



DATE: December 11, 2024
TO: Mayor Donovan and City Council
FROM: Stacie Pratschner, Development Services Director
SUBJECT: RESOLUTION: APPROVAL OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Council approval of the Public Participation Plan for the Periodic Update of the Comprehensive Plan.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

The attached Public Participation Plan (“the Plan” or “PPP”) prepared by the City’s consultant Otak has been reviewed by staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council in joint session Committee meetings beginning in September 2024. The purpose of the PPP is to help guide the engagement process during the City’s periodic update of the Comprehensive Plan: the PPP is intended to be dynamic, to change as needed, and be flexible in its approaches in order to meet the needs of Council and the community.

The draft Plan is consistent both State and local regulatory requirements that apply to a public participation program for a periodic update, including RCW 36.70A.130(2), WAC 365-196-600, Chapter 14.05 of the MVMC, and Resolution 491.

FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS:

None.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Department respectfully request that City Council consider approving the attached Resolution and Public Participation Plan.

ATTACHED:

Draft Resolution and Public Participation Plan

RESOLUTION NO.

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF MOUNT VERNON COUNCIL TO APPROVE THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN TO SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS DURING THE PERIODIC UPDATE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

WHEREAS, the Growth Management Act (GMA) requires cities and counties to periodically review and updated their comprehensive plans, with Skagit County and the City of Mount Vernon updates due to the State in December of 2025;

WHEREAS, the GMA requires communities to engage in robust public participation during the update process;

WHEREAS, RCW 36.70A.120, WAC 365-196-600, Chapter 14.05 of the MVMC, and City of Mount Vernon Resolution 491 require broad dissemination of a public participation program to ensure early and continuous public involvement in the development of amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the implementing development regulations that promulgate such plans;

WHEREAS, the City has developed a Public Participation Plan to pursue public input consistent with the laws stated in the previous recital (ATTACHMENT A);

WHEREAS, the City of Mount Vernon Planning Commission and the City of Mount Vernon Council have reviewed and proposed edits to the draft Public Participation Plan during joint Development Services Committee meetings beginning in September 2024;

WHEREAS, those edits are included in ATTACHMENT A;

WHEREAS, the attached public participation plan is a dynamic document, can change based on the needs of the Council and the community, and is designed to be flexible; and

WHEREAS, the City will enact the attached public participation plan to begin the update process as authorized by City Council through this Resolution.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MOUNT VERNON AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION ONE. The Council authorizes and directs the Development Services Department to proceed with the public participation plan as described in ATTACHMENT A.

Passed this 11th day of December, 2024.

Signed in Authentication this _____ day of _____, 2024

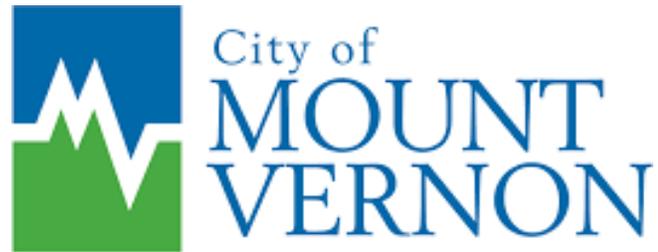
BY: _____
Peter Donovan, Mayor

Becky Jensen, City Clerk

Approved as to form:

Kevin Rogerson, City Attorney

Attachment A



Mount Vernon 2025-2045

Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update

Public Participation Plan



Prepared by the Otak Team and the City of Mount Vernon

December 2024

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Public Participation Plan Purpose and Key Goals.....	4
Audiences for Participation	5
Historically Under-Represented Communities.....	5
Community Organizations.....	5
Interpretation and Translation Needs.....	6
Tools and Actions.....	7
Process Documentation	10
Planning and Engagement Process Timeline.....	11
Participation Plan Phases	12
Phase I – Growth Targets and Visioning	12
Phase II – Updates to Element Goals and Policies.....	13
Phase III – Analysis Results: Community Gaps and Needs; Climate and Resiliency Considerations	14
Phase IV – Draft Comprehensive Plan.....	16
Phase V – Adoption Process.....	17
Appendix	
• How to Participate in the Planning Process	18
• Regulatory Requirements	19
State Law – RCW	19
State Agency Rules – WAC	22
City of Mount Vernon Requirements.....	27

Introduction

Public participation is an important component of an inclusive community. As the City works on updating its Comprehensive Plan for the period from 2025 through 2045, this Public Participation Plan (PPP) will guide the planning process and ensure that the public is provided with early, ongoing, and meaningful ways to be involved and help shape the future of Mount Vernon.

This Plan will provide for a variety of opportunities for residents, diverse interests and organizations, historically marginalized community members, interested parties, and partner agencies to participate in the planning process. Tools and timelines are included in this Plan.

The Washington State Growth Management Act requires participation of the public in the development and adoption of plans and regulations. For more about regulatory requirements and recommendations, refer to pages 19 through 27.

The chart below from the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) shows the various levels of engagement—all these levels are applicable to the Comprehensive Planning process and the various interests who will be involved, as further described throughout this PPP.

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION				
		 INFORM	 CONSULT	 INVOLVE	 COLLABORATE	 EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public		We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Public Participation Plan Purpose and Key Goals

The purpose of this PPP is to guide the public engagement process during the City's planning process for the periodic update of its Comprehensive Plan (2025-2045). This PPP is intended to be dynamic and updated as the planning process continues. This document includes flexibility in approaches that will help to ensure full participation.

The PPP will provide opportunities to share information to build awareness of the planning process, and to gather input on the community vision and draft plan elements as they are developed. The public participation plan also functions as a guide for residents, businesses, institutions, agencies, and others to make their voices heard throughout the project phases.

