

## Tieton: A unique small town escape in the Lower Yakima Valley

By Heather Villa for Senior Times

There's really no other place like it.

A sign posted next to South Naches Road, points to Tieton, south off Highway 12, 15 miles west of Yakima. The road leading to agricultural and artisan community, crosses a bridge over the Naches River and winds upward along idyllic pastures, dotted with grazing bison, horses, and cows. At the top of the ridge, apple, pear, and grape orchards parallel the two-lane road, covering an outstretched expanse of farmland.

It's the same road traveled by trucks, transporting produce out of the community, destined to reach other countries. And it's the same road used to sometimes deliver international works of art to the community. So much is happening in the little town, which occupies less than a square mile and sports a population of about 1,200.

**"It's the little town that could."**

- Ed Marquand, Seattle

Although Tieton was incorporated in 1942, recently the small Yakima Valley town has been gaining notoriety.

Ed Marquand, a fine art book publisher from Seattle, whose clients include The Smithsonian Institute and The Art Institute of Chicago, brought his urban ambition to Tieton.

On a spring day in 2005 in Tieton, a flat bicycle tire forced Marquand to a standstill. He saw beyond the town's vacant store-



fronts and warehouses — and discovered something great under its dulled surface.

Other artistic types followed Marquand and "Mighty Tieton" was formed.

"It's a loose band of creative businesses," Marquand said.

Marquand came up with the town's clever slogan, Mighty Tieton.

"It's the little town that could," Marquand added.

Even the town's official Native American name translates to "roiling water" and complements the resurgence.

Many of Tieton's historical traditional businesses like pharmacies, meat markets or produce warehouses, have been replaced by a paper studio, a print studio, a kite-making company, vintage household mercantile, and a warehouse gallery, among others. So now, similar to the apples that leave the fertile plateau, the items crafted by the locals often leave the community, generating a monetary cycle.

Tieton isn't a typical tourist town. That's why it's recommended for visitors to plan visits during Tieton's revolving events.

One recent event sponsored by the Tieton Arts & Humanities was the fourth annual 10 x 10 x 10



In Tieton, Washington, The Mighty Tieton Warehouse Gallery, a former apple storage warehouse, is the perfect venue to showcase art exhibits and community events.

Tieton Gallery Exhibition, an international juried art exhibition held in the Mighty Tieton Warehouse Gallery at 608 Wisconsin Avenue. The call for entries was open to any artists, but each piece, which could be made from any medium, couldn't exceed ten inches in any direction.

Out of more than 600 entries, 180 art pieces were accepted, coming from places as far away as Italy.

The free exhibit is open to the public from noon to 3 p.m. Friday through Sunday until Oct. 9 and by appointment.

Permanently displayed at the Mighty Tieton Warehouse Gallery, are sound sculptures created by a

recipient of the McArthur "Genius" Award, Trimpin. The display changes throughout the year. A couch situated in the center of the massive space is the perfect opportunity to relax and listen to unique sounds coming from the sculptures suspended from the walls or the 24 feet high ceiling. The perfect time to visit Trimpin's work is when other exhibits are open to the public or by appointment.

Through the end of the year, upcoming events include LitFuse: A Poets' Workshop, Dia de los Muertos/Day of the Dead, Chandelier Festival, and a Holiday Craft Bazaar.

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Artistic accomplishments in Tieton continue to develop. Tieton Arts & Humanities, a nonprofit organization, was recently awarded a \$50,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts titled "Our Town." The grant will allow for continued community engagement, and economic development through artistic endeavors such as a mosaic project.

Tieton Arts & Humanities is also responsible for bringing a travelling Smithsonian exhibit to town in 2011.

While the artisan events are often the reason people visit Tieton, a stop at long established Santos Panaderia, a bakery and grocery store, located at 840 Wisconsin Ave., is a bonus. A table stacked with fresh produce and a freezer full of tubs of ice cream sit at the front of the store. In a side room, trays of freshly baked Mexican pastries, such as jalapeño and cream cheese sweet breads, line the shelves.

For a little town, there's always something a bit different happening. Not too many places offer tamale making classes, natural dye workshops, and demonstrations of racecars built from scratch.

Mayor Stan Hall also discovered something special about Tieton when he relocated to the area nine years ago from Northern California. Hall said the town will become a draw for mountain bike enthusiasts when a new trail is complete.

Hall said volunteers are building mountain bike trails on city owned property. While the unpaved trails are projected to be completed in a couple of years, some of the trails are ready to ride. The trails will be a draw for beginners to highly skilled mountain bikers, complete with jumps. The trailhead is at the corner of Rosenkranz Road and N. Tieton Road.

While some of the Tieton businesses are open seven days a week, others are open only three days a week, and some by appointment only.

From Kennewick to Tieton, the 200-mile round trip makes for a fascinating day trip, and finding a parking place is never a problem.

For more information about Tieton's artisan businesses, and specific dates and times for upcoming events, visit [www.mightytieton.com](http://www.mightytieton.com) and [www.tietonarts.org](http://www.tietonarts.org) or call 509-494-2009.