

Mount Vernon Police Department

2021

*Attaining the highest quality of life and security
for all who live, work, learn, and visit
the City of Mount Vernon...*

*by working with our neighborhoods
promoting safety and reducing crime.*

**Annual
Report**

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.



DEPARTMENT VISION

Safe and Enjoyable Community Living



DEPARTMENT 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.

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INTRODUCTION

This Annual Report identifies and documents the Police Department's 2021 experiences, accomplishments and achievements. It's an inward look at our successes and strengths, as well as an outward measure of effectiveness in our ability to build positive community partnerships and citizen involvement. It includes crime statistics and identifies how Department resources are utilized. This report also provides a glimpse into future obstacles and challenges, which will be addressed through annual strategic planning.

"The real measure of a police agency – the fact that separates excellence from mediocrity – is the commitment to purpose and to pursue continuous improvement with integrity"

- MVPD STRATEGIC PLAN

We continued to build programs, practices and implement crime reduction measures that are relevant, have the community's trust and confidence at their core. Education and prevention are key to focus on and find ways to resolve problematic issues as well as our ability to communicate and partner with citizens and businesses, eliciting their help and support. Crime prevention continues to be the central theme of this organization and make our community a desired place to live, work, learn, and play.



To Our Community:

Significant public policy was enacted by the State Legislature this past year intended to reform law enforcement practices. New laws restricted when an individual's physical detention for suspected crimes could occur. Narrow circumstances for police to pursue vehicles was set. Audio/video recording during suspect interviews was required in many situations. New requirements for police force use, duty for an officer to intervene when another officer's actions appeared inappropriate, decriminalized drug possession and police officer de-certification responsibility to the Washington Criminal Justice Training Commission.

Changes in offender behavior were almost immediate. Police eludings went up significantly as offenders saw that by getting to a vehicle meant they could just drive away. Drug arrests crimes dropped, property crimes increased. Physical intervention or detentions for minor crimes and behavioral health calls were reduced.

Despite these restrictions, we pursued ingenuity and innovating as the only way forward.

For example, 25-27% of our service calls were linked to behavioral health. Restructuring our Outreach Services to provide social workers as a first responders, case managers to navigate the complex systems, and a Nurse Practitioner for field medicine would be more effective.

We added new less lethal technology to give officers more choice before resorting to deadly force. The Skagit and Island County Chiefs and Sheriffs developed a "Strategic Interests Plan" that included information sharing sessions with legislators ahead of the next year's sessions to educate them on impacts and suggested improvements for public policy.

When some cities across the U.S. saw their government leaders calling to defund police services with little or no logical process, Mayor Jill Boudreau and our City Council were steadfast in their support. They pointed to our policing philosophies, policies, and services that had been in place for years and exemplified what other communities were demanding from police reform. They embraced and funded the proposed outreach services innovation.

The dedication, professionalism and resiliency from all our staff was evident when other agencies were experiencing unexpected resignations/retirements and we had next to none. Despite the obstacles, we accomplished significantly during 2021.

As we look ahead to 2022, we will continue to work together to address issues and concerns that affect safety and life quality in our neighborhoods and provide the very best possible service to our residents and visitors.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'C. Cammock', with a stylized, cursive-like script.

Christopher E. Cammock
Chief of Police

"Safe and Enjoyable Community Living"

SNAPSHOT

**Largest Municipality
in
Skagit County**

35,390
2021 Population

12.5 Square Miles
Mount Vernon

32%
Countywide Calls
MVPD Handles

23,046
2021 Service Calls

+ 16.67%
Violent Crime
2020-2021

-2.56%
Burglary
2020-2021

+15.38%
Robbery
2020-2021

+ 50.89%
Motor Vehicle Theft
2020-2021



The Mount Vernon Police Department consists of 46 commissioned officers, 15 limited commission, non-commissioned or support staff when fully staffed. 50+ citizen volunteers provide valuable services in our Citizens On Proactive Patrol and Mount Vernon Police Volunteer groups that free up Department staff to respond to service calls, in-progress crimes, apprehend offenders and address life quality issues. They too are invaluable *members of this organization*.

As you review the 2021 crime figures, goals and objectives, accomplishments consider the difficult circumstances placed on police officers to conduct lawful detentions, pursue criminal suspects in vehicles, address increased call loads with staffing vacancies (6), absences within within our command staff, management workload shifted to supervisors and the gradual return of our Citizen Volunteers from the pandemic years. Department personnel achieved great success despite these obstacles.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & CHARTS

The Department is divided into two “bureaus” each under the direction of a Lieutenant or Manager. A “horizontal” management structure encourages decision-making at all organizational levels in an effort to eliminate bureaucratic barriers, innovate ideas, increase communication efficiency and effectiveness to illicit community trust and support. We strive to hire those who display strong leadership, decision-making, and communication skills, and we provide continued training to enhance these qualities.

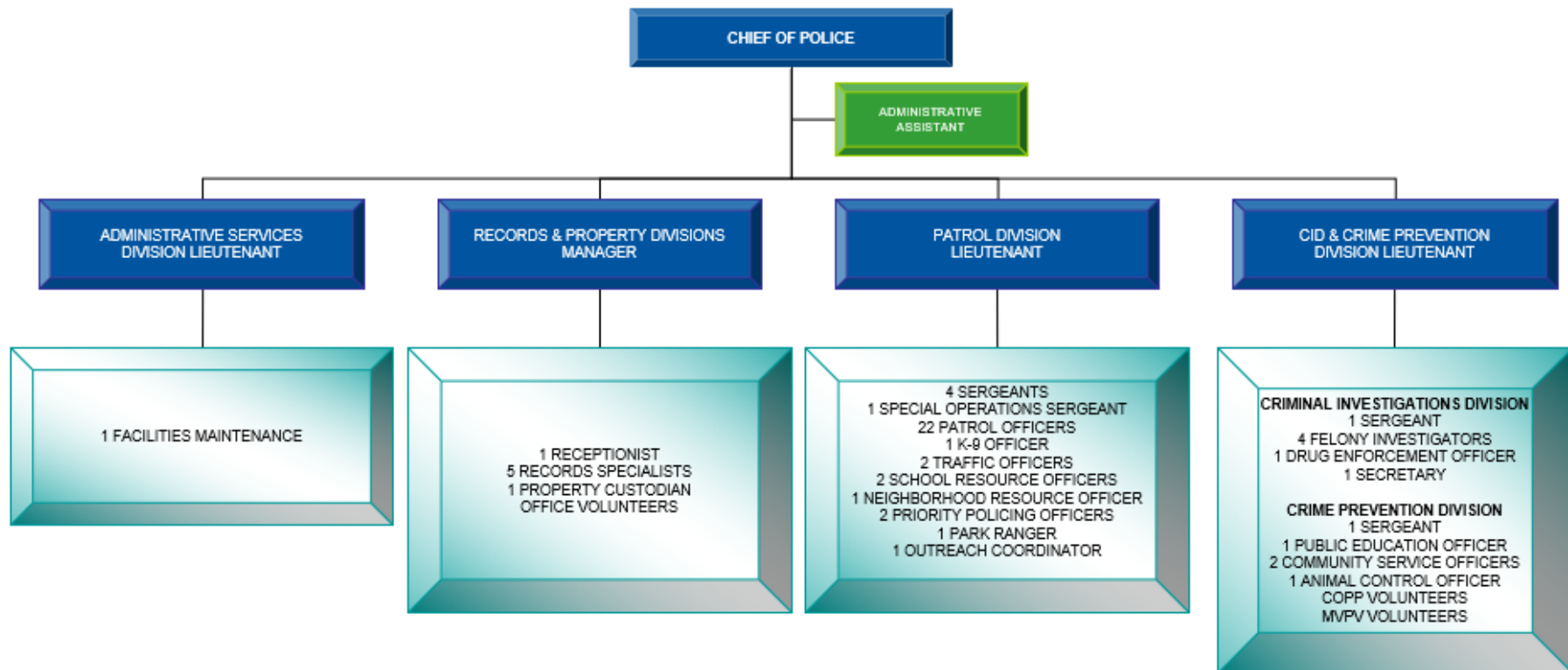
The next two pages display staffing and functional organization charts portraying the many core responsibilities necessary to police our community.