Key Goals

Through the PPP the City will:

- Help establish the framework for the citizens of Mount Vernon to voice to their elected officials what their vision for the community is over the 20-year planning horizon.
- Build awareness about the Comprehensive Plan, supporting development regulations, and how both are developed, adopted, and amended, as well as about how the public can participate in that process.
- Learn from participants about key gaps and needs that the periodic update may be able to address.
- Build a list of people and organizations who wish to participate directly in the process and keep them informed throughout the process.
- Collect feedback and incorporate comments on the scope of the update, draft plan elements, and draft development regulation amendments needed to support the Comprehensive Plan.
- Inform participants about feedback and comments received so that people know how their input was used.
- Build long-term relationships with community groups, businesses, agencies, and other organizations and connect them to City government.

Audiences for Participation

The audience for participation in the Comprehensive Plan periodic update is everyone—everyone who lives, works, has a business, goes to school, visits Mount Vernon, or otherwise interacts with Mount Vernon. This broad audience includes residents of Mount Vernon; owners and tenants of properties in Mount Vernon; owners, managers, employees, and customers of businesses in Mount Vernon; educators, students, and administrators of schools in Mount Vernon; elected officials, leaders, and staff of the City of Mount Vernon; officials and staff of public agencies that interact with Mount Vernon; members and leaders of Native American tribes with a current or historical presence in Mount Vernon; and people from special interest groups and organizations.

This is a vast audience that includes thousands of people and businesses, organizations, and agencies. The City will implement the tools and actions in this PPP to reach and give a voice to as many of these people, businesses, organizations, and agencies as possible. While outreach and engagement will focus on those currently living and working in and visiting Mount Vernon, the Comprehensive Plan also will be taking a twenty-year look ahead and growth, population changes, jobs, and economic vitality opportunities—and this “look ahead” means considering the needs of *future* Mount Vernon interests as well as current interests.

Historically Under-Represented Communities

Mount Vernon will work diligently to engage historically under-represented people in the community—those who in the past may not have actively participated or have not had as much of a voice in engagement efforts because of specific barriers to participation and feedback possibly being minimized or discounted compared to those in the community who were actively involved.

Methods of engaging historically under-represented groups in this periodic update will include a wide variety of ways to participate (see Tools and Actions) and collaboration with community organizations that can help us connect to these groups, including but not limited to the following:

- Community Action of Skagit County
- Latino Civic Alliance
- EDASC
- Chamber of Commerce
- Skagit Valley College
- Downtown Association
- Skagit Land Trust
- North Cascades Institute
- Re Sources

- Skagit Artists

Community Organizations

Mount Vernon partners with community organizations that work to connect with, provide services to, and represent different communities in the city. Partners to coordinate with include but aren't limited to the following: faith-based organizations that also have a mission to provide social services, sheltering, and safe spaces; the School District; Senior Center; and other organizations and agencies.

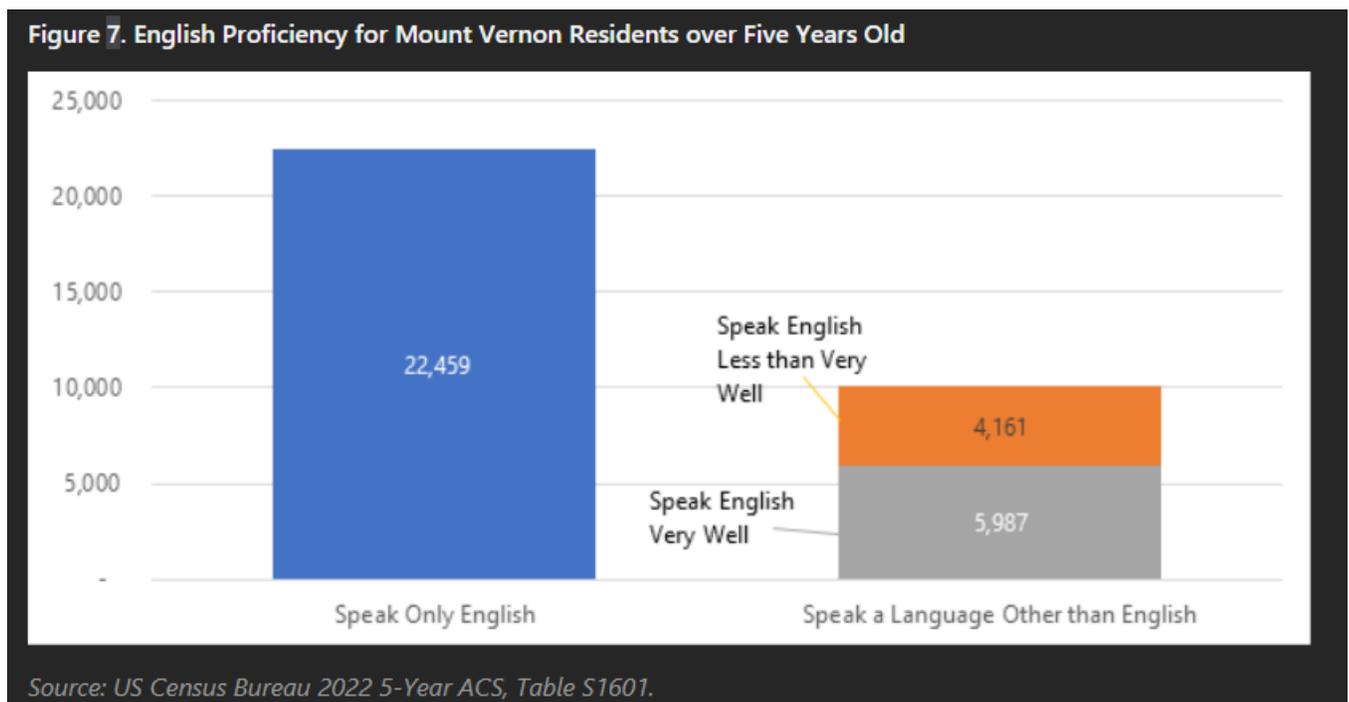
The City will seek to support and partner with organizations that are able and willing to use their contacts to share information and connect people with the project team. The city recognizes that these organizations are usually overworked already and will seek to avoid adding burden (e.g. by having city staff travel to the organization for a meeting rather than the reverse) seek to ensure that these connections are supportive of their missions, and where possible, support the organizations through capacity building and/or compensational mechanisms (such as providing childcare, meals/food, transportation, and/or reimbursements for costs).

