



**Planning and Community
Development Department**
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James Rausse, FAICP, WEDG
Commissioner

Pamela J. Tarlow, Esq.
Deputy Commissioner of Planning and
Community Development

February 4, 2026

City Council
City Hall
One Roosevelt Square
Mount Vernon, NY 10550

RE: PARK IN LIEU FEES FOR PARKING VARIANCES

Honorable City Councilmembers,

The Department of Planning and Community Development has identified an inconsistency between the goals in the adopted Comprehensive Plan and the existing, outdated zoning code. To encourage successful development proposals in 2026 that are consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan, we respectfully request for the City Council to consider suspending this fee-in-lieu provision until the new zoning ordinance is adopted. The new zoning should re-introduce a fee-in-lieu for parking (perhaps at a higher rate), but with lower parking ratios that reflect realistic need and what is realistically achievable given the City's smaller lot sizes. This will incentivize applicants to provide the parking that is necessary, but not raise the cost of doing business in Mount Vernon.

Currently, the City has developers that are required to pay parking in lieu fees based on the existing zoning code. Attached is the adopted fee program requirement, §267.40 attachment 3.1 The fee requires, for multi-residential users, 2 parking spots per dwelling unit. It does not differentiate based on location or size. Mount Vernon is unique in requiring a blanket provision of 2 spaces for all dwelling units, regardless of size. While this is typically not an issue for single-family or two-family homes, almost every multi-family development proposal requires a parking variance unless the project is a large, new construction building with a self-contained garage. This oddity can be expressed in an extreme: a studio apartment (where the average occupancy is 1.5 people) would need two parking spots, even in a transit-oriented development area where the resident is more likely to be dependent on public transportation.

This fee should be collected after a Zoning Board of Appeals ("ZBA") action allowing a variance for parking and before the certificate of occupancy is issued.

Historically, there has been inconsistent enforcement of these fees, creating issues of across-the-board fairness with who these fees are applied to, delays in land use board decisions, and placing undue burden on small to medium-sized property owners who do not have the means nor wherewithal to cover these fees. This has resulted Mount Vernon has parking requirements that are much higher, and less flexible, than neighboring municipalities. Most municipalities have parking ratios that are scaled to the size of a dwelling unit, with two or three-bedroom units requiring more parking per unit, and studio and one-bedroom units requiring less parking per unit

The fact that many parking variances are required in Mount Vernon, has meant that these applications have been burdened by payment-in-lieu fees for parking requirements that cannot realistically be met. Parking variances were required in 44 % of the submittals in 2025 to the ZBA.

It should also be noted that requiring something that has a likely outcome of approval, slows down processing of more complex issues, and deters new development.



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Ultimately, the City's goal (as noted in the Comprehensive Plan) is to reduce parking for transit-supported developments after our new zoning is written. The aim is that Mount Vernon will join our neighbors in requiring lower parking ratios for apartment buildings near transit, which means that many of our current development proposals will ultimately comply with future parking requirements and not need variances (or need to pay fees-in-lieu). However, for these proposals to move forward now (under current zoning), applicants are often looking at parking fees-in-lieu of between \$50k and \$250K, which effectively make their proposals financially unfeasible, especially small development projects under 20 units.

Mount Vernon has committed to fair housing choice as part of the Consolidated Plan submitted to HUD and to comply with the Fair Housing Act of 1964 et al. Choice includes residents who may wish to live in smaller rental buildings as much as living in single family homes or large luxury buildings. In keeping the City's regulations open to providing choice, the City Council should consider this fee as burdensome at this time.

Staff hereby requests that this fee be suspended until it is reconciled as part of a new zoning code, which should be adopted within the next 18-24 months.

The City of Mount Vernon remains committed to advancing policies that promote housing opportunity. I respectfully request the City Council's consideration of this legislation and welcome the opportunity to provide additional information as needed.

Sincerely,

JAMES RAUSSE, FAICP, WEDG

cc: Mayor Shawyn Patterson-Howard
Comptroller Darren M. Morton
Malcolm Clark, Chief of Staff

Attachment