan room's online debut, over 80,000 projects have been posted to the virtual plan room, of which nearly 38,000 have been posted over the past six years.

I began my employment with the TCCC back in January 2009 as a part-time data-entry clerk, but it wasn't long after that the position officially became full-time. After several months, I started my collection of hats by assisting with our reprographic services, providing technical support to both the office and our members, and in general, streamlining our workflow and data-entry processes. I sincerely appreciate Jamie Lennick's recognition of her new team's potential and within months the volume of data that we were posting to the virtual plan room increased exponentially over the next few years. The TCCC staff has grown to the core group that is still here today and I'm quite proud of what this team has accomplished. To those that have come and gone, thank you for the help, as we could not have done this without you.

The sheer amount of data that gets transmitted through the virtual plan room is staggering. In my early years, we were only posting documents to the virtual plan room in black and white. The files became larger and more complex over time, as the industry was trending towards the incorporation of color into their blueprints, using different file types, supporting layers, tags, and additional metadata. It was in the late 2010s where we upgraded the plan room functionality to support color drawings for viewing. In 2019, we purchased our HP PageWide to start offering large-format color printing services. Today, we continue to offer simple flat-rate pricing for all our printing services, and color

will continue to be available to our members, at no extra cost.

It's been years in the making, but I'm happy to report that I am making solid progress on the logistics of upgrading the virtual plan room service. While many tweaks and upgrades have been made to the website over the years, there are certain features that have been deprecated, other functionality has become limited, and the user interface is generally showing its age. Now is the time to transition our data to the newest version of the platform that is already familiar to members. We will bring the service up to date with more modern browsing standards and will be introducing some great new features. I'm excited to share more information before the end of the year.

While we discuss and finalize the plans for implementation and the transfer of our data, I can assure you that there will be a transition period where both platforms are accessible. We will not have the capability for data entry to post projects to both platforms at once, so one approach we may take is to duplicate the work on some select local projects, for users to compare how that information is presented and to get a clearer understanding of the new features that are available. Member companies that are interested in a preview of the new platform will be invited to do so. A series of training sessions will be scheduled to introduce the new virtual plan room, and we will consider recorded tutorials as needed.

We're continuing to observe a shift away from the "traditional bid" process here in Washington State with the usage of alternative contracting methods and the adoption of electronic procurement platforms. As these platforms come and go, merge, or collapse, there is a concern that electronic bidding could become a barrier to entry for smaller contractors, either due to tighter budgets if platforms include a download delivery or e-bidding fees, limited access to technical resources or a lack of

meaningful technical support, and lastly, challenges with digital adoption in general. While the diversification of the bidding process has its benefits, we encourage agencies to consider the perspective of their bidders and to invest in educating contractors of their own firm's unique bidding process, ensuring transparency and fairness to all contractors.

As the construction industry trends towards digital bidding processes, there are a lot of competing platforms out there; not only in the virtual plan room space, but in how documents are being distributed digitally to both plan centers and contractors alike. There are a lot of services out there that offer a repository of actively bidding construction projects, and we understand the need to iterate upon our existing service to remain competitive. We hope you find our virtual plan room service to be more comprehensive in how extensively we report on bidding opportunities and that our customer service goes beyond your expectations.

Thank you to all those that have supported the association over the past 75 years. Current and past members, board officers and directors, executive directors, volunteers, and staff... there are so many people that have contributed to the association's success and will continue to do so. After Jamie Lennick retired in late 2018, she hoped that I would develop a love for this position as much as she did and to stay here for the next 20-some years. Almost seven years in as the current executive director, I can say I most assuredly have. I look forward to working towards that next milestone of 100 years.

Whether you access the virtual plan room, participate in our programs, attend events, or use our printing services, we greatly appreciate you. If you're not a member yet, please don't hesitate to contact us with questions, schedule a free trial, or drop in for a demo of the service. We are here to help your business succeed and to engage with the community for the benefit of the construction industry. ▲



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A message from the vice president of the TCCC

JARED HAFF

I have had the privilege of serving on the Tri-City Construction Council (TCCC) board since 2019 and am honored to currently hold the vice president position. Over the past six years, I have truly enjoyed working alongside our dedicated board members as we collaborate to ensure the continued success and growth of the TCCC for many years to come. I look forward to stepping into the role of president in 2026.

The TCCC was founded in 1950—a time when Harry S. Truman was president of the United States, *The Ed Sullivan Show* and *The Lone Ranger* were household favorites, and icons like James Dean, Marlon Brando, and Marilyn Monroe were shaping Hollywood. Since then, the TCCC has been a strong and enduring presence in our community. We are grateful to all our past and present members who have supported us along this journey.

Today, TCCC members enjoy access to valuable resources,

including our plan center, educational programs, and networking events such as the annual golf tournament and TCCC's annual celebration. Our golf tournament serves as an important fundraiser for scholarships, helping students with construction-focused goals pursue their dreams. Through these efforts, we encourage the next generation in our region to consider the construction trades as a rewarding and sustainable career path.

I would also like to recognize Scott Howard, our executive director, and his outstanding team. Their dedication to keeping the plan center current and their willingness to assist with any questions is invaluable to our members.

To all who have supported—and will continue to support—the TCCC, thank you. On behalf of the board, I wish everyone a strong finish to 2025 and a healthy, successful, and prosperous 2026! ▲



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Photo: Pasco Aquatics Facility

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TCCC

celebrates 75 years!