The Washington State Equity Guidelines for community compensation related to engagement help remove barriers to participation in government actions by moving from a transactional relationship to a relational one: in other words, we meet people where they are and remove the cost barrier to them being involved in local decision making and visioning.

The [Community Compensation Guidelines handbook](#) describes in detail the types of reimbursements that the City will consider when conducting its outreach efforts.

Interpretation and Translation Needs

According to American Community Survey [ACS data](#) from the 2020 Decennial census and 2022 five year updates, 31.1 percent of Mount Vernon residents reported speaking another language at home besides English, with 26.7 percent of residents listing Spanish as the other language at home. Spanish is by far the most common language spoken at home besides English. The City will translate key documents into Spanish and will have Spanish-speaking interpretation available at public workshops and open house events. The City will also provide translation services to connect with speakers of other languages and will look for opportunities to connect with Spanish-speaking residents through means such as faith-based institutions and organizations.



Tools and Actions

The City anticipates using the following public participation tools and actions to carry out the purpose and key goals of the PPP and engage the full community in the planning process. These methods include a variety of in-person and online activities to maximize the outreach potential throughout the community. City Council has a strong interest in providing a full spectrum of techniques that include in-person meetings and workshops as well as online methods.

Project Web Presence

The City will maintain a project-specific website at:

<https://www.mountvernonwa.gov/1295/2025---2045-Comprehensive-Plan-Update>. This web presence will provide up-to-date information about the periodic update. Visitors to the website will be able to participate in short polls, review documents and draft plan elements, sign up for the contact list, see a calendar of key dates, comment periods, and upcoming events, and submit comments.

Interested Party List

The City will maintain a list of people and organizations who are interested in closely following the periodic update process. The list will include names, email addresses, and mailing addresses of people and organization contacts. The City will develop a sign-up sheet at the project website listed in the section above, and staff during public meetings will also add to the list the contact information of people who submit formal comments at specific points in the process.

Email, Comment Form, and Mail

The City will develop an online comment form, and comments may be emailed to staciep@mountvernonwa.gov. Comments may always be sent by mail to **Mount Vernon Planning Division, Development Department, 910 Cleveland Avenue Mount Vernon, WA 98273**.

Handouts, Project Fact Sheet/Newsletter, and Informational Materials

Staff will create graphics for the project web presence, as well as handouts to distribute at outreach events and displays for meetings and events. Staff will coordinate with the Mayor's office to put informational flyers in City utility bills to reach a wider audience.

Community or Pop-up Events: Tabling/Presence at Special Events and Places in the Community

In Mount Vernon, community events occur year-round, often downtown but also in neighborhoods throughout the city. Members of the planning team and City staff will join as many of these events as possible to staff tables and kiosks, answer questions, and listen to what people have to say. These events will also be helpful for promoting other events like open houses. Booths/tabling space will be staffed at special events and key locations in the community (grocery stores for example) during the planning process with displays, information, hand-outs, and QR codes directing people to the project web presence and key polls for input. Some examples of key events include but are not limited to the following: the Illuminight Winter Walk, the Forest Feast, Earth Day, the Tulip Festival, Downtown Street Fair, Farmers Market, the 4th of July, the Highland Games, and the Skagit Fair.

Neighborhood Associations, Chamber of Commerce, Boards and Commissions, and Other Organizations—Presentations, Briefings, and Focus Group Sessions

Members of the planning team and City staff will facilitate various small group/focus group meetings throughout the planning process. Invitees could include Chamber of Commerce members and business representatives, downtown organizations, various boards and commissions, Youth groups, Senior Center and senior groups, and other active organizations who are eager to be a part of planning for the community's future.

Local Media and List Serves

The City will coordinate with the Skagit Valley Herald and other local news outlets to help spread the word. The City also will leverage the Mayors listserv to provide outreach and information to the community about the planning process.

Social Media Outreach

The City's [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and other social media accounts will be used to build awareness about the update planning process, advertise open houses, and share key information such as formal comment periods. The Park, Police, and Library Departments all maintain active Facebook accounts that staff can leverage to spread the word about the periodic update.

Online Chat Hours

Members of the planning team and City staff (including Spanish-speaking City staff) will hold online chat hours to provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions or discuss proposals directly with staff.

Other Creative Engagement Methods

Members of the planning team will collaborate with and coordinate with City staff to implement other forms of creative engagement. Some ideas mentioned to date include:

- Working with the school district on student/youth engagement opportunities
- Signs/notices on garbage/recycling collection trucks
- Information on drink coasters in downtown businesses

Tribal Engagement

House Bill 1717 enacted legislation applicable in Washington State that allows federally recognized tribes to participate in planning processes under the Growth Management Act (GMA). Tribal Engagement is an overarching term that encompasses all levels of tribal communication and partnership, from informal coordination to formal government-to-government consultation. Federally recognized tribes retain their rights as sovereign nations to a direct government-to-government relationship with the federal government, independent of the state or local jurisdictions. Tribal Sovereignty is a legal term that means the right of a people to self-govern within jurisdictional borders. According to Washington Tribes, “Tribal sovereignty recognizes that American Indian tribes have the political status of nations and that Indian nations are located within the territorial boundaries of the United States. As sovereigns, tribal nations have a government-to-government relationship with the two other sovereign governing bodies in the U.S. the federal and state governments.”

For the City of Mount Vernon, the planning team and City staff will engage tribal representatives from the Samish, Swinomish, Upper Skagit, Stillaguamish, and Sauk-Suiattle Nations early in the planning process to determine their preferred methods for involvement and participation.

