

2/14/2023

12 Woodland Circle

Mt Vernon, OH 43050

Mr. Todd Hill, Clerk of Council

40 Public Square, Mt Vernon, OH 43050

RE: Subdivision proposal, Highland Real Estate, Newark Rd.

Dear Mt Vernon City Council,

Please be advised that information provided to the Planning Commission and apparently relied upon by them concerning the referenced proposed development contained materially false and misleading information. Some of the more significant issues are explained below along with another concern that needs to be addressed before the proposal could be deemed qualified, safe and in the interest of the community.

The developer and others asserted that there are no archaeological resources within the development area. Those assertions are false. There are many acres within the subdivision site that contain significant and important prehistoric artifacts and activity areas already registered with the State Historic Preservation Officer. That archaeological site is registered as Site # 33-KN-588 and details have been and are publicly available through the State of Ohio. This fact alone is sufficient to order that the Planning Commission's decision and recommendation be remanded to the Commission and reconsidered. The developer's and others assertions to the contrary should give you pause to consider all other aspects of the proposal.

Certain real estate and political interests have asserted that the Mt Vernon real estate market is "hot" and that there is a need for more housing in Mt Vernon. Such assertions are seriously misleading and incorrect. The closest "hot" real estate market is on the west side of Columbus in Hilliard, too far away to be relevant. A simple review of data and facts shows that housing prices in Mt Vernon are far below the average for the state of Ohio. Even worse, housing appreciation in Mt Vernon is some of the lowest in the state, far below average and comparable with Youngstown and other declining communities. This pathetic economic performance is due to the currently adequate and oversupply of housing already on or available to the market thus keeping rents and prices down and depressed.

If data and statistics aren't your thing then just drive around Mt Vernon; the entire west side is in serious rapid decline and the north side is following it down. All of this makes it clear that the Mt Vernon housing market is well supplied if not oversupplied; it cannot be said that more housing is needed or even desirable when the depreciation and decline within the city is so obvious and the supply is so high. It is detrimental to residents and homeowners (and the tax base) to artificially interfere with the current housing free market by providing so many more residences as proposed; the consequence will certainly be more housing price and value degradation to be borne by current residents (and the city) and further decline in established areas within the city. The risk that Mt Vernon will further decline and become the Youngstown of central Ohio, or worse, is real because of the proposal.

It is nonsensical to assert that there will be an "Intel effect" and therefore more housing might maybe be needed in Mt Vernon. Westerville, Gahana, New Albany, Granville and Newark, close and desirable uptrending communities for Intel employees, are already built out or are already being built out. The new subdivision in Newark, for one example, is impressive with many finer homes on larger lots already built or under construction to address the property types anticipated by the "Intel effect". That one in Newark is a thoughtful development and symbiotic with community values (and taxes) on the rise. It is inappropriate to use "Intel effect" speculation in planning Mt Vernon with the realities and negative consequences being what they are.

Many citizens have expressed concerns about safety along Newark Rd with the entrance to such dense development being at blind spots on Newark Rd. The latest proposal moved the entrance south, to the bottom of a swale to a location that is worse, much worse and dead blind from both directions. It has gone from bad to much worse, deadly and reckless if not willfully intentional. That decision appears to be a stick-in-the-eye to all those that expressed concern, as if to say just shut up, we'll decide what's best for you. The fact is that the only access to the property that would be safe and competent would be to take the access road west to BlackJack Rd. BlackJack is straight and flat and of adequate size; traffic can easily and safely be routed from the subdivision through the BlackJack commercial areas that see little traffic flow with safe, controlled and much better access to the north, south and west. If the developer lacks the engineering expertise to make something so simple a reality and to accommodate (or even care for) the safety and well being of the community then outright denial of the proposal is appropriate. You will know who you are dealing with if something simple like safe access via BlackJack Rd won't be planned for and engineered. It hasn't been that long ago that a bicyclist, for one example, was killed in the very spot they propose to make an access.

Finally, the subdivision density standard applied by the Planning Commission is inappropriate. That is a standardized density standard blindly adopted within a larger "standard" applied to major urban and inner-city areas such as Cleveland and Cincinnati and is detrimental for a rural community with rural community values. The Commission seems to be comfortable hiding behind the fact that that is "the standard" and giving rural community values no realistic consideration. By not directly addressing the anticipated problems caused by overdeveloping the property, amongst others, the people of Mt Vernon and the city have been short changed, potentially duped.

For the reasons discussed, the appropriate course of action is to remand the Planning Commission's decision and recommendation to the Planning Commission for reconsideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. W. Everett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert W Everett