The Tri-City Construction Council (TCCC) was incorporated as a non-profit membership-based organization on March 7, 1950. An excerpt from Article III, Section D of the TCCC bylaws states that the association was formed “To encourage sound business methods, tending to raise the standing of the members in the business world, to encourage efficiency and high professional standards, to promote better relations between members and the public, public bodies and private owners, to combat unfair practices, to support contractors...” and “in general to foster and promote the highest ethical conduct of all members.”

Originally established in the City of Pasco, the TCCC office has moved a couple of times to and within the City of Kennewick, with our current location at 20 E Kennewick Avenue in

Kennewick, Washington. The 5,000 square-foot facility was equipped with 10 individual cubicles for privacy, five large open tables, and two phone rooms, including one computer with Internet access for the members to use. With the purchase of a new Océ TDS 400 Engineering Copier, the plan room was able to start providing large-format printing services. To this day, we continue to provide great rates with fast, friendly, and professional service.

“Construction council gives contractors access to plans via the Internet” was a headline in the *Tri-Cities Area Journal of Business*, July 2007 issue. For more than 50 years, the organization was and still is your regional plan center for projects bidding throughout Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

“When developers or engineers need to find a contractor to get a construction job done, they can turn to the Tri-City Construction Council,” Jamie Lennick said. Lennick was the association’s executive director for 23 years, before Scott Howard became director in late 2018. We’re still here posting bid opportunities, free of charge to plan-issuing agencies.

Over the years, membership has fluctuated, but we are happy to report that enrollment has returned to levels matching 25 years ago. Nearly 500 companies are members of the Tri-City Construction Council today. With the longstanding reciprocal plan room agreements that TCCC has with both the Yakima, Washington plan center, and the Hermiston, Oregon plan center, our associations’ combined membership exceeds 750 member companies. While each of us are our own separate entities, there has always been a shared commitment to supporting our respective construction industry communities.

Thank you to all the companies that have and continue to support the Tri-City Construction Council over the past 75 years. The association would not still be here without the ongoing support of its membership.

7 D. To encourage sound business methods, tending to raise the stand-
8 ing of the members in the business world, to encourage efficiency and high
9 professional standards, to promote better relations between members and the
10 public, public bodies and private owners, to combat unfair practices, to support
11 contractors and associate in efforts to rectify conditions of an unsatisfactory
12 character, to prevent unjust and unreasonable discrimination against any person
13 or persons by any combination, person or conspiracy of any manner relating to
14 the business of the members of the corporation and in general to foster and
15 promote the highest ethical conduct of all members.

Special thanks to the numerous individuals that have volunteered their time to serve on the TCCC board as an officer or director. Your service has been and continues to be truly appreciated. The TCCC will continue its commitment to you, to not only to provide your business with the latest construction leads, but to ensure that our virtual plan room is maintained with accurate, timely updates for each of your bidding opportunities. ▲

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What is the Tri-City Construction Council?

The Tri-City Construction Council is a non-profit membership based organization. We have approximately 500 members and are governed by a Board of Directors. We publish a weekly bulletin, have a website with the bulletin online and are in the process of developing our website to offer online plans and specifications. In the last two years the plan room has hosted over 2,500 projects bidding throughout Washington, Idaho and Oregon.



Current Board of Directors

President: Kevin Harrington
Vice-President: Steve Zaback
Sect./Treasurer: Craig Mayfield
Directors: Dean Burrows,
Tim Doyea, Steve Strecker,
Ben Lindholm, Barbara Chervenil,
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The plan room is equipped with 10 individual cubicles for privacy or 5 large open tables. We have two phone rooms, one including a computer with internet access. Need a meeting location? Reserve our conference room during the week, or if you need more space for a weekend training session, you may reserve the plan room.

Advertising



Get the word out! Quarterly advertising with competitive rates. 1/3 page ad inside the weekly bulletin costs only \$100 per quarter. Business card size cover ad costs only \$50 per quarter. One page insert only \$50, you provide copies or \$100 if we provide copies. Paper bulletin circulation is currently 320 members, with online advertising in the near future.

Visit us on the Web



- Online Bulletin
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- Project details including job summary & drawing index
- Order prints and specs directly online
- Membership roster
- In the process of developing website to include online prints & specifications

Tri-City Construction Council

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OUR LEADS. YOUR OPPORTUNITIES.

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Help us continue to shape the future of the **TCCC**

As a member of the Tri-City Construction Council (TCCC), the administrative contact of your company is eligible to receive surveys. Answers can be submitted anonymously, but those companies that are willing to disclose their contact information are entered into a drawing for a free quarter of

membership dues. Entries for the drawing are limited to one participant per company.

These surveys can help us understand which services are valuable to you, as well as guide us towards offering additional services in the future. All surveys take less than one minute and anonymity is always an option. Your

time is valuable, so we will continue to find meaningful ways to reward our members for their participation.

The TCCC may gather feedback on all aspects of the services and programs we offer. Prior surveys have informed our decision to offer additional electronic payment options, as well as our ability to offer training courses through our affiliation with the Northwest Independent Plan Center Association (NWIPCA). As your local Tri-Cities area plan room, we want to help your company succeed in the construction industry. If you are a current member of the association and are interested in registering for these surveys, please email scott@tcplancenter.com to verify your eligibility.

As a non-member, please visit our website www.tricityplancenter.com for more information on the services, events, and programs we currently offer. Frequently asked questions are also available at www.tricityplancenter.com/faq/. ▲

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For businesses that want access to the latest construction leads, the Tri-City Construction Council (TCCC) offers a virtual plan room featuring accurate, timely updates on the details and documents for a variety of bidding opportunities.

WHAT ARE THE MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS?