Authorized Personnel: 46 Sworn Officers and 15 Civilian Staff

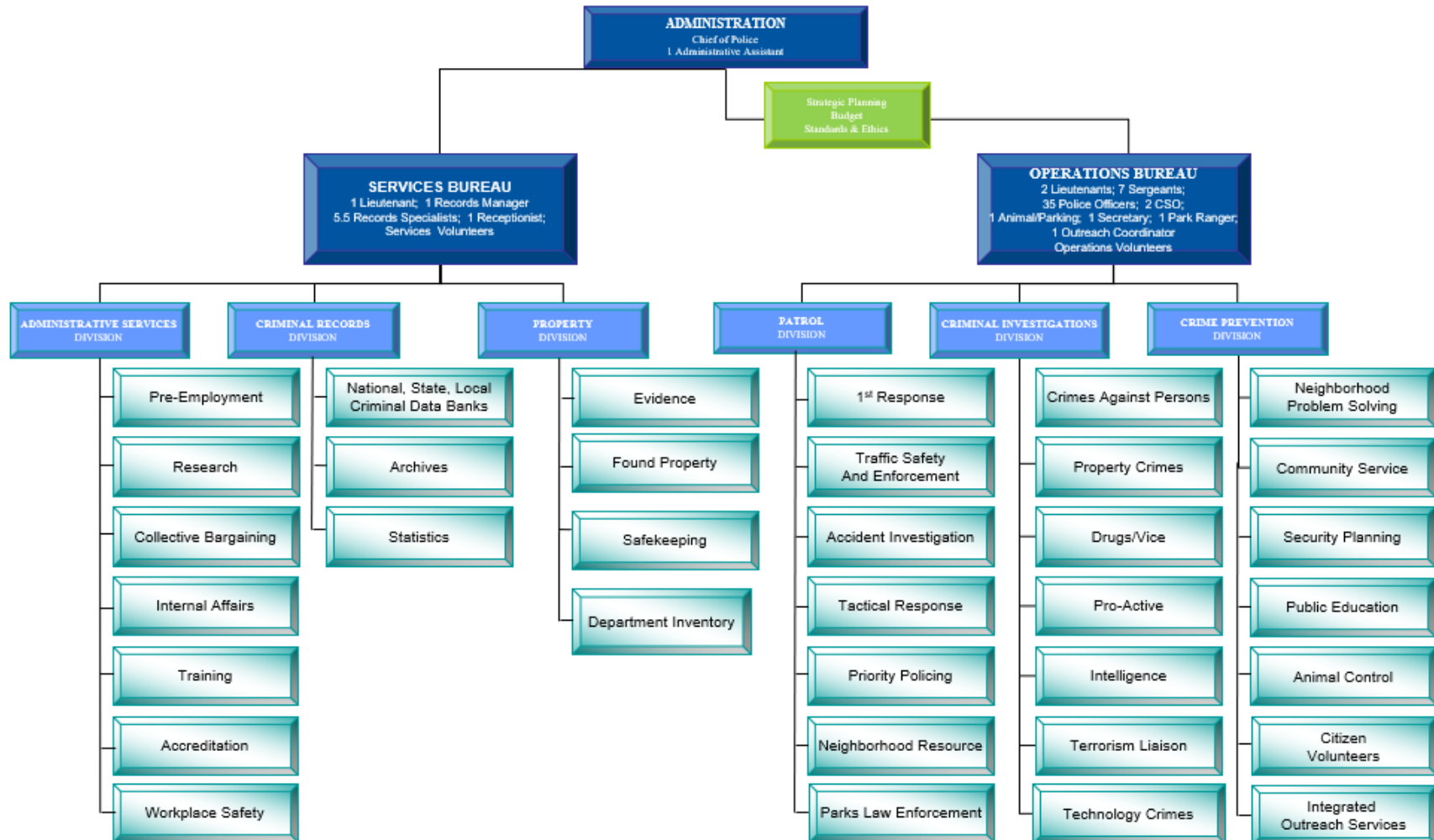


STAFFING CHART

THE CITIZENS OF MOUNT VERNON



FUNCTIONAL CHART



SERVICE BUREAU

Administrative Services Division

This Division is responsible for pre-employment, research, collective bargaining, internal affairs, training, and accreditation. Chris Cammock served as the commander for this Division before being promoted to Police Chief and a securing a replacement wasn't possible this year.



Records & Property Divisions



The Records Division is responsible for records management, public inquiry, firearms background/licensing and processing responsibilities for prosecutors and courts.

The Property Division is responsible for the general maintenance, storage, integrity, and management of all property and evidence in the Department's possession.

OPERATIONAL BUREAU

Patrol Division



The most visible representation of policing comes from the Patrol Division where they provide first response to service calls.

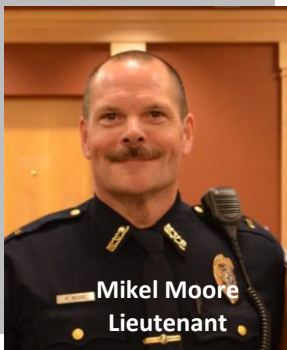
- Uniformed first response
- Neighborhood & school resource
- Community Outreach
- Parks and trails law enforcement
- K-9
- Traffic enforcement
- Tactical Response
- Priority Policing Team

Safe and enjoyable community living



Promote, preserve, and deliver a feeling of security, safety & productive quality service

Criminal Investigation Division



This Division investigates serious crimes against persons and/or property; follows up on drug/vice related activity; gathers intelligence; and provides proactive investigation.

