

Mount Vernon, NY 10552

October 8, 2025

Re: Opposition to Zoning Changes in the Proposed Comprehensive Plan

Dear Members of the Mount Vernon City Council,

My name is Donna Wemple, and I write to you not only as a 26-year resident of Mount Vernon, but as a homeowner and taxpayer.

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the zoning changes proposed in the so-called “Comprehensive Plan,” particularly the elimination of single-family zoning and the blanket legalization of duplexes, triplexes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in residential neighborhoods.

These changes pose a direct threat to the very communities that have sustained Mount Vernon through years of hardship. Our single-family neighborhoods are stable, tax-contributing, and deeply rooted communities. They provide green space, absorb stormwater, and most importantly, support the city’s per-capita tax base.

Instead of being protected or supported, these neighborhoods are being targeted for intensified density with no clear plan to expand infrastructure, address traffic and parking, or preserve community character. Simply, it’s destabilizing policy. It undermines property values, reduces quality of life, and drives away exactly the kind of families and homeowners Mount Vernon needs to retain.

Legalizing multi-unit housing throughout established single-family zones risks turning these neighborhoods into high-turnover, investor-owned rental corridors. It encourages speculative development, absentee landlords, and a transient population less connected to the long-term well-being of our city.

If housing expansion is a goal, do it responsibly by supporting projects near transit hubs and in underutilized commercial corridors. But this plan does not reflect responsible growth. It reflects a rushed, top-down approach that sacrifices community stability for density targets.

I urge you to reject the proposed elimination of single-family zoning.

Sincerely,
Donna Wemple

From: [Mrs. Kenyah Miller](#)
To: [cityclerk](#)
Cc: [MayorSPH](#)
Subject: Comprehensive Plan Feedback
Date: Wednesday, October 8, 2025 11:15:53 AM

You don't often get email from kmiller@intellectusprep.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

Greetings-

Intellectus Preparatory Charter School has not been included in this comprehensive city plan at all. We currently serve 150 students across grades 6-10, we will be adding 11th and 12th grade one at a time over the next two years until we are a full 6-12 campus. Intellectus Prep focuses on accelerated academics and high school completion, as well as early college. I respectfully request that Intellectus Preparatory Charter School is appropriately included in this plan. Even private schools are listed, so I am assuming this is an oversight, and not a slight. Intellectus Prep has consistently served the community, shows up at community events (and pays), and even serves as a training site for the Mount Vernon Police Department.

Furthermore, the way the education section is written refers to changes "proposed" or in the future. At this time, the proposed changes have been enacted, so it should be adjusted to reflect what currently is.

Lastly, the education section only includes enrollment data. However, a strong emphasis should be placed on the actual performance of the district. These numbers can be obtained from data.nysed.gov. This is the data that people are using to determine whether or not to move to Mount Vernon.

I am not able to make the meeting tonight or next week due to prior obligations, but I am happy to be of service in any way possible.

Preparing Scholars for Life,

Mrs. Kenyah Miller

Founder/CEO and Executive Director

[Intellectus Preparatory Charter School](#)

175-177 Gramatan Avenue

Mount Vernon, NY 10550

914.221.6929 x110 | www.intellectusprep.org | [Book a 30-minute Meeting](#)

"Non Scholae Sed Vitae" - We learn not for school, but for life.

Comp Plan Public Hearing Comment

Nicole Bonilla, MBA

City Clerk - City of Mount Vernon, New York

From: Sarah Alim <salim@savills.us>
Sent: Tuesday, October 7, 2025 1:17 PM
To: cityclerk <CityClerk@mountvernonny.gov>
Subject: Commentary on the Mount Vernon 10 Year Plan

You don't often get email from salim@savills.us. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Mount Vernon City Board,

My name is Sarah Abdin. I've lived in Mount Vernon for 10 years. I'm 35, a mom of three girls (ages 4, 3, and 6 months), and a real estate program manager—so yes, I think about how businesses and how their real estate portfolio function (or don't) for a living.

I love this city. My two older girls are students at Friendship for Tots (they love it!), and my dream is to keep my girls in the Mount Vernon public schools all the way through high school without constantly worrying if I'm gambling with their education. I want to buy a home here, raise my kids here, and believe in the future here. But right now, Mount Vernon feels like a city that's lost its confidence.

We have *everything* a great city needs: three train stations, 30-minute access to Manhattan, incredible diversity, and a tight-knit community when it's allowed to shine. We could be the Long Island City of Westchester—think Forest Hills energy with Pelham-level schools and New Rochelle pride. But we've got to stop tripping over ourselves and start managing our potential.

So here's my real talk—from someone who loves Mount Vernon enough to stay, and who's stubborn enough to believe we can do better.

1) The North/South Divide is Embarrassingly Real

Mount Vernon is *visibly divided*. You don't need a map to find it — just cross the Metro-North line.

On one side, you've got tree-lined streets, historic homes, and people walking dogs under working streetlights. Cross the tracks and it's a different city — older buildings, cracked sidewalks, empty storefronts, and a gray, tired energy that says, "The city stopped caring about us."

It's not dirt — our streets are actually pretty clean — it's *neglect*. It's a lack of attention, investment, and leadership. It's the "other side of 8 Mile," but ours is just a half-mile apart. That should embarrass us.

And it's not just visual — it's racial, economic, and structural. City services, schools, investment... they all look different depending on which side of the line you're on. That divide isn't accidental — it's the result of years of decisions. And we need to start undoing it, not managing around it.