Find out more at www.tricityplancenter.com/membership/

- 24/7 access to the virtual plan room.
- Print, copy, and scanning document services.
- Specifications are bookmarked and separated by their unique Construction Specification Index (CSI) codes and the table of contents.
- Blueprints sheets are each labeled by sheet number and title, and can be individually downloaded, combined as a single document, or loaded into a ZIP file.
- Project plans can be directly ordered online or downloaded and printed elsewhere.
- All specifications, addenda, amendments, and memos are OCR processed to be searchable.
- Comprehensive review process to make sure project reporting is timely and accurate, along with a nightly review of all daily processes.
- Nightly email updates will notify members of all projects posted the day before and can also be sorted with filters by unique keywords.
- Members tracking a project will receive instant email notifications for addenda and memos.
- Plan center reports on projects from the actively bidding phase to contract award when possible.
- Customer service is local, in-house, and you will always speak to a human, not a chat bot.
- Staff is available during office hours to help work through troubleshooting any technical issues.
- Access to the membership directory.
- Advertising opportunities via this annual magazine and at the annual scholarship golf tournament.
- Meeting room can be reserved by members to use for seminars, training, or presentations.

WANT TO POST A PROJECT TO THE PLAN ROOM?

Visit www.tricityplancenter.com/send.

- Posting projects to the virtual plan room is free!
- A reciprocal plan room agreement with both the Yakima, Washington Plan Center and the Hermiston, Oregon Plan Center means your project will be viewed by over 700 members of our combined plan rooms.
- Specifications are bookmarked by CSI codes and the table of contents; Blueprints are individually titled per the sheet index to aid members' search for projects that contain the services they provide.
- Staff will notify agencies if there are any missing, illegible, or corrupted documents that may hinder a contractor from providing an accurate bid. ▲



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TCCC 28th Annual Scholarship Golf Tournament



TRI-CITY CONSTRUCTION COUNCIL (TCCC) 28TH ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP GOLF TOURNAMENT

When: To be announced (May 2026) –
Registration Opens April 2026

Where: Canyon Lakes Golf Course, Kennewick, WA

The annual golf tournament is a wildly popular tradition that helps us provide scholarships to deserving students!

Support can be provided by either reserving a team of four players or by sponsoring a hole. Team registrations include green fees, a cart, range balls, drink tickets, a raffle ticket, dinner, and a goodie bag. Additional raffle tickets are

available to purchase for a chance to win one of the many prizes offered.

Hole sponsorships include a full-color laminated sign on the course with your company name and logo, along with your company's name in some of the event materials. Your support will also be recognized on our website where we announce scholarship winners, and your logo is even included in this magazine. A total of six students were awarded a \$2,500 scholarship in 2025.

Please note that this is a very popular event and team slots fill up very quickly! The registration details will be announced in the first quarter of 2026. Online registration has been well received since its adoption in 2024, and it has been a more efficient way of handling the first-come first-serve registration policy. Please note that only members in good standing with Tri-City Construction Council are eligible to sign-up for the event. Sponsorships are open to any firm that wants to support the scholarship program. Email scott@tcplancenter.com with any questions.

Do you want notice of the registration date and sign-up details for future golf tournaments? There is now a golf tournament-only newsletter where you will receive a direct link to the online event registration website immediately when sign-ups are open each year. You can opt in at the following link: www.tricityplancenter.com/golf. ▲

Scholarship Award information

Funded by the Annual Golf Tournament

Every year, the Tri-City Construction Council (TCCC) hosts a golf tournament to provide scholarships to deserving students. For the 27th annual event, six students were each awarded \$2,500.

Thank you to everyone who was able to participate and special thanks to all the hole sponsors that help us raise the bulk of the scholarship funds each year. The list of sponsors is available on our website at www.tricityplancenter.com/golf.

Each year, the scholarship committee selects winners based upon the following criteria: academic

achievement, community and school involvement, financial need, leadership potential, and relationship of the student's field of study to the construction industry.

Over the past 27 years, a total of \$207,000 has been awarded to students!

Congratulations to all the following students who were each awarded a \$2,500 scholarship in 2025:

- Phoebe Bland
- Elijah Carter
- Camden Howard
- Owen Haight

• Myles Mayovsky

• Connor Harper

To be eligible to apply for next year's scholarship, one must be currently enrolled or planning to enroll in an accredited public or private college, university, or trade school. The criteria, application process, and deadline will be announced by February 2026.

You can sign up to the Tri-City Construction Council's Announcements and Events newsletter at the following link, www.tricityplancenter.com/connect to be notified when the application process opens. ▲

Special thanks to the following Golf Tournament Hole Sponsors!





OUR LEADS. YOUR OPPORTUNITIES.

Annual holiday party

TRI-CITY CONSTRUCTION COUNCIL (TCCC) ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

When: To be announced (fourth quarter 2025)

Where: To be determined

In 2024, the TCCC brought the magic of Craig Martin to the Three Rivers Convention Center. In essence, we wanted to capture the spark of the 2023 holiday party by continuing with the new format of hiring a live magician.

Craig Martin had a formal stage performance and mingled with guests performing strolling magic throughout the evening. The venue gave us an opportunity to elevate the technical aspects of the event by broadcasting the live stage show on two large flown screens on both sides of the stage. Though there were some reports on audio issues, we hope the event was a worthwhile experience. There is always room to improve and this year we're going back to the drawing board.

