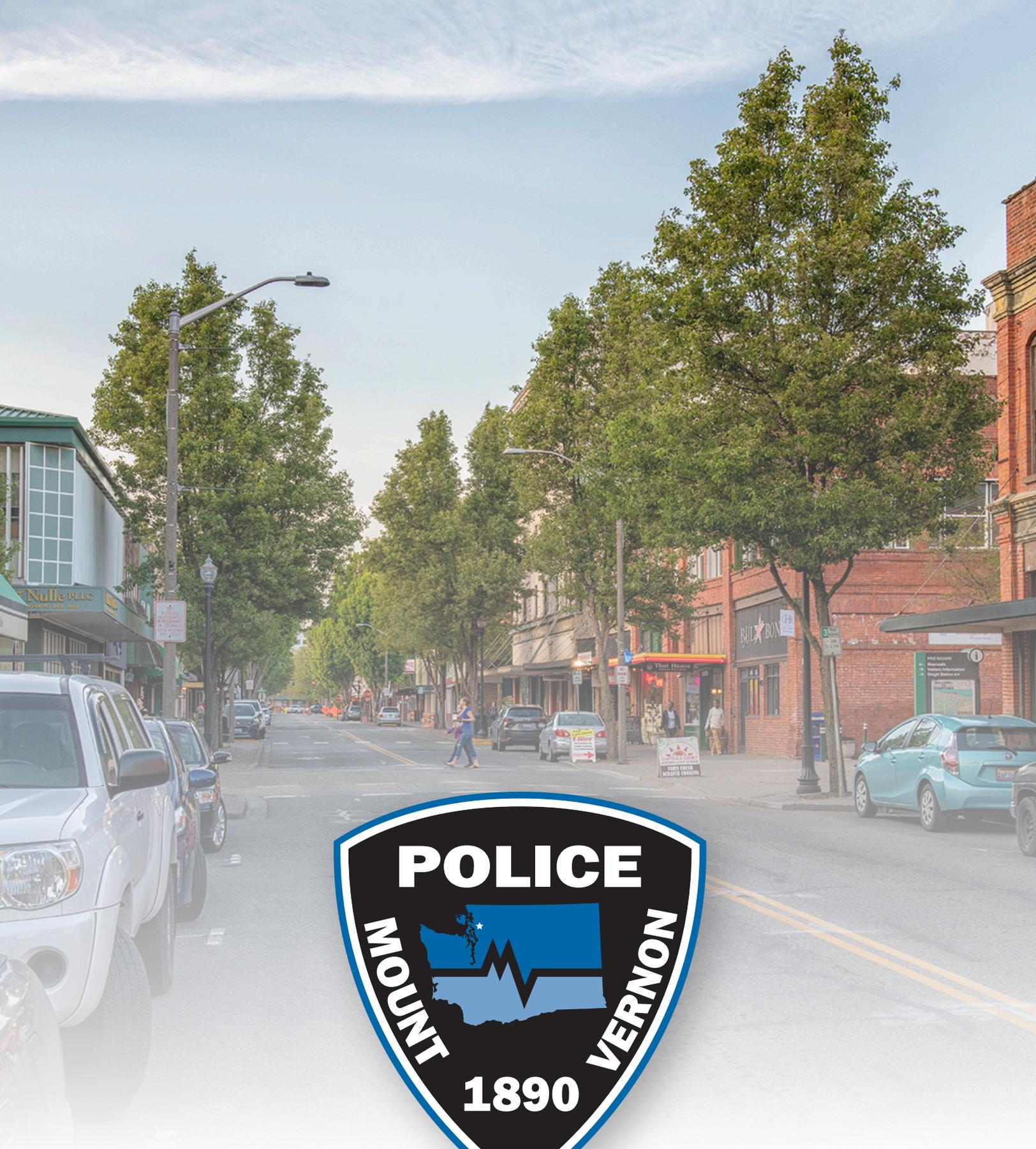




Strategic *Plan* 2022-2026

Working with our community to attain the highest quality of life and security for all who live, work, learn, and visit the City of Mount Vernon.





Strategic Plan 2022-2026

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Mount Vernon Police Department

Code of Ethics

As a Mount Vernon Police Officer, my fundamental duty is to serve mankind; to safeguard lives and property; to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation, and the peaceful against violence or disorder; and to respect the Constitutional Rights of all men to liberty, equality and justice.

I will keep my private life unsullied as an example to all; maintain courageous calm in the face of danger, scorn, or ridicule; develop self restraint and be constantly mindful of the welfare of others. Honest in thought and deed in both my personal and official life; I will be exemplary in obeying the laws of the land and the regulations of the office. Whatever I see or hear of a confidential nature or that is confided in me in my official capacity will be kept ever secret unless revelation is necessary in

the performance of my duty. I will never act officiously or permit personal feelings, prejudices, animosities or friendships to influence my decisions.

With no compromise for crime and with relentless prosecution of criminals, I will enforce the law courteously and appropriately without fear or favor, malice or violence and never accepting gratuities.

I recognize the badge of my office as a symbol of public faith, and I accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to the ethics of the police service. I will constantly strive to achieve these objectives and ideals, dedicating myself before God to my chosen profession law enforcement.

VISION

Safe and Enjoyable Community Living

MISSION

To consistently seek and find ways to affirmatively promote, preserve, and deliver a feeling of security, safety, and productive, quality services to citizens and visitors of our community.

The Department's Vision, Mission and Values, in concert with the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics, reflect the guiding philosophy of the Mount Vernon Police Department.

To the Mayor, City Council, Staff, and Citizens of Mount Vernon



On behalf of the Mount Vernon Police Department staff, it's my pleasure to present our 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

The Mount Vernon Police Department exists to serve the citizens, businesses, and visitors in the City of Mount Vernon. We are committed to maintaining the standards of a professional law enforcement agency while meeting the needs and expectations of our community.

The Strategic Plan is a working document developed through a comprehensive planning process. It serves as a map to predict obstacles, describes how police services are positioned, sets organizational direction, effectiveness for our resource allocations and forecasts impacts that may get in the way of achieving our preferred future.

We believe in community oriented policing principles as a foundation for the services we deliver. It's rooted at the neighborhood level with partnerships between police, residents and businesses problem solving quality of life issues that lead to crime and neighborhood decay.

This plan communicates our goals and strategies and recognizes our strengths, limitations and capacity for achieving these goals and strategies. It is an evolving document that is reviewed annually and updated as information and direction changes. Your review and feedback is welcomed and assists us in working collaboratively to serve Mount Vernon.

We enjoy tremendous support from the Mayor and the City Council who represent the community and we could not advance our policing capabilities without that support and confidence.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "C. Cammock".

Christopher E. Cammock
Chief of Police



Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century

2020 and 2021 were unprecedented years with the worldwide Coronavirus pandemic and nationwide calls for police reform.

Change and evolution are certainties in policing. Citizens expect that police are fair, objective and unbiased in their decision making. In order to continue to provide the best services possible, it is imperative we keep pace with transformations that occur both in policing and in our community.

Key to a strong and vibrant department is **quality staff** who demonstrate the ethics and integrity that do the right thing for the right reason. They must be well trained and equipped with the tools and skills necessary to deal with the issues and concerns of our complex society. We work hard to attract “quality” candidates who are educated, mature, and maintain a high standard of integrity.