Environmental Review Process

The City will conduct an environmental review process under the [State Environmental Policy Act](#), which includes issuing a threshold determination and comment period on the Comprehensive Plan and supporting development regulations updates.

Citizen Advisory Committees

The City will establish two Citizen Advisory Committees to act as advisory bodies to the Planning Commission and support the development of goals and policies related to climate resilience, housing, land use, transportation, and other elements in the Comprehensive Plan. The City Council may also establish at its discretion an ad hoc Committee to support the development of zoning code updates.

Planning Commission

The Mount Vernon Planning Commission (<https://mountvernonwa.gov/130/Planning-Commission>) will have a lead role in supporting City Council through the comprehensive plan update as the City's legislative advisory body. The planning commission will work on the update over most of its meetings in 2025 (including joint sessions with the City Council). Public comment is taken at every planning commission meeting and several formal public hearings about each of the individual elements of the Comprehensive Plan will be held before a recommendation is made to the council. The commission will also be provided summary reports of public comments at key points in the process.

City Council

The Mount Vernon City Council (<https://mountvernonwa.gov/98/City-Council>) will serve as the final approving body, responsible for adopting the updated Comprehensive Plan, scheduled to occur by calendar year end of 2025 (December 31, 2025). City Council will receive briefings at key points in the update process in 2025. Public comment is taken at every city council meeting, and a formal public hearing will be held before City Council makes its decision. Staff anticipates prior to a final hearing to adopt the entire Plan; individual hearings will be held with Council to adopt individual Elements as they are completed. The Council will also be provided summary reports of public comments at key points in the process.

Process Documentation

The City will carefully document all engagement activities, and the input received from participants throughout the planning process. We will report about what we have been hearing from the public to the Planning Commission and to City Council. A full summary and compilation of comments received and supporting documentation will be provided as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan.

Public Participation Plan Phases

The periodic update project is organized into five phases: project scoping through final adoption. In this section, we summarize the work that will occur in each phase and particular tools and actions that the city will use to connect the public, or audience, to that work.

Phase I – Growth Targets and Visioning

The initial launch of the scoping part of this phase supported the overall planning, public involvement, and local environmental approach. The public engagement steps of this phase were intended to inform the community about the update, relay information about the process and elements of the project, inform the community and stakeholders about how to get and stay involved, and gather feedback from the public on the long-term vision for the community.

Phase I Overview—Fall/Winter 2024-2025

Phase I work will include finalizing the public participation plan, initial engagement efforts, existing conditions and trends analysis, and other background analysis and preparation for Phase II work. Phase I work also will involve confirming growth targets for housing units and jobs and conducting the housing needs and land capacity analyses to help inform decisions related to geographic growth assignments.

Focus On:

- Growth targets allocated to the City
- Scope, process and timeline of the Comprehensive Plan update process
- What is the 2045 vision for Mount Vernon?
- Outreach and education about state legislation related to housing and analyzing housing needs
- Outreach and education related to land capacity analysis
- Where and how will we grow over the next 20 years?

Engagement Goals

- Build awareness of the project.
- Confirm scope of the update (areas of focus, growth alternatives).
- Confirm the vision for the city.
- Identify other projects that will impact the city during the planning period.
- Identify agencies and community organizations.
- Begin collecting feedback; gather input via the visioning poll.

Tools, Actions, and Related Timelines

November 2024 to December 2024:

- Build and launch project web presence including an online storymap and portal for input.
- Create the interested party list.
- Activate project email address.
- Create first project fact sheet/newsletter.
- Visioning poll preparation and launch.

November 2024 to January 2025:

- Continue to host visioning poll and analyze results.
- Hold introductory open house.
- Provide briefings/engagement of Planning Commission and City Council.

Phase II – Updates to Element Goals and Policies

Phase II Overview—Winter 2025 through Spring 2025

Phase II will evaluate needed updates to policy guidance and gather input on potential updates to goals and policies from the Planning Commission, City Council, and others as directed by the City. We also will host a second online poll to gather input on goals and important considerations for policy development. Phase II will occur from Winter 2024-2025 through Spring 2025.

Key Topics and Questions

- What are the most important considerations related to updating goals and policies for the plan elements?
- Outreach and education around consistency with state, region, and countywide planning policies and provisions

Engagement Goals

- Continue to build awareness of the project.
- Foster relationships with agencies and local community organizations.
- Continue collecting feedback.
- Continue to build awareness about the planning process and ways people can be involved.
- Targeted engagement efforts should begin in early Spring 2025; work with community liaisons; community organizations on focus group sessions/targeted engagement.
- Prepare draft vision statement/values and gather feedback.
- Prepare specific materials related to updating goals and policies for the plan elements; as well as purpose of the plan elements; plan organization and content; etc.

- Explore and test different participation methods; adjust as needed.

Tools, Actions, and Related Timelines

Winter 2024-2025 through Spring 2025

- Continue to build interested party list as project becomes more focused.
- Continue to update project web presence and storymap.
- Briefings to boards, commissions, neighborhood associations, and other special interests.
- Prepare for and launch targeted engagement efforts with community organizations and community liaisons.
- Use Planning Commission and City Council briefings to continue to build awareness of the project and process.
- Host online poll to gather input on goals and key considerations influencing policy making.
- Launch online “chat with a planner” hours in English and Spanish.
- Prepare for public workshop series/open house sessions in late Spring/early Summer with content bridging Phase II and Phase III work (sharing analysis results; sharing draft vision; gathering input on gaps and needs; addressing climate and resiliency considerations/needs; etc.)
- Prepare updated fact sheet/newsletter.
- Prepare meeting notification materials.

