

C·R·E·A·T·I·N·G

Bridges

TO THE FUTURE



Mount Vernon
An Innovative Community; Authentically Hometown

Strategic Plan Phase II
City of Mount Vernon, Ohio

2023 through 2028

October 23, 2023

To the Stewards of The City of Mount Vernon, Ohio:

The City of Mount Vernon has boldly taken the next steps in our strategic planning and continued to **zero in** on our management of the progress and growth that has started to come to our community. Through the work of discovering then prioritizing projects, initiatives, and new ideas, the insight, passion, and dedication of our various departments continue to help guide the entire City by striving for our mission: **to provide modern city services with an emphasis on continual improvement, customer service, and equitable laws that support our residents and visitors while attracting and retaining investors in our community.**

Phase II of strategic planning offers a road map of how we continue to respond to the top five main areas of stakeholder interest that we discovered at the start of the initial phase. Those main areas include (by order of priority): **Police Protection/Law Enforcement, Fire/EMS Protection, Utility Infrastructure, Transportation Infrastructure, and Economic Development.** Most of this plan addresses those areas, yet it became clear that we needed to address another area: our **team members.** The work of our team members impacts those five general areas and improves our efficiencies.

Creating any type of **bridge** necessitates **safety** measures, excellent **quality**, and efficient **productivity.** As department heads identified and defined their strategic goals for Phase II, they kept these criteria in focus for creating **bridges** to Mount Vernon's future.

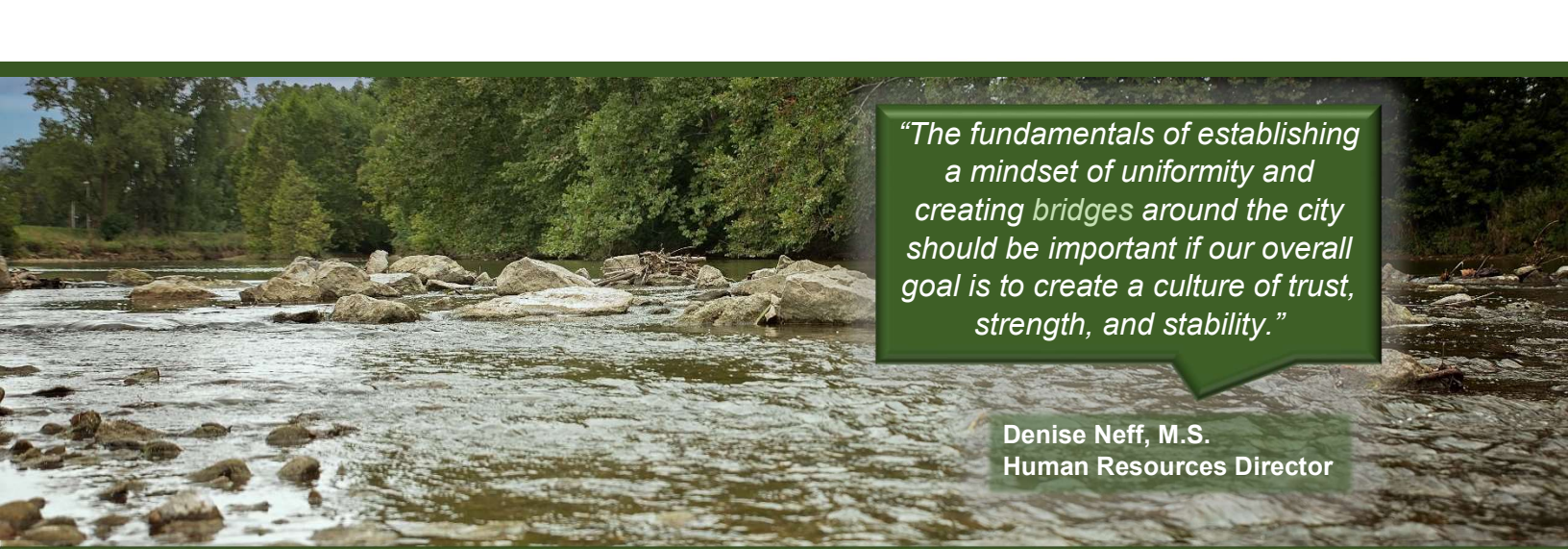
A strategic plan is more than just a document that is developed, approved by the legislative board, and then sits on the shelf unopened. This plan will be used in budget appropriations for the different departments, capital projects, and other long-term investment initiatives that meet the future needs of the City. Soon, we will begin executing the plan, as this is the true measure of our success. As Thomas Edison said, **"Vision without execution is hallucination."**