Nowhere is this divide clearer than on **4th Avenue**, our so-called "Main Street." My family runs businesses there, and I can tell you firsthand: it's in trouble. Homelessness, open drug use, shoplifting, abandoned storefronts — the street has become a place people avoid, not visit.

We lost our **Rite Aid across from the Metro-North** station because of repeated theft and safety issues. Think about that: a national retailer, on a prime corner across from a commuter hub, gave up. That's a failure of safety, not business.

But it doesn't have to stay that way.

4th Avenue could be our comeback story. Across from a major train station, it's perfectly positioned to become a mixed-use, active corridor — our version of Steinway Street or even Downtown New Rochelle. We just need to make it safe, bright, and livable.

What I'm asking for:

- **Light it up.** Reliable streetlights and active cameras so people feel safe after 7 p.m.
- **Feet on the street.** Consistent foot patrols—not just drive-bys. Presence changes behavior.
- **Fix the zoning.** Right now, 4th Avenue is strangled by commercial-only zoning. Let building owners create apartments above storefronts. Residents mean lights on at night, safer streets, and buildings that get real investment. When owners can make income upstairs, they'll modernize downstairs.
- **Don't tax the survivors.** The small businesses that are still there are heroes. Don't burden them with improvement fees — *help them*.
- **Rebrand the corridor.** New signage, fresh storefronts, and art that celebrates Mount Vernon's culture. Bring pride back to the south side.

We can make 4th Avenue the heart of this city again — but we have to stop treating it like its lungs: something we hold our breath around.

2) Homelessness & addiction

Let's talk about the issue we all see but hate to mention: too many people are suffering in the open.

You can walk from the station to 4th Avenue and see people sleeping in doorways, nodding off on benches, or yelling at ghosts. It's heartbreaking, and it's also unsafe. Businesses can't operate like this, and families can't walk their kids around like this.

This isn't just a policing issue — it's a systems issue. These are people with trauma, addiction, mental illness, or all three, and right now we're addressing it with the same approach we use to fill potholes: patch and move on.

We need compassion *and* boundaries:

- **Partner with regional programs.** We're not alone — Westchester County and New Rochelle have programs that connect unhoused residents to treatment, housing, and case management. Use them.
- **Convert vacant city properties** into transitional housing with wraparound services: counseling, job readiness, addiction treatment. Not shelters — structured programs with exit plans.
- **Establish crisis response teams.** We need trained professionals, not police, handling mental health calls when possible. It's more humane and more effective.
- **Clean and reclaim public spaces.** Families and businesses have a right to safety. Compassion without rules is chaos, and right now, we're living the proof.

We can care deeply without letting the city unravel. A safe city *is* a compassionate city.

3) Schools — fewer buildings, better results (and don't leave closed sites to rot)

I've got three little girls I want to keep in this district through high school. Help me say "yes" to that.

We have too many schools for too few students, and not enough results where it counts. I know consolidation and closures are already on the table. Good. My question is: what's the plan for those closed sites? Please don't let them sit vacant and drag neighborhoods down.

What I'm asking for:

- **Yes you are closing & consolidating** underused schools—but **what is the plan for reuse?**
- **Partner with a reputable developer** to convert closed sites into **mixed-income affordable housing** or **community hubs** (childcare, arts/rec, workforce training).
Idle land = blight; reused land = revenue + vitality.
- **Supercharge MVHS.** Modern labs, clean bathrooms, safe halls, rigorous academics,

and college/CTE pathways. Publish a 12-month turnaround plan with monthly public metrics.

- **Slim the admin, fund classrooms.** If dollars aren't reaching teachers and facilities, you're doing it wrong.
- **Full transparency.** Post contracts, vendors, and spend in a simple public dashboard.
-

My family—and a lot of families like mine—are deciding whether to stay based on this.

4) Infrastructure — the pipes, the pavement, the priorities

This one's not glamorous, but it's urgent.

Mount Vernon's sewer system is over 100 years old. The city reports we lose **23.6% of our water** before it even reaches homes. That's not a small leak — that's millions of dollars literally vanishing underground. And the system is failing. Every time it rains hard, basements flood and residents cross their fingers that the toilets will flush.

This is a basic quality-of-life issue. We can't keep patching. We need a rebuild — smartly funded and tightly managed.

How to fund it without raising taxes:

- **Cut redundancy.** We do street sweeping twice a week—that's a rich-city habit. Cut to once and put the savings into pipes.
- **Win grants.** NYS Environmental Facilities Corp exists for this. With that huge city hall building who even works there? Hire a full time grant-writer. That role should pay for itself with all the state and federal money on the table...
- **Targeted infrastructure bond** with independent oversight and a public progress tracker.
- **Fix it right once.** When a street opens for repaving, require full line replacement before closure—no more patchwork boomerangs.

Fix the bones before we add muscle.

5) Homeownership — let working families plant roots (this is personal)

I do spreadsheets for a living, so trust me: I've run the mortgage calculator twelve ways. With prices over \$600k and our property taxes, buying in the city I've lived in for a decade (and my husband grew up in!) still feels like trying to board a train that never stops. And I'm a full-time professional with two incomes in the household. If I can't make it pencil, what chance does a single parent or first-gen buyer have?

Homeownership is what turns "I live here" into "**I'm invested here.**" Owners paint, plant, join PTAs, and fight for better blocks. Renters can be great neighbors too—but ownership stabilizes a city.

