PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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JAMES RAUSSE, FAICP, WEDG
COMMISSIONER

February 24, 2025

VIA EMAIL:
Honorable City Council Members
City of Mount Vernon
1 Roosevelt Square
Mount Vernon, New York 10550

RE: Request for the City Council to enact legislation to update the City Municipal Code to permit and regulate indoor recreation and amusement uses. For consideration on the agenda at the March 12, 2025 City Council meeting.

Honorable City Council Members:

I am writing to respectfully request for the City Council to enact legislation to update the City Municipal Code to permit and regulate indoor recreation and amusement uses. This would require an amendment to *Chapter 267 – Zoning*.

Fun City Adventure Park, which has locations nationwide, has approached the City of Mount Vernon to explore an opportunity to open a location in Mount Vernon. Fun City is interested in taking over the vacant Bed Bath and Beyond location on Sandford Boulevard, which would be an ideal property given its location, and the fact that it is an existing space that already has adequate structured parking and is directly served by Bee-Line buses.

The general trend of large-format retail closures, which has impacted many municipalities, has created an opportunity for indoor recreation and amusement uses. The increase in these types of uses is another trend that appears to be occurring throughout the Northeast, perhaps in response to a market demand for recreational experiences that can be obtained regardless of the time of day or weather. These businesses can offer a range of recreational experiences including trampolines, video arcades, laser-tag, parkour courses, rock-climbing walls, bowling lanes, go-karts, miniature golf, virtual-reality arcades and other types of uses. Local examples of these types of businesses can be found in New Rochelle (Sky Zone Trampoline Park), Pelham Manor (Dave & Busters), White Plains (5th Dimension Virtual Reality), Greenburgh (SportTime USA), Yonkers (Chuck E Cheese), Mount Kisco (Grand Prix Racing & Entertainment) and Port Chester (Air Riderz Adventure Park). Most of these local examples are businesses that have taken over spaces that were once occupied by a large-format retail store, or a vacant warehouse or light industrial building. By updating the Municipal Code to permit and regulate indoor recreation and amusement uses, the City of Mount Vernon will be able to take advantage of this trend, and perhaps repurpose some if its larger vacant or underperforming retail or industrial spaces with recreational uses that will add to the City's tax base and provide recreational opportunities to families. The current dearth of these facilities inside the City is a topic that has frequently been mentioned at the Comprehensive Plan Community Conversations that the Department of Planning and Community Development has held in the past several months.

We recommend adopting legislation to allow for indoor recreation and amusement uses under the following zones: CB – Commercial Business, I – Industrial, and LI-7.5 Landscaped Industrial Districts. To accomplish this, we recommend adding the following definition to Chapter 267 – Zoning:

RECREATION OR AMUSEMENT FACILITY, INDOOR
A building and site designed and equipped for recreation, amusement and leisure-time activities that are

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completely located inside of a building, including but not limited to, bowling, go-karting, slot-car racing, amusement devices, miniature golf, sports/batting cages, laser tag, climbing walls, trampolines, rope courses, arts and crafts activities, games of deduction (treasure hunts, escape the room, etc.), virtual reality and other activities. This use shall be deemed to include associated instructional classes. Retail, food and beverage sales associated with any such uses shall be deemed an accessory use. Indoor recreation facilities shall not be deemed to include health and athletic membership clubs, discharge of firearms, or any use where the activity is prohibited by law from being accessible to all age groups. To the extent applicable, the above shall be subject to the provisions of Chapter 84 - Amusements.

We recommend that Recreation or Amusement Facility, Indoor be listed as a principal permitted use in the: CB – Commercial Business, I – Industrial, and LI-7.5 Landscaped Industrial Districts.

We also recommend that parking requirements for Indoor Recreation Facilities be considered on a case-by-case basis during site plan review. While parking requirements are an important consideration, it would be difficult to codify parking requirements on a square foot basis because the size requirements for different types of recreational amenities vary. Instead, we recommend the zoning ordinance require applicants to submit a parking study demonstrating the demand for parking based on data from the Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE), field data and other appropriate source material. The final determination should be left to the discretion of the Planning Board during site plan review, in consultation with staff from the Department of Planning and Community Development.

We thank the City for your support in addressing the needs in the city. I am available to address any questions or concerns you may have regarding this request.

Sincerely,

JAMES RAUSSE, FAICP, WEDG

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