At the time of this magazine's publication, we don't have a date or venue booked, but the TCCC board of directors and executive director will begin the party planning once the board reconvenes in September. It may be an entirely new format or a return to form of previous years, but if anything, it may be scaled down to a venue with a more limited capacity. While it's not ideal to place a cap on the number of tickets that can be sold, it does increase the



pool of potential venues. We know that a lot of companies have transitioned to hosting their own annual parties, so attendance at this event has unfortunately been on a downward trend. Our goal is to host an event that people truly look forward to attending.

We need to hear from you though! What aspects of the event have you enjoyed from previous years? Are there activities that you really enjoyed from other holiday parties that you would like to see us consider adopting? Feedback is essential to guide our decisions of where we go next with the annual party. TCCC members will soon be sent a survey to help gather that information. Your time and input will be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions or feedback from previous attendance, email scott@tcplancenter.com.

For information on all events hosted by the Tri-City Construction Council, be sure to subscribe to the Announcements and Events newsletter. You can opt into these emails at the following page on our website

www.tricityplancenter.com/connect

where you will also find our hours of operation and contact info.

PRINTING SERVICES

offered by TCCC a value-added member benefit

Did you know that being a member of the Tri-City Construction Council gives you the benefit of color printing on large-format construction blueprints at no extra cost? We offer competitive, flat-rate costs on all standard technical drawings that contain lines and partial page renderings. Technical drawings or posters containing large page renderings may be subject to a price adjustment due to ink usage.

Members can order drawings online directly within the virtual plan room or anyone can email files to printorders@tcplancenter.com. Files that are too large for email can be sent through our MailBigFile service: www.mailbigfile.com/tricityplancenter. Orders are typically printed immediately upon receipt for a quick turnaround time during our hours of operation. We'll contact you with any questions.

We aim to keep our blueprint prices fair, simple, and competitive. The TCCC offers large-format blueprints, black and white, or in color at a cost of \$2.00 per sheet for all drawings up to 36-inch-by-48-inch with standard lines and partial page renders. We'll even staple your order with a binding strip at no extra charge.

For more information on pricing and the full list of printing services we offer, please visit www.tricityplancenter.com/print.

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Plan room updates

Your support and ongoing feedback help us improve and implement new features for you on our website and within the virtual plan room. Here are several of the current changes:

- **Error reporting:** Is a specification or a plan missing? Perhaps an important detail was omitted. You can report an error to the plan center directly from the Specs,

Plans, and Addenda pages for each project. This feature will use your default email client and include the Project ID within the subject to assist plan room staff in reviewing and addressing your reported errors quickly.

- **Manual credit card payments:** We have made it easier than ever to pay with a credit card online. If you know the amount owed, visit www.tricityplancenter.com/ccp/ and "Click to Pay". Square is the payment gateway and processes all transactions securely with encryption.
- **Card on file:** Square has the option to save your credit card on file for easier manual payments in the future. Please note that this optional feature will not automatically charge your card.
- **Autopay:** This is a new feature being rolled out on select accounts for those that are interested. With a card on file, you can opt in to automatic payments via Square. This results in higher processing fees, which is why this is currently



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only being offered on a case-by-case basis. The TCCC will continue covering the fees for as long as we're able to do so. This feature is directly linked to the recurring Square invoices feature introduced a few years ago.

Here is a reminder of some of the other changes we've implemented over the years:

- **Recurring Square invoices:** Square invoices for membership dues can be scheduled to automatically send a link to pay with a credit card online. A formal invoice for dues will still be sent via mail or email, but the Square invoice to pay online will be automatically emailed every three months on the 10th day. Recurring Square invoices, combined with a card on file, enables the ability to autopay for those members interested in that free service.
- **Paperless invoicing:** Members can continue to opt-in to paperless invoicing for their quarterly membership dues. Email scott@tcplancenter.com with your company name, along with the name and email of the contact who should receive the invoices. Just over 50 percent of current members are enrolled in the paperless service.
- **Polypropylene paper:** We now offer tear- and water-resistant polypropylene paper. While this product is more expensive than our standard 20-lb bond, it will reduce the need for multiple copies of plans that may get worn out on the job site. If you try it, we would love to hear your feedback on how well the product holds up!
- **Expanded services:** Flat-rate full-colour printing on both large- and small-format drawings is available to

both members and non-members. Please note that payment may be requested upfront for non-members. For more information and pricing on our printing services, please visit www.tricityplancenter.com/print.

- **Direct ordering:** You can submit files for printing to printorders@tcplancenter.com or use our

MailBigFile service instead to send us large files securely via mailbigfile.com/tricityplancenter. Specify the page numbers and tell us if you want your documents stapled, and we'll reach out if we have any questions. Documents can be resized for printing at any size though scale is not guaranteed on any adjustments. ▲



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Tri-City Construction Council's HP PageWide XL 5100 printer allows us to offer highly competitive pricing on large-format color drawings. Members of the association will receive the benefit of flat-rate color printing at no extra cost on all standard technical drawings that contain lines and partial page renderings. Technical drawings or posters containing large or full-page renders may be subject to a price adjustment due to a higher volume of ink used.

For more information on pricing and a full list of printing services offered, please visit www.tricityplancenter.com/print.

EFFICIENT

Blueprint orders are typically printed immediately upon receipt for a quick turnaround time during operating hours. Our large-format printer can produce 20 D/A1 (24x36) pages per minute with a quick first page output.

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OPTIONS

In addition to our standard 20-lb bond paper, we also have a water- and tear-resistant polypropylene paper available to be printed on 36-inch rolls. Enlargement or reduction of drawing size is available upon request, but please note that scale is not guaranteed on orders that request a change in size for printing. ▲

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These online, instructor-led Bluebeam courses are offered by your local Plan Room or Builders Exchange through their membership with the Northwest Independent Plan Room Association. NWIPCA was created by local plan room operators to offer expanded services to their members and the local construction community. Visit www.nwipca.com to learn more about the association.

