

Costa Mesa seeks public's input on the City's housing future

The City is accepting written comments on the proposed Consolidated Plan for future housing during the public review period (April 18, 2025 through May 20, 2025) and also at the public hearing on Tuesday, May 20, 2025.

The Consolidated Plan includes a strategic plan for addressing housing and community development needs of the City, which are intended to guide the City's use of CDBG and HOME funds over a five-year period. The Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plans are required for the City to continue receiving these federal funds.

The City began its consolidated planning process in September 2024 by soliciting feedback from residents at the Senior Center Knowledge and Health Fair Expo, holding two community meetings, one stakeholder meeting, and launching a survey to learn how residents would like to spend future grant funds for housing and community development.

The draft plan will help determine the use of U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Act (HOME) funds based on the required needs assessment and market analysis and feedback received through the public participation process.

For more information, please visit our website [here](#).

Accounting Specialist II Jasmine Vega is the April City Manager Award recipient

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison named Accounting Specialist II Jasmine Vega as the April recipient of the City Manager Leadership Award.

“Jasmine is one of those rare breeds who always has a smile on her face and will consistently make anyone she is helping feel like they have her undivided attention,” Farrell Harrison said. “She has been a key resource with the Finance Department when it comes to working on major projects such as ERP, TESSA migration, and monthly Treasurer’s Reports. I appreciate her dedication to the job and am happy to present her this award.”

Vega has been an instrumental component of the Treasury team within the Finance Department over a number of years. She began her time with the City as a part-time employee in March 2017 as an Accounting Specialist, and just a few months later, in the fall of 2017, she was hired as a full-time Accounting Specialist.

During her eight years with the City, she has taken on many roles and responsibilities, working on exceedingly more important functions and projects. Her ability to demonstrate growth within her roles over the years led to her promotion to Accounting Specialist II, as well as to serve in acting roles as needed to ensure the Finance Department maintained a high level of service to both internal and external customers.

She was recently described by a colleague as a “rock star” for her enthusiastic and knowledgeable efforts during the Genesis Bank Catalyst Expo, where she shared valuable insights with attendees on how businesses can register as vendors with the City.

Vega has a positive attitude and a strong attention to detail which allows her to provide exceptional customer service. On any given day, she handles matters such as accounting issues, invoice tracking, bank wires, business license or false alarm questions. Even when she is approached on a topic not within the scope of her normal Treasury expertise, she is the type of professional that will personally ensure that the matter will get passed to the appropriate department for resolution.

Vega holds a bachelor's degree in political science from UC Irvine.

Costa Mesa Resident Sought to Serve on the Animal Services Committee

The Costa Mesa City Council is currently seeking one resident to serve on the Animal Services Committee:

The Animal Services Committee meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month except for August and December and provides advice and recommendations to the City Council on animal services issues and to promote pet licensing, assist with planning and execution of animal-related events. The City is recruiting for one member (Appointment by Mayor Pro Tem Manuel Chavez), for a term expiration of April 2027. For further information, contact Animal Services Coordinator Jessica Torrejon at (714) 754-5128 or visit www.costamesaca.gov/ASC.

Application Process – Residents who are interested in getting involved in local government are encouraged to complete a Committee Application Form from the City Clerk's Office or

from the City's website (www.costamesaca.gov/apply). The completed application may be submitted online; mailed to Costa Mesa City Clerk at Post Office Box 1200, Costa Mesa, California, 92628-1200; emailed to cityclerk@costamesaca.gov; or hand-delivered to the City Clerk's Office at City Hall, 77 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa. The deadline is 5 p.m., Tuesday, April 8 2025. The appointments are tentatively scheduled for the April 15, 2025 City Council meeting.

Costa Mesa introduces City's first Poet Laureate

The City of Costa Mesa announced that local poet and University of California Irvine instructor Danielle Hanson has been named the first Poet Laureate in the City's history.