Recruiting and hiring is a continual challenge. The competition is high for a limited candidate pool. This is a local, regional, and national trend. We’ve worked hard to improve hiring process efficiencies without compromising standards because doing so is risky and could eventually erode the community’s trust.

Keeping up with the constantly **changing technological and forensic advances** is a major challenge. We are a mobile society virtually connected through many different devices. Criminals use these as tools to commit crimes and evade police detection. Facial recognition technology, DNA identification, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, artificial intelligence (A.I.), digital payments replacing cash, wearable smart technology, digital cloud storage and sharing, autonomous and electric vehicle migration are examples of the rapidly evolving capabilities for legitimate and illegal use.

The use of **public and private security cameras** to detect crimes in real-time or afterwards has gained national popularity. We have achieved successes through the City public camera program in identifying and arresting criminals. The Police and Court Campus security camera system is tied into a broader City system that covers roads, parks, trails and public buildings.



The Department transitioned to Sector **e-ticketing** for the issuance of infractions and citations. In 2021, the Department completed transition of **body worn camera** and cloud-based evidence storage which was a major accomplishment. Over 80,000 pieces of new evidence were stored in the first year.





In the last two years, the Records and Property Division converted from a manual entry system for evidence tracking to **bar coding**. This reduces multiple points of data entry and allows for batch changes using a single

point and click scanner. A web-based platform, GovQA, provides **paperless access to requested police records**. **Live-scan replaced manual fingerprinting** for concealed weapon permits, employment backgrounds and confirming criminal suspect identities rapidly.



The Department embraces a **Zone Deployment** strategy that has been in place since 2011. There are twelve geographic zones throughout the City and two full service Neighborhood Stations at Kulshan and West Hill that were previously in place. Patrol Supervisors, Officers and Community Service Officers are assigned to the 14 defined neighborhood zones. Complementing this strategy is a monthly program called “**Operations Talk**”. Staff from each Division as well as different City Departments (Code Enforcement, Legal, Parks and Enrichment, Sanitation) meet to identify and resolve areas experiencing disorder, decay and/or criminal activity. In addition, a MVPV citizen volunteer provides regular crime analysis and mapping. Significant successes have occurred through information exchanged during “Operations Talk.”

It is not uncommon for **community members to express their viewpoint** on a wide range of issues and topics. We see this through direct public contacts, the media, and demonstrators who protest specific issues. This has meant increased responsibility and challenges that follow for how the Department and community will respond. Remaining committed to an open and honest exchange has been found to be the most effective.

The Department’s **community engagement** commitment is reflected in programs like Citizens Academy, Block Watch, Preparatory Academy, and volunteer opportunities.

Citizen expectations for a safe environment that contributes to strong community vitality are high. This requires a critical eye on budgeting, staffing, and re-thinking how best to respond to calls for service.

We must place a **strong emphasis on strategic and operational planning** as we look to the future. To act in the contrary would be like looking through a fog unsure of our destiny or of the results we may achieve. As you work your way through this document, it will become very clear our purpose and the direction we are taking to continue to make our community a great place to live, work, learn, and play.



Who We Serve

The continuous focus on the residents and visitors of Mount Vernon



Mount Vernon is made up of 35,500 residents (2022). It covers 12.3 square miles, and is the center of County government. The **population** has increased up 11.4% in the last ten years showing consistent annual growth. Conservatively, this could result in a population exceeding 40,000 by year 2031.

The **demographic face** of Mount Vernon has been changing as the population continues to increase. The area is viewed as an attractive place to live due to its hometown feel, abundant recreational opportunities, fiber network connecting business worldwide, proximity to the Bellingham/Seattle/Everett job market, school systems and quality of life. In 2021, Mount Vernon represented 27% of the County's total population. This percentage has been constant for many years; however, is expected to take a larger share over the coming years due to fiber connectivity options, expanding schools and healthcare facilities, affordable homes and growth management laws that encourage incorporated area growth.

Mount Vernon enjoys and celebrates its **cultural diversity**. Over 33% percent (2021 est.) of the community's population and over 56% of enrolled students in the Mount Vernon School District are Latinx (2022 MVSD). In Skagit County, about 18% of the population is Latinx. We are committed to providing bilingual/cultural officers and staff to understand and communicate issues affecting minority communities.

It will also be important to maintain police programs and functions in our **schools and neighborhoods** that build productive relationships, understand problems facing minority communities and develop specific police-community partnerships to address not only crime but fear perceptions about police.

Skagit Valley Community College hosts several thousand students from throughout the region and the world, providing an array of academic and vocational learning opportunities. By expanding into bachelor degree programs, this could increase attendance due to the cost and convenience community colleges offer.

Homelessness continues to be a persistent social crisis. In Mount Vernon, 25-27% of police calls contain a behavioral health component. Access to mental health and substance abuse services is difficult enough and for those with limited familiarity or experiencing mental difficulties, it can be nearly impossible. Homelessness in the county is caused by diverse factors; unaffordable housing, unsustainable employment, lawful evictions, post-traumatic stress disorders, divorce, substance abuse and mental illness. Other factors include, lack of income, physical disability, poverty, lack of supportive services, unemployment, no family support, and low paying jobs. In the US, homelessness affects a wide range of population segments including victims of domestic violence, families, ex-convicts, the a ged, children, and veterans among others.



In 2017, the Police Department employed a **Social Worker** to bridge the gap between law enforcement, and/or emergency medical response and the social needs of those within our community. Within the first year, the Embedded Social Worker contacted 227 individuals, placing 11 into substance use treatment, three into their own living facility, seven returned home (out of county or state), two for mental health services, 21 obtained ID cards/driver's licenses, five enrolled in Medically-Assisted Treatment Services, two enrolled in Northwest Regional Care Services, and 24 housing assessments were completed.

In 2020/21, widespread calls for **police reform** occurred. The Washington State Legislature enacted new laws to significantly curtail police detention and force use powers. This impacted our ability to fully service behavioral health calls that often had propensity for violence or a need to use restraint to protect the individual from themselves. It was the legislators' intent to have the public health system serve these needs, however, we found that the public health system wasn't equipped as many of the highest users were either not eligible, had removed themselves from programs or were removed by the provider for behavior violations. **911 (Police/Fire/EMS) became the number of last resort** in these circumstances.

In 2021, we made a concerted effort to re-examine our embedded social work services. **Integrated Outreach Services** evolved from this comprehensive review and provides licensed social workers as first responders and case managers for behavioral health related police calls.

Mount Vernon is not immune to **gang subculture** and the antisocial behaviors and crimes perpetrated. Proximity to I-5, mid-point between major cities, quality schools and a reputation for a desirable place to live are all influencers. The Department dedicates significant resources to address this. We believe dedicating staff to educate/address gang subculture is the best approach to reducing youth violence. **Officers in the schools** provide a safety component, preventative, and mentorship role with the goal of helping youth make positive life choices. **Partnerships** have been established with schools, Youth and Family Services, law enforcement agencies, and other community stakeholders who deal with youth violence. We are striving to provide education and prevention and obtain dispositions to incidents through enforcement.



