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Village of Northport

Master Plan 2025

Page is Placeholder for Village Council Resolution adopting Master Plan 2025

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2025 VILLAGE OF NORTHPORT MASTER PLAN

Acknowledgements

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INTRODUCTION

In 1987, the Northport Planning Commission adopted a Comprehensive Future Land Use Plan and a Zoning Ordinance emphasizing the need for preserving the small-town atmosphere of the Village. Since that time, evolving community perspectives and expectations have created a need for new land use policies for the Village. The plan was updated, in accordance with State law, in 2004, 2010, and again in 2018, with input and policy direction from the Village Council, Planning Commission, and Village residents.

The 2025 update to the Village of Northport Master Plan continues to provide strategic vision for the Village of Northport while serving as an aspirational framework for progress.

The Plan creates a culture of leadership and integrates natural and human capital to address important societal challenges related to sustainability and resiliency of environmental systems. The Plan is intended to raise the profile of existing Village of Northport practices and provide a broader foundation for active, robust, and continual conversations among administration, staff and citizens. These types of conversations are intended to empower and guide individuals - producing the behavioral change that will result in a more sustainable and resilient Northport community. It expresses a long-range vision and model of the Village of Northport and gives guidance for achieving those goals.

The Village of Northport has a moral and ethical duty to provide a community that is healthy and safe for its citizens and businesses while simultaneously protecting the environment for future generations. This plan promotes a policy, governance and administrative infrastructure that ensures that the Village of Northport not only has high-performance, resilient and energy-efficient facilities, but simultaneously creates an inclusive environment in which the health and wellness of the Northport community are key considerations in the decision-making framework.

Furthermore, the plan aims to establish a decision-making framework that prioritizes three key components: social, financial, and environmental. These integrated components are reflected in the general goals for the Village of Northport, ensuring a balanced approach to sustainable development in all areas.

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General Goals

- Promote responsible population and employment growth that prioritizes public health and safety, preserves and enhances environmental quality, and considers long-term impacts. This growth should align with the Village of Northport's goals of environmental stewardship and community well-being.
- Identify and clearly designate areas where both new development and improvements to existing developments can be most effectively accommodated and are most desirable. Encourage growth in these areas through targeted incentives and land use regulations that support sustainable and well-planned development.
- Preserve the area's natural beauty, open spaces, dark night sky, environmentally sensitive features, and historic character, while also maintaining an attractive built environment. Guide the overall pattern of growth and the development of specific sites to ensure that both the community's history and its natural resources are protected and integrated into future planning.
- Encourage economic development that provides diverse and continuing employment opportunities for Northport residents.
- Encourage the provision of adequate, sustainable, and affordable public utilities and services.
- Encourage affordable attainable housing and diversity in housing types.
- Encourage energy conservation by promoting practices that reduce energy consumption across residential, commercial, and public sectors. Support the adoption of energy-efficient technologies, renewable energy sources, and sustainable building designs. In alignment with the State of Michigan's "Michigan Green Communities" goals, advocate for energy-saving initiatives such as improved insulation, the use of smart technologies, and the development of green infrastructure. By prioritizing energy conservation, the Village of Northport can work to reduce its carbon footprint, lower utility costs, and contribute to a more sustainable and resilient community.
- Ensure universal access by promoting inclusive design and infrastructure that provides equal opportunities for all residents and visitors, regardless of age, ability, or background, to access public spaces, services, and transportation within the Village.
- Conserve natural resources and protect wildlife and biodiversity by implementing sustainable practices that protect and enhance the communities environmental assets, while fostering community engagement in conservation efforts.
- Establish a framework for effective collaboration among neighboring communities, with particular emphasis on fostering strong partnerships with Leelanau Township and Leelanau County. The Village should actively engage with other local governments, public agencies, and the private sector to work together in addressing the challenges of managing growth responsibly, encourage diverse housing options, advance regional environmental objectives, and achieving the goals of the master plan.

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Function of the Plan

The Master Plan provides a legally recognized framework for making decisions about land use in the Village. It is intended to aid a broad range of public and private users, including community groups, builders, developers, Village officials and other government agencies. The Plan helps these various users in several ways.

First, the Master Plan is the framework for regulations that govern the location and intensity of land uses in the Village. The Plan's policies provide the basis for more detailed functional plans, and for evaluating proposed changes in zoning and other developments. It provides Village officials with direction for developing detailed plans and reviewing development proposals. It also indicates to the public the present limits and opportunities for plans, zoning or other regulations that apply to the community or to a specific parcel.

