

October 8, 2025

To the Planning Commission and Village Council, Village of Northport

I want to address two interrelated aspects of land use in the Village: Disposal of what I will call “common property” and drafting of a new Village Master Plan. After reviewing the old and sections of the draft Master plans, I have some observations and questions.

Under the currently approved 2018 Master Plan, in the Land Use and Development section, it states: “The Master plan is intended to guide future development in Northport in accordance with the goals of the community. It provides recommendations on the best location for land uses within the Village limits.”

The plan was based on a community survey, a Small Town Design Initiative and Future by Design program. This basis prioritized keeping a small-town environment close to water, environmental quality and natural resources, along with a need for senior housing. “This will be accomplished by preserving much of the Village for residential land uses, limiting higher-density, nonresidential development uses along much of the lakeshore, providing for the preservation of natural features, and setting aside land for recreation and open space needs.”

I am not clear how affordable, higher density housing locations are being formulated with the priorities stated. I am trying to better understand zoning changes since the creation of this plan in which it states, “Only land use changes in accordance with the Plan should be permitted. If changing circumstances make certain types of development desirable that are not in accordance with the present Plan, the Plan should be amended PRIOR to the approval of the development to ensure the new land use to be in accordance with the revised Master Plan.”

After reading the General Goals being considered for the new plan, I am not clear what the priorities for land use will become. What is the Master plan revision being based on? Have there been forums or surveys undertaken or other planning experts engaged? Can we hold community forums as you work on the draft? Do we plan to continue to prioritize the small-town atmosphere and environmental quality? Perhaps a revised Master Plan needs to be developed and approved to guide decisions before we move forward on housing locations, give away or sell community land, or develop attainable housing which our current master plan does not appear to reflect as a priority. What is our comprehensive plan for interrelated issues of economic sustainability, job stability, environmental quality and infrastructure needs?

This brings me to the issue of affordable housing for 7th Street. I believe this planning committee and Village has a duty to follow its publicly available plan which states, “The land area allocated to higher-density uses is large enough (in the 2018 plan) to provide ample room for growth while not over-burdening the facility and service abilities of the Village and not destroying the residential character of the community. The plan should be referenced in making land use decisions so that growth occurs in an orderly and acceptable manner.”

If you refer to the future land use map found in the currently available Master Plan, you will note the areas designated for higher density housing are back from the lakeshore and not in wetlands. The current Village recreation plan also shows this as greenspace/recreation and states these open spaces

are critical elements contributing to the wellbeing of the public, desirability and beauty of the Village, and preservation of environmental quality.

Based on these commitments to our community, many members were surprised and upset to see the location on 7th street rise to the top of the rubric for use as apartments or attainable cottage homes. Giving away land that was designated as natural open space has brought many questions and concerns. I see several reasons why 7th Street, “common good” open land, should not be appropriated by this local authority for other uses:

1. The deed/title was given to be used for shared public use, open space.
2. It is near the Lakeshore area and contributes to the beauty of Northport that is coveted by all.
3. It contains sensitive Lakeshore wetlands that protect water quality.
4. It is an animal habitat that backs up to other conservation lands.
5. It is useful for promoting the physical, social, and emotional health of the community.

We have many signatures asking the Village Council secure this parcel with a “natural park” deed restriction as was intended originally before the reverter clause was removed to preserve this area for future generations.

Although many communities in the country are now trying to convert blighted, underutilized land owned by the public for affordable housing using newly created incentives, the disposal of community land raises serious questions that require thoughtful consideration: Under what circumstances should public land be given away or sold? And, by what process? What recognized public objective is served and what are our priorities for land use owned by the Village? Should you as policy makers support “experiments” (tax incentivized and land use disposal are very new), with our community properties and tax revenues? Will this solve an affordable housing problem into the future? Are we giving away public land to line the pockets of developers or future landowners instead of contributing to all? How is giving away land to some fair to others who have purchased land at market rates (such as the 50 X 100-foot lot that just sold on 5th Street)? Will this land serve a good future use if we keep it? Once it is gone, we will never get it back.

These issues are not simple. Your decisions hold consequences for the future of this Village, have financial consequences for the Village and its residents, and impact infrastructure demands as well as the quality of life here. I do not underestimate the amount of work involved in revising the Master Plan. It is a formidable task that needs to involve our entire community of stakeholders. In this way we can secure a well-planned, bright and beautiful future for Northport.

Thank you for your consideration and work,

Vickie Slot