A Division of the Mount Vernon Police Department



Who We Are

It is the Mission of the Mount Vernon Police Department

“To consistently seek and find ways to affirmatively promote, preserve and deliver a feeling of security, safety, and productive quality service to citizens and visitors of the community”.

The Mount Vernon Police Department is a well-trained full-service municipal police agency providing essential policing services within its city limits and serves as the seat for Skagit County.

To fulfill its mission, the Department has a **FY2022 total budget of \$11,632,687**. Funding highlights appropriated as follows:

Salaries and Benefits:	\$6,245,968
Overtime:	\$395,000
Supplies:	\$188,964
Operational Services:	\$1,903,075
Police Vehicles:	\$144,875
Police Equipment:	\$27,922
TOTAL:	\$11,632,687

The 2022 General Budget for the City of Mount Vernon is \$33,429,411. The Police Department represents 35% of the operating funds. The City is a mission driven organization requires a dedicated work force to provide expected services (75% of the entire operating costs are labor).

The Department’s 2022 **authorized strength** consists of 46 Commissioned Officers, 9 non-commissioned or partially commissioned, and ten non-sworn support personnel, for a total of **65 employees**. In addition, approximately 50 volunteers provide a variety of services in support of Department programs. Staffing is arranged as follows:

- 1 - Chief of Police**
- 3 - Division Lieutenants**
- 7 - Squad Sergeants**
- 35 - Police Officers**
- 2 - Community Service Officers**
- 1 - Park Ranger**
- 1 - Integrated Outreach Services Supervisor**
- 4 - Integrated Outreach Services Specialists/ Case Managers**
- 1 - Records Manager**
- 6 - Records Specialists**
- 1 - Administrative Assistant**
- 1 - Secretary**
- 1 - Receptionist**
- 1 - Animal Control Officer**
- 65 - Total Personnel**

Functional Divisions

The Police Department is arranged in two (2) Bureaus and six (6) subordinate Divisions.

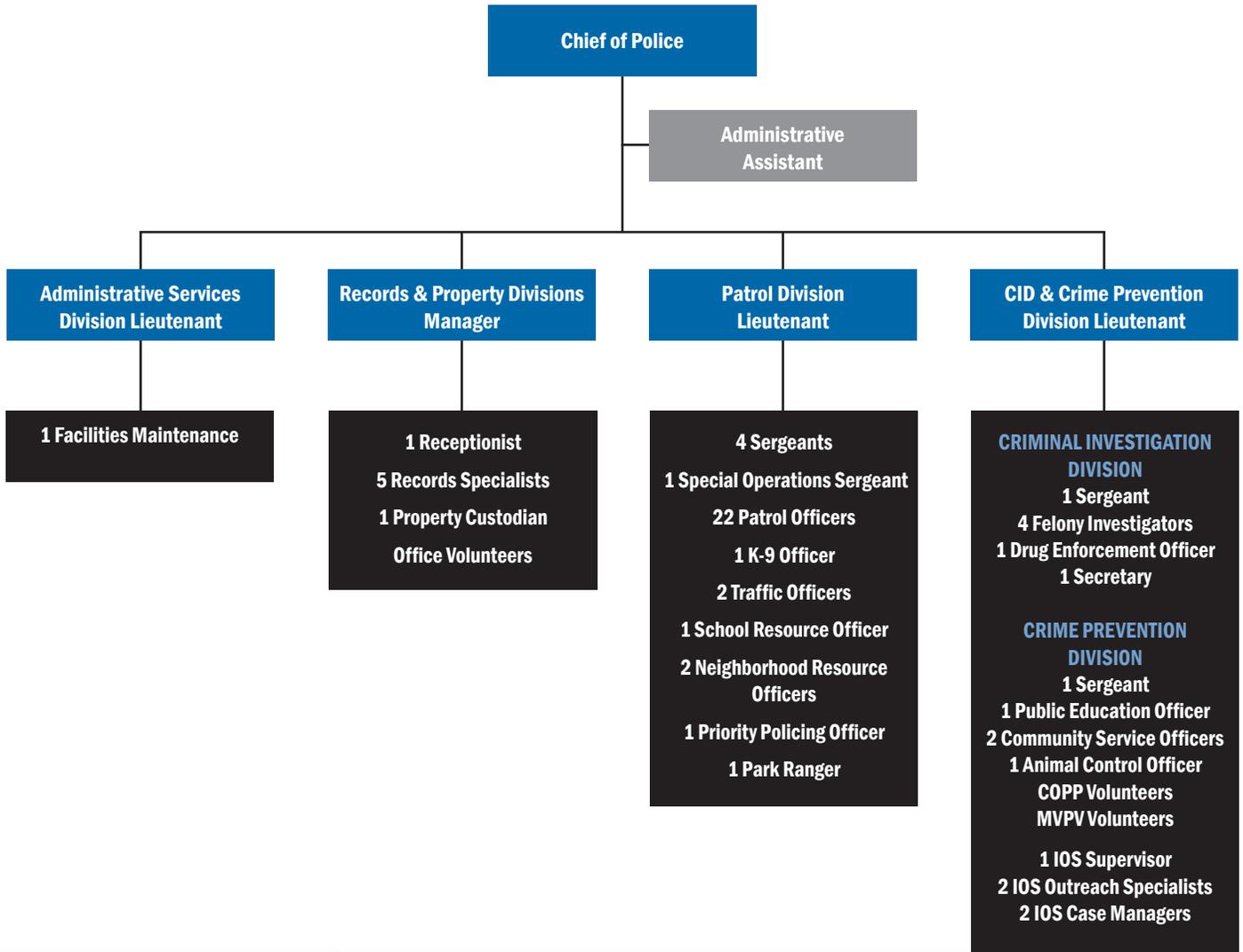
The **Operations Bureau** is comprised of the following Divisions:

- Patrol
- Criminal Investigations
- Crime Prevention

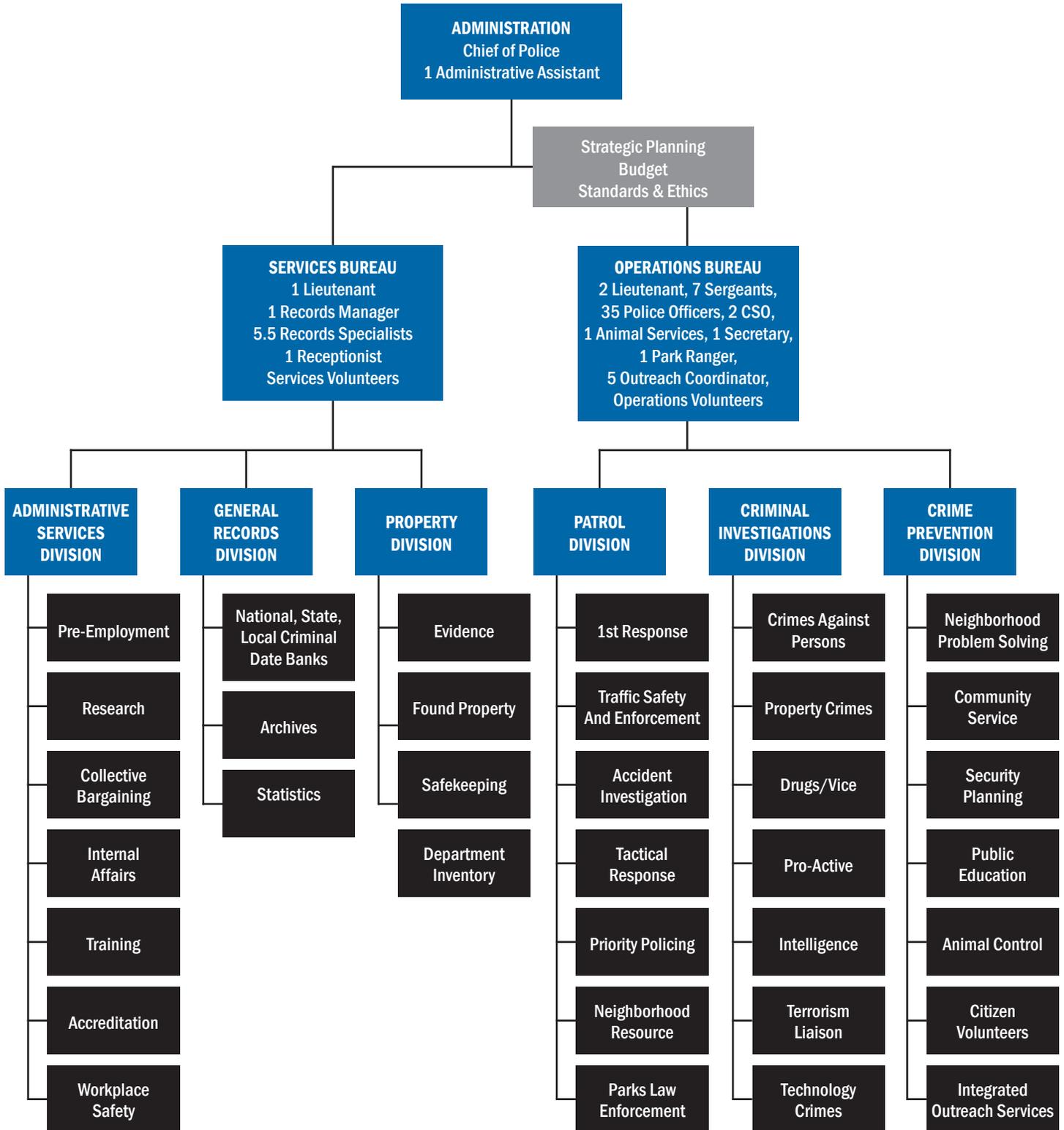
The **Services Bureau** is comprised of the following Divisions:

- Records
- Property and Evidence
- Administrative Services

Staffing Organization



Functional Organization





Core Values

What we believe

The men and women of the Mount Vernon Police Department are dedicated to fulfilling the Department Mission and Vision, and commit their energy and ability to continue the history of providing quality service to all citizens of the community. In doing so, the Department strives to uphold a set of core values that represent the basic fabric of the organizational culture.

- 1. The highest value is placed on the preservation of human life.**
- 2. The principles of a democratic society must be preserved and advanced.**
- 3. The first operational priority is to prevent crime.**
- 4. The community must be involved in policing itself.**
- 5. The Department is accountable to the community it serves.**
- 6. The Department is committed to professionalism in all aspects of operations.**
- 7. The Department is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity.**
- 8. The Department must be attuned with a community in continual cultural change.**



Priorities

Fulfilling our policing mission

Established operational priorities place the highest importance on delivering quality professional services to the community through open communication and adaptability in addressing problems. While emphasis is placed on building stronger neighborhoods, we continue to employ policing practices where necessary with the ultimate goal of modifying behavior. Protection of our citizens, their property, and visitors to this community are the driving force behind what we do and how it is accomplished.

We are committed to fulfilling our policing mission through the following:

- 1. Employing highly competent and qualified staff**
- 2. Providing a quick and rapid response to emergencies**
- 3. Developing effective policing practices to combat criminal activity**
- 4. Developing strategies to address homelessness**
- 5. High visibility of Department personnel and volunteers**
- 6. Building community partnerships and problem solving together**
- 7. Developing a sense of trust and understanding with the community**
- 8. Utilizing prevention practices as a central operating strategy**
- 9. Demonstrating the highest standards of professional conduct and ethics**
- 10. Leverage our human resources with technology and innovation**



Strategic Planning

Overview of planning purpose and process



From a service standpoint, this **Strategic Plan** serves as the Police Department's guide for preparation and response to community issues of crime and public safety. It also provides the central feature of the Department's performance management system and annual budget planning.

This planning process involves staff from all assignments and levels of responsibility. The outcome is a document that serves to guide service levels, program development, resource allocation, and budget preparation.

A continuous information flow from community members (formal and informal; written and oral) is essential. Sources of information related to issues of crime and public safety include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Block Watch Meetings**
- **Citizen complaints/concerns**

- **Crime statistics**
- **City Council Meetings**
- **Business contacts**
- **Social media**
- **Citizen surveys**
- **Officer observations**
- **Newspapers**
- **Criminal investigations**
- **Citizen Boards**
- **Planning Commission Meeting**
- **Community networks** (examples: Apartment Managers and Downtown Merchant Association network)
- **Public Safety Committee Meetings**
- **Operations Talk** (Department program designed to identify and solve community wide issues or problems)
- **Health statistics**
- **Community Advisory Boards**
- **Citizens' Academy**
- **Law and Justice Council**
- **Traffic Safety Committee Meetings**
- **City Ward Meetings**
- **Crime victims**
- **Commissioned studies** (housing, health, crime, population, education, etc.)



Planning Principles

The standards applied

In planning for future policing focus in our community, the Police Department adheres to three distinguishing principles: communication, collaboration, and comprehensiveness.

- **Communication** is two-way and all-level. Ideas and insight are sought after and encouraged at all Department levels. The same is true at the community level.
- **Collaboration** is imperative if measurable success is to be attained.

- **Comprehensiveness** becomes a safeguard against omission of important planning elements or policing needs.

The Department employs two needs-assessment models. It combines the attributes of a needs-based model with those of a capacity-focused model. This approach emphasizes the balanced investigation of neighborhood and other community needs with the discovery of community resources available to assist citizens in investing in themselves and quality-of-life improvement efforts.



Planning Methodology

The system of planning practices

To ensure accurate planning, ongoing input from the general public is required. Five methods are routinely used by the Department to gather information: (1) Review of publications (including scientific and professional journals); (2) Surveys and audits (internal and external); (3) Site visits of community institutions and service providers; (4) Public meetings such as Block Watch, Community Advisory Boards, School Board, Law and Justice Council, Public Safety Committee, and City Council; (5) Statistical review.

METHOD I: A review of various publications is an ongoing practice. Scientific journals and other similar documents are reviewed for changes in forensic practices that may impact the Department's procedures or budget. Newspaper articles and editorials, social media commentary and other public input sources are reviewed for current opinion and public attitude toward pertinent issues. Public agency reports are reviewed for demographic updates and other information relevant to police planning.

METHOD II: Neighborhoods may be surveyed to learn what residents sense as the most important issues relating to crime, fear, and public safety. In the course of work, police personnel are regularly questioned to gain a practitioner's viewpoint on the condition of the community and potential solutions to crime problems. The Department website incorporates a community survey tool that can be easily accessed and sent to the Department electronically.