"I am honored and excited to have been selected for this role, and I look forward to working together with a vibrant Costa Mesa community of local artists and writers to help get poetry into public spaces around the City," Hanson said.

Mayor John Stephens welcomed Hanson to Costa Mesa, and the Council plans to introduce her at the Tuesday, April 1 meeting.

"Not every City has a Poet Laureate, and I'm pleased to hear that we have one now," Mayor Stephens said. "Poetry is an important literary art form that provides a wonderful complement to the City's existing performing and visual arts."

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison also is happy to have Hanson aboard.

“As the City of the Arts, it is only fitting that we would have a Poet Laureate,” Farrell Harrison said. “I look forward to her upcoming poetry events and I know the public will greatly benefit from this exposure to the arts and classic literature that is not offered in every City. Congrats to our Parks & Community Services team for making this happen.”

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a Poet Laureate is typically someone named to that position by the government, the royal family, or an organization, who is asked to write poems about important public occasions.

Hanson views her role to be, in part, a cheerleader for poetry in the community. She is a believer in the power of poetry to build empathy, to make people feel heard, and to create a sense of connection and wonder.

“The Poet Laureate position is an ideal platform to get poetry out where people already are. In the past, I have collaborated with artists and arts organizations,” Hanson said. But there are even more things that can happen when you team up artists with local governments. Costa Mesa is a real leader in this regard.”

The Poet Laureate appointment is a two-year stint and in addition to creating new poetry, Hanson plans to hold public workshops where people can learn and experience the craft of creating poetry. These workshops will be for writers and non-writers—no previous experience is needed.

Hanson, who has been writing poetry for over 30 years, said this position is both humbling and exciting, and she relishes the idea of being able to contribute to exposing more people to poetry.

Hanson teaches poetry at UC Irvine and she is a past winner of the both the Codhill Press and Elixir Press Prizes in poetry. In addition, she is the marketing director for Sundress Publications and she has authored two books, “Ambushing

Water,” which was a finalist for Georgia Author of the Year and “Fraying Edge of Sky,” winner of the Codhill Poetry Prize. A third book “The Night Is What It Eats,” is coming out this fall. Click here to read some of her poems <https://www.citricacid.ink/issue-13/two-poems>.

Hanson is a graduate of the University of Tennessee Chattanooga, where she double majored in humanities with a concentration in creative writing and mathematics. She is married to the UCI dean of engineering, Magnus Egerstedt, and they have college-aged identical twin daughters who have the goal to be circus performers, she said.

Police Chief Ron Lawrence Announces retirement after 35-year career in law enforcement

After a successful 35-year career serving California as a police professional, with over a third of that time as the leader of a department, Chief of Police Ronald A. Lawrence has announced that he intends to retire this summer.

Chief Lawrence began his career in 1989 and promoted up the ranks with different law enforcement agencies in California, including serving as police chief in the cities of Citrus Heights and Rocklin before his appointment as police chief in Costa Mesa on Sept. 7, 2021.

While in Costa Mesa, he is credited with introducing innovative police technologies to assist crime fighting

efforts, building trust throughout the community, developing police personnel for future leadership positions, and reducing crime in what was already a safe city.

Mayor John Stephens applauded Chief Lawrence's commitment to Costa Mesa.

"During his time as the top leader of our police department, Chief Lawrence led the organization through a staffing transition as a result of key retirements, and he has brought the organization to a whole new level," Mayor Stephens said, adding, "He introduced a responsive culture which is highly regarded in the law enforcement profession, and became a trusted and respected professional and neighbor in our community."

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison also expressed her sincere appreciation for Chief Lawrence.

"It is with mixed emotions that I accept Chief Lawrence's intent to retire at the end of June after an amazing and successful 35-year career dedicating his life to the service of others," City Manager Farrell Harrison said. "He led our remarkable police department, filled with dedicated professionals, who have built and earned the trust of our community. Chief Lawrence will be missed, and I thank him for transitioning the police department to an even higher level of performance."