Create a real on-ramp:

- **First-Time Buyer Mount Vernon:** down-payment/closing-cost help for residents here **5+ years**, with counseling so people buy safely.
- **Rehab-to-Own:** take vacant/city-owned homes, renovate with trade-school partnerships, and sell below market to resident buyers who agree to live there (not flip).
- **Legal ADUs** (backyard/attic/basement units) with safety codes so owners can offset mortgages and add gentle, regulated density.
- **Shared-equity / community land trust** pilots so affordability lasts for the next family, not just the first.
- **Permit fast-track + pre-approved plan sets** for small rehabs—days, not months. Time is money, and delays kill deals.

Give families like mine a fair shot to **buy here**—and watch loyalty (and the tax base) grow.

6) Corruption...quit the bullshit please

The federal subpoenas, the unpaid school funds, the consulting contracts, it's all out there. This city doesn't have a "bad reputation"; it has a well-earned one. It's time to be the generation that fixes that:

- **Independent audits** of city and school finances.
- **Mandatory public bidding** for contracts and consulting work.
- **A shared transparency portal** showing every expense, from both the city and the school district.
- **Tie leadership raises to transparency metrics.**

You can't rebuild trust if you don't stop breaking it.

7) Bring in revenue (without squeezing residents or small businesses)

No new taxes. No new fees on 4th Ave. Just smarter plays.

- **Redevelop closed school sites and idle city lots** into **mixed-use** with affordable units.
- **Transit-Oriented Development** at all **three stations**—capture our commuter advantage.
- **Signature cultural festivals** (food, music, arts) that celebrate our diversity and bring outside wallets in.
- **Naming rights & sponsorships** for parks, playgrounds, and city events.
- **Public-private partnerships** for infrastructure and streetscapes.
- **Full-time grant office**—stop leaving state/federal money on the table.
- **C-PACE** to help property owners modernize (lower energy costs, safer buildings, prettier streets).

I'm not angry—just exhausted by wasted potential. Mount Vernon is the most well-positioned, underperforming city in Westchester, and it doesn't have to be. I'm choosing to stay. Please make that choice worth it—so my three girls can grow up proud of the city that raised them.

Kindly,
Sarah Abdin

David Reich

Comments to City Council on proposed Comprehensive Plan 10/8/2025

I have quite a few concerns with the comprehensive plan, strictly from a layman's point of view. I'm not a city planner, but I do have common sense and I've also seen the continuing decline of our beloved city over the past 30 years or so.

My first concern is close to home – the Fleetwood and Hunts Woods neighborhoods. Although the plan calls for no zoning change from the current single-family residential, I think we need wording that specifically prohibits work-arounds such as ADUs, splitting parcels and converting single-family homes into duplexes and triplexes. I brought this up to the Mayor and she said, in writing, that she opposes ADUs, so I'd look to hold her to that. However, we need specific wording to prevent that. Otherwise, we risk losing value of our homes, which for most of us is our biggest investment and asset.

Still close to home for me... the Fleetwood business district. It has traditionally had a small-town feel, and I believe that must be preserved. I am alarmed that the plan proposes a change to the blocks between Westchester Avenue going west, from around Cedar St. to just north of the parkway, at Center Street. A change would permit high-rises which will completely change the character of the neighborhood, bring overcrowding and make parking and traffic even more challenging than it currently is. Traffic and parking congestion will kill off many remaining retail businesses along Gramatan and down Broad and Grand, and it will discourage other retail from considering the neighborhood. I strongly urge the council to limit height on those blocks to 3- 4 stories, if even that high.

The plan calls for high-rise residential along transit corridors by rail stations downtown and at MV West. In theory, sounds good, but the city cannot sustain 18 – 21 story residential buildings. Whatever building does take place, it must be

market-rate. MV has more than its share of low-income and affordable housing, so we should stop it now and let other communities in Westchester do their fair share.

Finally – NO MORE PILOTS for residential. If developers want to build in our city, let them pay their fair share of taxes. PILOTS should instead be used to lure commercial and targeted retail development, to provide more jobs for our residents. Also, the plan does not include any specifics for how we will try to attract business into our city. It's nice to say it, but we need to see a realistic and ongoing plan.

The bottom line... this proposed plan is a long way from being ready for adoption by the council. All aspects of the proposals need to be closely examined with generic impact reviews, so we know what we are getting ourselves into.

If you rubber-stamp and fast-track this, you are doing the city and current and future residents a grave disservice. And we, the voters, will remember and work hard to get your behinds out of those chairs you now occupy.

Thank you.

From: noreply@civicplus.com
To: [cityclerk](#)
Subject: Online Form Submittal: Sign-Up to Speak at a City Council Meeting
Date: Wednesday, October 8, 2025 12:56:49 PM

Name	Jerry Canning
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Email Address

Address

City	Mount Vernon
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State	NY
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Zip Code	10552
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Phone Number

I hereby request permission to speak before the "Committee of the Whole" of the City Council for four (4) minutes. My Topic is:	Comprehensive plan - I reject the proposed elimination of single-family zoning.
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Will Speaker Log In By Zoom?	Yes
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Date	10/8/2025 7:00 PM
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Zoom Info: www.zoom.us

Meeting ID: 974 3754 6185

Email not displaying correctly? [View it in your browser.](#)

October 8, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Steven Vazquez and I have resided in Mount Vernon for 3 years now at

I have reviewed the Comprehensive Plan and I have some concerns:

- The plan seems to open the door in other neighborhoods for some serious issues I have noticed in mine by allowing duplexes and triplexes in certain single-family zones 'by right' and retroactively legalizing informal conversions. For example, my street has not once been cleaned by other property owners. Trash has been laid out en masse for months outside some property streets and even on their yards, and to me it is a clear indication of a lack of resources in Code Enforcement. That said, how does this plan ensure that the city gets more resources to address the already lacking services?
- The plan mandates buildings with 10+ units to include permanently affordable housing into many neighborhoods, requiring subsidies or tax abatements that erode the tax base of a city whose budget ran at a \$75 million deficit last year. How will these future subsidies and abatements be paid for? What studies have been conducted here to support this? How will services expand to support this initiative?
- How is the recommended use of general municipal revenue for housing financing sustainable without continuing to increase property taxes at high rates?
- What is the reasoning for producing this plan without a Generic Environmental Impact Statement? How does this plan take environmental impact into consideration here, considering the city faces significant issues with parking, housing mix, flooding and drainage, and neighborhood character?
- How does this plan make public

Please make sure that these concerns are addressed before moving forward with adopting this plan.

