

David M. Apatang
Governor



GOV. COMM. 24-42
(HOUSE)

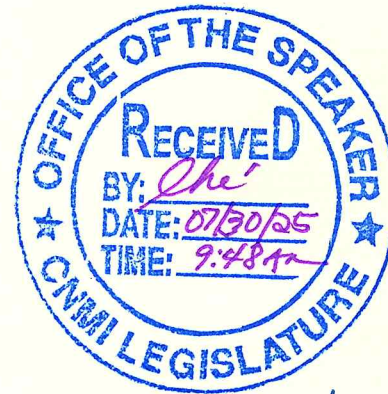
Dennis James C. Mendiola
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

July 29, 2025

GOV2025-016

The Honorable John Paul P. Sablan
Chairman
Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950



7/30/25


The Honorable Edmund S. Villagomez
Speaker
House of Representatives
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
Saipan, MP 96950

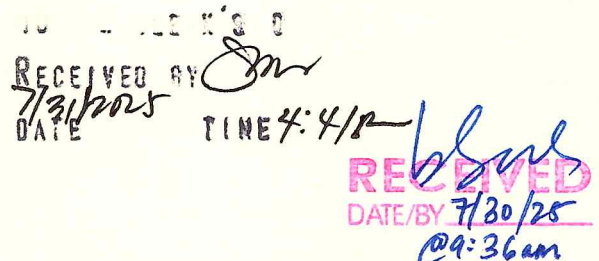
Dear Mr. Chairman and Mr. Speaker:

This is to inform you that I have signed into law **House Local Bill No. 24-5, D1**, entitled "To amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define "Automobile Sales & Service." which was passed by the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation of the Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

This Bill becomes **Saipan Local Law 24-06**. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,


DAVID M. APATANG
Governor



cc: Lieutenant Governor; Attorney General; Commonwealth Law Revision Commission;
Public Auditor; Acting Special Assistant for Administration;
Commonwealth Zoning Board; Programs and Legislative Review Office



**SAIPAN AND NORTHERN ISLANDS LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION
THIRD SENATORIAL DISTRICT
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE**

SECOND SPECIAL SESSION, 2025

HOUSE LOCAL BILL NO. 24-5, D1

**A LOCAL BILL FOR AN ACT
FOR THE THIRD SENATORIAL DISTRICT**

To amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define "Automobile Sales & Service".

OFFERED BY

Representative John Paul P. Sablan

Introduced on March 21, 2025


HOUSE ACTION

Transmitted to Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation for action on

April 25, 2025

DELEGATION ACTION

Referred to:	5/21/25 SNILD Committee on Zoning
Comments Solicited:	3/21/25 Mayor of Saipan [Del. Matters 24-23] Mayor of Northern Islands [Del. Matters 24-24] 18 th SNIMC [Del. Matters 24-25]
Comments Received:	None
Standing Committee Report:	24-01 Adopted 7/22/25
Passed First & Final Reading:	July 22, 2025 w/Draft 1


Frances Joan P. Kaipat
Delegation Clerk



**SAIPAN AND NORTHERN ISLANDS LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION
THIRD SENATORIAL DISTRICT
TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE**

FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 2025

H. L. B. NO. 24-5, D1

**A LOCAL BILL FOR AN ACT
FOR THE THIRD SENATORIAL DISTRICT**

To amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define “Automobile Sales & Service”.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE THIRD SENATORIAL DISTRICT DELEGATION PURSUANT TO
CHAPTER 4, DIVISION 1, TITLE 1 OF THE COMMONWEALTH CODE:**

SECTION 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

The Delegation finds that pursuant to Section 404, Table 1 of the Saipan Zoning Law, “Automobile Sales & Service” businesses are permitted in Mixed Commercial and Industrial zoning districts. Despite such use being allowed pursuant to the aforementioned table, the Delegation finds that the Saipan Zoning Law does not provide a definition for “Automobile Sales & Service.” Recognizing the need for clarity, the Delegation finds it necessary to establish a definition to ensure consistency in regulation and facilitate smoother operations for businesses engaged in such activities. A clear definition will help zoning officials and stakeholders apply the law more effectively.

Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define “Automobile Sales & Service.”