They carried over (2020) 43 cases, investigated 262 new cases, and cleared 217 in 2020. One Sergeant, five Investigators, and one Police Secretary are assigned to this Division.

The Division submits criminal cases to the Prosecutor for review, charging, or declining those cases where the collected information reveals no possibility of the case being solved.

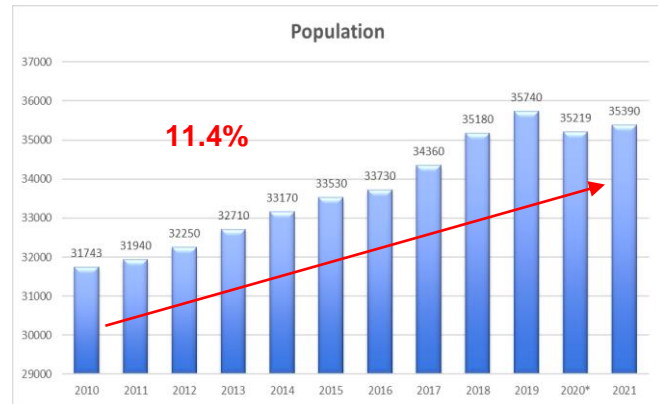
Crime Prevention Division

The Crime Prevention Division is our public education and engagement branch where resources are put towards equipping citizens, identifying and solving community problems. Services include security planning, crime prevention education, and community services. This division is responsible for managing the Department's extensive Volunteer programs.



OUR COMMUNITY

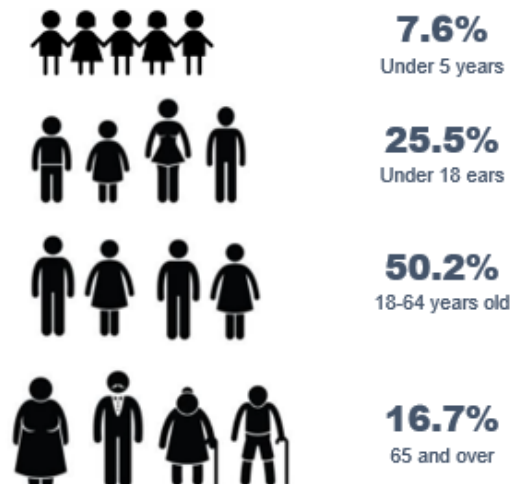
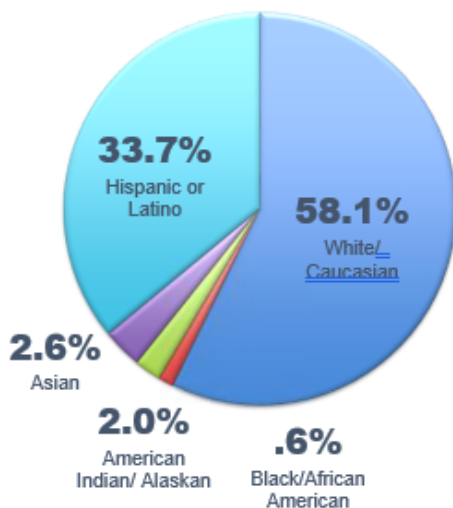
Mount Vernon is a mid-way point between two major international trade centers, Seattle and Vancouver, B.C. Mount Vernon is the center for county government and many social service agencies. Our recreational areas and community events attract many visitors and our fiber loop and Opportunity Zones offer tax advantages that encourage new business.



Our population in the Census 2020 reported 35,219. 2021 estimated population for Mount Vernon was 35,390 showing a steady, continued increase. High density housing construction, infilling vacant spaces, and high traffic volumes result as people living in urban settings are impacted by longer commute time, less open space for children and limited affordable housing relocate.

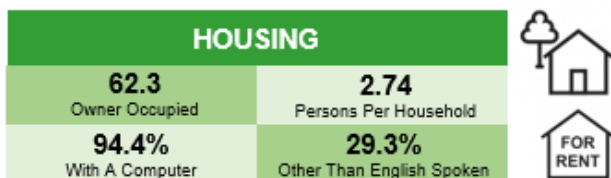
Growth increases the service demands for police and as the County seat, courts, public, non-profit and social services are centered here for underserved populations posing unique policing challenges.

DEMOGRAPHICS



Source: 2021 U.S. Census Quick Facts

HOUSING



Source: 2021 U.S. Census Quick Facts

ECONOMY

2012 (\$1,000)



Newly passed laws significantly limited when police could conduct vehicle pursuits for criminal offenders, raised the standard from reasonable suspicion to probable cause for a forceful detention, required two treatment assessment referrals before an arrest for simple drug possession could occur and reinforced the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission authority to conduct independent administrative investigations into police conduct where there state commission could be suspended or revoked. Most of the new laws took effect in July 2021. Some of the changes in offender behavior were:

Eluding A Police Officer	+133%
Vehicle Theft	+51%
Vehicle Recovered Stolen Vehicle	+92%
Vagrancy	+54%
Trespassing	+30%