From: Nanette Aguirre <
Sent: Wednesday, October 8, 2025 3:39 PM
To: Bonilla, Nicole <nbonilla@mountvernonny.gov>
Cc: nanetteaguirreesq@gmail.com <
Subject: Fwd: Comments regarding rezoning

You don't often get email from nanetteaguirre347@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello,

Please submit the below objection and have it entered on record with respect to the comprehensive plan and today's hearing.

Thank you,

Nanette Aguirre

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Nanette Aguirre
Date: October 8, 2025 a
To: envisionmv@cmvny.com
Subject: Comments regarding rezoning

Pursuant to the hearing this evening regarding rezoning to multiple family units, please note my objection as the new owner of 16 Burkewood Road. Furthermore, here are a series of priorities that are unaddressed and unacceptable, not to mention, I have lived in my home for less than one year and have never been more concerned about where my tax dollars are going. I am an active real estate investor and attorney. Priority items are:

1) non-stop helicopter and airplanes over 10552 to the point that it is impossible

to keep my windows open or enjoy my backyard,

2) roads, water drains and sewer are in desperate need of updating including the added destruction due to Bronxville Field Club dumping directly into these outdated and at capacity infrastructure lines,

3) Mount Vernon by way of Fleetwood is already a commuter area and it will not help property values or traffic or noise or safety to make more of Mount Vernon a multi family zoning especially in the area by hunt woods. These homes have increased property values only because they are quiet and single family. 10552 pays the bulk of Mount Vernon taxes and we will all flee if this plan proceeds.

Please confirm receipt of this objection from me.

Nanette Aguirre. Esq.

Gabriel Thompson
Mount Vernon NY 10552
October 8th, 2025

Subject: Reject the “Envision Mount Vernon” Plan — Stop the Attack on Our Neighborhoods

To the Mount Vernon City Council and Planning Department:

The so-called Envision Mount Vernon Comprehensive Plan is nothing more than a stealth attempt to wipe out single-family neighborhoods and hand the city over to developers looking to profit off our stability and our history.

Let’s be honest — this plan doesn’t “modernize” zoning; it bulldozes it. By pushing “missing middle” housing and “flexible” lot sizes, you’re setting the stage for multi-unit buildings jammed onto single-family blocks, destroying the quiet character that makes our neighborhoods livable — for Black, Latino, Asian, Indian, and working-class families alike.

What you’re really proposing is to erase a pathway to homeownership and generational wealth in exchange for creating a permanent class of renters beholden to the same generational slumlords who already exploit Mount Vernon. That’s not equity — that’s economic segregation dressed up in planning jargon.

I could easily sell my home, convert it to a triplex, and move to Scarsdale, Bronxville, or Pleasantville if this passes. But future families won’t get what I have — they’ll pay more for less, and they’ll never experience the stable, quiet, diverse neighborhood that exists now. If people here wanted that kind of density, they’d live in the Bronx.

No one asked for this. There’s been little public outreach, no infrastructure plan, and zero explanation of how our overburdened sewers, narrow streets, and aging schools are supposed to absorb this density. I attended the comprehensive plan meetings — this proposal was never once raised by residents. So who asked for it? Developers? Consultants? Campaign donors?

Mount Vernon is not New York City. We have commuter trains, not subways. We are a small, diverse town with no “exclusionary” enclaves to justify this kind of social engineering. Take 10552, for example — the wealthiest ZIP code in Mount Vernon, and it’s roughly 40% Black, 30% Latino, 30% white. This is one of the most integrated single-family neighborhoods anywhere in the region. What problem are you even trying to solve?

Mount Vernon deserves smart, balanced growth, not a developer feeding frenzy disguised as progress. Protect single-family zones. Extend the public review period. And stop trying to rush through a plan that residents clearly and overwhelmingly do not want.

If this plan moves forward as written, expect fierce opposition — in meetings, in court, and at the ballot box.

Sincerely,
Gabriel Thompson
Mount Vernon Resident

Nicole Bonilla, MBA

City Clerk - City of Mount Vernon, New York

From: Adriane Saunders

Sent: Wednesday, October 8, 2025 5:47 PM

To: Bonilla, Nicole <nbonilla@mountvernonny.gov>

Subject: comprehensive Plan

You don't often get email from surestopmv@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Please read this into the record for tonight's city council meeting.

My name is Adriane Saunders, and I am taxpayer of the city of Mount Vernon.

This so-called "Comprehensive Plan" is not at all comprehensive. In fact, it is reckless, as it fails to address two problems that define Mount Vernon's decline:

1. An old, crumbling infrastructure that can't handle what we already have — flooding every time it rains; broken, collapsing storm and sewage drainage systems; raw sewage in basements; roads that test even the best suspensionsystems, and parking shortages everywhere.
2. A city dependent on property taxes for half its budget, with ballooning expenses and shrinking alternative revenuestreams. And those property taxes fall squarely on single-family homeowners who are already stretched to the breaking point.