1 **SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.**

2 Article 4, Section 410 of the Saipan Zoning Law, as amended, is hereby amended by adding
3 a new subsection (k) to read as follows:

4 “(k) Automobile Sales & Service. An establishment engaged in the marketing, direct or
5 indirect sales, and servicing of new and used automobiles, including light trucks and motorcycles.
6 Typical activities include vehicle sales, manufacturer recall work, diagnostics, maintenance (e.g.,
7 tune-ups and oils changes), mechanical repairs, parts replacement, paint work, body work, glass
8 work, washing, detailing, and warranty repair work. Automobile Sales & Service businesses may
9 also include sales lots, showrooms, and repair and service centers.

10 **SECTION 3. SEVERABILITY.**

11 If any provision of this Act or the application of any such provision to any person or
12 circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act
13 or the application of its provisions to persons or circumstances other than those to which it is held
14 invalid shall not be affected thereby.

15 **SECTION 4. SAVINGS CLAUSE.**

16 This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be construed as affecting any existing
17 right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes repealed or under any rule, regulation, or
18 order adopted under the statutes. Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding
19 instituted under or pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of
20 terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in
21 existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

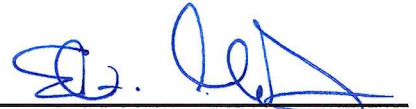
SECTION 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the Governor or its becoming law without such approval.

CERTIFIED BY:

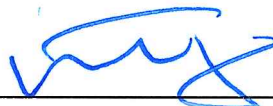


John Paul P. Sablan
Chairman
Saipan & Northern Islands Legislative Delegation



Edmund S. Villagomez
Speaker
24th House of Representatives

Approved this *29th* day of *July*, 2025.



David M. Apatang
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands



SAIPAN AND NORTHERN ISLANDS LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION
Third Senatorial District
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature

Rep. John Paul P. Sablan, Chairman • Senator Celina R. Babauta, Vice Chair • Rep. Joel C. Camacho, Floor Leader

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 24-01
DATE: JULY 11, 2025
RE: HOUSE LOCAL BILL NO. 24-5

ADOPTED 7/22/25
JPC

The Honorable John Paul P. Sablan
Chairman
Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation
Twenty-Fourth Northern Marianas
Commonwealth Legislature
Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Your Committee on Zoning, to which House Local Bill No. 24-5 was referred, entitled:

"To amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define "Automobile Sales & Services" and to establish a screening requirement for "Automobile Sales and Service" businesses that are adjacent to certain zoning areas."

begs leave to report as follows:

I. RECOMMENDATION:

After considerable discussion and deliberation on the bill, your Committee recommends that the Delegation pass House Local Bill No. 24-5 in the form of Draft 1.

The Honorable Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Bldg. • Capitol Hill • P.O. Box 500586 • Saipan, MP 96950.

JPC
07/22/25
@ 10:30 am

II. ANALYSIS:

A. Purpose:

The purpose of House Local Bill No. 24-5 is to amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define "Automobile Sales & Service" and to establish a screening requirement for "Automobile Sales & Service" businesses that are adjacent to certain zoning districts.

B. Committee Amendments:

Your Committee made the following amendments to remove the requirement to establish a screening requirement for "Automobile Sales & Service" businesses that are adjacent to certain zoning districts:

1. Page 1, Title: The Title was amended to read as follows:

~~"To amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define "Automobile Sales & Service" and to establish a screening requirement for "Automobile Sales & Service" businesses that are adjacent to certain zoning districts."~~

2. Page 1, Line 10 and Page 2, Lines 11-13: The following sentence was deleted:

~~"Additionally, the Delegation seeks to minimize potential impacts that Automobile Sales & Service businesses may have on neighboring properties in certain zoning districts by establishing adjacent property screening requirements."~~

3. Page 2, Line 16 and 17: The paragraph was amended to read as follows:

~~"Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define "Automobile Sales & Service" and to establish a screening requirement for "Automobile Sales & Service" businesses that are adjacent to certain zoning districts."~~

4. Page 2, Lines 28-30 and Page 3, Lines 31-32: Deleted the following sentence:

~~"Automobile Sales & Service business shall be screened from adjoining properties in Village Residential, Village Commercial, Rural, Mixed Commercial, or Beach Road zoning districts. Such screening shall consist of appropriate vegetation or fencing designed to minimize the business' visual, noise, and operational impacts on neighboring properties."~~

The legal counsel stated for the record that the above amendments to strike language regarding screening requirements will not have any effect on the definition in its entirety.