CRIME PROFILE

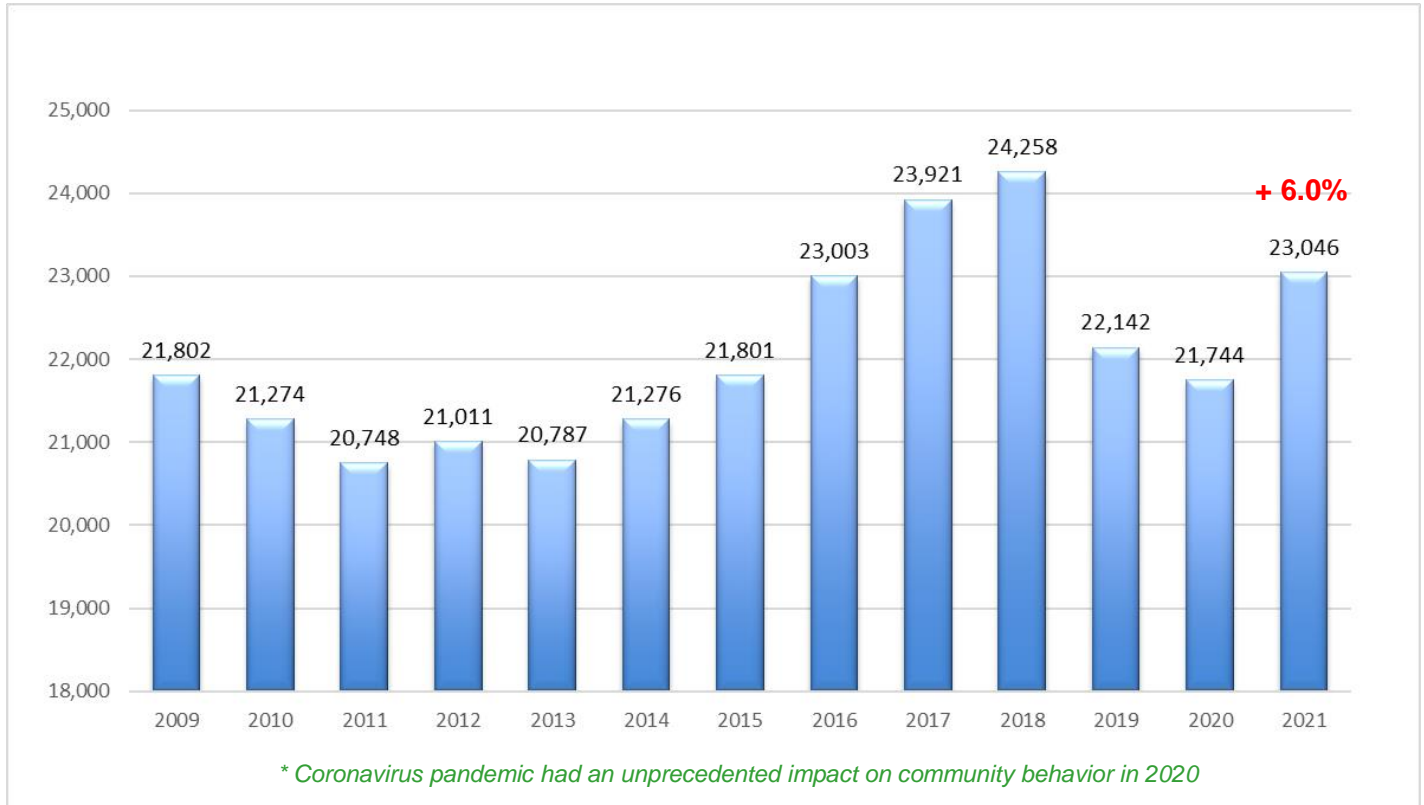
The Mount Vernon Police Department reports its crime data to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) and is NIBRS certified by the FBI. NIBRS presents comprehensive detailed information about crime incidents to law enforcement, researchers, governmental planners, students of crime, and the general public. (Learn more about NIBRS - www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr/nibrs)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	- % +
Arson*	7	7	8	2	8	6	6	3	16	433.33%
Assault - Simple	339	334	330	306	299	261	271	300	257	-14.33%
Aggravated Assault*	41	46	33	44	39	55	26	51	46	-9.80%
Burglary	257	224	206	194	207	261	136	156	152	-2.56%
Counterfeit/Forgery	51	21	22	27	23	33	29	23	20	-13.04%
Destruction of Property	517	447	603	560	601	468	347	445	467	4.94%
Drug Offenses	305	351	395	463	452	569	446	325	115	-64.62%
Fraud Offenses	45	51	55	40	35	51	43	61	55	-9.84%
Homicide*	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	1	0	-100.00%
Kidnapping/Abduction	2	7	7	9	6	4	0	7	2	-71.43%
Larceny/Theft - From Vehicle	295	238	214	175	162	196	189	218	230	5.50%
Larceny/Theft - Shoplifting	492	517	553	480	366	407	434	381	230	-39.63%
Larceny/Theft - Other	125	285	248	283	247	394	289	234	230	-1.71%
Motor Vehicle Theft	130	111	90	114	107	114	115	112	169	50.89%
Pornography	2	1	1	3	7	1	0	1	1	0.00%
Prostitution	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	-100.00%
Robbery*	31	21	25	24	17	26	17	13	15	15.38%
Sex Offense - Other	6	1	12	1	12	2	4	1	3	200.00%
Sex Offense - Rape*	17	15	12	13	13	16	13	10	14	40.00%
Stolen Property Offenses	48	44	29	36	20	34	19	21	22	4.76%
Total Group A Offenses	3363	3296	3327	3273	3114	3473	2864	2166	2446	12.93%
Violent Crime*	97	89	79	83	79	105	62	78	91	16.67%
Violent Crime per 1000	3.01	2.68	2.35	2.46	2.30	2.98	1.73	2.21	2.57	16.10%
Calls for Service	20,787	21,276	21,801	23,001	23,921	24,258	22,772	21,744	23,046	5.99%
MV Population	32,250	33,170	33,580	33,730	34,360	35,180	35,740	35,219	35,390	0.49%

CALLS FOR SERVICE

A “call for service” is when police are requested, dispatched or an incident is observed. Not every service call generates a police report. These calls for service include, but are not limited to: criminal activity; motor vehicle collisions; assists to other agencies; suspicious activity, alarm activation responses and other service related functions. Although total calls have dropped, the time devoted to addressing them is significant.