PROFESSIONAL INDUSTRY COURSES

NOV

11

Construction Estimating Principles and Application (1 Day - 4 Hours)

Take a deep dive into advanced elements of estimating and how to use current tools (primarily Bluebeam) to create accurate and consistent work. This open forum discussion led by a panel of experienced construction estimators explores advanced elements of construction estimating. Experienced estimators will be challenged to evaluate their own systems within the framework of current trends and models.

NOV

12-13

Reading Construction Documents (2 Days - 6 Hours)

This two-session course is designed for newcomers to the construction industry or those who want to learn more about reading building plans and specifications. Students will walk away with a deeper understanding of title block information, scales and dimensions, navigating specification manuals, and understanding material and construction requirements in both paper and electronic documents.

BITESIZED BLUEBEAM CLASS SCHEDULE

Course Cost: \$110 per course for NWIPCA affiliated plan room members
\$165 per course for non plan room members

DEC

02

Bitesize Bluebeam 1: Baseline Basics (2 hours)

Whether you're opening Bluebeam Revu for the first time, or you've used it for years, this class will ensure a higher baseline knowledge. Attendees will learn interface navigation: including menu dropdowns, toolbars, various panels, keyboard shortcuts, recommended settings, and several tips & tricks to increase accuracy.

DEC

03

Bitesize Bluebeam 2: Basics Materials Takeoffs & Estimates (2 hours)

With Revu's intuitive measurement tools and customizable interface, we can turn your highlighters into data rich takeoff tools. We'll start by going through the standard measurement tools and settings, then move into various customization options and discuss the results in the Markups List. **Bitesize Course #1 is a Pre-Requisite.**

DEC

04

Bitesize Bluebeam 3: Advanced Materials Takeoffs & Estimates (2 hours)

After the Basics course, we'll move into creating custom columns, embedding formulas, and information organization. Did you know that you can export to an Excel spreadsheet, or even link directly to that Excel template file full of formulas you've been using for years? **Bitesize Courses #1 and #2 are a Pre-Requisite.**

Course Requirements (Technology & Participation) - Please ensure you meet the following requirements:

- Have Bluebeam 2018 or newer installed, and ready to go before class. Download a free trial: www.bluebeam.com/trials
- Attendance via tablet or phone is not recommended. You should have a mouse with a scroll wheel when attending this class.
- 2-screen computer set-up is recommended. This will allow you to watch the instructor on one screen, while practicing on the other.

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Group retrospective rating programs, also known as "retro," are safety incentive programs offered by the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) that provide refunds of L&I premiums for workers' compensation insurance as a reward for creating safe work environments.

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ROCKWOOL has announced plans to construct its fifth North American manufacturing facility at the Wallula Gap Business Park in Walla Walla County, Washington.

ROCKWOOL's new plant to spark jobs and green tech

New Washington facility to create hundreds of jobs and deploy cutting-edge sustainable technology

By Shayna Wiwierski

In the rolling hills of Walla Walla County, a quiet business park is poised to become a hub of green manufacturing.

ROCKWOOL, a global leader in stone wool insulation, has announced plans to construct its fifth North American manufacturing facility at the Wallula Gap Business Park in Walla Walla County, Washington. The \$175 million investment, set to break ground in the third quarter of 2025, will create over 670 construction jobs and 125 permanent positions, delivering a significant economic boost to the

region while advancing sustainable manufacturing practices.

The decision to build in Wallula comes after an extensive site selection process, driven by the region's proximity to growing markets in the western United States and access to green energy.

"We're experiencing tremendous demand for our stone wool insulation products, particularly in the west," says Paul Espinosa, public affairs manager for ROCKWOOL North America. "Wallula checked all the boxes—

proximity to our customers, robust infrastructure, and a commitment to sustainable energy that aligns with our goals."

The 567,000-square-foot facility, to be built on a 100-acre portion of a 250-acre site acquired from the Port of Walla Walla, will feature ROCKWOOL's proprietary large-scale electric melting technology. This will be the company's first deployment of such a system in the United States, a milestone in its push for greener production. The electric melter further minimizes the environmental footprint

The electric melter further minimizes the environmental footprint by leveraging Washington State's clean energy grid, which state officials have pledged to make even more sustainable over time.

by leveraging Washington State's clean energy grid, which state officials have pledged to make even more sustainable over time.

"This technology dovetails with our commitment to producing as sustainably as possible," Espinosa says.

Stone wool insulation, made from natural basalt rock and air, is lightweight yet durable, making it a preferred choice for energy-efficient buildings. However, its airy composition means transportation costs and emissions can add up when shipping from distant facilities. By establishing a manufacturing hub in Wallula, ROCKWOOL aims to reduce these impacts while meeting rising demand. The company already operates two facilities in Canada (Milton, Ontario, and Grand Forks, British Columbia) and two in the United States (Byhalia, Mississippi; and Ranson, West Virginia). The Wallula plant will be its third U.S. location.

Local officials have welcomed the project, which promises to inject vitality into the rural economy. The Walla Walla County Community Development Department issued a Final SEPA Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance (MDNS) for the project, and the Washington Department of Ecology granted a Construction Stormwater General Permit. Site preparation began in February 2025 and is nearly 90 percent complete, with vertical



The company already operates two facilities in Canada and two in the United States. The Wallula plant will be its third U.S. location.