C. Comments:

Pursuant to 1 CMC § 1405, comments were solicited from the following on March 21, 2025:

- 1) Honorable Ramon "RB" Jose B. Camacho, Mayor of the Municipality of Saipan;
- 2) Honorable Valentino N. Taisacan, Jr., Mayor of the Northern Islands; and
- 3) Honorable Marian DLG. Tudela, Chairperson, 18th Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council.

In addition, the Committee solicited comments from the following:

- 1) The CNMI Attorney General;
- 2) Saipan Chamber of Commerce;
- 3) Department of Commerce; and
- 4) Commonwealth Zoning Office.

To date, comments were received from the following:

- 1) Remedio C. Mafnas, Secretary, Dept. of Commerce. June 16, 2025

"I am writing to express my strong support for HLB 24-05, which proposes to clearly define "automobile sales and service" and to require appropriate screening requirements for those businesses when located new certain zoning districts."

- 2) Remedio C. Mafnas, Secretary, Dept. of Commerce. June 17, 2025

"House Local Bill No. 24-05 represents a forward-thinking effort to modernize the Saipan Zoning Law by both clarifying the definition of "Automobile Sales & Service" and proactively addressing potential community concerns through screening. We believe that with the recommended clarifications and stakeholder engagement, the bill can effectively balance the need for regulatory clarity, community protection, and business continuity."

- 3) Therese T. Ogumoro, Zoning Administrator, Commonwealth Zoning Office.
June 18, 2025

"The Zoning Board and Office support the bill's intention to include a definition of this use for the purpose of providing clarity. However, we would like to suggest to your committee to hold further actions on this bill at this time, and allow staff to

recommend an appropriate definition to be included within the upcoming proposed text amendments to the law. These amendments are anticipated to be forwarded to the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation (SNILD) later this year for its review and adoption. In this case, it will allow the Board to review the proposed amendments from staff before transmittal to the SNILD for further action."

- 4) Somia T. Quan, President, Joeten Motor Company, Inc.
Michael Sablan, Senior Vice President, Triple J Saipan Inc. dba Triple J Motors
Joint comments dated July 11, 2025.

"In conclusion, we support the intent of HLB23-05's inclusion of a definition for "Automobile Sales & Service" but oppose the proposed screening requirement incorporated into the definition and the HLB. We strongly urge our honorable law makers to remove the screening requirements from the HLB."

In a public meeting held in the House Chamber on July 11, 2025, the Committee received oral testimonies from the following:

- 1) Mr. Jose Mafnas Jr., Corporate Counsel, Triple J Saipan Inc.

"Submitted a Joint Letter stating our position on House Local Bill 24-5. Because our position is specified in the letter and detailed in the letter, I'm just going to speak generally. First of all, both dealerships support the intent of the local bill to include a definition to automobiles sales and service to the Saipan Zoning Law. We have no issue with the definition, except however for the screening requirement that's incorporated in the definition is the aspect of the local bill that both Triple J and Joeten strongly oppose."

- 2) Mr. Alex Sablan, Saipan Chamber of Commerce.

"I too am here to talk about 24-05 and offer up the same concerns related to the legislation for the record. That the screening aspect of the actual law be stricken, if possible and that the intent of the actual legislation is I guess warranted in a sense that the automobile establishments need to be put into the zoning regulations."

Comments have been attached as part of this committee report. Oral testimonies can be made available for public inspection upon request or can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfoYpT-eQRE>.

D. Committee Findings:

Your Committee finds that "Automobile Sales & Service" businesses are permissible in Mixed Commercial and Industrial zoning districts in accordance with Section 404, Table 1 of the Saipan Zoning Law. Your Committee further finds that the Saipan Zoning Law does not offer a definition for "Automobile Sales & Service," despite the fact that such use is permissible under the aforementioned table. Your Committee deems it necessary to establish a definition in order to guarantee consistency in regulation and to facilitate the smoother operation of businesses engaged in such activities, recognizing the necessity for clarity. Zoning officials and stakeholders will be able to more effectively apply the law if a precise definition is provided.

Your Committee finds that this Act will amend Article 4, Section 410 of the Saipan Zoning Law, as amended, to add a new subsection (k) that will define Automobile Sales & Service to read as follows:

"(k) Automobile Sales & Service. An establishment engaged in the marketing, direct or indirect sales, and servicing of new and used automobiles, including light trucks and motorcycles. Typical activities include vehicle sales, manufacturer recall work, diagnostics, maintenance (e.g., tune-ups and oils changes), mechanical repairs, parts replacement, paint work, body work, glass work, washing, detailing, and warranty repair work. Automobile Sales & Service businesses may also include sales lots, showrooms, and repair and service centers."

