



## **City of Mount Vernon seeks public input for strategic plan**

*Online survey available to public to help officials determine city priorities for next 3-5 years*

MOUNT VERNON - City government officials are reaching out to the public to gather opinions and suggestions to develop Mount Vernon's strategic plan, a plan to determine internal and external priorities for the next three to five years. Additionally, information taken from the surveys will also be used to develop the City's mission, vision, and goals. Online survey data collection will conclude on January 31, 2021, and will be analyzed by a steering committee before being unveiled later in the year.

"This is extremely important to us for many reasons," said Mount Vernon Mayor Matt Starr. "Having a mission, vision, and goals will help each one of us at the city all steer in the same direction based on the public's determination of priorities. Each one of our decisions should be able to be linked back to these foundational principles we create, which will help us streamline our projects, workload, and budgets. Not only will the work we do be more meaningful, but also future-driven."

In 2020, the city has had three emergency water or wastewater-related issues involving key pipelines to life-sustaining infrastructure. Also, housing is reported as a significant need in the community which directly relates to economic development. With Cooper Progress Park now under local control, the city and economic development partner, the Area Development Foundation (ADF), are both poised to leverage all of these issues into a workable plan. Both agencies will be looking closely at the data.

"Prepared communities do better," said Gottke. "Plans are a way for cities to show their priorities and allocate resources necessary for growth and development. This is important because it's growth-focused which will create opportunities for new residents and entrepreneurs to enjoy quality of life and increase business growth in Mount Vernon."

Starr has heard positive feedback on the city's initiative to begin a strategic plan that takes some of the concepts in Knox County's plan and tailors them to the city. Furthermore, Starr reports that citizens are excited to be a part of determining priorities. "I'm hearing from stakeholders that the timing [for the plan] is great and we are off to a good start. The steering committee and the city administration wants members of the public to know that their opinions matter and we need their help," said Starr.

The city is planning to share the data in public meetings as they are allowed to continue and as the data becomes available. The online survey is available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MVOhio> and will be available for respondents to complete now through January 31, 2021.

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**ABOUT THE CITY OF MOUNT VERNON:**

The City of Mount Vernon is an innovative community with an authentic hometown feel. Home to 17,000 people, Mount Vernon is the county seat for Knox County and boasts historic buildings and districts as well as business and professional, educational, and recreational opportunities through many adaptive reuses of the community's infrastructure and spaces. Specific attractions are the historic Woodward Opera House, the Knox County Memorial Building and Theater, and the 250-acre Ariel~Foundation Park adjacent to the state scenic Kokosing River. With strong ties to higher education, Mount Vernon Nazarene University, Kenyon College, and Central Ohio Technical College have satellite locations in the historic downtown. Located 40 miles northeast of Columbus, Mount Vernon is near the geographic center of Ohio and has connections all over the globe.

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