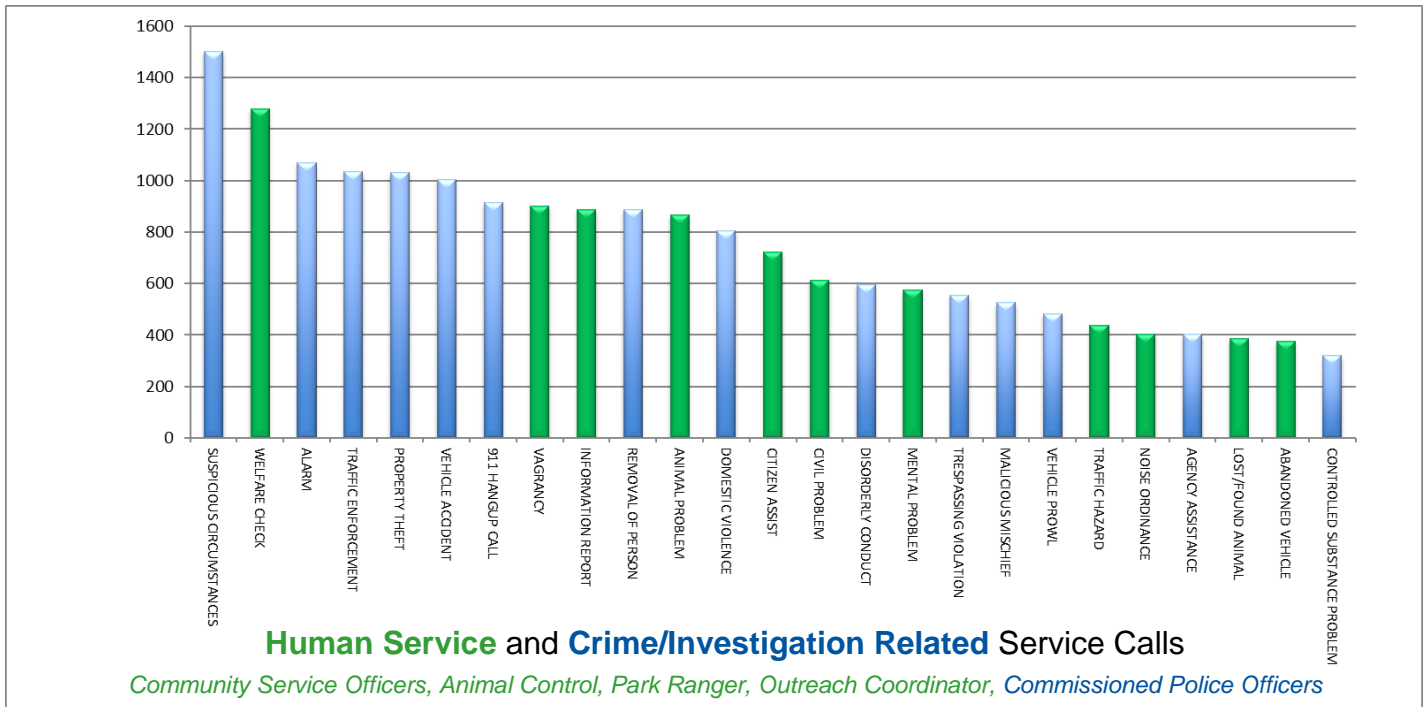
Historical Perspective



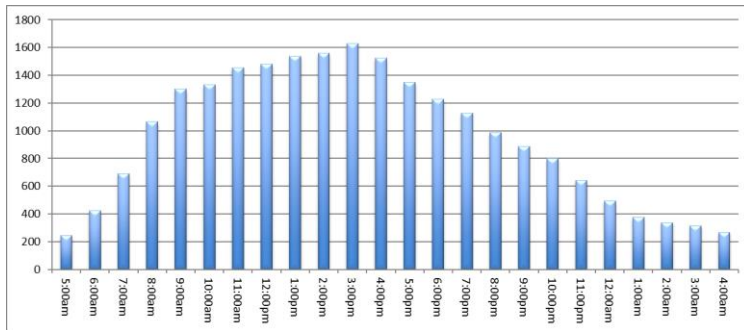
2021 Service Calls

Anacortes Police	8,889
Burlington Police	9,750
Mount Vernon Police	22,046 32%
Sedro Woolley Police	7,736
Skagit County Sheriff	18,732
Swinomish Police	2,574