Your Committee further finds that zoning regulations for automobile sales and services are crucial for managing the potential impacts of these businesses and ensuring they are developed in a way that is compatible with the surrounding community and environment.

The Committee agrees that defining "Automobile Sales & Service" will promote regulatory consistency and enhance operational efficiency for businesses involved in these activities, thereby aiding Zoning Officials and stakeholders in the effective application of the law, therefore, your Committee agrees with the intent of this Act and recommends its passage in the form of House Local Bill No. 24-5, Draft 1.

E. Legislative History:

House Local Bill No. 24-5 was introduced by Representative John Paul P. Sablan on March 21, 2025 and lay on the desks of the Members for three legislative days. On April 25, 2025, House Local Bill No. 24-5 was subsequently referred to the SNILD Standing Committee on Zoning for disposition.

July 11, 2025

RE: H.L.B. No. 24-5

Page 6 of 7

A similar legislation, House Local Bill No. 23-59, "To amend the Saipan Zoning Law, as amended, to add a definition for "Automobile Sales & Services"; and for other purposes." was introduced in the Twenty-Third Legislature on August 8, 2024.


F. Cost Benefit:


House Local Bill No. 24-5, Draft 1 proposes to amend the Saipan Zoning Law, as amended, to define "Automobile Sales & Service". Therefore, the enactment of House Local Bill No. 24-5, D1 will not result in additional cost to the CNMI Government.

III. CONCLUSION:


The Committee is in accord with the intent and purpose of House Local Bill No. 24-5 and recommends its passage in the form of Draft 1.

Respectfully submitted,


Sen. Corina L. Magofna
Chair


Rep. Denita Kaipat Yangetmai
Vice Chair

Rep. Angelo A. Camacho
Member


Rep. Joel C. Camacho
Member

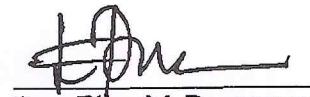
Rep. Diego F. Camacho
Member

Rep. Malcolm J. Omar
Member

Rep. Raymond U. Palacios
Member



Rep. Ralph N. Yumul
Member


Rep. Elias M. Rangamar
Member

July 11, 2025

RE: H.L.B. No. 24-5

Page 7 of 7

Reviewed by: [Signature]
Legal Counsel

Date: [Signature]

Attachment: Remedio C. Mafnas, Secretary of Commerce, June 16, 2025
Remedio C. Mafnas, Secretary of Commerce, June 17, 2025
Therese T. Ogumoro, Zoning Administrator, June 18, 2025
Somia T. Quan, President, Joeten Motor Company Inc. and
Michael Sablan, Senior VP, Triple J Motors, July 11, 2025

TWENTY-FOURTH NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH

LEGISLATURE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 21, 2025

FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 2025

H. L. B. 24-5 D1

**A LOCAL BILL FOR AN ACT
FOR THE THIRD SENATORIAL DISTRICT**

To amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define "Automobile Sales & Service" and to establish a screening requirement for "Automobile Sales & Service" businesses that are adjacent to certain zoning districts.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE THIRD SENATORIAL DISTRICT
DELEGATION PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 4, DIVISION 1, TITLE 1 OF
THE COMMONWEALTH CODE:**

1 SECTION 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

2 The Delegation finds that pursuant to Section 404, Table 1 of the Saipan
3 Zoning Law, "Automobile Sales & Service" businesses are permitted in Mixed
4 Commercial and Industrial zoning districts. Despite such use being allowed
5 pursuant to the aforementioned table, the Delegation finds that the Saipan Zoning
6 Law does not provide a definition for "Automobile Sales & Service." Recognizing
7 the need for clarity, the Delegation finds it necessary to establish a definition to
8 ensure consistency in regulation and facilitate smoother operations for businesses
9 engaged in such activities. A clear definition will help zoning officials and
10 stakeholders apply the law more effectively. Additionally, the Delegation seeks to

11 ~~minimize potential impacts that Automobile Sales & Service businesses may have~~
12 ~~on neighboring properties in certain zoning districts by establishing adjacent~~
13 ~~property screening requirements.~~