Second, the Master Plan provides the framework for decisions about public facilities and services (such as where facilities should be located to support planned growth). It is intended that government agencies and special districts use the Plan in preparing their functional plans for delivering services.

The Master Plan is a broad policy document intended to guide more specific land use decisions in the future. Regulations such as zoning and building codes or road construction standards are legal standards applied uniformly with little discretion. Therefore, although the Master Plan is adopted by resolution and carries legal weight when applied to specific land use decisions, it is not, by itself, considered law. This means that the Plan has a certain degree of flexibility which allows review and adjustment should conditions change over time. In contrast, the Zoning Ordinance provides land use regulations and is adopted by ordinance, and as such carries the weight of law.

The Master Plan is implemented through the Zoning Ordinance, decisions on individual land development proposals, and public spending for facilities and services. Because of its impact on community goals, the Village Council should inform the Planning Commission of any major project involving the expenditure of funds.

Plan Concept

The Plan concept is a vision of how Northport should grow and develop while protecting its high quality of life. Residential, commercial, and industrial growth should occur in a pattern that protects public health and safety while enhancing varied community character, natural beauty and environmental quality.

The Plan concept guides Northport's efforts to achieve these ends by indicating clearly where new housing, shopping and economic development should be encouraged and where open space and rural and agricultural areas should be protected. The Plan provides a framework in which the Village can effectively and responsibly manage growth and development, as well as establishing an orderly process for accommodating change.

The Plan concept provides a guide to the growth and development of the Village, while recognizing the variety of natural and man-made features, the desire of its residents, and the need for adequate public facilities and services. The following major land use descriptions define this pattern and are shown on the Future Land Use Map, changes in zoning and other developments. It provides Village officials with direction for developing detailed plans and reviewing development proposals. It also indicates to the public the present limits and opportunities for plans, zoning or other regulations that apply to the community or to a specific parcel.
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Land Use Descriptions

RESIDENTIAL AREAS, where most of the concentrated housing of the Village is located and where future residential growth of the Village is encouraged. Higher density residential development in these areas will limit the encroachment of residential uses into less developed areas.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL AREAS, consisting of scattered residential homes and valuable scenic, recreational, agricultural and open space lands. Development densities and services levels will remain low to maintain the rural open space character of these areas.

COMMERCIAL AREAS, the existing downtown area and commercial residential core where additional commercial activities are to be located in order to ensure the economic strength of the downtown. Public spending priorities for facilities and services should be concentrated in this area. Commercial and resort areas secondary to the downtown are also allowed in the Village.

INDUSTRIAL AREAS, consisting of relatively large, carefully located parcels of land suitable for industrial uses. These areas are located in order to minimize conflicts with surrounding land uses. The parcels, though very few, may accommodate expansion and are in close proximity to arterials.

PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS, where the physical features of the area are such that development is undesirable, either for construction purposes or for the retention of scenic and unique lands. These areas may include wetlands, coastlines, waterways, steep slopes, scenic views, forestlands, or other areas conducive to open space or parkland preservation.

Current Plans & Policies

	What is it?	Developed/ Adopted
Zoning Ordinance	The Village Zoning Ordinance is a locally-adopted law that determine where and how development should occur. It is based on the goals of the Master Plan and administered by the Village.	2006
5-Year Recreation Plan	The Recreation Plan builds on previous planning initiatives by identifying the Village's highest recreation priorities. It includes an action plan for the recreation goals and objectives identified by the community throughout the various planning efforts. The Plan was approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and makes the Village eligible for Natural Resources Trust Fund grant dollars and other DNR programs.	2016

Historical Plans & Policies

	What is it?	Developed/ Adopted
Future By Design	As part of Michigan State University's Small Town Design Initiative, the Leelanau Township Community Foundation appointed a group called Future By Design to lead community visioning efforts. Future By Design used the work completed by the Small Town Design Initiative as a foundation for more detailed planning and design visioning, with four committees focused on trails, growth, waterfront development, and streetscapes, and wayfinding projects. Future By Design consultants and volunteers held a number of public visioning and work sessions to develop draft goals related to these issue areas. The results of this effort helped guide development and public improvement activities in the Village.	2007
Designing and Achieving Our Potential	Leelanau Township, the Village of Northport, and the Leelanau Foundation developed an economic strategy called Designing and Achieving Our Potential. It includes input from residents, stakeholders and businesses, and identifies important challenges and specific strategies for economic development. The need to enhance the Village's year-round business opportunities, improve the community, create jobs and overnight accommodations, market the community, obtain grants for development, and explore incentives for business were identified as high priorities in the report.	2013

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