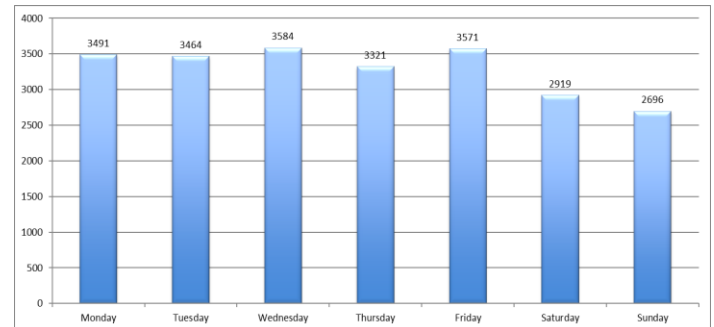
Top 25 Service Calls



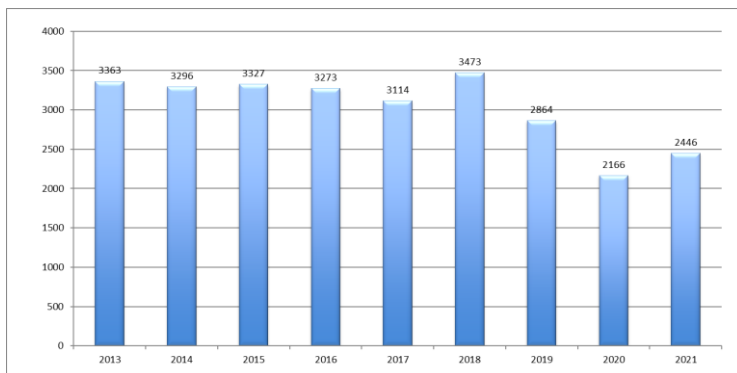
Time of Day



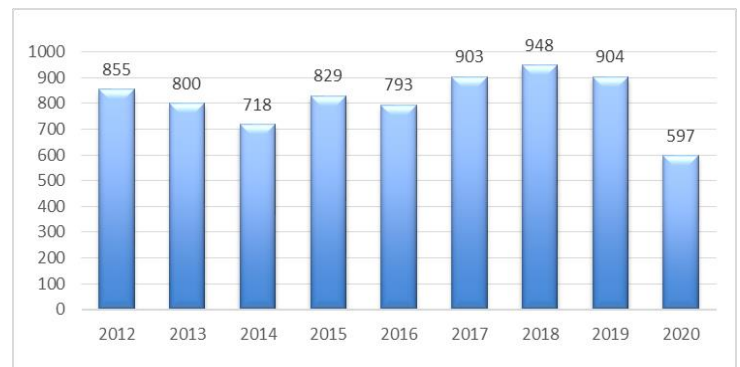
Day of Week



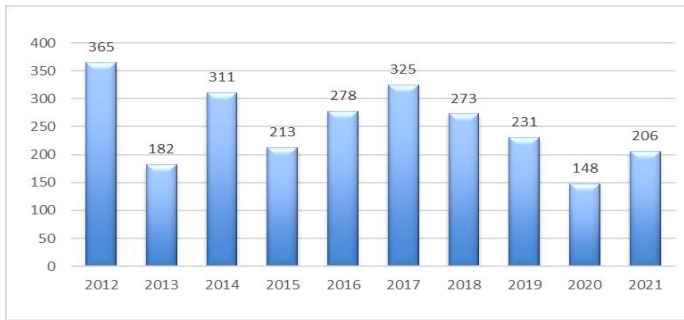
Total Group A Offenses



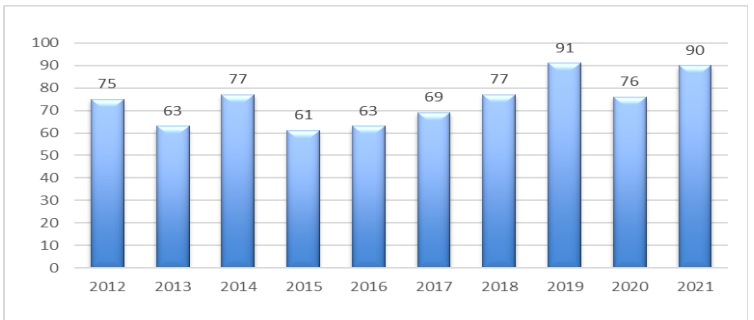
Non Traffic Misdemeanors



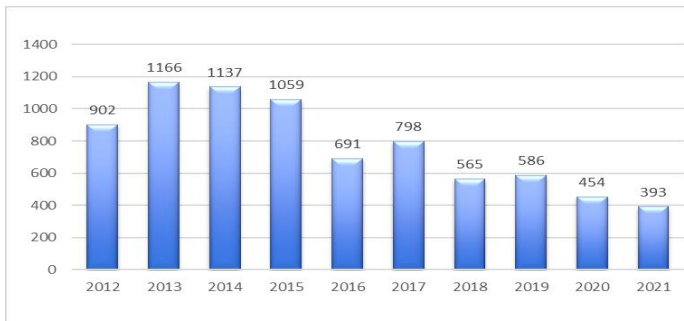
Criminal Traffic Charged



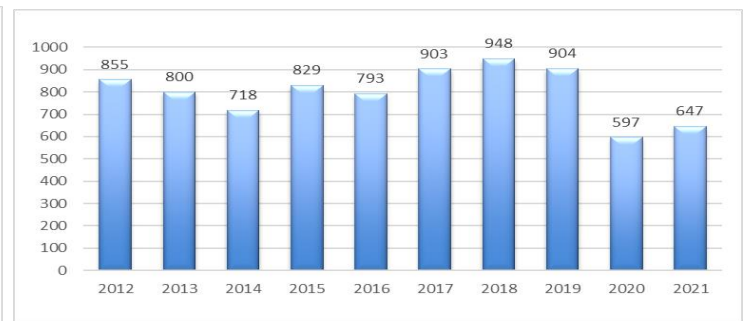
DUI Violations Charged



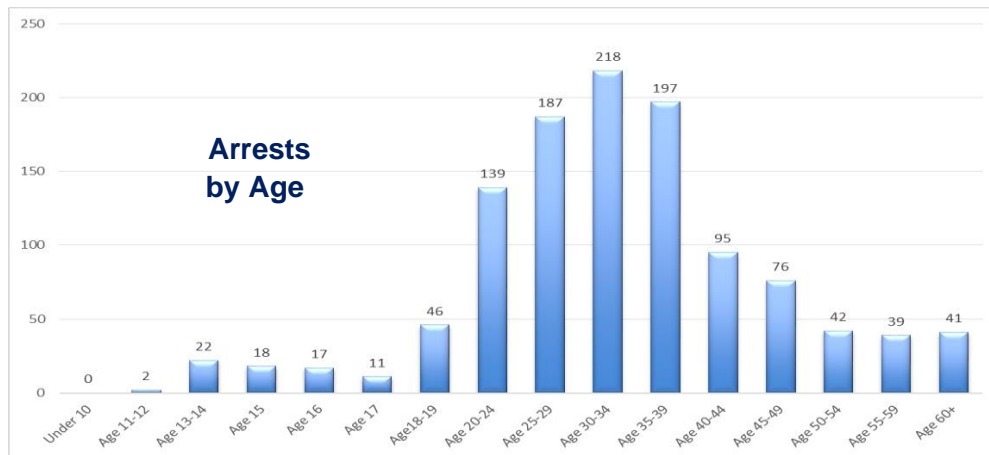
Traffic Infractions



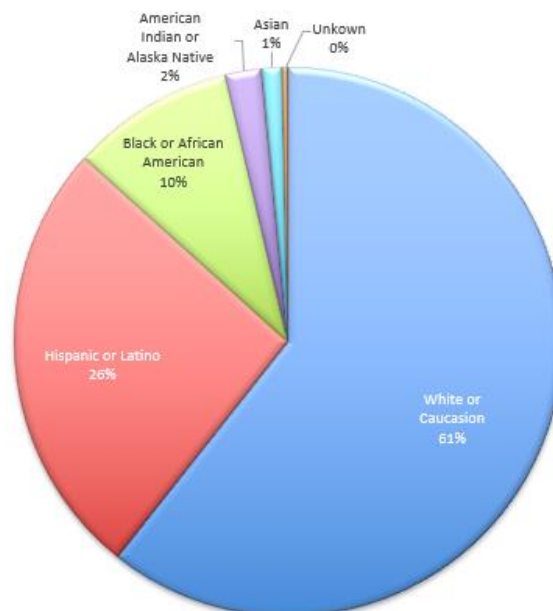
Non-Traffic Infractions



Arrests by Age



Arrests by Ethnicity



(53.6% of the Black or African American Arrests involved one individual with significant behavioral health issues. Arrest was part of obtaining treatment. Removing the individual adjusts to 4.7%)

RESOURCE PLANNING

We place great emphasis on building strong neighborhoods, both residential and business. When neighborhoods are allowed to decay, criminal behavior gains the upper hand. Gone unchecked decay spreads, crime develops, citizen engagement is replaced by fear and desired behaviors are replaced by undesired behaviors.



Four strategic principles guide our resource planning decisions; *open and honest two-way communication* with the community, *adaptability* in providing solutions to issues and problems, *shared responsibility* with our citizenry for policing our community, and *crime prevention* as a central theme of operation.

Crime prevention encompasses education, problem solving and enforcement with the ultimate goal to improving safety and neighborhood life quality. It begins with identifying the scope and size of the problem. Next determining if properly informed and equipped citizens can resolve it. Partnering occurs at every stage but when problem risk or complexity exceeds the citizen's ability, we take a primary role.

Modifying behavior to reduce accidents, injuries and make our streets safer is our goal when dealing with traffic related issues. Officers consider the seriousness of the occurrence, Department policy, and the driver's history when responding to a traffic-related incident. Once officers have reviewed the situation, they use their discretion to determine the best outcome. Since the Department has no mandate regarding the number of citations issued, neither "quota standards" nor "revenue" play a part in an officer's decision to warn (educate) the driver or issue a ticket (enforcement). Engineering modifications also play an important role in helping improve the safety of city streets.



Problem Solving "Success"

1. *Problem is eliminated.*
2. *Reduce the problem through measures that result in fewer incidents.*
3. *Reduce the harm per incident even though the number of incidents remain the same.*
4. *Handle incidents in an improved way.*
5. *Remove the problem from the police/criminal justice system. (To an appropriate system)*

"Safe and enjoyable community living"

DEPARTMENT PRIORITIES

Operational priorities place high importance on delivering quality, professional services.

*Develop understanding and trust
with the community we serve*



*Demonstrate highest professional
ethics conduct and ethics*



Utilize prevention practices as the central operating strategy.

- A Crime Prevention Division devoted to providing citizens education, services and tools.
- Animal Control, Community Service Officers, Park Ranger, Patrol Zone Deployment, Outreach Coordinator, Neighborhood and School Resource functions.



Employ highly qualified and competent staff.

- Dedicated recruiting and retention programs.
- Rigorous selection process to identify candidates with desired values, abilities and skills.



Provide quick and rapid response to emergencies & emerging crime issues.

- Core competencies training & equipment.
- Crisis Negotiations, Gang Resource, K-9, S.M.A.R.T and Tactical Operations functions.



Develop crime resistance barriers in our neighborhoods and business districts.