14 Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to amend the Saipan Zoning Law to
15 define "Automobile Sales & Service" ~~and to establish a screening requirement for~~
16 ~~"Automobile Sales & Service" businesses that are adjacent to certain zoning~~
17 ~~districts.~~

18 **SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.**

19 Article 4, Section 410 of the Saipan Zoning Law, as amended, is hereby
20 amended by adding a new subsection (k) to read as follows:

21 "(k) Automobile Sales & Service. An establishment engaged in the
22 marketing, direct or indirect sales, and servicing of new and used automobiles,
23 including light trucks and motorcycles. Typical activities include vehicle sales,
24 manufacturer recall work, diagnostics, maintenance (e.g., tune-ups and oils
25 changes), mechanical repairs, parts replacement, paint work, body work, glass
26 work, washing, detailing, and warranty repair work. Automobile Sales & Service
27 businesses may also include sales lots, showrooms, and repair and service centers.
28 ~~Automobile Sales & Service business shall be screened from adjoining properties~~
29 ~~in Village Residential, Village Commercial, Rural, Mixed Commercial, or Beach~~
30 ~~Road zoning districts. Such screening shall consist of appropriate vegetation or~~

31 ~~fencing designed to minimize the business' visual, noise, and operational impacts~~
32 ~~on neighboring properties."~~

33 **SECTION 3. SEVERABILITY.**

34 If any provision of this Act or the application of any such provision to any
35 person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction,
36 the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or
37 circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected
38 thereby.

39 **SECTION 4. SAVINGS CLAUSE.**

40 This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be construed as
41 affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes
42 repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes.
43 Repealers contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or
44 pursuant to prior law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of
45 terminating, or in any way modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall
46 already be in existence on the date this Act becomes effective.

47 **SECTION 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

48 This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the Governor or its becoming
49 law without such approval.

Prefiled: 3/20/2025

Date: _____ Introduced by: /s/ John Paul P. Sablan

HOUSE LOCAL BILL 24-5 D1

Reviewed for legal sufficiency by:

/s/ Joseph M. Hallahan

House Legal Counsel

Date: 3/19/2025

HLB 24-5 D1 Reviewed for legal sufficiency by:

Joseph M. Hallahan 7-11-25

House Legal Counsel

Date: 7/11/2025



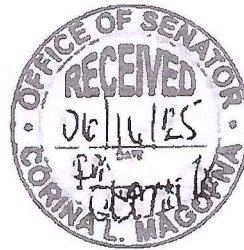
Department of Commerce
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
P.O. Box 5795 CHRB, Saipan, MP 96950
Website <https://commerce.gov.mp/>
Telephone: (670) 664-3000



Remedio C. Mafnas
Secretary
CNMI Department of Commerce
secretary.mafnas@commerce.gov.mp
(670) 664-3000

June 16, 2025

The Honorable Corina L. Magofna
Office of the Senator
24th Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
Senator.CorinaMagofna@gmail.com



SUBJECT: *In Strong Support of HLB 24-05 - Zoning Definition and Regulation for Automobile Sales & Service*

Dear Senator Magofna,

I am writing to express my strong support for HLB 24-05, which proposes to clearly define "automobile sales and service" and to require appropriate screening requirements for those businesses when located near certain zoning districts.

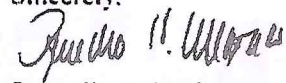
At present, the lack of clear definition has caused confusion for both business owners and zoning officials. Without specific language, it becomes difficult to consistently apply the law, leading to delays, misunderstandings, and uneven enforcement. Defining this term will remove ambiguity, provide regulatory consistency, and create a smoother process for those trying to comply with zoning rules.

Beyond administrative clarity, this legislation should also address critical public concern about how these businesses impact nearby residential areas. Automotive operations often involve dust from repairs, chemical runoffs, fumes from paint or fuel, and the noise of constant mechanical work. These environmental effects don't just affect the look of a neighborhood, they can impact on the air quality and health of those living close by, especially vulnerable groups like children and the elderly.

By requiring screening such as solid fencing, vegetation buffers, or other physical barriers this bill provides for a layer of protection for surrounding communities. These measures help contain pollutants, reduce noise, and create visual separation that preserves the character of nearby homes. It's a practical and responsible way to allow business activity while safeguarding residents from unnecessary exposure to harmful conditions.

