MEMORANDUM – OFFICE OF THE VILLAGE MANAGER

TO: Northport Village Council

FROM: Jered Ottenwess, Village Manager/Zoning Administrator

DATE: March 6, 2026

RE: Zoning Map and Text Amendments

1. Summary

The Planning Commission has initiated amendments to the Village of Northport Zoning Ordinance and Official Zoning Map pursuant to MCL 125.3306.

The proposed amendments include:

- Revisions to Article II (Definitions) to replace the generalized "Transient Lodging" category with defined use classifications for Campground/RV Park, Hotel, Motel, and Short-Term Rental;
- Amendments to Article V (Schedule of Uses) to remove "Transient Lodging" and assign the newly defined lodging uses to appropriate districts;
- Amendments to Article XV (D-1 Multi-Use District) reducing the minimum lot area from two (2) acres to 0.5 acres;
- Amendments to Article XVIII establishing detailed Special Use standards for Campgrounds/RV Parks; and
- Zoning Map amendments affecting parcels identified in the public hearing notice, adjusting district boundaries among D-1, R-1, R-2, R-4, and CN-1 districts.

The purpose of the amendments is to clarify regulatory language, align zoning districts with the Village Master Plan, improve internal consistency of the ordinance, and promote orderly land use patterns consistent with infrastructure capacity and environmental constraints.

2. Statutory Authority

These amendments are processed pursuant to:

- Michigan Planning and Zoning Enabling Act (MCL 125.3101 et seq.)
- MCL 125.3306 – Amendments to zoning ordinance and zoning map
- MCL 125.3405 – Requirement that zoning be based upon and consistent with the Master Plan

Under MCL 125.3306:

- The Planning Commission may initiate amendments.
- A public hearing must be held.
- The Commission forwards a recommendation to the Village Council.
- The Village Council may adopt amendments by ordinance.

This report provides the Planning Commission with a legislative analysis to support findings and recommendation to the Village Council.

3. Existing Conditions and Regulatory Context
The current ordinance includes a broad "Transient Lodging" use category applied as a Special Use across multiple districts. This generalized classification does not distinguish between materially different lodging types, resulting in regulatory ambiguity.

The D-1 Multi-Use District currently requires a minimum lot size of two acres. Given the Village's existing parcel configuration and compact development pattern, this dimensional requirement is inconsistent with typical lot sizes and has limited the intended mixed-use flexibility of the district.

The existing zoning map includes district boundaries that do not consistently reflect:

- Existing development patterns,
- Infrastructure service areas,
- Logical land use transitions,
- Master Plan future land use guidance.

The proposed amendments address these inconsistencies.

4. Purpose and Planning Rationale
The amendments serve several interrelated planning objectives:

1. Regulatory Clarity – Replacing "Transient Lodging" with defined categories provides precision and reduces interpretive ambiguity.
2. Use Differentiation – Hotels, motels, campgrounds, and short-term rentals have distinct land use impacts and should not be regulated identically.
3. Housing Diversity and Infill – Reducing the D-1 minimum lot size enables mixed-use infill and moderate-density housing consistent with Village character.
4. Infrastructure Efficiency – Adjusting district boundaries better aligns development potential with sewer, water, and road access.
5. Environmental Protection – Special Use standards introduce buffering, setback, sanitation, and lighting requirements that protect water quality and adjacent uses.
6. Seasonal Use Management – Lodging definitions and standards provide structured oversight of seasonal population impacts.

These objectives are grounded in the adopted Master Plan.

5. Master Plan Consistency (MCL 125.3405)
The 2018 Village of Northport Master Plan establishes a long-range framework emphasizing compact development, preservation of residential character, concentration of commercial activity, infrastructure efficiency, environmental stewardship, and accommodation of seasonal population impacts.

