

Mount Vernon Strategic Plan Phase I

AUGUST 5, 2021



Mount Vernon

An Innovative Community; Authentically Hometown

To the Stewards of the City of Mount Vernon,

In the words of Yogi Berra, “If you don’t know where you’re going, you might end up someplace else.” With those words in mind, the City of Mount Vernon, in late 2020, started the process of developing its first strategic plan. City leaders understand that in order to move the City forward in a focused way it must work to identify the community’s needs, values, and priorities.

To accomplish this goal, the City commissioned eight, all-volunteer focus groups comprised of citizens, youth, business leaders, non-profit leaders, and government officials. Two comprehensive surveys were also distributed to local residents and City employees with 473 respondents. The data gathered through this process was evaluated by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee to develop this Phase I Strategic Plan.

The Steering Committee consisted of selected members of the different focus groups. Along with the City Auditor and City Law Director, who served as the City’s senior advisors, they met over the course of a year and were tasked with developing the City’s Mission, Vision, Values, and Guiding Principles. Grounded in stakeholder input and community guidance, this plan will serve as a compass for City leaders to identify and prioritize specific goals, programs, projects, and initiatives.

City leaders also developed a tagline to help reflect the values of this community by marrying the past with the future. *Mount Vernon: An Innovative Community; Authentically Hometown* captured commonly-shared sentiments of stakeholders from the different focus groups. Our appreciation for our history along with our aspiration to modernize offers a balance of care and protection for our core values that make Mount Vernon a special place on Earth.

Looking forward to the accomplishments that will come forth as a result of this collective planning effort, I am grateful to those who offered insight and input into this creation. I would especially like to thank Rick Dzik, our City’s Safety-Service Director for guiding, summarizing, and coordinating this process in helping the City decide on our common goals and guiding philosophy. His skillful leadership is invaluable to the City.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matthew T. Starr". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Matthew T. Starr
Mayor, City of Mount Vernon

Vision

This vision statement highlights what we want to be in the future.

Mount Vernon will be a premier city, with historic hometown values, for a diverse group of citizens, visitors, and businesses ensuring safety and opportunity for all through innovative and fiscally responsible services.

Mission

This mission statement is a challenge and a reminder to City leaders and staff of what we promise to our citizens, visitors, businesses, and other stakeholders.

Mount Vernon is dedicated to providing modern city services with an emphasis on continual improvement, customer service, and equitable laws that support our citizens and visitors while retaining and attracting investors in our community.

Values

The values of the City of Mount Vernon represent those qualities and characteristics most essential to our community.

Collaboration

Innovation

Inclusivity

Equity

Stewardship

Hometown Character

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles for the City are specific, actionable priorities for the near term. They represent the key areas of focus for our City over the next five to seven years. Departmental and legislative initiatives will be prioritized based on these needs.

#1 Foster a collaborative environment that is supportive of business and economic growth through fair, efficient, and transparent regulatory processes.

#2 Support public safety and criminal justice through skilled and diverse hiring, modern facilities and equipment, and investment in staff and training.

#3 Embark on modern and diverse options while maintaining and improving mobility and interconnectedness of neighborhoods when designing transportation infrastructure.

#4 Ensure resources to provide affordable access to modern, safe, and efficient utilities while promoting sustainable lifecycle management and strategic expansion of services.

#5 Collaboratively support a vibrant, active, and livable hometown community through world class parks, recreational opportunities, arts and entertainment, and a thriving historic downtown.

#6 Through initiatives such as streamlined development processes, innovative zoning, and strategic incentives the City will support policies to ensure safe, abundant and attainable quality housing.

#7 Continue to act in stewardship of the public interest through enhanced public communication, implementation of innovative solutions, ongoing professional development of the workforce, and efficient, effective, and fiscally responsible governance.

Next Steps

With this guidance, City leaders will embark on Phase II of the City’s strategic plan. This process includes prioritization of existing programs and projects in alignment with these values and guiding principles. It will also include identification of new initiatives to support the community’s current and future needs.

Each City department will be tasked with development of their goals, strategies, projects, programs, and performance metrics to support the priorities outlined in this document.

Acknowledgements

The Mayor would like to thank the following community members for their time and input for this Strategic Plan. One of Mount Vernon’s greatest strengths is its active and involved citizens.

Steering Committee Members

Bob Boss, Regional President, Park National Bank
Rob Broeren, Law Director, City of Mount Vernon
Jeff Gottke, President, Knox County Area Development Foundation
Jen Odenweller, Executive Director, Ariel Foundation
Samantha Scoles, Councilwoman, City of Mount Vernon
Terry Scott, Auditor, City of Mount Vernon
Bill Seder, Superintendent, Mount Vernon City Schools
Dr. Henry W. Spaulding II, President, Mount Vernon Nazarene University
Matthew Starr, Mayor, City of Mount Vernon
Bruce White, Chief Executive Officer, Knox Community Hospital
Alex Wright, Director of Operations, Ariel Corporation

Focus Group Participants

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|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Brian Ball | Kenny Griffith | Mathias Orndorf |
| Greg Bemiller | Carrie Haver | Mark Ramser |
| Lisa Brown | Bruce Hawkins | Kim Rose |
| Christy Byrom | Mary Jo Hawkins | Jeffrey Scott |
| Chad Christopher | Dena Hess McKinstry | Cheryl Splain |
| Nick Clark | Mike Hillier | Joe Strosnider |
| Colleen Clarkson | Tom Hinkle | Dave Stuller |
| Denise Conway | Lori Jones-Perkins | Ed Tharp |
| George Curry | Amber Keener | John Thatcher |
| Sam Filkins | Matthew Kurtz | Shannon Treisch |
| John Francis | Anthony McNeal | Julia Warga |
| Jocelyn Gilardi | Julie Miller | Tammy Woods |
| Zach Green | Christine Moretz | |
| Kathy Grennich | Robert Morgan | |

Strategic Planning Facilitator

Richard Dzik, Safety Service Director, City of Mount Vernon