Local officials have welcomed the project, which promises to inject vitality into the rural economy.



The facility's design reflects ROCKWOOL's integrated approach to manufacturing.

construction expected to start by late summer or early fall. Completion is slated for late 2027 or early 2028.

The economic impact is substantial. During construction, the \$175 million investment will support local contractors and suppliers, with ROCKWOOL prioritizing regional businesses.

"We've been very pleased with the response from local subcontractors," Espinosa notes, citing strong interest following bid packages released by PCL Construction, the project's owner representative. Once operational, the facility will employ 125 workers, generating an estimated \$8.6 million in annual job earnings and \$2.4 million in state and local tax revenue.

"These are well-paying jobs with benefits," Espinosa emphasizes. "And, we expect these figures to be conservative."

The facility's design reflects ROCKWOOL's integrated approach to manufacturing. It will include a furnace section for melting basalt, a

"factory within a factory" for cutting and packaging the stone wool, and a distribution warehouse for shipping finished products. The company has secured assurances from regional quarries that basalt, a key raw material, is abundant in the area.

Beyond economics, ROCKWOOL is positioning itself as a community partner. The company has a track record of supporting local businesses and forming partnerships in the regions where it operates. In Wallula, it plans to continue this tradition, fostering growth in an area already home to advanced manufacturing firms within the 1,280-acre Wallula Gap Business Park. Former Governor Jay Inslee and current Governor Dan Ferguson have both expressed enthusiasm for the project, as have federal representatives.

The choice of Wallula also reflects strategic foresight. The Port of Walla Walla's business park offers ample space for future expansion, with ROCKWOOL reserving the option for two additional phases depending

on market demand. For now, the focus remains on Phase 1, but the company's optimism about continued growth suggests Wallula could become a cornerstone of its North American operations.

As climate concerns drive demand for energy-efficient building materials, ROCKWOOL's investment in Wallula signals a broader shift toward sustainability in manufacturing. By combining cutting-edge electric melting technology with Washington's clean energy resources, the company aims to set a new standard for environmentally responsible production. For the Walla Walla region, the arrival of ROCKWOOL heralds not just jobs and revenue, but a chance to be part of that transformation.

"This facility isn't just about meeting demand—it's about doing so responsibly, with technology that reduces our environmental impact while creating good jobs," says Espinosa. ▲



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Benton County embarks on ambitious expansion to fairgrounds to modernize and boost local economy

By Shayna Wiwierski

The fairgrounds, a cornerstone of Benton County since its establishment, have long served as a gathering place for community events.

Visitors to Benton County's fairgrounds will soon enjoy a reimagined, vibrant destination as a visionary \$15 million expansion and renovation project transforms aging infrastructure, elevates visitor experiences, and catalyzes economic growth across the Tri-Cities region.

The project, which began in 2024, is a two-phase initiative funded by economic development dollars designated to spur local growth. Phase 1, nearing completion, focuses on upgrading the fairgrounds' parking facilities. Previously gravel lots, these areas are being paved, equipped with new lighting, improved landscaping, and enhanced accessibility features, including better ADA-compliant pathways.

"The parking lot upgrades bring visitors closer to the event buildings,

making it safer and more convenient, especially for social events, trade shows, or retail activities," says Tom French, director of event center and fairground for Benton County.

Managed by Big-D Construction, this \$3 million phase wrapped up in early August, significantly improving the fairgrounds' functionality for the 51 weeks outside the annual fair.

The second phase, a \$12 million overhaul of the McDaniel Arena's grandstands, is set to begin in September 2025 and conclude by July 2026, just before the next fair. Fowler General Construction, the general contractor, will oversee the replacement of the outdated bleacher seating with modern, wrap-around grandstands. While the historic "over-the-shoots" section on the arena's north side will remain untouched, the

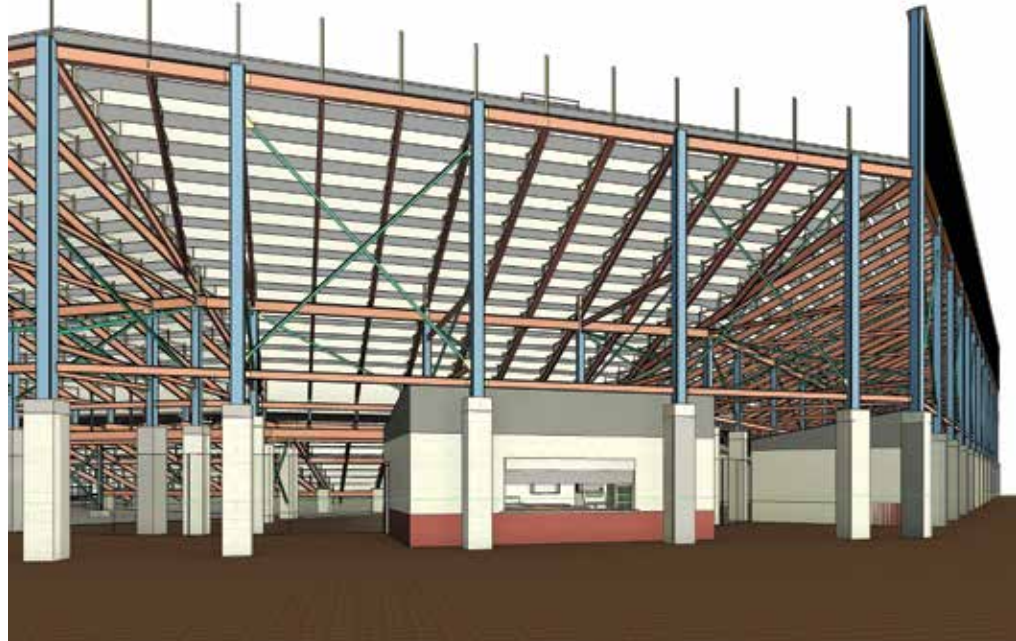
new design includes a 15-foot shade wall to provide comfort during events, addressing the challenge of covering the expansive structure with a roof.