METHOD III: Contact is made with institutions, such as schools and churches, as well as social service agencies and other police agencies to discuss common planning issues. In addition, many community needs are determined through communication with service clubs and volunteer organizations.

METHOD IV: Direct contact with citizens at public gatherings such as Block Watch Meetings, City Council Meetings, Planning Commission Meetings, Public Safety Committee Meetings, City Council Ward Meetings, Community Advisory Boards, Law and Justice Council, school meetings, community networks, Citizens Academy and action groups are usually excellent opportunities to gain information on what the community feels to be current public safety issues.

METHOD V: Local, regional, and national crime statistics and trends are customary sources for data acquisition with short and long range police planning.

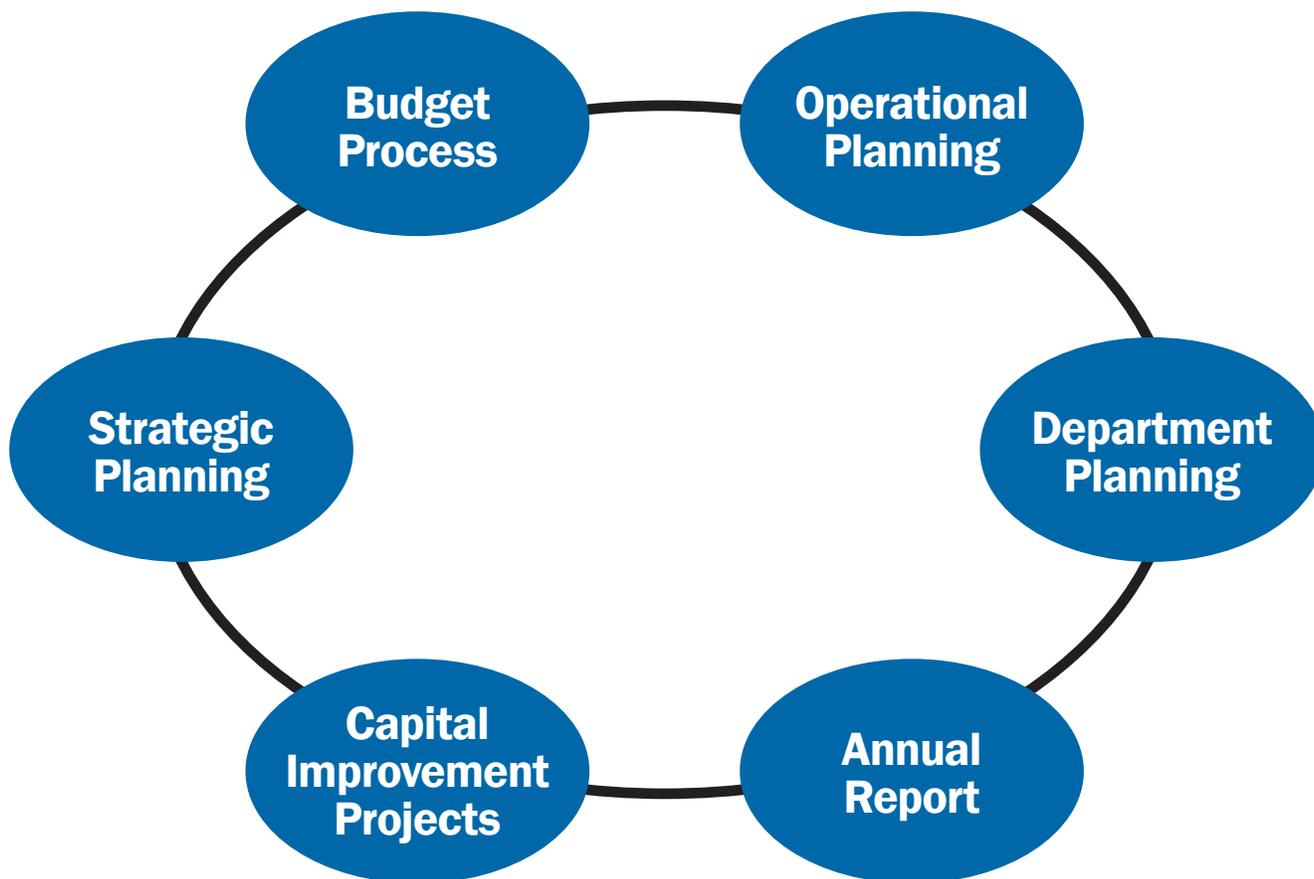


Planning Process

Developing Goals and Objectives
A performance measurement tool

For the Police Department to be effective and efficient, it must plan continually. The Department prescribes to a formal process or model. Prior to the preparation of each year's budget, the Police Department holds a series of internal division-level workshops to develop and/or revise

goals and objectives. Personnel are asked to plan for their specific divisional needs for the coming year. These needs must align with the Department Mission, Vision, and Broad Goals for providing responsive service, reducing crime, and improving public safety.



Long-range Focus

Generally, what we aim for

The **Strategic Plan** contains a section comprised of a less-focused set of vision statements. These statements are developed through a careful ongoing study of

community values, demographic changes, and policing trends. These visions usually do not change dramatically over the short term.



Plan Evaluation

Adjusting the policing mechanism

Evaluation of the **Strategic Plan** is an ongoing process. Adjustments are accomplished through internal administrative mechanisms and, where appropriate, community and City Council Members and other City staff may become involved. During even-numbered

years, the Plan is rewritten to reflect major changes to Department direction and focus. In odd-numbered years, minor adjustments are made to the Plan to reflect Divisional progress toward goals and to ensure the most efficient use of resources.



Policing Philosophy

The motivating principles

Philosophically, the Department espouses a series of linked operating principles that require neighborhood-based partnerships to solve problems relative to crime, fear and neighborhood decay. Fundamentally, there are four primary strategies that form the substance of our service and mission.

1. There must be open and trusting two-way communication **"EXCHANGE"** between police and citizens. Citizens are heard and involved in the delivery of policing service.
2. **"PREVENTION"** is the central strategy in all operations. It is, by far, more to the community's advantage to prevent crime than it is to react to it once it has occurred.

3. Reduction of crime and fear, solutions to neighborhood problems, and general issues of public safety are **"SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES"**. Safer streets will be realized only if police and citizens collaborate to make it so.
4. If we are to be successful in our mission, we must be **"ADAPTABLE"**. No two neighborhoods are exactly alike, nor are the factors that make up their problems. It is our preference to apply flexible, tailored policing plans to each problem as identified and mutually validated.

Organizationally, this philosophy is expected to be visible in the work product of all Department members and is a priority consideration in hiring and transfer decisions.



Operational Priority

It is of greater benefit to prevent crime than to respond to it



The Department's first operational priority is to prevent crime. Emphasis on prevention and a broader interactive and community-based strategy that incorporates systematic problem solving has replaced a traditional operational strategy of "patrol and deter". Neighborhood improvement projects are regular occurrences and are aimed at making neighborhoods less vulnerable to crime and disorder. Preventative strategies are at the core of all police efforts to reduce crime and fear. Evaluation of recent prevention-based projects has pointed to improvements in the life quality of affected residents.