Commercial Concentration
The Master Plan identifies the downtown and designated commercial areas as focal points for economic activity. The text amendments assign higher-intensity lodging uses (Hotels and Motels) to appropriate commercial districts while maintaining Special Use review for uses that may affect residential areas. The map amendments reinforce this structure by refining district boundaries to prevent scattered commercial encroachment.

Residential Character and Housing Diversity
The Plan calls for preservation of established residential neighborhoods while encouraging housing diversity and accommodating an aging population. The reduction of the D-1 minimum lot

size supports compact, moderate-density infill consistent with the Village's traditional development pattern and infrastructure-served areas. It does not expand residential use into rural or environmentally sensitive lands but instead promotes efficient use of existing urbanized areas.

Infrastructure-Based Growth
The Master Plan emphasizes directing growth where sewer and water capacity exist. The Village has additional sewer and water capacity available. The map amendments align zoning intensity with infrastructure service areas, supporting fiscal responsibility and long-term sustainability.

Environmental Protection
The Plan identifies wetlands, waterways, and environmentally sensitive lands as critical community assets. The proposed amendments do not increase development intensity in environmentally constrained areas. Campground/RV Park standards require setbacks, buffering, sanitation controls, and lighting limitations, consistent with environmental protection goals.

Seasonal Population Management
The Master Plan recognizes the Village's significant seasonal population increase and the economic and service impacts associated with tourism. The lodging definitions and Special Use framework provide a structured method for managing seasonal uses while supporting economic vitality.

Based on the foregoing, staff finds that the proposed text and map amendments are based upon and consistent with the 2018 Village of Northport Master Plan as required by MCL 125.3405.

6. Public Health, Safety, and Welfare
Zoning regulations must advance legitimate governmental interests in protecting public health, safety, and welfare.
The amendments promote these interests by:

- Clarifying land use classifications to reduce inconsistent application;
- Directing higher-intensity uses to appropriate districts;
- Establishing objective spacing, buffering, and sanitation standards;
- Supporting infrastructure efficiency and fiscal stability;
- Protecting environmentally sensitive areas;
- Providing structured oversight of seasonal lodging impacts.

The amendments are rationally related to legitimate public purposes.

7. Reasonableness and Spot Zoning Analysis
Michigan courts invalidate rezonings only if they are arbitrary, capricious, or constitute impermissible spot zoning. Spot zoning typically involves singling out a small parcel for treatment inconsistent with surrounding land uses and the Master Plan, primarily for private benefit. The proposed map amendments do <u>not</u> constitute spot zoning because they:

- Affect multiple parcels and involve district boundary refinements rather than isolated parcel treatment;
- Are consistent with the Master Plan's future land use framework;
- Align development potential with infrastructure capacity and logical land use transitions;
- Advance articulated public planning objectives rather than private contractual arrangements;

- Were initiated legislatively by the Planning Commission and processed pursuant to statutory procedures.

The record demonstrates that the amendments are reasonable exercises of the Village's zoning authority and are not arbitrary or capricious.

8. Infrastructure and Fiscal Considerations

The affected areas are served or capable of being served by municipal water, sewer, and public streets. The Village has identified additional sewer and water capacity. By directing development toward infrastructure-served areas, the amendments support efficient capital utilization and long-term fiscal stability. No immediate public expenditure is required as a result of the amendments.

9. Findings of Fact (For Planning Commission Consideration)

The Planning Commission may find that:

1. The amendments were properly initiated pursuant to MCL 125.3306.
2. The amendments are based upon and consistent with the 2018 Village of Northport Master Plan.
3. The amendments promote public health, safety, and general welfare.
4. The amendments align zoning classifications with infrastructure capacity and development patterns.
5. The amendments provide objective regulatory standards and improved ordinance clarity.
6. The map amendments do not constitute impermissible spot zoning.
7. The amendments represent a reasonable legislative refinement of the Zoning Ordinance and Map.

10. Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation of approval to the Village Council for adoption of the proposed Zoning Ordinance text amendments and Zoning Map amendments.