Village Planning Commission and Counsel,

We are writing to express concerns regarding the special use permit application for short-term rental use at 160 S. West St. As someone who has corresponded with the Village and the Planning Commission numerous times, we want to reiterate the urgent need for affordable housing in Northport. Our community needs year-round rentals and single-family homes at various price points—not more vacation rentals. Receiving this letter was disheartening, especially knowing the local owners are fully aware of the housing crisis facing Northport. We were hopeful that this property would bring us new neighbors who would contribute to our community year-round, rather than introduce a revolving door for short-term guests. This address is directly across from my home at 183 S. West St., surrounded by neighbors who reside here throughout the year.

Additionally, we believe the Village owns land adjacent to us that has been considered for potential year-round attainable housing. The location is just a block from both the Dandelion Children's Center and Northport Public School, making it ideal for a family with children seeking a year-round rental or a home to purchase. The property requesting this Special Use permit is more compatible with the homes across the street, which were sold as affordable rentals through the Reach program in 2012. When our neighbors purchased this property, they were aware that permission for vacation rental use might be denied, so we are confident they have alternative plans that would better serve the interests of our community.

We strongly urge the Planning Commission and Village Council to place a cap on vacation rentals. Currently, around 40/50 percent of homes in the Village sit empty for much of the year. While we understand the financial appeal of vacation rentals for homeowners, we must take a long-term approach as a Village and ask ourselves: what is enough? Northport already has no shortage of vacation rentals, and many owners have reported that occupancy rates are not as high as they once were; the market is oversaturated. Our Village should follow the example of Frankfort and Suttons Bay by capping vacation rentals and actively incentivizing year-round rentals through any means possible.

As small business owners struggling with staff housing shortages, and as neighbors of the proposed vacation rental, we respectfully urge you to deny this application. More vacation rentals are not what our community needs—they do not fit our street and do not benefit our Village. Let’s prioritize opportunities that strengthen Northport’s year-round community and support its future.

Thank you for your service to our Village,

Kristi Fischer and Brian Hafner