An example of this approach to policing is the "Neighborhood Resource Officer" (NRO) function. NRO's concentrate pertinent police resources on neighborhoods with extraordinary challenges. The goal is to reduce crime, fear of crime, and neighborhood decay to a level generally equal to the greater community. The effort is coordinated through one specially trained officer. He or she must organize and mobilize that neighborhood to not only help in the reduction of crime, but also to develop strategies to protect the area from the inevitable return of crime due to the periodic introduction of new and additional antisocial influences. This is accomplished through the residents' collective experiences and knowledge combined with the prevention-specific

training and guidance provided by police. This approach may take one year, or it may take several years of hard work, depending on the complexity of the specific problem.

"Zone Deployment" is another example. This involves dividing the City into twelve zones in addition to the two already established full service neighborhoods, Kulshan Creek and West Hill. The Patrol Officers responsible for these geographic boundaries work with the community to identify and solve neighborhood issues and/or problems. "Operations Talk" meets monthly with all operational police/city staff to review each zone to identify hot spots requiring extra resources to resolve. Our neighborhoods and business districts have benefited greatly from this forum.

Mount Vernon contains 866 acres of park land and over 26 miles of public trails. The addition of a Park Ranger provides specialized public safety and interpretive educational services for these areas. Community Service Officers take certain workloads off of commissioned police officers and provide tools and training for residents to build crime resistant strategies in their neighborhoods. Social Workers bring advanced behavioral health certifications for individuals with challenges who are high utilizers of 911.



A central focus on **prevention** must not be interpreted as a reduced eye for **enforcement**. No successful policing plan is all one or the other. As long as there are relative deprivation, unsupervised children, unemployment, mental illness and an array of personality disorders, there will be crime. Prevention efforts alone have their limits. They may not be able to fully address the actions of impulsive, violent, or predatory offenders. Enforcement efforts alone do nothing to get at what is allowing the criminal activity to occur in the first place. As an example, the single enforcement strategy of placing police officers outside of bars and lounges to arrest drunk drivers will undoubtedly result in DUI arrests every night but will do little to stop the problem of drinking and driving.

A more effective approach is working with bar owners to prevent over service; working through the media to inform the public; educating children in the schools; and maintaining a consistent enforcement stance against drinking and driving all help to have a combined lasting impact on the problem. Ultimately, it is all about creating a balance of strategies that will most likely prevent the problem from reoccurring.





Future Growth

Policing is all about people and requires people to do the work.

Policing involves people; people do the policing, and people are policed. Most citizens will have some interaction with police at one time or another - whether it is a neighbor's emergency, a collision, a nuisance, a crime, suspicious circumstances, or fear. As the population grows, so does the number of people in need of police services. Technology can mitigate that need to a point. In the end, it takes people.

For example, in 2021 one sworn police officer position was reclassified to a Sergeant. This filled a Special Operations Sergeant position that had been vacant for eight years. This position provides direction and oversight for six different specialized functions. The goal to replace this position once the vacant police officer positions are filled remains.

Accurately predicting the staffing needs of a police department is difficult at best. There is no universally applicable staffing standard for police departments because of the many community variables in play. Calls for service, policing philosophy, priorities and practices, population size, composition and density, cultural fabric, reporting practices, transiency of the population, prosecutorial and judicial policies, crime trends, and political climate all have an effect on staffing a police department.

Experiences from the past 5-10 years have shown that change is constant and the need to continually reevaluate both staffing levels and composition is important for effective public safety. For example, homelessness in Downtown and West Mount Vernon was contributing to loitering, aggressive panhandling, shoplifting, and public health conditions that weren't present before. The City's Problem Elimination Team process identified a number of solutions and the addition of a Park Ranger and Social Worker within the Police Department emerged. These functions contribute to the response to police calls.

In calculating the number of police officers and support staff that may be needed, the Police Department examines two different sets of data.

The first set, although not particularly meaningful, looks at state averages for communities the size of Mount Vernon, based only on population. This method of calculation is relatively popular with municipal officials because it is the easiest to understand and to politically defend. It, of course, assumes that the comparable cities have all used valid methods themselves and that the community characteristics have been considered and are similar. This is rarely the case.

In 2002, the last time the Department was near the (2014/1.47) state average for officers per 1000 population, it was staffed at a rate of 1.61 officers per 1000 population, and 2.0 total staff per 1000 population. This "blind" calculation might suggest the Police Department was adequately staffed in 2002. The danger in this method of calculation is that it does not take into consideration the characteristics of this community or the behaviors of the population when compared to another City of equal population.

The average is only an arithmetically derived figure somewhere near the mid-point of a series of higher and lower numbers. In 2021, the state average for Cities between 25,000-50,000 was 1.53 officers per 1000 population (WASPC). Currently the 2022 Department average is 1.30 officers per 1000 population. Over the past four years commissioned staffing levels have remained the same.

In Mount Vernon, this number of officers is unable to handle all calls for service without regularly seeking assistance from surrounding jurisdictions. Most often, calls are "stacked" until officers are available. Some of these calls for service are held for non-sworn staff. If this method is applied using 1.43 (averaging 2016 factor

COMMISSIONED	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Officers	45	45	45/46	46	46	46	46
Population	33,730	34,360	35,180	35,740	35,219*	35,390	35,500
Officers Per Capita (1,000) <i>*2020 Census Year</i>	1.33	1.30	1.30	1.28	1.30	1.30	1.29

SERVICE CALLS	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Population	33,730	34,360	35,180	35,740	35,219	35,390	35,500
Calls	23,003	23,921	24,258	22,772	21,744	23,046	24,510
Officers	1.95	1.88	1.89	2.02	2.11	1.99	1.87

(1.33) and the state average (1.53)), and a conservative population growth to a future population of over 40,000 residents in year 2031, there will be a need for 57 police officers to provide today’s level of service. An important point to note is this estimation is based on the premise that the current staffing level is appropriate to meet the service demands this City requires.

The Department will require (at a minimum) an average of 1.10 additional officers every year, in addition to necessary support staff; an aggressive venture. The extrapolation detailed above with a modest population increase will result in the number of officers needed to remain understaffed based on the current number of police officers and service/call load demands.

The second, and arguably more supportable method of calculating true staffing needs, involves evaluating calls for police service. In 2016, MVPD employed 1.95 officers per 1000 calls for service and 2.56 total staff. Calculations by this method suggest a need for **62 police officers** in

addition to necessary support staff for a population of over 40,000 and over 31,000 calls for service in the year 2031. However; this assumes no more than a 3.0% annual growth in calls for service. If there was a 3.5% annual increase in calls for service to year 2031, there could be a staffing need for up to **65 police officers**. Fortunately, 3.5% growth each year for ten years is cautiously optimistic given the previous ten years growth. As stated above with the current staffing level and calls for service as the starting base for quantification, it assumes the Department is adequately staffed. The actual need will be higher than projected as outlined above.

The **point of this discussion** is to emphasize the Department cannot predict, with certainty, the exact staffing picture for a point in time ten or more years away.

However, by annually evaluating and updating the data, the Mayor and City Council can gain some sense for ongoing staffing needs. By being informed, fiscal challenges can be planned for well in advance.