Reflecting on his time as police chief, Lawrence shared, "When I was hired for this position, I was asked to transition the organization for the future, build a professionally diverse police department, and maintain the already positive reputation of the Costa Mesa PD," Lawrence said. "I could not be more pleased with what we have accomplished together, and I have full confidence that our police staff is well positioned to guide the department well into the future."

Lawrence thanked the City Manager, Mayor, City Council, City

staff and the police department for their support.

“I have profound gratefulness for City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison, who trusted me and gave me the autonomy to lead the police department. I appreciate her leadership. I also have tremendous gratitude for our Mayor John Stephens and the entire City Council for their faith and belief in me to lead the police department. Our City Manager and City Council have done, and continue to do, remarkable work to maintain Costa Mesa as a great place to live and work, and I know each one of them has a servant’s heart which makes our community better in more ways than one. Costa Mesa is fortunate to have such quality leadership, including my colleagues in other City Departments, who pour their dedication into our community. I am truly fortunate to have worked with such outstanding professionals.”

Chief Lawrence lauded public safety in Costa Mesa, giving high praise to the infrastructure and leadership put in place by the City Manager, City Council, and Fire Chief Dan Stefano.

“Public safety in Costa Mesa continues to evolve into a really great place, thanks to Lori Ann Farrell-Harrison, Fire Chief Stefano and his staff, our Costa Mesa police professionals, and our City Council. Thanks to the emphasis on public safety and the continued support from our City Council, the safety and well-being of our public remains a top priority in Costa Mesa,” Chief Lawrence said.

In addition to his years as a police chief, Lawrence has served on many statewide boards and commissions, including the Western States Information Network (WISN), the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), and the California Police Chiefs Association (CPCA) – elected as CPCA President in 2019 representing all 335 municipal police chiefs in California as the liaison to the Governor, State Attorney General and legislators at the Capitol.

Lawrence said he made his decision to retire to spend more time with his wife Jennifer, and to allow new police leadership to grow.

“It is difficult to leave a profession I love, but I look forward to spending more time with my best friend and supportive wife Jennifer, and our family, who are always there for me,” Lawrence said. “I know I leave the City on great terms, and after building upon a strong and diverse team I recognize that it’s time to allow future leaders to push the organization to even greater heights. I am so proud of Deputy Chief LaPointe, our Executive Staff, and our entire PD team for what we have accomplished together.”

Chief Lawrence and his wife Jennifer will still call Costa Mesa home, choosing to continue to live in our community because they consider Costa Mesa safe, vibrant, and friendly.

The decision to select a new chief of police to succeed Chief Lawrence will be made by City Manager Farrell Harrison in the coming months. Chief Lawrence will remain as the police chief for the next three months, announcing that his last day with Costa Mesa will be Friday, June 27, 2025.

Public Works welcomes Paul Martin as the new Transportation Services Manager

Public Works Director Raja Sethuraman announced Paul Martin, a seasoned transportation professional, is the City’s new

Transportation Services Manager.

With over 25 years of experience in both the public and private sectors, Martin brings extensive expertise in all areas of Transportation, including Active Transportation, Planning and Operations.

In his new role, Martin will oversee the City's traffic operations, transportation planning and active transportation programs.

Prior to joining Costa Mesa, Paul served as the first Active Transportation Coordinator for the Orange County Transportation Authority.

He also worked as the Transportation Manager at City of Placentia and Active Transportation Manager at Mark Thomas.

Paul is registered as a Civil Engineer and Traffic Engineer with the State of California.

Martin holds a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Civil Engineering from UC Irvine.

Management Analyst Sergio Escobar is latest recipient of City Manager Leadership Award

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison named Management Analyst Sergio Escobar as the City Manager Leadership Award for the month of March.

“When I was first hired, the City Council tasked me with building a strong relationship with our Latino community,” Farrell Harrison said. “Sergio has been at the forefront of that effort. It is such a blessing that he came to the City Manager’s Office. He has done nothing but excel since that time. He is so beloved by all of us. I am so thrilled to present him with this award.”