This plan fixes neither problem. It actually makes both worse.

From what I understand, the city seeks to move this plan forward without preparing a Generic Environmental Impact Statement. You are able to get away with this because a GEIS is not technically required under state law. But just because you *can* do something, doesn't mean you *should*. Under SEQRA, adopting a comprehensive plan is a Type I action — meaning it is *presumed* to have significant environmental impacts. But here, Council doesn't have to "presume" —

you already know the problems faced by this community, and given that reality, a GEIS is absolutely necessary. You should have already issued a Positive Declaration and directed the preparation of a GEIS to assess cumulative impacts on flooding, drainage, parking, housing mix, and neighborhood character.

A GEIS isn't bureaucratic busywork — it's protection. It's how you make sure the public, planners, and the courts can see the truth *before* the damage is done. Rushing to adopt this plan without that review — in a city whose infrastructure is already failing — isn't just bad policy; it's bordering on criminal negligence. It is indefensible. That is especially so here, where the required SEQRA paperwork isn't even complete or signed.

Perhaps the most dangerous part of this plan is the backdoor attempt to erase single-family zoning — legalizing duplexes, triplexes, and ADUs in the very neighborhoods that have kept this city financially afloat. These neighborhoods aren't just zoning categories. They're a lifeline. They provide the bulk of the per capita tax base. They absorb stormwater. They contain significant green space. And — just as important — they are home to people who have stayed here *in spite of* everything. These are residents who pay the highest tax rate in Westchester County, who put up with failing schools, collapsing roads, and nonexistent city services — but remain because they love the homes they have built, their neighborhoods, and their neighbors.

What happens when you drive those people away? When you destroy the very thing — the quiet, single-family character — that makes staying here worthwhile? You lose the city's stable core. You hollow out the tax base. You create a transient city of absentee landlords and renters with no stake in its future. You abort the opportunity for families to create generational wealth. You call that revitalization? I call it collapse.

If this City Council issues a Negative Declaration under SEQRA, it will be one of the most irresponsible, indefensible acts of this administration. A Negative Declaration means the Council is saying this plan will have *no significant environmental impact*. I hope that you are ready to own that pronouncement, because in Mount Vernon, that's absurd on its face. We have flooding, raw sewage, collapsing roads, no parking — I could go on, and you all are prepared to claim that massive zoning changes and new development won't make that worse? Come on. This is exactly the kind of project SEQRA was designed for and the only responsible path is to issue a Positive Declaration and conduct a GEIS. Anything less is a cover-up. And if the Council pushes this through anyway, it will show that this wasn't about good planning or public welfare — it was about political expediency — and it will be challenged in court.

Under New York law, before issuing a Negative Declaration, the lead agency must identify environmental concerns, take a *hard look* at them, and provide a *reasoned elaboration* for its determination. There is no evidence that has happened here.

Do your jobs. Follow the law. Protect this city before it's too late.

Thank you.



FERRANDINO & ASSOCIATES INC.
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS

MEMORANDUM

To: President and Members of the City Council

From: Vince Ferrandino, AICP

Re: Comments on Mount Vernon Draft Comprehensive Plan –
Envision Mount Vernon-- Unveiled on September 24, 2025

Date: October 8, 2025

My name is Vince Ferrandino. I am a professional planner with an active consulting practice in the tri-state area, a former Commissioner of Planning & Development for the City of Mount Vernon, and current Mount Vernon resident. I have reviewed the *Draft Plan* including the *Phase 1 Downtown Vision Report*, as well as the Long Form EAF, Parts 1 & 2, and the resolution by the City Council declaring itself-Lead Agency under SEQR and setting the public hearings for October 8 and 14, 2025. I offer the following preliminary comments. Following the completion of the second public hearing, I may opt to add to these comments.

Please accept the below referenced testimony/comments for placement into the public record this evening.

After almost three (3) years of stops & starts in preparing the *Draft Plan* before you tonight, the planning commissioner, on September 24, 2025, submitted a 475 page document, replete with 36 goals and 419 objectives, recommendations for several zone changes, and other land use procedures & capital improvements, to the Council for action. On that date, with ZERO discussion, the Council scheduled two public hearings:

the first one two (2) weeks later on October 8, 2025 (tonight), and the second one six (6) days later on October 14. I highly doubt that any of the Council people read the *Draft Plan* before accepting the document as "complete," and scheduling these hearings; and, just as likely, members of the public will not have sufficient time to review, digest and comment upon it. As of October 5, 2025, just four (4) days before tonight's hearing, ZERO documents were placed on the City Council web site (*Granicus Legistar*) for the public to review. After my personal prodding, only some of the documents appeared on line yesterday, October 7, 2025 -- only one (1) day ago. While the planning staff touts the public input process they undertook over several months in producing this *Plan*, the extremely tight timeline, arbitrarily established by the City Council to adopt it, and the absence of complete documents to review on line in a timely manner, seriously

compromises that process.

Further, the environmental review process is also being rushed, with the goal of bypassing a full vetting of the impacts of this *Draft Plan* via a full *Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS)*. Under NYS SEQRLaw, the adoption of a comprehensive plan is a Type 1 Action which is presumed to "have a significant adverse impact on the environment". But despite stating in the City Council resolution that the Proposed Action is a Type 1 Action, the scant Long Form Parts 1 & 2, prepared by the planning department, belies that with incredulous responses of "no impact" throughout.