We are excited to begin these next steps in **Creating Bridges to the Future** of our service to this wonderful City!

Respectfully submitted by the executive leadership team:

Dr. Matthew T. Starr, City Mayor
P. Robert Broeren, Jr., Law Director
Bruce Hawkins, City Council President
Terry Scott, City Auditor
David Stuller, City Treasurer
John Thatcher, Judge





“The fundamentals of establishing a mindset of uniformity and creating bridges around the city should be important if our overall goal is to create a culture of trust, strength, and stability.”

Denise Neff, M.S.
Human Resources Director

BRIDGING PHASES I AND II

In the Phase I document of August 5, 2021, the Vision, Mission, Core Values and Guiding Principles were created.

'Next Steps' stated: 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 the identification of new initiatives to support the community's current and future needs.

Fast forward to 2023 – this Phase II document identifies and prioritizes programs and projects to align with the Vision, Mission, Values, and Principles to support the community's current and future needs.

CREATING BRIDGES TO THE FUTURE

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VISION, MISSION, VALUES

VISION

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.

The vision highlights what we want to be in the future.

MISSION

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.

The mission is a challenge and reminder to City leaders and staff of what we promise to our citizens.

VALUES

The qualities and characteristics most essential to our community are:

*Collaboration
Innovation
Inclusivity
Equity
Stewardship
Hometown Character*

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

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The seven guiding principles established in Phase I are specific, actionable priorities for the near term. They represent key areas of focus for our City over the next several years. Departmental and legislative Phase II initiatives in the following pages are 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.

PHASE II: CRITERIA FOR GOALS

Mount Vernon will focus on three important criteria for serving community stakeholders as City departments deliver services for the future.



... the way in which safety is managed in the City within the departments. It is the combination of beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of team members toward the safety of themselves (and fellow team members), the overall safety of the work environment, and thus the safety of the community. The City wants everyone to go home at the end of the day safely to their families.



... the opinions, beliefs, traditions, and practices concerning quality. It represents the environment in which the employees follow guidelines, take quality-focused actions, talk about quality, but also see other team members do the same thing. Quality adds value to the service delivered to internal and external customers.



... a measure of how efficiently a person completes a task. It is the rate at which the City or department produces goods and services (output), usually judged on the amounts of inputs (labor, capital, energy, or other resources) used to deliver those goods and services. Generally, productivity occurs when the previous two standards (output and inputs) have been mastered or nearly mastered.

STRATEGIC GOALS

"Our City has entered an exciting era and our administration is committed to seeing the growth and development of Mount Vernon proceed in a smart and thoughtful way. This phase of our strategic plan is a crucial step in that process as we build bridges into the future for the benefit of our citizens and stakeholders."

Tanner S. Salyers
Safety Service Director

SAFETY

Engineering, Fire, Human Resources, Police, Public Utilities, Public Works, and Safety Service

Strategic Goal: Improve workplace safety by mitigating hazards, instituting safe work practices, and environmental measures to reduce the likelihood of workplace incidents.