Escobar started with City of Costa Mesa in 2021, serving as a City Council Aide and promoted to Management Analyst in 2024. Before joining the City of Costa Mesa, Escobar began his public service journey in various public agencies such as the Orange County Transportation Authority, City of Newport Beach and in his hometown, the City of Santa Ana.

In his current capacity, Escobar is key member of the Constituent Services Team, serving as the liaison to the Mayor and City Council, he provides a superior level of customer service by collaborating with city departments to respond to community concerns efficiently and effectively, ensuring that residents receive the support and assistance they need.

His passion for community outreach and engagement is evident in his work across some of the city’s most underserved neighborhoods, including Shalimar, Filmore, Mendoza, and Center Street. Escobar has built trust and made strong connections with community groups such as Costa Mesa Unidos, Las Promotoras, and Resilience OC.

Beyond his strong efforts to uplift the community, Escobar serves as a key liaison to the Mayor and City Council, assisting with initiatives that support residents and create meaningful policy changes.

A prime example of his exemplary work in promoting inclusive and equitable access to housing and social services. His efforts to spread awareness about Project Food Box have helped many seniors and families struggling with food insecurity

receive essential support. With a deep commitment to serving the most vulnerable residents, Escobar has also played an instrumental role in the development and launching of the City's Tenant Protection and Rental Assistance program, ensuring that tenants understand their rights and have access to necessary resources and services.

Most notably, Escobar provided critical support to the Shalimar Park Expansion Project and Relocation Plan, which presented the City with a unique opportunity to acquire a property adjacent to the Shalimar Park, allowing for the possible expansion of the park's footprint in a park deficient neighborhood.

Additionally, the project includes the relocation of existing residents, improving their housing needs by providing housing units at the City owned James Street property units and providing financial assistance to those tenants wishing to relocate. Escobar's approach and tact in handling the sensitivity of the tenants has made it a seamless and thoughtful process.

His compassion and empathy for the Costa Mesa community has gained him respect and recognition amongst residents, City Council, and his peers.

He has a bachelor's degree in public administration and is in his final semester pursuing a master's degree in public administration, both from Cal State Fullerton.

Flood Watch will be in effect from 10 p.m. Wednesday, March 12 through 6 p.m. Thursday March 13

As a late winter storm is predicted to hit Costa Mesa and the OC Region, a Flood Watch will be in effect from 10 p.m. Wednesday, March 12 through 6 p.m. Thursday March 13. Here are some simple tips to help stay safe:

- Stay informed: Keep an eye on local weather updates, and get notifications from AlertOC.com
- Avoid areas prone to flooding such as 17th Street and Pomona Avenue.
- No Parking from 6 p.m. Wednesday to 6 p.m. Thursday near the intersection of 17th and Pomona. Signs are posted.
- Avoid flooded areas: Never attempt to drive or walk through flooded streets. It's not worth the risk.
- Secure your property: If you live in a flood-prone area, consider sandbagging vulnerable areas around your home.
- Have an emergency kit ready: Flashlight, extra batteries, non-perishable food, and water are always good to have on hand.
- Check your drains: Clear leaves and debris from your gutters and drains to prevent blockages.
- Stay safe, stay dry, and let's all look out for one another!

For more information please visit www.weather.gov

Costa Mesa Residents Sought to Serve on City Committees

The Costa Mesa City Council is currently seeking residents to serve on the following City Committees:

Animal Services Committee: The Committee meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 5:30 p.m. except for August and December and provides advice and recommendations to the City Council on animal services issues and to promote pet licensing, assist with planning and execution of animal-related events. The City is recruiting for three members (Appointments by Mayor Pro Tem Chavez, Council Member Reynolds, and Council Member Marr), each for a term expiration of April 2027. For further information, contact Animal Services Coordinator Jessica Torrejon at (714) 754-5128 or visit www.costamesaca.gov/ASC.