A comprehensive plan "sets the table for the future," usually over a ten year time frame. This one proposes radical zone changes in a number of City neighborhoods which could negatively affect community character and increase our population by 10 to 15%, adversely impacting our already aging & fragile infrastructure. We have not had a Comprehensive Plan update since 1968. This *Plan*, whatever its pluses or minuses as drafted, deserves to be reviewed and vetted very carefully, in accordance with the law. Arbitrarily rushing to approve it before year's end will not accomplish that goal.

As a matter of fact, the public hearing(s) should be kept open until such time as the Comp Plan consulting team and planning department have had a chance to review all comments and respond to them individually, as well as in a revised Draft Comprehensive Plan for posting and further comment by the public. This may take several weeks or months.

I ask you to rethink the process and the environmental consequences of your actions, as a lawsuit will be in the offing if you do not.

I will submit detailed technical comments as an "expert planning witness" before the end of this fast tracked process and public comment period.

Thank you.



CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, N.Y.

Mayor Office

SHAWYN PATTERSON-HOWARD, MPA
Mayor

City Hall, One Roosevelt Square
Mount Vernon, NY. 10550
(914) 665-2362 – Fax: (914) 665-6173

MALCOLM CLARK
Chief of Staff
KHENDRA DAVID
Deputy Chief of Staff

October 8, 2025

Honorable Members of the City Council
City Hall
1 Roosevelt Square
Mount Vernon, NY 10550

RE: Envision Mount Vernon Draft Comprehensive Plan

Members of the City Council,

I apologize for my absence tonight, but it is important to put on paper my initial thoughts about this Draft Comprehensive Plan. I will continue to expand my comments over the next two weeks. First, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to the City Council, the Department of Planning and Community Development, our consultants, advisory board members, and the many community stakeholders who contributed to the development of the Envision Mount Vernon Draft Comprehensive Plan. This plan represents a historic milestone the first comprehensive land-use plan undertaken in the City of Mount Vernon over fifty-five years.

The process to reach this point has been deeply collaborative and inclusive. Over thirty community engagement sessions including workshops, educational forums, neighborhood meetings, and discussions held in churches and community centers have shaped this document. This report is the collaboration of all of Mount Vernon throughout the past few years.

While I support the vision and goals of this draft plan, I want to highlight one area of particular importance: the preservation of our single-family neighborhoods. As we look toward future growth, we must ensure that neighborhood preservation is balanced with smart, intentional development. Growth must be community-driven, not dictated by outside investors. Our residents must remain at the center of shaping Mount Vernon's future.

Housing is one of the most critical elements of our city's future. As Mayor, I strongly support the development of both workforce and market-rate housing. I am not in favor of low-income housing as Mount Vernon has paid its share of investments in that area. To that end, we must ensure that we build housing that allows our residents to remain in our community as they build wealth, raise families, and retire. A vibrant housing mix is an essential one that includes single-family homes, multifamily buildings, townhomes, condominiums, co-ops, and market-rate housing for seniors. Homeownership opportunities must be woven into our growth strategy so that residents at all income levels have a pathway to stability and equity.

"The Jewel of Westchester"



CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, N.Y.

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It is also important that as we consider limited allowances for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), we do so with great care and intention. ADUs should be permitted only on owner-occupied properties not for speculative investment or absentee ownership. We must prevent corporate entities and poorly managed LLCs from exploiting these opportunities at the expense of our neighborhoods and residents.

The Draft Comprehensive Plan goes far beyond housing. It encompasses strategies for economic development, sustainability, transportation, expansion of our tax base, cultural arts, equity, and smart growth. It strikes a thoughtful balance between preserving the character of our neighborhoods and seizing new opportunities for responsible development that benefits our entire community.

I support increasing density in a strategic, data-informed manner particularly along high-traffic corridors, retail areas, and transit-oriented zones. Such development will bring diversity of income, attract neighborhood-serving retail, and create opportunities for dining, recreation, cultural arts, and entertainment. These are the investments that make Mount Vernon not just a place to live, but a destination to experience.

Mount Vernon is not a poor community. Our challenge is not the lack of people or potential, but the lack of diversity in our retail, commercial, and industrial base. By implementing the Envision Mount Vernon plan with focus and discipline, we can create the ecosystem needed to keep residents' spending local, attract new investment, and build the economic richness our city deserves.

Thank you once again for your tireless work, partnership, and dedication to shaping the Mount Vernon of tomorrow. Together, we are ensuring that our city's growth is smart, equitable, and rooted in the strength of our community.

In Service,

Shawyn Patterson-Howard, Mayor
City of Mount Vernon, NY

To: Mount Vernon City Council
From: Michael Justino-ZBA Chair; FNA President; Advisory Committee Member
Date: October 8, 2025
Subject: Comments and Concerns Regarding the Comprehensive Draft Plan

Dear Members of the City Council,

This statement is submitted to express significant concerns regarding the current **Comprehensive Draft Plan** and its associated procedures. Several substantive and procedural issues require attention and correction prior to consideration of Plan adoption.

1. SEQRA Classification and GEIS Requirement

As this action constitutes a **Type I action under SEQRA**, a **Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS)** is absolutely required **prior to adoption**. Proceeding without a completed GEIS would be procedurally improper and may expose the City to legal challenges. The GEIS must address cumulative impacts, mitigation strategies, and alternatives in sufficient detail to inform decision-making.

2. Deficiencies in the Long-Form Environmental Assessment Form (EAF)

The current **Long-Form EAF** is **deficient**, with numerous sections left **blank and unsigned**. This undermines the transparency and completeness of the environmental review process and must be rectified prior to any further consideration of plan adoption.