The implementation of current and modern safety practices is on the minds of team members throughout the City. The need to establish a **safety team**, consisting of an identified employee within each department to become a "safety officer," is at the forefront. Safety Officers may be responsible for reporting concerns to their supervisors along with attending monthly safety meetings. This team would help with the implementation of standard training programs. To move forward with this objective in 2024, a safety team leader would need to be identified. Then, this team leader will recruit committee members from departments around the City.

Engineering, Income Tax, Public Utilities, and Public Works

Strategic Goal: Enhance customer experience through modern facilities with an inviting, safe, pleasant environment, and convenience of payment options in City buildings.

Our Public Works department has plans to remove the North Main and East Chestnut buildings as soon as possible for safety measures and prepare for the growth and plans for the construction of the new annex building behind City Hall that will house the Engineering team along with the Water Billing and Income Tax offices.

Engineering and Public Works

Strategic Goal: Reduce workplace errors while increasing efficiencies and profitability through standardizing procedures.



Standard operating procedures provide the policies, processes and standards needed for the City to succeed. They can benefit the City by reducing errors, increasing efficiencies and profitability, creating a safe work environment, and producing guidelines for how to resolve issues and overcome obstacles. The Public Works department will work with Engineering to define procedures and SOPs for service and regulatory processes.

Fire / EMS

Strategic Goal: Improve workforce physical fitness to provide more effective customer service.

Physical fitness and wellness are extremely important for City team members who work in the Fire/EMS department. Firefighters and emergency medical personnel need strong aerobic capacity for the rigors of the everyday job, which can include running up stairs and climbing ladders, all while carrying up to 75 pounds of PPE, depending on the job. Future goals are to establish National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) physicals for all full-time employees, work with City Administration and Union Local 3712 to



establish an annual physical fitness incentive program, and to work with the Office of Human Resources by developing an employee wellness resource guide.

Police and Fire / EMS

Strategic Goal: Reduce response time for all calls for service (CFS) to citizens.

As the City of Mount Vernon continues to expand and large employers are building mega-complexes not far from our community, development of housing and businesses within the City is inevitable. The need to address current and future emergency response times within the City is critical for both police and fire departments. To **bridge** the idea(s) of expansion, the need to purchase land, develop building plans, and begin construction of new fire stations on the east and south sides of the City must be sooner than later. Additionally, plans are in the works to build a modern police department to increase safety measures for our community's future needs.



Probation

Strategic Goal: Reduce citizen fatalities due to drug misuse.

The **NaloxBox** initiative is an innovative, community-access naloxone program that provides tools, training, and awareness to empower laypeople to rescue victims of opioid overdose. The goal is to potentially save the life of their family member or loved one. The Probation department plans to develop a QR code that will be placed on each Naloxbox that will lead to a video on how to administer the lifesaving product, Narcan. The QR code will also log real-time statistics regarding the use of the product.



Public Works (Public Parks)

Strategic Goal: Increase parks and recreation options for citizens and visitors.