"The current grandstands are not salvageable due to their age," French explains. "The new seating will increase capacity, add modern restrooms, and improve the overall experience."

The project's roots lie in a comprehensive master plan developed with input from community questionnaires and workshops, ensuring alignment with public needs. The plan, presented to the Board of County Commissioners, emphasizes both modernization and the preservation of the fairgrounds' historical charm.

"We're keeping an eye on the heritage of the original fairgrounds while

“With increased seating capacity and modern amenities, we’ll be able to host larger concerts, equestrian events, and community-oriented activities,” French says.



The second phase, a \$12 million overhaul of the McDaniel Arena’s grandstands, is set to begin in September 2025 and conclude by July 2026.

investing in upgrades to support larger events and attract new activities,” says French, adding that the improvements are expected to draw bigger crowds, boosting local businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and retail across the Tri-Cities.

The fairgrounds, a cornerstone of Benton County since its establishment, have long served as a gathering place for community events. However, its aging infrastructure has limited its ability to compete for larger regional events. The expansion aims to change that, positioning the fairgrounds to join conversations with promoters routing major acts through the Pacific Northwest.

“With increased seating capacity and modern amenities, we’ll be able to host larger concerts, equestrian events, and community-oriented activities,” French says. Since he took over as director in 2022, non-fair events have already doubled from 60 to nearly 120 annually, a trend expected to accelerate post-expansion.

Beyond economic benefits, the project prioritizes safety and accessibility.

Upgraded lighting, moving away from costly metal halide systems, will enhance visibility, while new landscaping and tree installations improve aesthetics.

“It’s about creating a safer, more welcoming environment,” French says. “Better lighting, better ADA access, and a more attractive setting will make the fairgrounds a place people want to visit year-round.”

The project has faced minimal challenges, with French describing only “typical in-house timeline bumps.” The collaborative approach, involving community feedback and careful planning, has kept the initiative on track. While exact economic

projections remain cautious, French is optimistic about the fairgrounds’ future impact.

As the Benton County Fairgrounds prepares for its next chapter, the expansion reflects a broader vision of growth and community pride. With Phase 1 nearly complete and the arena upgrades on the horizon, the fairgrounds are poised to become a dynamic regional destination, blending tradition with modernity to serve Benton County and beyond for decades to come.

“By investing in these upgrades, we’re supporting larger events, attracting new visitors, and providing a better experience for everyone,” he says.▲

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Columbia Basin College's new residence hall

Elevating student life and regional impact

A standout feature of the new residence hall is a custom metal hawk sculpture at the building's corner, which glows subtly at night, symbolizing CBC's welcoming spirit.

Columbia Basin College (CBC) is transforming its campus and the Tri-Cities region with a new \$23.5 million residential building, set to open in fall 2026.

Designed to house 156 students, the project addresses surging demand for on-campus housing while fostering a vibrant, inclusive community. With a focus on sustainability, modern

amenities, and strategic campus integration, the four-story structure is poised to become a cornerstone of CBC's mission to make higher education accessible and to bolster the regional economy.

The new residence hall, located on the northeast corner of CBC's Pasco campus, responds to a pressing need for new housing.

"Our current housing, Sunhawk Hall, fills up by June, with a waitlist of over 70 students this year alone," says Eduardo Rodriguez, CBC's vice president for administrative services.

The new building will add 152 beds in 38 four-bedroom suites, eight single units, including one on each floor for resident assistants, and a two-bedroom suite for a resident director, significantly expanding capacity. This increase supports CBC's recruitment efforts and enables the development of signature programs, clubs, and student experiences, positioning the college as a destination campus.



Designed to house 156 students, the new CBC residential building addresses surging demand for on-campus housing while fostering a vibrant, inclusive community.



The new residence hall, located on the northeast corner of CBC's Pasco campus, responds to a pressing need for new housing.

The project aligns with CBC's commitment to affordability. By offering accessible on-campus housing, the college removes financial barriers, making higher education attainable for a diverse student body.

"More housing supports student success and retention," Rodriguez notes, adding that stable living options are critical for academic achievement.

The 54,500-square-foot building, designed by RGU Architecture and

Planning and NAC Architecture, prioritizes both functionality and aesthetics. Situated across from Sunhawk Hall, the site was chosen to create a cohesive student housing district.

"We wanted to keep housing clustered to foster a connected community," Rodriguez explains. The location offers high visibility from the airport and easy access to public transportation, enhancing its role as a "CBC Gateway."

The building's design, led by Robert Uhrich, principal at RGU, blends modern and homey elements. Its wood-framed structure, accented with metal siding and asphalt roofing in CBC's signature blue and white, features pitched roofs to evoke a residential feel. A standout feature is a custom metal hawk sculpture at the building's corner, which glows subtly at night, symbolizing CBC's welcoming spirit.

"It welcomes visitors and symbolizes opportunity," Uhrich says.



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The 54,500-square-foot building, designed by RGU Architecture and Planning and NAC Architecture, prioritizes both functionality and aesthetics.

Beyond campus, the project is a driver for regional growth. CBC is a major economic player in the Tri-Cities, contributing nearly \$400 million annually to the local economy, according to a recent study.