Phase III – Analyses Results: Community Gaps and Needs; Climate and Resiliency Considerations

Phase III Overview—Spring through Summer 2025

Phase III will share the results of analyses, including housing needs, land capacity, multimodal transportation (as available), parks and recreation, utilities capacity analyses/research, climate impacts related greenhouse gas emissions analysis, and other planning for future growth. The public will be engaged to provide input on key community gaps and needs, as well as climate resiliency considerations to feed into the capital improvements planning (capital facilities project lists and financing plans) work related to the Comprehensive Plan. During this phase of work the team also will be working on compiling the full draft plan to share in Phase IV.

Key Topics and Questions

- What is our vision for 2045? Present draft vision statement in briefings and public workshop series/open house sessions; gather feedback to finalize vision.
- What are the needs and gaps in the community and what changes and improvements will be needed to address these over the next 20 years with continuing growth and

change?

- Working with staff and Planning Commission: what changes should be considered to the drafted comprehensive plan's text, maps, images, development regulations, and capital facility project lists and financing plans? (Goals and policies will be a focus of earlier work under Phase II.)

Engagement Goals

- Continue to build awareness of the project and collecting feedback.
- Foster relationships with agencies and local community organizations.
- Build awareness of the roles of individual comprehensive plan elements and seek feedback on what changes should be considered.
- Build awareness of the interrelationships between growth alternatives and plan elements.
- Continue targeted engagement efforts and work with community liaisons; community organizations on focus group sessions/targeted engagement.
- Proactive preparation of specific materials related to this phase of engagement.
- Explore and test different participation methods; adjust as needed.

Tools, Actions, and Related Timelines

Spring through Summer 2025

- Continue to build interested party list as project engagement continues.
- Continue to update project web presence and story map.
- Provide briefings to boards, commissions, neighborhood associations, and other special interests.
- Continue targeted engagement efforts with community organizations and community liaisons.
- Use Planning Commission and City Council briefings to continue to build awareness of the project and process.
- Host online poll to gather input on key gaps and needs in the community.
- Continue online "chat with a planner" hours in English and Spanish.
- Update fact sheet/newsletter.
- Prepare specific materials for the public workshop series/open house sessions planned for late Spring/early Summer.

Phase IV – Draft Comprehensive Plan

Phase IV Overview—Late Summer through Fall 2025

Phase IV will roll out the draft plan for review by the Planning Commission with briefings to City Council and will continue to engage the public and special interests to gather input on the draft plan prior to the formal adoption process. This phase of work also will cover the environmental review process, which is anticipated to be an environmental checklist and

potentially an MDNS threshold decision.

Key Topics and Questions

- Does the draft Comprehensive Plan address the needed updates, changes, needs, and gaps?
- Do the proposed projects/improvements lists seem complete?
- What other changes should be considered before finalizing the plan?
- Can environmental impacts be sufficiently mitigated?

Engagement Goals

- There is widespread awareness of the draft Comprehensive Plan purpose, highlights, growth decisions, and planned goals, policies, and improvements to serve growth.
- Build awareness about the upcoming decisions and formal adoption process.
- Document frequently asked questions and requests and prepare responses.
- Established relationships with agencies and local community organizations have been forged.
- Continue targeted engagement efforts and work with community liaisons; community organizations on focus group sessions/targeted engagement.
- Proactive preparation of specific materials related to this phase of engagement.

Tools, Actions, and Related Timelines

Late Summer through Fall 2025

- Continue to update project web presence and storymap.
- Provide briefings to boards, commissions, neighborhood associations, and other special interests.
- Continue targeted engagement efforts with community organizations and community liaisons.
- Use Planning Commission and City Council briefings to continue to build awareness of the project and process.
- Place draft plan materials online for public review.
- Continue online “chat with a planner” hours in English and Spanish.
- Update fact sheet/newsletter.
- Prepare specific materials for the public open house sessions planned for Fall prior to the formal adoption process.
- Press releases/notifications prior to public open house sessions

Phase V – Adoption Process

Phase V Overview—Late Fall 2025

Phase V includes the formal adoption process, which will include final review through the Planning Commission, with the Commission making a formal recommendation to City Council. Then deliberation by City Council with a public hearing held for public comment prior to final

adoption of the plan, which must occur by the end of December 2025. The planning team and City staff will plan out these meeting dates well in advance and build awareness of the proposed adoption timeline.

Key Topics and Questions

- Does the proposed updated Comprehensive Plan reflect public input?
- Do the updated Comprehensive Plan and supporting development regulations meet the requirements of the periodic update, and implement the scope of the update?
- Are any final amendments needed?

Engagement Goals

- Public, agencies, organizations, and all involved and interested have opportunities to provide comments on the plan during the adoption process.
- The plan will be presented in its entirety including the vision statement, updated goals, policies, and provisions, updated background information and analyses, capital facilities/improvements project lists, and implementing development regulations to the Planning Commission and City Council.

Tools, Actions, and Related Timelines

Late Fall 2025 (by the end of the year)

- Continue to update project web presence and storymap.
- Support the formal adoption process with presentation materials for Planning Commission and City Council meetings.
- Update fact sheet/newsletter for the last time with information about the adoption process.
- Press releases/notifications prior to the public hearing that is part of the adoption process.

How to Participate in the Planning Process (Subject to Updates)



Learn about the update project at <https://www.mountvernonwa.gov/1295/2025---2045-Comprehensive-Plan-Update> or at an event on the project calendar.



Provide written comments via email staciep@mountvernonwag.gov.

Comments will be read and considered by staff upon receipt and will be provided to the planning commission and council as packages in both complete and summary form.



Provide verbal comments to staff at a public participation event.

Verbal comments will be heard and considered by staff and will be relayed to the planning commission and council in summary form.

Provide comments to the Mount Vernon Planning Commission during meetings where the Comprehensive Plan is on the agenda. The Mount Vernon Planning Commission will hold meetings on the comprehensive plan throughout the rest of 2024 and through fall 2025.

Agendas may be accessed at the following website:

<https://www.mountvernonwa.gov/agendacenter>.