Active Transportation Committee: The Committee meets on the first Wednesday of the month and helps plan and implement an Active Transportation network for the City by improving bicycle and pedestrian connectivity throughout the City, and also assists with the review, update and implementation of the city's Active Transportation Plan. The City is recruiting for three members (Appointments by Mayor Pro Tem Chavez, Council Member Reynolds, and Council Member Marr), each for a term expiration of April 2027. For further information, contact Active Transportation Coordinator Brett Atencio Thomas at (714) 754-5275 or visit www.costamesaca.gov/ATC.

Fairview Park Steering Committee: The Committee meets on the second Wednesday of every other month and evaluates the Fairview Park Master Plan, evaluates park enhancement opportunities that are compliant with Measure AA, and makes recommendations to the Parks and Community Services Commission and the City Council. The City is recruiting for three members

(Appointments by Council Member Buley, Council Member Gameros, and Council Member Pettis), each for a term expiration of April 2029 and for one member (Appointment by Mayor Stephens) for a term expiration of April 2027. For further information, contact Fairview Park Administrator Kelly Dalton at (714) 754-5135 or visit www.costamesaca.gov/FVPSC.

Finance and Pension Advisory Committee: The Committee meets on the second Wednesday of the month and provides advice to the City Council on issues related to significant financial matters and advises annually on the adoption of the City's budget, the allocation of any budget surpluses, and the City's investment performance and policies. The City is recruiting for one (1) member (Appointment by Council Member Buley) for a term expiration of April 2028. Applicants shall have pension knowledge or shall be residents or individuals that conduct business within the City and have a background that includes experience in securities trading, financial planning, banking, auditing, accounting, or a closely related and relevant field. For further information, contact Executive Assistant Dina Wild at (714) 754-5243 or visit www.costamesaca.gov/FIPAC.

Housing and Public Service Grants Committee: The committee meets twice a year and helps to promote understanding of the community development process and activities funded by the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). Additionally, the committee rates and ranks applications for CDBG public service grants, ultimately developing funding recommendations for City Council recommendations. The City is recruiting for three (3) members (Appointments by Mayor Pro Tem Chavez, Council Member Reynolds, and Council Member Marr), each for a term expiration of April 2027 and for one (1) member (Appointment by Council Member Buley) for a term expiration of April 2026. For further information, contact Grant Administrator Mikelle Daily at (714) 754-5678 or visit www.costamesaca.gov/HPSGC.

Traffic Impact Fee Ad Hoc Committee: The Committee meets on an

as needed basis and the purpose of the Committee is to fund the necessary transportation/circulation improvements, which are related directly to the incremental traffic impacts imposed on the City's transportation system by the development of new and/or changing commercial, industrial, and residential uses as permitted by the General Plan. The traffic impact fee committee assists staff on all aspects related to the updating and revision of traffic impact fees. The City is recruiting for four (4) members with a term expiration of April 2029; one (1) Major Developers' Representative, one (1) Small Developers' Representative and two (2) At-large positions. For further information, contact Public Works Director Raja Sethuraman at (714) 754-5343 or visit www.costamesaca.gov/TIFAdHoc.

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MEDIA CONTACT

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Chief Plans Examiner Charles Chamoun is the latest recipient of the City Manager Leadership Award

Assistant City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly presented the City Manager Leadership Award for February to Chief Plans Examiner Charles Chamoun.

“Charles has a lot of fans here at City Hall, and I’m one of them,” Gallardo-Daly said. “Charles is known for delivering customer service that exceeds expectation. Anyone who visits the second floor knows him as a problem solver and solution-oriented individual who treats the public and city staff with respect and courtesy.”

He first began working for the City of Costa Mesa Public Works Department in January of 1991 as an Engineering Technician I. He later transferred to Development Services where he was eventually promoted to Chief Plan Examiner.

Due to his 34 years of experience, his institutional knowledge is so important to the City and fellow employees. It is very common for staff to go to him for clarification and explanation of Department practices and policies, and how they can best be applied.