Inside, the building is designed for comfort and community. Each suite offers private bedrooms (approximately 100 square feet each), shared kitchens, living areas, and bathrooms with dual sinks and larger-than-standard showers. The roughly 1,000-square-foot four-bedroom units include full-size refrigerators, generous counter space, study desks, and individual climate control. Community spaces, such as lounges, study rooms, and a daylit basement with a game room and bike storage, encourage interaction.

“The basement feels like a family room, open to all students,” Uhrich says, noting its large windows and connection to a grand stairway and main lobby.

The project is targeting LEED Silver certification, reflecting CBC’s commitment to sustainability. Solar panels, doubling as shade structures in the courtyard, generate energy, while EV charging stations and bike storage promote eco-friendly transportation. Native landscaping with minimal lawn and efficient irrigation, paired with stormwater

swales, manages rainwater effectively. Inside, low-VOC paint, resilient flooring, and ceramic tile ensure a healthy living environment.

“Students helped choose durable, cleanable materials,” Rodriguez says, highlighting their input in creating a long-lasting, comfortable space.

The building’s proximity to a major transit stop reduces reliance on cars, further enhancing its environmental credentials. Outdoor features, including a community garden and ample seating, encourage engagement with nature and peers.

Beyond campus, the project is a driver for regional growth. CBC is a major economic player in the Tri-Cities, contributing nearly \$400 million annually to the local economy, according to a recent study.

“Eighty percent of our graduates stay



The project is targeting LEED Silver certification, reflecting CBC's commitment to sustainability.

in the region, supporting one in every 31 jobs," Rodriguez says.

The construction phase alone has injected \$1 million into the local economy, with long-term benefits from increased student spending and talent retention.

Funded through an \$18 million state lease-purchase bond program and local reserves, the project demonstrates fiscal responsibility. Its focus on affordable housing strengthens CBC's role as an economic and educational hub, fostering a skilled workforce and vibrant community spaces.

The project's success stems from a skilled team, including Fowler General Construction, RGU and NAC (architects), SPVV Landscape Architects, JUB Engineers (civil), MW Engineering (mechanical, electrical, plumbing), Structural Forte

(structural), and The Greenbusch Group (acoustics). Despite a tight timeline, with construction starting this summer and aiming for completion by June 2026, the team is navigating challenges like potential supply chain issues with careful planning.

"The building's repetitive design simplifies construction," Urich notes, ensuring efficiency.

Set to open in fall 2026, CBC's new residence hall is more than a housing solution—it's a commitment to student success, sustainability, and regional vitality. With its thoughtful design, inclusive amenities, and economic impact, the project underscores CBC's role as a transformative force in the Tri-Cities.

"This is about building a stronger, more educated, and vibrant community," says Rodriguez. ▲


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Multimillion-dollar makeover

The Columbia Center remodel includes a lighter and brighter interior color palette, 72,000 square feet of vibrant modern tile, and six updated seating areas designed for comfort and style.

Columbia Center Mall undergoes a remodel

By Shayna Wiwierski

Shoppers at Kennewick's Columbia Center Mall will soon have a more modern, vibrant experience while shopping.

The mall, centrally located in the Tri-Cities region, is undergoing a multimillion-dollar revitalization that began in November 2024. This project aims to modernize the only all-in-one shopping and dining destination in Eastern Washington and Oregon, ensuring it remains the region's premier retail hub. With a completion date set for winter 2025, the transformation will refresh the

mall's aesthetic and enhance its appeal for future growth.

Opened in October 1969, the Columbia Center spans over 750,000 square feet in a single-story structure and houses more than 100 shopping, dining, and entertainment options, including major retailers like Macy's, Dick's Sporting Goods, Lululemon, and Sephora. Having undergone previous remodels in 1988 and 2006-2007, the mall's interior, last updated 40 years ago, is due for a modern overhaul.

"After 40 years since its interior was last updated, now is the perfect time to give the center a modern look and feel," says Willie Parker, general manager at Columbia Center Mall, a Simon Property.

The remodel includes a lighter and brighter interior color palette, 72,000 square feet of vibrant modern tile, and six updated seating areas designed for comfort and style. The project is being executed by American Flooring, Empire Electric, Paint Smith, and Rheinschmidt Consulting.

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“The project is progressing as planned and is expected to be completed on time,” notes Parker, highlighting the smooth progress of the construction. The mall remains fully operational during the transformation, minimizing disruptions for visitors.

The updates are designed to elevate the shopper’s experience and position the mall for future retailer endeavors.

The Tri-Cities region, encompassing Kennewick, Richland, and Pasco, has a growing population exceeding 300,000, and the Columbia Center draws visitors from across the area and parts of Oregon. Its diverse offerings cater to a wide demographic, from families to fashion enthusiasts. The remodel aligns with national trends, as malls adapt to compete with online retail by creating inviting, contemporary spaces that foster community engagement.

The investment underscores Simon’s commitment to maintaining the Columbia Center’s status as a regional retail leader. By blending modern aesthetics with its established role as a community hub, the mall is poised to continue serving

the Tri-Cities and beyond for years to come. The revitalization project not only refreshes the physical space but also reinforces the mall’s position as a vital economic and social anchor in the region.

“The updated look and energy will enhance the shopper’s experience and prepare us for future retailer

endeavors, ensuring Columbia Center remains the number-one shopping destination in Eastern Washington and Oregon,” says Parker. “Centrally located, Columbia Center is Eastern Washington and Oregon’s only all-in-one shopping and dining destination.” ▲

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