Provide comments to the Mount Vernon City Council during its formal comment periods during regular Council meetings or at the public hearings that will be scheduled later in 2025. The Mount Vernon City Council will make the final decision on the updated comprehensive plan and development regulations. The council will be briefed on the update progress several times throughout the project. The council will then hold a comment period and public hearing before making a final decision on the full plan in late 2025.

<https://www.mountvernonwa.gov/agendacenter>.

Regulatory Requirements

State Law – Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Provisions

RCW 36.70A.130(2)(a) requires the City to establish and broadly disseminate to the public a public participation program that identifies procedures and schedules whereby updates, proposed amendments, or revisions of the comprehensive plan are considered by the city council. The public participation program must provide for broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives, opportunity for written comments, public meetings after effective notice, provision for open discussion, communication programs, information services and consideration of and response to public comments (RCW 36.70A.140).

The public participation program must include notice procedures (RCW 36.70A.035) that are reasonably calculated to provide notice of proposed comprehensive plan and development regulation amendments to property owners and other affected and interested individuals, tribes, government agencies, businesses, school districts, public water systems and organizations.

Specific RCW Requirements

RCW 36.70A.130(2)(a) Comprehensive plan review procedures – public participation program

Each county and city shall establish and broadly disseminate to the public a public participation program consistent with RCW 36.70A.035 and 36.70A.140 that identifies procedures and schedules whereby updates, proposed amendments, or revisions of the comprehensive plan are considered by the governing body of the county or city no more frequently than once every year. "Updates" means to review and revise, if needed, according to subsection (1) of this section, and the deadlines in subsections (4) and (5) of this section or in accordance with the provisions of subsection (6) of this section. Amendments may be considered more frequently than once per year under the following circumstances: [initial adoption of a subarea plan, adoption or amendment of a shoreline master program, amendment of a capital facility plan concurrent with a city budget, adoption of a comprehensive plan amendments necessary to enact a SEPA planned action].

(b) Except as otherwise provided in (a) of this subsection, all proposals shall be considered by the governing body concurrently so the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be ascertained. However, after appropriate public participation a county or city may adopt amendments or revisions to its comprehensive plan that conform with this chapter whenever an emergency exists or to resolve an appeal of a comprehensive plan filed with the growth management hearings board or with the court.

RCW 36.70A.140 Comprehensive plans – Ensure public participation.

Each county and city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall establish and broadly disseminate to the public a public participation program identifying procedures providing for early and continuous public participation in the development and amendment of comprehensive land use plans and development regulations implementing such plans. The procedures shall provide for broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives, opportunity for written comments, public meetings after effective notice, provision for open discussion, communication programs, information services, and consideration of and response to public

comments. In enacting legislation in response to the board's decision pursuant to RCW 36.70A.300 declaring part or all of a comprehensive plan or development regulation invalid, the county or city shall provide for public participation that is appropriate and effective under the circumstances presented by the board's order. Errors in exact compliance with the established program and procedures shall not render the comprehensive land use plan or development regulations invalid if the spirit of the program and procedures is observed.

RCW 36.70A.035 Public participation – Notice provisions.

(1) The public participation requirements of this chapter shall include notice procedures that are reasonably calculated to provide notice to property owners and other affected and interested individuals, tribes, government agencies, businesses, school districts, group A public water systems required to develop water system plans consistent with state board of health rules adopted under RCW 43.20.050, and organizations of proposed amendments to comprehensive plans and development regulation. Examples of reasonable notice provisions include:

- (a) Posting the property for site-specific proposals;
 - (b) Publishing notice in a newspaper of general circulation in the county, city, or general area where the proposal is located or that will be affected by the proposal;
 - (c) Notifying public or private groups with known interest in a certain proposal or in the type of proposal being considered;
 - (d) Placing notices in appropriate regional, neighborhood, ethnic, or trade journals; and
 - (e) Publishing notice in agency newsletters or sending notice to agency mailing lists, including general lists or lists for specific proposals or subject areas.
- (2) (a) Except as otherwise provided in (b) of this subsection, if the legislative body for a county or city chooses to consider a change to an amendment to a comprehensive plan or development regulation, and the change is proposed after the opportunity for review and comment has passed under the county's or city's procedures, an opportunity for review and comment on the proposed change shall be provided before the local legislative body votes on the proposed change.
- (b) An additional opportunity for public review and comment is not required under (a) of this subsection if:
- (i) An environmental impact statement has been prepared under chapter 43.21C RCW for the pending resolution or ordinance and the proposed change is within the range of alternatives considered in the environmental impact statement;
 - (ii) The proposed change is within the scope of the alternatives available for public comment;
 - (iii) The proposed change only corrects typographical errors, corrects cross-references, makes address or name changes, or clarifies language of a proposed ordinance or resolution without changing its effect;
 - (iv) The proposed change is to a resolution or ordinance making a capital

budget decision as provided in RCW 36.70A.120; or

(v) The proposed change is to a resolution or ordinance enacting a moratorium or interim control adopted under RCW 36.70A.390.

RCW 36.70A.470 Project review – Amendment suggestion procedure

(1) Project review, which shall be conducted pursuant to the provisions of chapter 36.70B RCW, shall be used to make individual project decisions, not land use planning decisions. If, during project review, a county or city planning under RCW 36.70A.040 identifies deficiencies in plans or regulations:

- (a) The permitting process shall not be used as a comprehensive planning process;
- (b) Project review shall continue; and
- (c) The identified deficiencies shall be docketed for possible future plan or development regulation amendments.

(2) Each county and city planning under RCW 36.70A.040 shall include in its development regulations a procedure for any interested person, including applicants, citizens, hearing examiners, and staff of other agencies, to suggest plan or development regulation amendments. The suggested amendments shall be docketed and considered on at least an annual basis, consistent with the provisions of RCW 36.70A.130.

(3) For purposes of this section, a deficiency in a comprehensive plan or development regulation refers to the absence of required or potentially desirable contents of a comprehensive plan or development regulation. It does not refer to whether a development regulation addresses a project's probable specific adverse environmental impacts which the permitting agency could mitigate in the normal project review process.