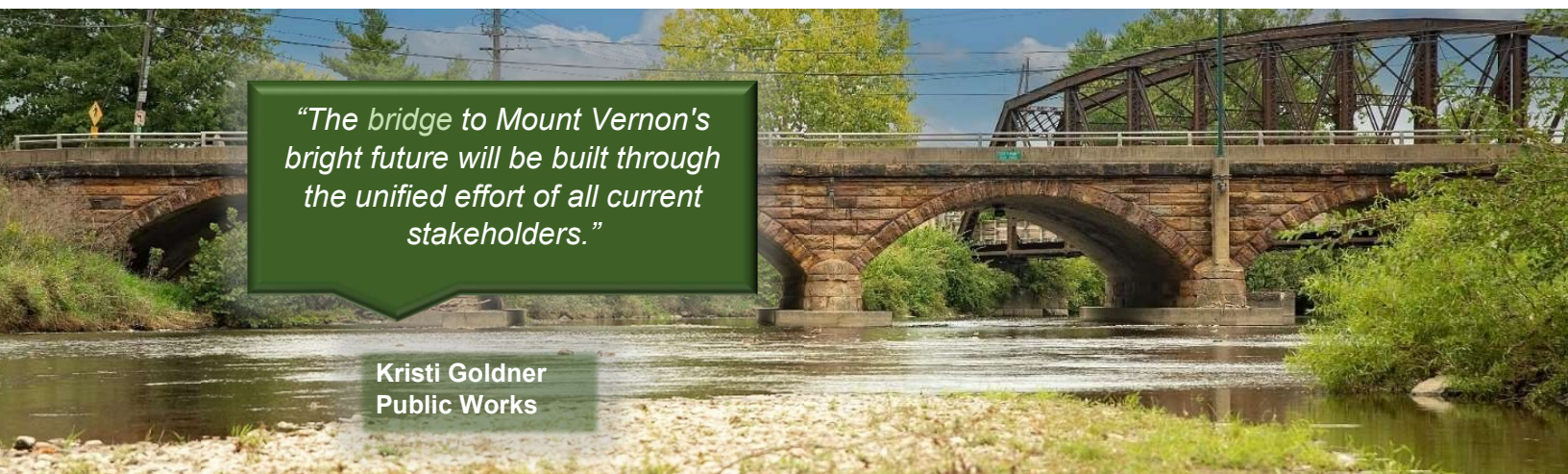
Meeting the needs of our community members, including their beloved pets, is important to the City. Dogs' roles in society are expanding, whether as companions or assuming special roles for assistance or therapy by volunteers or human health professionals. From pets to service animals, emotional support animals, and more, our furry friends benefit our physical health and safety, mental health, and overall well-being.

Our goal is to develop and install a dog park at the old football field beside 1101 W. Gambier St. The dog park will be complete with a divided small and large dog area with equipped hydration stations and obstacle courses.

Public Works (Cemetery)

Strategic Goal: Protect the beauty and peaceful resting place of loved ones by maintaining a standard of perpetual care and the prevention of vandalism.

The City's public cemetery has a rich history, dating back to 1833. Mound View Cemetery is named after an ancient Indian mound, which is located in the western part of the cemetery. With over 41 acres, cemetery staff strives to provide family and friends with a quiet and safe place to reflect and mourn. To forestall vandalism, we will pursue installing boundary fencing and gates along with video surveillance equipment.



“The bridge to Mount Vernon's bright future will be built through the unified effort of all current stakeholders.”

Kristi Goldner
Public Works



Dr. Matt Starr, Mayor



Administration

Strategic Goal: Support local and small businesses to maintain local economic sustainability to provide products and services to the community.

Currently, the City of Mount Vernon does business with almost 600 local (Knox County) vendors out of 2,500 vendors in total (24%). The fundamental strategy is to reinvest the tax dollars into the local community as much as possible to continue to recirculate the dollars within the local community. Local vendors generate tax revenue which supplies the City Government with its revenue. The City wishes, in turn, to reinvest a portion of that revenue stream back into the local community.



Administration and Human Resources

Strategic Goal: Create a welcoming environment, increase early productivity, and reduce the learning curve of new hires.

There is a great need among all City-wide departments to design and develop an innovative onboarding and retention program for all new employees, along with new members of City Council and committees, to prepare them for their prospective new roles within the City. To create a **bridge** into their new position and/or career, brief preboarding and orientation videos would introduce our culture and check off the necessary boxes, such as compliance and informational City training.

All Departments -- City-Wide

Strategic Goal: Improve customer service speed and convenience through e-government services (e-transactions).

A City's website is often the first point of contact for residents, businesses, and visitors. As a result, it is important for government websites to not only be functional but also engaging and informative. A fully interactive website for our City will go a long way toward creating a communication **bridge** with community members and prospective visitors to our City. All departments will be charged with working together to provide up-to-date pertinent information about their respective projects and initiatives, including increased self-service and availability of public forms.