- Block Watch & Business Watch Programs
- Police Department Operations Talk & City Problem Elimination Response Team
- Zone Deployment, Neighborhood & School Resource



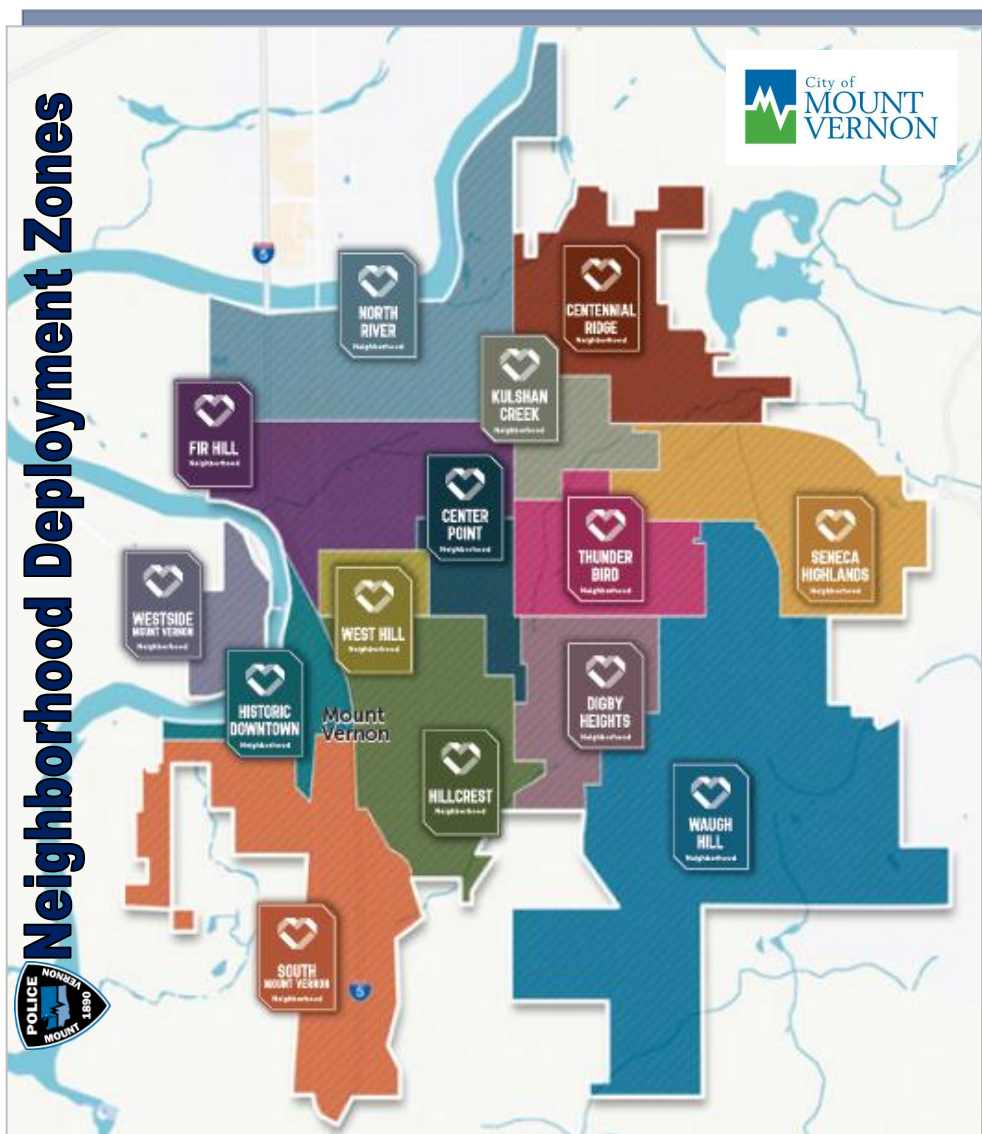
Building community capacity to understand & address crime causes.

- Citizens Academy and Preparatory Academy programs.
- Citizens on Proactive Patrol and Mount Vernon Police Volunteer programs.
- Community networks and partnerships. (MVHope, OWLT, Latino Advisory, Organized Retail Theft)

DEPLOYING FIRST RESPONDERS

The city comprises 14 neighborhood zones. Two neighborhoods are serviced by full-time Neighborhood Resource Officers and 24 patrol staff are distributed to the remaining twelve zones. A strong indicator of a community's overall health is the livability within its neighborhoods. They experience similar problems, but the causes vary so solutions require partnering to create tailored approaches.

Daily, patrol shifts divide the City into a north, south and "roving" areas. Shift briefings, service call history, resident and business owner communication are all ways officers monitor their assigned zone while responding to service needs citywide.



***Improves
Communication***

***Prevents Issues
Falling Through
Cracks***

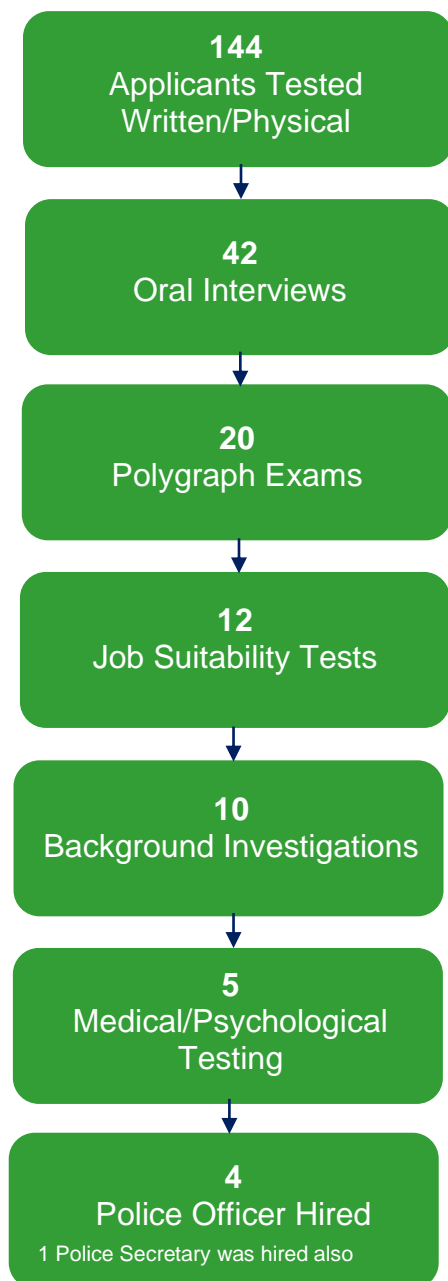
***Strengthens
Relationships***

***Greater Acuity
For
Neighborhood Issues***

OUR MOST IMPORTANT RESOURCE

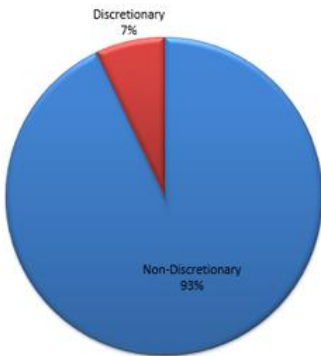
Policing is a people served business requiring highly capable individuals both of character and skills. We look for innovative ways to backfill needed vacancies and make necessary adjustments so service levels the City requires are maintained.