3. Zoning Completion Prior to Adoption

Zoning revisions must be **completed and synchronized** with the comprehensive plan before final adoption. Without finalized zoning, the plan's implementation framework remains uncertain, potentially creating confusion and inconsistency between policy and regulatory intent.

4. Single-Family Zoning Concerns

The proposed plan raises serious concerns about the preservation and integrity of single-family zoning districts. These areas have long been a defining feature of Mount Vernon's residential character and stability. Any changes to density or permitted uses within these districts should be carefully studied for their long-term impacts on neighborhood cohesion, infrastructure capacity, and property values.

5. High-Rise Density Between Gramatan Avenue and Westchester Avenue

The proposed high-rise density designations within the corridor between **Gramatan Avenue east to Westchester Avenue** appear excessive and inconsistent with surrounding neighborhood context. The scale, height, and intensity proposed would significantly alter the built environment

and may create adverse impacts on traffic, parking, and overall livability. A more balanced, context-sensitive approach to height and density is warranted.

6. Lack of a Retail Plan for the Fleetwood Business District

The **Fleetwood Business District** lacks a coherent retail and economic development plan in the draft. The Fleetwood Business district is currently suffering from vacant store fronts and lack of pedestrian traffic after 6:00 PM. This omission risks undermining the district's commercial vitality and its role as a neighborhood economic anchor. A targeted retail strategy—emphasizing pedestrian activity, small business retention, and mixed-use synergy—is essential before adoption of the broader plan.

7. Insufficient Use of the Advisory Committee

The **Comp Plan Advisory Committee** has not been adequately utilized during the **Phase 2** review process. There were only two (2) meetings called. The first, only to explain the plan to change consultants and other miscellaneous processes, with NO input from the members. The second meeting was a slide presentation and broad overview of the work in progress with scant detail and little feedback from members.

During **Phase 1**, most Advisory Committee members recommended **much lower height and density levels** than those ultimately proposed. This deviation from advisory input raises concerns about the effectiveness of the public participation process and the value placed on community-based recommendations.

8. Public Hearing and Review Process

It is imperative that the **public hearing remain open** until all public and agency comments have been thoroughly reviewed by both the **Planning Department** and the **consulting team**. The public must have the opportunity to:

- Review all consultant responses to public communications and questions. Then present the **revised plan** to the **Advisory Committee** and recirculate for **public review**;
- Address **remaining concerns**; and
- Participate in a transparent discussion regarding the process for **public input evaluation, consolidation, and plan revision** leading to final review.

This step is critical to maintaining public trust, ensuring compliance with SEQRA, and producing a comprehensive plan that reflects the collective vision of the community.

Conclusion

Given the concerns outlined above, we strongly recommend that the City Council refrain from adopting the Comprehensive Plan until:

1. The **Long Form EAF** is fully and accurately completed;
2. The **GEIS** is completed and accepted;
3. Zoning updates are finalized;
4. The public and Advisory Committee have a full opportunity to review and respond to all revisions.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael Justino

Chairman-Zoning Board of Appeals

President-Fleetwood Neighborhood Association

Member-Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

Public Comment on the Comprehensive Plan Draft

Submitted by Wendy Ball-Attipoe, Member, Comp Plan Advisory Committee
Member and a ZBA commissioner

My comments concern diversity of housing options & the elimination of single family zones; inconsistencies in neighborhood designations; density parameters and environmental impact

This plan advocates for a diversity of housing options, yet throughout its 475 pages it repeatedly calls for the elimination of single family only zones and the allowance of duplexes and triplexes “by right” in all single family zones. (For ex. Sections 3-7; 3-18; 4-11; 5-45; 5-70) Are single family zones not among the diverse housing options that should be a feature of a future Mt. Vernon?

As a member of the comp plan advisory committee, I attended many many of the community conversation workshops and sessions over the past 3 years of this process. In not one of them did I hear a community member say, “Gee I really want my neighbor to be able to create an apartment in their basement or attic and add to the parking problems and noise pollution I already experience.” Additionally, the plan does not include Relevant Takeaways from the Community Conversation with Neighborhood Associations that took place from Sept. 2023 – May 2024. In these discussions quality of life was a major concern.

This idea of the elimination of single family exclusionary zoning came late in the game and was presented as part of the plan in June 2025 at a meeting of the Planning Dept., and Cleary Consulting with the Advisory Committee to share a preliminary outline of the draft plan. It was then re-circulated in public plan workshops in July 2025. In the last workshop via Zoom, homeowners expressed their displeasure with this idea and specifically asked the Planning Dept if single family zoning was going to be eliminated across the board as this “elimination by right” language suggests, and we were told No. Yet this concept is repeated throughout this draft plan.

According to the Implementation Plan Section 6, there are only 2-1/2 neighborhoods that would remain single family zones. These are Aubyn & Pasadena, and some residential sections of Fleetwood. The Implementation Plan section is at odds with the Neighborhood Analysis in the Placemaking Section where No Change to the Land Use Characteristics of Huntswood, Chester Hill Park, Chester Heights, and Oakwood Heights, are recommended along with Aubyn & Pasadena—yet only those two and parts of Fleetwood are noted as single family zones in the Implementation Section.

Between the adoption of the Downtown Vision Plan, and the appropriate recommendations for transit oriented development, and corridor mixed use in high and medium density areas, just how much more density can Mt. Vernon take if also now includes the elimination of single family zones and the widespread allowance of the building or conversion to duplexes and triplexes? The City Council must incorporate an environmental impact assessment and density projections analysis into this process so that we all understand beyond the abstract how many people will be living here and what kinds of services are required as a result. I also ask the City Council to reject the notion of the elimination of single family zoning.