Projected Service Call Growth Rate/Police Officer Needed (Using 1.95 rate from 2016)

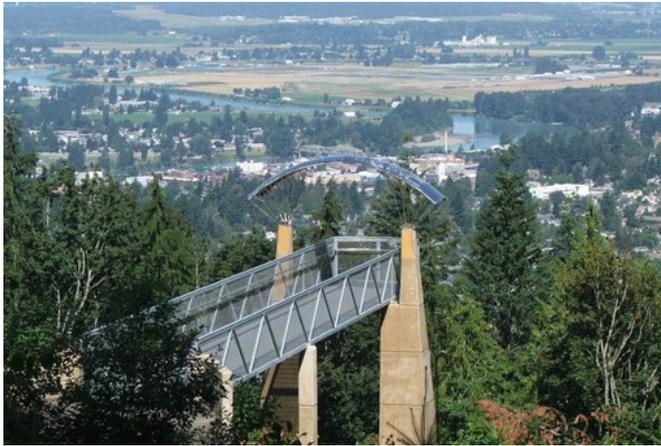
YEAR	3%	Factor	#Officers
2022	24,500	24.50	48
2023	25,235	25.24	49
2024	25,992	25.99	51
2025	26,772	26.77	52
2026	27,575	27.58	54
2027	28,402	28.40	55
2028	29,254	29.25	57
2029	30,132	30.13	59
2030	31,036	31.04	61
2031	31,967	31.97	62

YEAR	3.50%	Factor	#Officers
2022	24,500	24.50	48
2023	25,358	25.36	49
2024	26,245	26.25	51
2025	27,164	27.16	53
2026	28,114	28.11	55
2027	29,098	29.10	57
2028	30,117	30.12	59
2029	31,171	31.17	61
2030	32,262	32.26	63
2031	33,391	33.39	65



Strategic Outlook

Developing a future perspective



The Police Department operates in a dynamic environment that includes political, social, technological and environmental factors relative to crime and disorder. These factors have a direct impact on programs and operations. The key elements of the Department's Strategic Plan are the goals, objectives, and operational strategies that are outlined in this document.

This section of the Plan is intended to present the strategic outlook for the Department in the areas of crime prevention, response, and control. It attempts to make sense of the goals and objectives when placed in a strategic context.

Details of Department delivery and outcome measures are not included in this document. They are developed and maintained at the Division level.

As a basis for developing this Strategic Plan, the Department has identified the following key assumptions that, if significantly changed, would affect the ability to implement or maintain effective service programs.

- 1. The community will continue to grow at a rate that will result in an approximate population of 40,000 residents by year 2031 and the Department will realize staffing levels in accordance with the established staffing plan.**
- 2. The Mayor, Public Safety Committee, and City Council will maintain public safety as a high community priority and will adjust budgets, as appropriate, to keep up with community growth, social and crime trends, and local, state, and federal crime initiatives.**

- 3. The Department will propose crime impact measures that are likely to have the greatest effect on crime and work with the Mayor, Public Safety Committee, and City Council to accomplish their implementation.**
- 4. The Department will philosophically maintain a balanced approach to policing that includes exchange, prevention, adaptability, and shared responsibility as core strategic principles and rapid response, aggressive enforcement, and relentless investigation as the mainstay tactics used against crime and disorder.**

Based on these planning assumptions, the Strategic Plan for years 2022-2026 has been developed. It includes long-range and mid-range goals. The Department annual goals and objectives are posted on our website www.mountvernonwa.gov.

The specific objectives in this document are developed at the Division level with involvement from all personnel. It is the Department's experience that the more involved personnel are in the process of planning, the more successful it is at providing effective and responsive police services. Everyone is committed to reducing crime and protecting the quality of life enjoyed in the community. While many of the objectives may seem insignificant at first glance, they all contain a thread of connectivity to the larger goal of maintaining a safe community.





Departmental Broad Goals

The Broad Goals of the Mount Vernon Police Department have been in place for many years and remain sound. All organizational plans, including annual division-level goals and objectives, are required to be congruous and subordinate to the Department's Statement of Broad Goals.

Statement of Broad Goals

The Department will strive to provide policing service to the citizens of Mount Vernon congruent with its Vision and Mission. The below enumerated broad Department goals are the general guide to that end.

1. To decrease the amount of actual and perceived criminal activity.
2. To deliver the type of police service consistent with community needs and the ideals of modern policing practices.
3. To create and maintain community-wide awareness of crime problems and methods of increasing police ability to deal with actual or potential criminal activity.

4. To create and maintain community-wide awareness and commitment to community-based policing principles as an effective means to attaining the Department Mission and ultimately the Department Vision.
5. To recognize no two neighborhoods are exactly alike and to design our policing functions, approaches, and deployment to meet the needs of each neighborhood.





Long Range Focus

Where are we going



Although difficult to predict conditions and needs beyond the immediate future, the Department must plan several years ahead. This is especially true when trying to identify funding mechanisms for staffing and equipment needs in support of necessary programs. Through evaluation of the many official studies that are available to us and by staying current on the professional literature, we can formulate a generalized vision for the Police Department beyond the year 2026.

It is recognized preparations for the future must be fluid. The community does not exist in isolation. Regional and world events will be an influence and will cause a need to continually reshape the plan. With this in mind, there should be an expectation to regularly modify whatever plan is developed for the future of policing in Mount Vernon. As we look beyond 2022, we have identified seven focus areas.

Focus #1: A well defined public/police partnership to identify and provide effective and appropriate police services. By institutionalizing this practice, the word “community” is merely a descriptor for the Department’s policing philosophy. The goal is for “Community” to be a seamless component of our policing.

Focus #2: Fully integrated 21st Century technology to complement the traditional methods of policing. This will enhance the Department’s ability to efficiently plan for, prevent, and respond to crime, fear, and neighborhood challenges, including those introduced by the e-criminal.

Focus #3: A working relationship with non-traditional partners to address certain calls for service normally handled by publicly funded police agencies and which may be more appropriately handled by the private sector.

Focus #4: Integrate social work into our first response policing services as a dual approach to address behavioral health and the increasing homelessness population. This is a very complex issue and public health is unable to manage it within their means.

Focus #5: The merging or retooling of certain police functions within the County to improve consistency and effectiveness. Examples might include various administrative services, emergency management, centralized records, property and evidence, and specialized services such as K-9, major crime investigation, covert, crisis negotiations, Priority Policing, S.M.A.R.T, and tactical operations. It may be feasible to consolidate specialized police services in the county as criminal justice costs increase and a higher, more consistent standard of service is expected.

Focus #6: A semi-permanent police presence in all neighborhoods and business districts through “zone deployment.” This type of presence is currently well established in the Kulshan Creek and West Hill Neighborhoods and has proven highly effective in reducing crime and improving the delivery of services.

Focus #7: A county-wide collaboration to address violent crime issues affecting our communities. The upsurge in gang and drug activity may be best addressed by forming partnerships among criminal justice agencies, schools, churches, community groups, and other community members or partners.





Mid Range Goals and Objectives

2022-2026

Goal #1

Improve the cooperation and coordination of inter-agency policing efforts affecting the Mount Vernon Police Department and community.

Objective 1: Continue to encourage all Skagit County police agencies to establish a common philosophy of policing, with strategic policies of a similar tone for engaging and involving the community in the delivery of our services and reducing crime, the fear that it creates, and neighborhood decay.