Courts

Strategic Goal: Provide more effective case management interactions to reduce missed court-related payments.

The Municipal Courts need to transition to a new case management system (CMS) as the current CMS is antiquated. The new CMS will improve interactions with citizens by allowing for e-filing, text and email reminders of payments due, jury duty and upcoming court dates.



"In our municipal courts, we strive to foster unity, promote fairness, and ensure justice in order to contribute to the growth and progress of the community."

Lisa Mazza
Municipal Courts

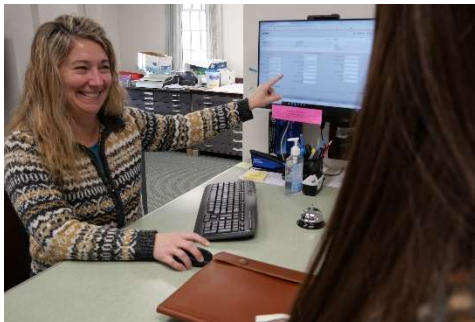
Engineering

Strategic Goal: Support the County-wide active transportation efforts for mobility options of citizens - create a more walkable community.

People in our community deserve easy and safe access to food, health services, education, and other life amenities. To that end, the City is committed to making our community more walkable and safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

Engineering and Zoning Code

Strategic Goal: Provide modern zoning laws that allow for smaller living spaces that will address the entire continuum of housing needed from transitional housing to market home ownership.



Revamping the City's zoning codes will provide greater flexibility of residential, business, and mixed-use options for infill lots to increase housing options of all types, styles, and locations. As outlined in the audit conducted on the City's current zoning practices and procedures, four major themes for improvement will help prepare the City to welcome and accommodate strategic growth. The central

themes of improvement include: 1) reorganize and reformat the regulations to improve usability; 2) streamline and clarify the procedures for development; 3) restructure the district and use regulations; and 4) modernize the substantive standards of the regulations. Requiring permits and increased enforcement will ensure that the community progresses according to these updated zoning codes.

Engineering, Public Utilities, and Public Works

Strategic Goal: Reduce time on site to locate utilities; provide accurate and up-to-date GIS coordinates to reduce staff time on site; and be able to isolate utilities issues to affect the fewest people.

One of the Engineering department's earliest projects is working hand-in-hand with Public Works to update the geographic information system (GIS) maps of all utilities within the city limits. This includes water, sewer lines, and power lines. GIS enables utilities to automatically organize information by location and store all network data in a single platform. It also helps with data management analysis to proactively identify potential risk and respond faster and more strategically to maintain infrastructure. Geospatial technology allows us to make informed decisions based on the importance and priority of resources most of which are limited in nature.

Engineering and Public Works

Strategic Goal: Improve traffic flow and traffic safety through new connecting roads and sidewalks throughout the city.

Zig-zagging through our City on major state and U.S. routes has put a burden on every driver who encounters our beautiful community, especially trucks. The City will continue to study how to streamline traffic flow and seek grant funding when available. For example, current plans are underway with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to redirect travelers on St. Rt. 13 with a new road connecting the viaduct with Sandusky Street both northbound and southbound. This will improve traffic flow on St. Rt. 13 and potentially reduce semi-trucks from traveling South Main Street, which is not configured for through traffic. Other road improvements will include working with ODOT to replace a culvert under St. Rt. 3 in the northern part of the City.



Income Tax

Strategic Goal: Increase convenience of transactions through e-payment system, reduce staff time on manual posting of “paper” checks.

Streamlining processes can be very cost effective for municipalities such as Mount Vernon. The Income Tax Department has a goal to set up companies with large payrolls to use Automatic Clearing House (ACH) for submitting withholding payments. This will allow them to upload the payments to the City’s bank account. This initiative will eliminate manually posting checks, which will save time and resources for both parties.

There are many advantages for setting up automatic withdrawal payments from individual taxpayer bank accounts. This, too, could save time, money and additional resources for City employees and the taxpayer. This feature would also guarantee payments are being paid in a timely manner.