(4) For purposes of this section, docketing refers to compiling and maintaining a list of suggested changes to the comprehensive plan or development regulations in a manner that will ensure such suggested changes will be considered by the county or city and will be available for review by the public.

Findings – Intent: "The legislature finds that during project review, a county or city planning under RCW 36.70A.040 is likely to discover the need to make various improvements in comprehensive plans and development regulations. There is no current requirement or process for applicants, citizens, or agency staff to ensure that these improvements are considered in the plan review process. The legislature also finds that in the past environmental review and permitting of proposed projects have been used to reopen and make land use planning decisions that should have been made through the comprehensive planning process, in part because agency staff and hearing examiners have not been able to ensure consideration of all issues in the local planning process. The legislature further finds that, while plans and regulations should be improved and refined over time, it is unfair to penalize applicants that have submitted permit applications that meet current requirements. It is the intent of the legislature in enacting RCW 36.70A.470 to establish a means by which cities and counties will docket suggested plan or development regulation amendments and ensure their consideration during the planning process."

State Agency Rules – Washington Administrative Code (WAC)

The Washington Administrative Code (WAC 365-196-600) provides formal recommendations for local participation programs, which are summarized below.. The Puget Sound Regional Council also published a resource, *Equitable Engagement for Comprehensive Plans*, to be used as a guide for meeting the requirements and conducting a meaningful outreach program.

Specific WAC Requirements

WAC 365-196-600 Public participation.

(1) Requirements.

- (a) Each county and city planning under the act must establish procedures for early and continuous public participation in the development and amendment of comprehensive plans and development regulations. The procedures are not required to be reestablished for each set of amendments.
- (b) The procedures must provide for broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives, opportunity for written comments, public meetings after effective notice, provision for open discussion, communication programs, information services, and consideration of and response to public comments.
- (c) Errors in exact compliance with the established procedures do not render the comprehensive plan or development regulations invalid if the spirit of the procedures is observed.

(2) Record of process.

- (a) Whenever a provision of the comprehensive plan or development regulation is based on factual data, a clear reference to its source should be made part of the adoption record.
- (b) The record should show how the public participation requirement was met.
- (c) All public hearings should be recorded.

(3) Recommendations for meeting public participation requirements. These recommendations are a list of suggestions for meeting the public participation requirement.

(a) Designing the public participation program.

- (i) Implementation of the act requires a series of interrelated steps, including: Development of the initial comprehensive plan, evaluating amendments as part of the docket cycle, conducting the periodic update and reviewing the urban growth boundaries, amending development regulations, and conducting subarea planning. Each of these has different levels of significance and different procedural requirements.
- (ii) Counties and cities are not required to establish individual public participation programs for each individual amendment. Counties and cities may wish to consider establishing a public program for annual amendments and establishing separate or updated programs for major periodic updates. When developing a public participation plan for a project not covered by the existing public participation plan, a county or city should develop a public

participation plan tailored to the type of action under consideration. This public participation plan should be focused on the type of public involvement appropriate for that type of action.

(iii) The public participation plan should identify which procedural requirements apply for the type of action under consideration and how the county or city intends to meet those requirements.

(iv) To avoid duplication of effort, counties and cities should integrate public involvement required by the State Environmental Policy Act, chapter 43.21C RCW, and rules adopted thereunder, into the overall public participation plan.

(v) Where a proposed amendment involves shorelines of the state, a county or city should integrate the public participation requirements of the Shoreline Management Act, chapter 90.58 RCW, into its public participation plan, as appropriate.

(vi) Once established, the public participation plan must be broadly disseminated.

(b) Visioning. When developing a new comprehensive plan or a significant update to an existing comprehensive plan, counties and cities should consider using a visioning process. The public should be involved, because the purpose of a visioning process is to gain public input on the desired features of the community. The comprehensive plan can then be designed to achieve these features.

(c) Planning commission. The public participation program should clearly describe the role of the planning commission, ensuring consistency with requirements of chapter 36.70, 35.63, or 35A.63 RCW.

(4) Each county or city should try to involve a broad cross-section of the community, so groups not previously involved in planning become involved.

(5) Counties and cities should take a broad view of public participation. The act contains no requirements or qualifications that an individual must meet in order to participate in the public process. If an individual or organization chooses to participate, it is an interested party for purposes of public participation.

(6) Providing adequate notice.

(a) Counties and cities are encouraged to consider a variety of opportunities to adequately communicate with the public. These methods of notification may include, but are not limited to, traditional forms of mailed notices, published announcements, electronic mail, and internet websites to distribute informational brochures, meeting times, project timelines, and design and map proposals to provide an opportunity for the public to participate.

(b) Counties and cities must provide effective notice. In order to be effective, notice must be designed to accomplish the following:

(i) Notice must be timely, reasonably available and reasonably likely to reach interested persons. Notice of all events where public input is sought should be broadly disseminated at least one week in advance of any public hearing. Newspaper or online articles do not substitute for the requirement that

jurisdictions publish the action taken. When appropriate, notices should announce the availability of relevant draft documents and how they may be obtained.

(ii) Broad dissemination means that a county or city has made the documents widely available and provided information on how to access the available documents and how to provide comments. Examples of methods of broad dissemination may include:

- (A) Posting electronic copies of draft documents on the county and city official website;
- (B) Providing copies to local libraries;
- (C) Providing copies as appropriate to other affected counties and cities, state and federal agencies;
- (D) Providing notice to local newspapers; and
- (E) Maintaining a list of individuals who have expressed an interest and providing them with notice when new materials are available.

(iii) Certain proposals may also require particularized notice to specific individuals if required by statute or adopted local policy.