Regarding Neighborhood descriptions, Neighborhood descriptions in the plan are overly broad, erasing nuance. I guess Kingsbridge Gardens is somewhere in Parkside, and Langdon Terrace is somewhere in Vernon Heights but the unique characteristics inside neighborhoods are not recognized and thus placemaking opportunities will be lost. Mt. Vernon is a place where one block in a neighborhood can be a completely different experience than another. This is very true of Vernon Heights where some blocks are strictly Single Family and others are multifamily.

In the case of my own Neighborhood of Oakwood Heights the description and boundaries in the plan are just plain incorrect on page 2-44. Here is a map that our Association put together. Oakwood Heights includes approximately 250 family homes on 13 streets in the area bounded in a sloppy triangle by North Columbus, East Lincoln and Lorraine Avenues in zip code 10553. Interior residents live on Willard, East Prospect, Hudson, East Sidney, Esplanade, Mersereau, Darwood, Magnolia, Sycamore, and Oakwood. Neither Traphagen School, or the Parklane or Esplanade Coops are part of Oakwood Heights. They are on the opposite side of Lincoln and are in zip code 10552. Nor does it include a variety of midrise apartment buildings. It was founded 100 years ago as a residential park and largely retains that character today.

In closing, I urge the City Council and Planning Department to revisit this plan with greater fidelity to the nuances and the lived realities of its neighborhoods. In a truly inclusive vision, single family zones should not only be characterized as exclusionary. They are vital threads in the fabric of Mt. Vernon's identity, offering stability, green space, and a quality of life that many residents cherish and have fought to preserve.

Let us move forward with a plan that reflects both the diversity of housing options and the diversity of lived experiences. Let us plan for growth, yes—but with clarity, transparency, and respect for the people who already call Mt. Vernon home and have invested their livelihoods in it.

Good evening. My name is Tamala Boyd, and I offer this testimony as a Mount Vernon resident and taxpayer.

This so-called “Comprehensive Plan” is not at all comprehensive. In fact, it is reckless, as it fails to address two problems that define Mount Vernon’s decline:

1. An old, crumbling infrastructure that can’t handle what we already have — flooding every time it rains; broken, collapsing storm and sewage drainage systems; raw sewage in basements; roads that test even the best suspension systems, and parking shortages everywhere.
2. A city dependent on property taxes for half its budget, with ballooning expenses and shrinking alternative revenue streams. And those property taxes fall squarely on single-family homeowners who are already stretched to the breaking point.

This plan fixes neither problem. It actually makes both worse.

From what I understand, the city seeks to move this plan forward without preparing a Generic Environmental Impact Statement. You are able to get away with this because a GEIS is not technically required under state law. But just because you *can* do something, doesn’t mean you *should*. Under SEQRA, adopting a comprehensive plan is a Type I action — meaning it is *presumed* to have significant environmental impacts. But here, Council doesn’t have to “presume” — you already know the problems faced by this community, and given that reality, a GEIS is absolutely necessary. You should have already issued a Positive Declaration and directed the preparation of a GEIS to assess cumulative impacts on flooding, drainage, parking, housing mix, and neighborhood character.

A GEIS isn’t bureaucratic busywork — it’s protection. It’s how you make sure the public, planners, and the courts can see the truth *before* the damage is done. Rushing to adopt this plan without that review — in a city whose infrastructure is already failing — isn’t just bad policy; it’s bordering on criminal negligence. It is indefensible. That is especially so here, where the required SEQRA paperwork isn’t even complete or signed.

Perhaps the most dangerous part of this plan is the backdoor attempt to erase single-family zoning — legalizing duplexes, triplexes, and ADUs in the very neighborhoods that have kept this city financially afloat. These neighborhoods aren’t just zoning categories. They’re a lifeline. They provide the bulk of the per capita tax base. They absorb stormwater. They contain significant green space. And — just as important — they are home to people who have stayed here *in spite of* everything. These are residents who pay the highest tax rate in Westchester County, who put up with failing schools, collapsing roads, and nonexistent city services — but remain because they love the homes they have built, their neighborhoods, and their neighbors.

What happens when you drive those people away? When you destroy the very thing — the quiet, single-family character — that makes staying here worthwhile? You lose the city’s stable core. You hollow out the tax base. You create a transient city of absentee landlords and renters with no

stake in its future. You abort the opportunity for families to create generational wealth. You call that revitalization? I call it collapse.

If this City Council issues a Negative Declaration under SEQRA, it will be one of the most irresponsible, indefensible acts of this administration. A Negative Declaration means the Council is saying this plan will have *no significant environmental impact*. I hope that you are ready to own that pronouncement, because in Mount Vernon, that's absurd on its face. We have flooding, raw sewage, collapsing roads, no parking – I could go on, and you all are prepared to claim that massive zoning changes and new development won't make that worse? Come on. This is exactly the kind of project SEQRA was designed for and the only responsible path is to issue a Positive Declaration and conduct a GEIS. Anything less is a cover-up. And if the Council pushes this through anyway, it will show that this wasn't about good planning or public welfare — it was about political expediency — and it will be challenged in court.

Under New York law, before issuing a Negative Declaration, the lead agency must identify environmental concerns, take a *hard look* at them, and provide a *reasoned elaboration* for its determination. There is no evidence that has happened here.

Do your jobs. Follow the law. Protect this city before it's too late.

Thank you.