Law Director

Strategic Goal: Better assist victims of crime.

The Law Director's Office continues to revise its policies and procedures with the ever-increasing requirements of Marsy's Law to better assist victims of crime. This Ohio law states that *"Victims of a criminal offense or delinquent act, or their estate, have a constitutional right to receive compensation ("restitution") for economic loss from the person who committed the act against them."*

Probation

Strategic Goal: Help people rebuild their lives and return/become successful members of the community.

Rewarding our community members who are working hard to get their lives back on track is essential to the City of Mount Vernon. The Probation department intends to be proactive in our community by rewarding their clients who are doing well. House checks generally have a negative connotation and incite fear in the typical probationer. The department's goal is to improve that image and perform house checks on deserving individuals to provide them with words of affirmation and encouragement. Small monetary gifts donated by community businesses could serve as an additional means to motivate individual(s) to continue down the right path.



Property Maintenance & Enforcement

Strategic Goal: Enhance economic development through educational and personal communications with property owners; reduce property violations to enhance property values, neighborhood values, and social infrastructure.

The Property Maintenance Department has a goal to educate residents and property owners about City ordinances to obtain voluntary compliance and reduce the number of violations through personal communication and violation notices. The department would also like to maintain a proactive inspection policy to stay at the forefront of effective code enforcement. Conducting daily monitoring of neighborhoods to identify potential violations early would deter further growth and deterioration of properties. Effective follow-up is needed on existing violations to ensure timely remediation.



Administration and Human Resources

Strategic Goal: Improve feedback to team members on work performance and expectations of the City's mission, vision, and values.

Annual evaluations can be a daunting task for many. However, the implementation of a new **positive evaluation model** could improve morale and increase productivity among City team members. With the new model, supervisors would be encouraged and held accountable to meet with their new subordinates after they have been on the job for ninety (90) days and with seasoned employees annually. Supervisors and subordinates would reflect on only 20% of the previous year's performance. While identifying what went right and what went wrong can be discussed, the evaluation conversation will be 80% focused on goals and positive reinforcement for the next year.

All Departments – City-Wide

Strategic Goal: Be a competitive employer in the community and region where people of various career goals want to work for the City of Mount Vernon.

There's no secret that the City of Mount Vernon will be impacted greatly when the new Intel Corporation's computer chip manufacturing campus in Johnstown is completed in 2025. Also recently known as 'Ohio One,' this multibillion-dollar company will bring an immense need for newly created positions City-wide to handle the growth throughout Phase II of our Strategic Plan.

Employee appreciation goes beyond positive evaluations and a pat on the back. If we treat employees like they make a difference daily, they will. Compensation management is important for employee motivation as well. Employees who are recognized for the value and experience they bring to a position are more likely to be determined, loyal, and higher performing than those who are not. A new compensation study will be launched and presented during Phase II of our Strategic Plan. The intention of this new analysis will be to review and make recommendations to City Council for **bridging** any gaps in our compensation levels to a place of worth, along with competitiveness in our current market.



All Departments – City-Wide

Strategic Goal: Enhance the professional development of each team member through educational and inservice options for new skill development.

Employee development programs are crucial for maintaining engagement, developing an internal talent pipeline, and retaining top talent. Investing in employee development attracts high-quality candidates by demonstrating that our beautiful and engaging City values growth and development. Our world is forever changing, and we all need to stay current in our fields of practice. This includes seminars and conferences not only on premises but also within a reasonable reachable distance.

Courts

Strategic Goal: Enhance driver education and license intervention to reduce citations and reduce the need for requests for driving privileges.



The Courts have established a goal to create a local Driver Interdiction/ License Intervention Program. Currently individuals who fail to provide proof of insurance during a routine traffic stop are given a non-compliance suspension of their driving privileges imposed by the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles without the benefit of consistent, accurate instructions about how to become compliant. The new

program would provide free information to offenders on traffic safety and instructions to become valid and regain their driving privileges, potentially resulting in fewer citations issued and fewer requests for driving privileges.