Objective 2: Study the state of police services within Skagit County. Report on what services might yet be combined, added, or deleted in the interest of efficiency and consistent service to the public.

Objective 3: Continue a county-wide strategy towards addressing violent crime associated with investigating and monitoring gang and drug activity.

Objective 4: Collaborate with the Skagit County North Star plan that creates a county-wide strategy to address homelessness and the impacts on the communities.

Objective 5: Partner with the Skagit Valley College, Washington Criminal Justice Training Commission and area Chiefs and Sheriffs for a SVC based satellite Basic Law Enforcement Academy program.



Goal #2

Maintain department effectiveness as the community grows in area and population.

Objective 1: Update the Police Department Staffing Plan to reflect projected changes in population and call for service. Increase the number of Police Officers at pace with this plan.

Objective 2: Distribute staff to effectively manage the call load and meet the needs and expectations of specific neighborhoods in the community.

Objective 3: Continue to be adaptable and address neighborhood issues that develop.

Objective 4: Evaluate emerging NRO areas such as Historic Downtown and Behavioral Health Officers.

Objective 5: Increase the number of nonsworn staff (CSO, Outreach Coordinator, Parks Ranger, etc) to allow for a more efficient response to calls for service.

Objective 6: Continue to hire officers and support staff that more closely reflects the makeup of our community to improve communication between the Department and the community.

Objective 7: Continue to plan for increased growth and future planned annexation throughout the City.

Objective 8: Complete a review and evaluate the need for a full-time digital forensics investigator and creating a joint computer forensic unit with Skagit County Sheriff's Office's program or another established program.

Objective 9: Research the ability to create a victim services function that would provide timely case status and support to crime victims.

Goal #3

Provide equipment that will improve police capability and keep the department current with advancement in technology.

Objective 1: Continue to acquire updated less-lethal equipment as technology in this area improves.

Objective 2: Efficiently acquire new patrol vehicles and other police equipment as necessary. Washington Department of Ecology is proposing rules that new light-duty cars and trucks sold in Washington meet zero-emission standards by 2035. Planning for equipment transitions, infrastructure improvements, operator training and more will be required.

Objective 3: Improve officer safety with the acquisition of equipment to assist officers in the performance of their duties.

Objective 4: Replace the retired multi-purpose vehicle with the command vehicle designed and proposed in 2022 as a shared asset with the fire department. This vehicle is used for major crime or fire scenes, extended investigations, and other high-risk incidents requiring mobile facilities.

Objective 5: Continue to develop a community camera system that monitors streets, parking lots, intersections, trails, parks, and other public areas.



Goal #4

Improve the general police records function, to include issues of staffing, accessibility, storage, and retention.

Objective 1: Utilizing efficient, up to date storage methods, archive police records and destroy hard copies as allowed by law and/or accreditation standards.

Objective 2: Modify and implement the General Records Retention Schedule for the Department, to include related software program.

Objective 3: Continued to study the necessity to increase staffing in the Records and Property Divisions to keep pace with other divisional growth and demands from changing legislation and public policies.

Objective 4: Coordinate with City Attorney for implementing a more efficient city-wide Public Disclosure Policy approach. For example, a full-time Public Records Officer or comparable specialty within Records to handle police department requests and could assist the City Attorney's Office, Finance, Fire Department, etc., as caseload allows.

Objective 5: Coordinate the implementation of JULOTA with Skagit County Public Health & Sheriff's Office. This will act as a primary records management system for law

enforcement embedded social workers to coordinate with their outreach counterparts within and outside Skagit County.

Objective 6: Utilize efficient storage methods and systems that provide improved efficiency and effectiveness for connecting public services and access. (Evidence.com, ProQA, OpenGov, Spillman Barcoding, etc.).



Goal #5

Develop a relationship between the department and residents of Mount Vernon that fosters open communication and trust on issues relating to community safety and security.

Objective 1: Maintain the annual Citizens' Police Academy and Preparatory Academy as mechanisms to accomplish the Department's Broad Goals. Look to expand this program into a Spanish spoken academy program either in its current form or customized for the Latino community needs/interest.

Objective 2: Steadily add neighborhoods to the Block Watch program.

Objective 3: Utilize communications links such as social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), the Department Web Site, e-mail, TV10, radio, lobby display, newspaper, Code Red, and other newsletters/notifications to provide educational and emergency information.

Objective 4: Continue to attract potential police officer entry level candidates through a wide range of strategies and tactics.

Objective 5: Maintain the volunteer programs managed through the Crime Prevention Division which enhances our communication ability with citizens, provides valuable feedback, and helps us police the community.

Objective 6: Continue to develop a partnership with the neighborhoods that fosters two-way open communication, prevention of crime, shared responsibility, and adaptability in how we address and solve community issues that improves community safety.

Objective 7: Study the viability for a non-profit foundation (MVPD Foundation), separate from the city, that is managed by citizens to provide a non-traditional funding source, greater spending flexibility, input towards future priorities and support contemporary policing practices. The Board could also provide perspective on annual force use and pursuit reporting, divisional conduct reviews and in certain cases internal affair action taken.



Goals and Objectives

Division-level Planning

Each year goals and objectives are provided by the Division Commanders who worked with assigned staff to devise ways to meet the Department Mission. Tactical aspects are not included for public viewing due to the often sensitive and protected nature of

operations. Performance measures and strategic planning schedules are also not included in this document but are retained at the division level. Current and past annual goals and objectives are posted on the Department's website.



Closing Comments

This document serves as planning guide on how we can best deliver policing services to our community. If we are to achieve desired outcomes, planning is vital; for without it, we would be reactive and move forward without clear direction, purpose, and resolve. This agency has a long-standing tradition of planning for the future, anticipating community issues, obstacles, and potential set-backs.

The issues affecting Mount Vernon continue to change. Population is steadily increasing and as people and businesses are attracted to the community, so is the potential for an increase in criminal activity. Policing is only one element in a broader community-wide effort to provide a safe, prosperous, and enjoyable environment. Knowing this, we must continue to work internally and externally to plan for a positive future for Mount Vernon. We have seen great successes from our staff working in collaboration with other community stake holders to address issues such as homelessness, youth and gang violence, drug activity, theft, and other forms of criminal activity.

Policing must be addressed community-wide with overwhelming resolve, for without it, we are not united and our chance of making meaningful and positive change will be diminished with resources being disconnected, duplicated, or even wasted.

Currently there are positive county-wide discussions with the goal of resolving the ineffective state public health system to address behavioral health. The North Star Strategic Plan intends to address barriers and silos, integrate criminal justice, social services, public health and independent providers to reduce homelessness and improve behavioral health services as a model for other communities.

The difficult times we faced during several years of police reform challenged the Department to re-think our deployment strategies and do more with different resources. One of the most difficult challenges is delivering the required policing services that residents have grown to know and expect. Policing is a people centric business, so the need for staffing resources will be a primary issue affecting this City over the next ten to fifteen years.

The Mount Vernon Police Department, as an organization within the community, continues to be a committed partner in creating neighborhoods and business districts free from violence and other adverse conditions that allow victimization to thrive.

Please check our website for more information
www.mountvernonwa.gov

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