2021 Police Officer Hiring Activity



MOUNT VERNON POLICE DEPARTMENT 2021 Staffing (Budgeted)	
Police Chief	1
Lieutenants	3
Records Manager	1
Sergeants	6
Patrol Officers	24
Traffic Officers	2
Neighborhood Resource Officers	2
School Resource Officer	1
K-9 Officer	1
Detectives	4
Drug Investigator	1
Public Education Officer	1
Community Service Officers	2
Animal Control Officer	1
Park Ranger	1
Outreach Coordinator	1
Records Specialist	5
Property Custodian	1
Receptionist	1
Investigations Secretary	1
Administrative Assistant	1
TOTAL	61

DEPARTMENT BUDGET



Policing priorities would be difficult to achieve without the Mayor and City Council who supported an annual budget and capital budget of \$10,975,076. The budget is developed in a fiscally conservative tone based on goals and objectives developed during the annual planning process and consideration for the city and department strategic plans. A zero-based budget approach is taken by Division Managers justifying all programs and operational needs. Over three quarters of the total budget is allocated to personnel costs. Even with limited financial resources, the Department has consistently exceeded all budgetary demands and has, in all instances, proven fiscally responsible.

POLICING CHALLENGES

In Mount Vernon

- Responsive to public demand for police transparency and accountability
- Homeless population affected by lack of affordable housing and underfunded mental health and substance abuse systems
- Voter initiated state mandates requiring annual training, firearm background checks, changes to police shooting investigations
- Recruiting, hiring and retaining that meets our community needs.
- New growth areas in the City and adapting services.
- Expand Department deployment model which provides a semi-permanent uniformed patrol staff presence in all neighborhoods
- Proactively address traffic related concerns
- Remain focused on Department operational priority – prevention of crime
- Propose crime impact measures that have the greatest success of addressing criminal activity
- Assertively address neighborhood issues involving drug and gang related activity
- Continued commitment to stay current with new technological advances
- Growing cultural differences
- Develop open communication and understanding with all cultures in this community
- Our challenge is continued community trust development and create solutions to their issues
- Continuing to be prepared for unusual occurrences



Inter-Agency Strategic Challenges

- Continue to look for ways where police agencies can share or combine resources
- Complete and implement the strategic plan for addressing drug and gang activity county-wide
- Integrating homeless outreach services withing law enforcement and traditional care agencies
- Radio interoperability migrating analog to digital and repeater tower aging and expansion
- Migration to Spillman Mobile platforms utilized on handheld devices
- Continued strategic response addressing homelessness and associated activities and crimes

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Citizen Participation & Integration In Policing

Demands for transparency and accountability from citizens towards police only drive the need for robust programs that involved citizens directly in police operations and offer opportunities to learn from each other about what it requires to police our community. Citizens Academy, C.O.P.P., M.V.P.V., Preparatory Academy, neighborhood based policing initiatives are just a few examples.



Integrated Outreach Services

25-27% of police calls involve vagrancy, person removal, welfare check, drug problem, etc. Frequently behavioral health is a root cause and require resources beyond law enforcement. In addition, police responses for behavioral health calls need reimagining. Integrating Masters in Social Work specialists with police officers has proven it can change an individual life from dependency and homelessness to an independent contributing member of the community, and, not every situation is incentivized by the offered social services and consequences from arrest or incarceration are part of the care planning. It's necessary that policing capabilities expand by offering multi-disciplinary approach that incorporates social work specialists.



Neighborhood Resource

Our community-based policing approach has delivered consistent success both short and long-term. Kulshan Creek and West Hill, two uniquely different neighborhoods, are serviced by Neighborhood Resource Officers who deliver policing services consistent with their needs. Historic Downtown has similar characteristics and would be served effectively by a Historic Downtown Resource Officer.

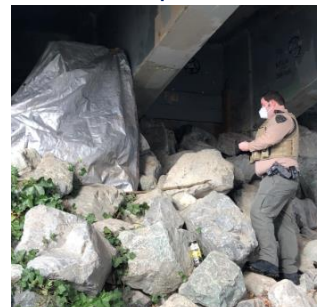


Neighborhood Zone Deployment

Patrol officers are assigned geographic areas called “Neighborhood Zones” (12 currently). These are larger areas than those defined for Neighborhood Resource Officers so additional patrol staffing would provide a stronger connection between the community and the members of the Department.

Park Safety & Enrichment Services

A Park Ranger who is able to devote full-time policing services to 842 acres of city park property and trails that comprises 16 parks, 23 miles of trails, 5 rental facilities, 8 ballfields and 3 soccer fields, boat launch, Spray Park, Skate Park, Dog Park and open spaces that attract visitors and provide recreation and respite for residents.



Priority Policing Model Change



Agencies have individually approached gangs, street crimes and contributed resources for drug enforcement through the Skagit County Interlocal Drug Enforcement Unit. Showing promise is an approach combining the Skagit County Interlocal Drug Enforcement, Skagit County Sheriff Proactive Unit and Mount Vernon Police Department Priority Policing. The new, Skagit County Interlocal Special Investigations Task Force would operate

to eliminate the offender’s ability to use jurisdictional boundaries to avoid detection and jointly focus on emerging criminal activity, drug offenses and criminal street gangs.

So we don’t lose the important youth probation, school, non-profit and faith based roles in preventing gang encroachment, we are integrating a specialized Gang Resource Officer function within our patrol squads. Patrol officers have daily contacts with individuals and neighborhoods and would contribute in a subsidiary capacity to the new Skagit County Proactive model.

Technology

Camera technology on public roadways and trails proved invaluable to solving crimes. One example involved a drive-by shooting where only bullet holes, casings and witness description were available. Investigators searched city cameras near the scene that captured the suspect’s route, license plate, matching clothing description and roles for who committed and assisted in the crime.

Forensic software provides tools to work with the variety of private security camera systems, cell phones and computers that have become part of most investigations. These software tools will allow a single investigator to connect a device and run a program diagnostic while they are doing other tasks.

2021 Organizational Accomplishments

Meeting our Mission is dependent on the many contributions from the members of this Department.

The annual strategic planning workshop was held during the first quarter to establish direction for the coming year. Prior to budget preparation, the various units and divisions formulated their annual goals and objectives which are congruent with the Department's Mission and Vision and subordinate to the agency's broad goals.

While we focus on planned goals and objectives, inevitable additional objectives are discovered. Department members attempt to accomplish these as well. As the year unfolds, the majority of the goals and objectives identified are accomplished while others are either modified or transferred to the following year due to a change in operational priorities.

Annually, division managers provide a re-cap of goals and objectives that are **available upon request**.

THANK YOU

Northwest Career Technical Academy Criminal Justice Students