(iv) The public notice must clearly specify the nature of the proposal under consideration and how the public may participate. Whenever public input is sought on proposals and alternatives, the relevant drafts should be available. The county or city must make available copies of the proposal that will be available prior to the public hearing so participants can comment appropriately. The notice should specify the range of alternatives considered or scope of alternatives available for public comment in accordance with RCW 36.70A.035 (2)(b)(i) and (ii).

(7) Receiving public comment.

(a) Public meetings on draft comprehensive plans. Once a comprehensive plan amendment or other proposal is completed in draft form, or as parts of it are drafted, the county or city may consider holding a series of public meetings or workshops at various locations throughout the jurisdiction to obtain public comments and suggestions.

(b) Public hearings. When the final draft of the comprehensive plan is completed, at least one public hearing should be held prior to the presentation of the final draft to the county or city legislative authority adopting it.

(c) Written comment. At each stage of the process when public input is sought, opportunity should be provided to make written comment.

(d) Attendance for all meetings and hearings to which the public is invited should be free and open. At hearings all persons desiring to speak should be allowed to do so. A county or city may establish a reasonable time limitation on spoken presentations during meetings or public hearings, particularly if written comments are allowed.

(8) Continuous public involvement.

(a) Consideration of and response to public comments. All public comments should be reviewed. Adequate time should be provided between the public hearing and the date of adoption for all or any part of the comprehensive plan to evaluate and respond to public comments. The county or city should provide a written summary of all public comments with a specific response and explanation for any subsequent action taken based on the public comments. This written summary should be included in the record of adoption for the plan.

(b) Ending the opportunity for comment prior to deliberation. After the end of public comment, the local government legislative body may hold additional meetings to deliberate on the information obtained in the public hearing.

(c) Additional meetings may be necessary if the public hearings provided the county or city with new evidence or information they wish to consider. If during deliberation, the county or city legislative body identifies new information for consideration after the record of adoption has been closed, then it must provide further opportunity for public comment so this information can be included in the record.

(9) Considering changes to an amendment after the opportunity for public review has closed.

(a) If the county or city legislative body considers a change to an amendment, and the opportunity for public review and comment has already closed, then the county or city must provide an opportunity for the public to review and comment on the proposed change before the legislative body takes action.

(b) The county or city may limit the opportunity for public comment to only the proposed change to the amendment.

(c) Although counties and cities are required to provide an opportunity for public comment, alternatives to a scheduled public hearing may suffice. Adequate notice must be provided indicating how the public may obtain information and offer comments.

(d) A county or city is not required to provide an additional opportunity for public comment under (a) of this subsection if one of the following exceptions applies (see RCW 36.70A.035 (2)(a)):

(i) An environmental impact statement has been prepared under chapter 43.21C RCW, and the proposal falls within the range of alternatives considered in the environmental impact statement;

(ii) The proposed change is within the range of alternatives available for public comment. When initiating the public participation process, a county or city should consider defining the range of alternatives under consideration;

(iii) The proposed change only corrects typographical errors, corrects cross-references, makes address or name changes, or clarifies language of a proposed ordinance or resolution without changing its effect;

(iv) The proposed change is to a resolution or ordinance making a capital budget decision as provided in RCW 36.70A.120; or

(v) The proposed change is to an ordinance or resolution enacting a moratorium or interim control adopted in compliance with RCW 36.70A.390.

(e) If a county or city adopts an amendment without providing an additional opportunity for public comment as described under (a) of this subsection, the findings of the adopted ordinance or resolution should identify which exception under RCW 36.70A.035 (2)(b) applies.

(10) Any amendment to the comprehensive plan or development regulation must follow the applicable procedural requirements and the county or city public participation plan. A county or city should not enter into an agreement that is a de facto amendment to the comprehensive plan accomplished without complying with the statutory public participation requirements. Examples of a de facto amendment include agreements that:

- (a) Obligate the county or city, or authorizes another party, to act in a manner that is inconsistent with the comprehensive plan;
- (b) Authorize an action the comprehensive plan prohibits; or
- (c) Obligate the county or city to adopt a subsequent amendment to the comprehensive plan.

WAC 365-196-610(2)(a) – Periodic update – Recommendations – Public participation program.

(i) Counties and cities should establish a public participation program that includes a schedule for the periodic update and identifies when legislative action on the review and update component are proposed to occur. The public participation program should also inform the public of when to comment on proposed changes to the comprehensive plan and clearly identify the scope of the review. Notice of the update process should be broadly disseminated as required by RCW 36.70A.035.

(ii) Counties and cities may adjust the public participation program to best meet the intent of the requirement. RCW 36.70A.140 notes that errors in exact compliance with the established program and procedures shall not render the comprehensive land use plan or development regulations invalid if the spirit of the program and procedures is observed. For example, if an established public participation program included one public hearing on all actions having to do with the periodic update process, the public participation program could be adjusted later to provide additional public hearings to accommodate strong public interest.

WAC 365-196-640(6) – Docketing of proposed amendments.

(a) RCW 36.70A.470(2) requires that comprehensive plan amendment procedures allow interested persons, including applicants, citizens, hearing examiners, and staff of other agencies, to suggest amendments of comprehensive plans or development regulations. This process should include a means of docketing deficiencies in the comprehensive plan that arise during local project review. These suggestions must be docketed and considered at least annually.

(b) A consideration of proposed amendments does not require a full analysis of every proposal within twelve months if resources are unavailable.

(c) As part of this process, counties and cities should specify what information must be

submitted and the submittal deadlines so that proposals can be evaluated concurrently.

(d) Once a proposed amendment is received, the county or city may determine if a proposal should receive further consideration as part of the comprehensive plan amendment process.

(e) Some types of proposed amendments require a significant investment of time and expense on the part of both applicants and the county or city. A county or city may specify in its policies certain types of amendments that will not be carried forward into the amendment process on an annual basis. This provides potential applicants with advance notice of whether a proposed amendment will be carried forward and can help applicants avoid the expense of preparing an application.

City of Mount Vernon Requirements

Chapter 14.05 of the Mount Vernon Municipal Code

Resolution 491