Chamoun deeply cares about our community and residents. Most recently, he has been monitoring and occasionally driving by the South Coast Drive leaning fence wall, which has been an issue lately.

In the early years, the wall’s deflection was nearly 3 to 4 inches. However, in 2024, he noticed the excessive deflection of the fence wall and reported to the Building Official where

immediate action was put in place.

After graduating college, Chamoun moved to Maryland where he got a job in Civil Engineering with emphasis on Surveying, Hydrology design, and Street improvements. After two years, he decided to move back to California and worked with a private Civil Engineering firm to further enhance and gain more experience in Civil Engineering.

Chamoun has a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from California State Long Beach.

Recreation Supervisor Tiana Asmine receives City Manager Leadership Award

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison has awarded the City Manager Leadership Award for the month of January to Recreation Supervisor Tiana Asmine.

“Since arriving in Costa Mesa in 2021, Tiana has been instrumental in helping to bring classes and events back to life after the pandemic when we needed it most,” Farrell Harrison said. “This award is proof that she is valued by her colleagues and I am grateful for her dedication to the public and her hard work does not go unnoticed.”

Asmine put in an extraordinary amount of time and effort into our rebranding and redesign of our Recreation Guide which is now known throughout the City as THE SPOTLIGHT!

She taught herself all aspects of the photoshop software to be able to enhance our magazine continuously. She also oversees

the award-winning SMART camp program which is a partnership with the school district to contract with over 25 teachers to provide Sports, Music and Arts to over 400 Costa Mesa youth.

Prior to coming to Costa Mesa, Asmine worked in the City of Riverside, where she was a Recreation Coordinator overseeing contract classes, camps, and recreation center programs.

She has been working in recreation for the past 15 years at various agencies which include the City of Lake Forest and City of Fountain Valley, where she gained extensive experience in special events, youth programs, aquatics, facility rentals and contract classes.

She has her Bachelor's Degree in Women's Studies from Cal State Fullerton and is in the process of getting her Masters in Recreation Administration at Long Beach State.

Lead Equipment Mechanic Evan Rodriguez receives this month's City Manager Leadership Award

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison presented the City Manager's Leadership Award for the month of December to Lead Equipment Mechanic Evan Rodriguez.

"I was impressed to learn that Evan has created an atmosphere and culture of excellence and customer service by cross training other members of his team on how to repair public safety apparatus and other vehicles in the fleet," Farrell

Harrison said. "This allows our staff to expand their knowledge base and skill sets to better serve our customers. I am grateful for his dedication and am thrilled to give him this award."

As the Lead Mechanic, Evan consistently exceeds expectations in his role while being focused in building a team of skilled mechanics who support all City Departments. His attention to detail, problem-solving skills, and ability to meet deadlines have been instrumental in the success of Equipment Maintenance

Rodriquez is a great collaborator and always willing to help his colleagues. He's a big believer in cross-training which allows for the sharing of knowledge about all City equipment and helps the entire Equipment Maintenance team grow their expertise. Rodriquez strongly encourages all the mechanics to attend training.

He's always looking for ways to improve and brings in new ideas. His proactive approach has boosted efficiency and productivity within our team. Rodriquez's positive and can-do attitude is contagious. He maintains a high level of confidence and professionalism, even during challenging times.

Some specific examples of Rodriquez's accomplishments are successfully leading the team of mechanics developing and implementing a new way of approaching Fire apparatus maintenance. This has been accomplished through in-house cross-training and encouraging staff to attend state certified Fire Mechanic classes. Due to these efforts, along with Rodriquez's approachable style, the City now has multiple mechanics that are able to address the unique demands of the Fire Dept.

Rodriquez's commitment to providing excellent customer service has resulted in numerous positive reports, increased the reliability of our vehicles and equipment and has demonstrated an increased level of professionalism of Equipment

Maintenance.

Rodriquez is a recent father so hasn't had much free time lately but does enjoy listening to music and spending time with his family.