Engineering

Strategic Goal: Protect and enhance City physical assets by generating a comprehensive list of streets, utilities, parks, and buildings and formulating a life-cycle plan for each.

Planning ahead for the preservation, rehabilitation, and/or decommissioning of our City's infrastructure will maximize the fundamental needs of municipal living and commerce while minimizing the detrimental effects associated with unplanned emergency repairs or replacement. The Engineering department would identify all public physical assets within the City and develop plans and manuals for operation, maintenance, repair, replacement, and rehabilitation. This may reduce downtime for all City departments by having the necessary resources on hand, such as labor and parts, and a strategy to use these resources. Understanding the life cycle of our streets, for example, puts our Engineering department in a better position to apply for and secure competitive government grants for our Public Works staff to repair a street before it becomes unsafe. Master plans for our water and wastewater systems can assist the Public Utilities department to more efficiently maintain or upgrade those critical components before a disruptive break occurs.

Fire / EMS, Police, Public Utilities, Public Works

Strategic Goal: Serve the community using up-to-date equipment, safe vehicles and internet connectivity.

As City residents depend upon our safety services, utilities infrastructure, and public operations to keep them safe and their lives comfortable, we need to make sure our vehicles and equipment are top notch and up to date. Our growing population will require additional equipment and tools to enable City staff to perform more work in-house instead of hiring contractors to perform the work at additional expense. Developing and utilizing modern internet connectivity for remote monitoring of City infrastructure may improve communication between departments and support planned maintenance.





Law Director

Strategic Goal: Increase efficient collaboration with law enforcement partners and provide better services to those who interact with the Law Director's office.



In conjunction with the Municipal Court's transition to a new case management system, the Law Director's Office will pursue the adoption of the software's Prosecutor Module. This will continue the office's evolution into a modern law office, allowing the City to collaborate more efficiently with our law enforcement partners and provide better services to those who interact with the office.



“Let us unify to build bridges and become safe, productive barrier-breakers for improved quality throughout our great city.”

John Alberts
Public Works

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON LEADERSHIP

as of October 31, 2023

DEPARTMENTS

MAYOR

Dr. Matthew Starr

AUDITOR

Terry Scott

CIVIL SERVICE

Tony Deluliis, Test Administrator

ENGINEERING

Brian W. Ball, City Engineer

FIRE / EMS

Chad Christopher, Fire Chief

HUMAN RESOURCES

Denise Neff, Human Resources Director

INCOME TAX

David Stuller, City Treasurer

LAW

P. Robert Broeren, Jr., Law Director

MUNICIPAL COURT

John Thatcher, Judge

POLICE

Robert K. Morgan, Police Chief

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE & ENFORCEMENT

Greg Bemiller, Code Enforcement Officer

PUBLIC UTILITIES

(Water, Wastewater, Distribution, Collection Billing)

Aaron Reinhart, Director of Public Utilities

PUBLIC WORKS

(Cemetery, Buildings/Lands, Parks, Streets)

Tom Hinkle, Director of Public Works

SAFETY SERVICE

Tanner Salyers, Safety Service Director

CITY COUNCIL

PRESIDENT

Bruce E. Hawkins

FIRST WARD

James Mahan

SECOND WARD

John Ruckman

THIRD WARD

Tammy Woods

FOURTH WARD

Mike Hillier

AT-LARGE

Amber Keener

AT-LARGE

Mel Severns

AT-LARGE

Janis Seavolt

"Together, we are the architects of unity and the builders of bridges, forging a future where quality, productivity, and safety are our guiding pillars, connecting stakeholders to a brighter tomorrow."

Lt. Andrew Burns
Police Department



Mount Vernon

An Innovative Community; Authentically Hometown

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