HLB 24-05 reflects a smart and balanced approach to growth. I fully support its passage and thank you for your continued efforts to improve the quality for all Saipan residents through thoughtful zoning legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Remedio C. Mafnas", written in a cursive style.

Remedio C. Mafnas



Department of Commerce
Office of the Secretary
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
P.O. Box 5795 CHRB, 12054 Pohnpei Way Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-3077 • (670) 664-3067
email: info@commerce.gov.mp
Web: www.commerce.gov.mp



Arnold I. Palacios, Governor • David M. Apatang, Lt. Governor • Remedio C. Mafnas, Secretary

June 17, 2025

The Hon. Senator Corina Magofna
The Senate
24th Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
P.O. Box 500129
Saipan, MP 96950



RE: Comment on House Local Bill No. 24-05

Hafa Aдай, Senator Magofna,

I am writing in response to your request for comments on House Local Bill 24-05 To Amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define "Automobile Sales & Service" and to establish a screening requirement for "Automobile Sales & Service" businesses that are adjacent to certain zoning districts.

COMMENTS:

I. Overview of the Proposed Amendment

House Local Bill No. 24-05 intends to address the current ambiguity in the Saipan Zoning Law regarding "Automobile Sales & Service." Specifically, the bill seeks to:

- **Define "Automobile Sales & Service:**

The amendment clarifies that these establishments include operations involved in marketing, sales (both direct and indirect) of new and used vehicles – including light trucks and motorcycles – as well as a range of services that cover manufacturer recall work, diagnostics, routine maintenance, and various repair and detailing activities.

- **Establish a Screening Requirement:**

To reduce the potential visual, noise, and operational impacts on neighboring properties, the bill mandates that Automobile Sales & Service businesses located adjacent to Village Residential, Village Commercial, Rural, Mixed Commercial, or Beach Road zoning districts implement screening measures. These measures, described in the bill as "appropriate vegetation or fencing," are intended to serve as a buffer between such businesses and adjoining areas.

II. Analysis of the Amendment

1. Strengths:

- **Enhanced Regulatory Clarity:**

By providing a comprehensive definition, the bill eliminates uncertainty currently present in the zoning law, which will assist zoning officials, stakeholders, and business owners alike in understanding permitted uses and responsibilities.

- **Mitigation of Adverse Impacts:**

The inclusion of screening requirements is a proactive measure intended to protect neighboring areas from potential disturbances often associated with these businesses. This demonstrates foresight in balancing economic activity with community welfare.

2. Areas for Consideration:

- **Guideline Specificity for Screening Measures:**

The language "appropriate vegetation or fencing" offers flexibility; however, without standardized criteria or technical benchmarks, implementation may vary significantly across jurisdictions. Clear guidelines would help ensure uniform enforcement while respecting local aesthetics and environmental considerations.

- **Economic and Operational Impacts on Existing Businesses:**

For established Automobile Sales & Service entities, immediate compliance might present financial or logistical challenges. A transition period or phased implementation could help these businesses adapt without undue operational disruption.

- **Stakeholder Engagement and Implementation Oversight:**

As these provisions affect both business operators and neighborhood residents, ongoing dialogue with affected parties and the establishment of a review or monitoring system could provide valuable feedback and allow for timely adjustments based on real-world conditions.

III. Recommendations

1. Develop Technical Guidelines for Screening:

- **Establish Minimum Standards:**

Define specific metrics for acceptable vegetation density, fencing materials, or alternative screening structures. These should take into account local environmental factors and urban design aesthetics.

- **Compliance Timeline:**

Consider a transitional period for existing businesses to upgrade their screening methods, ensuring smooth adaptation to the new regulatory environment.

2. Facilitate Stakeholder Consultations: Engage with business owners, local residents, urban planners, and environmental experts to refine the screening guidelines. Their insights can help identify practical concerns and lead to a balanced approach that promotes both economic viability and community quality of life.

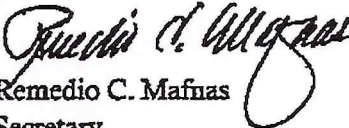
3. Implement a Monitoring and Review Framework: Set up a designated panel or review process to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the screening measures. This framework should monitor community impact, assess compliance, and be flexible enough to allow for adjustments based on stakeholder feedback and evolving conditions.

4. Address Edge Cases: Consider provisions for areas where jurisdictions overlap or where retrofitting existing structures may pose unique challenges. Case-by-case review or an appeals process can ensure fairness and equitable treatment under the law.

IV. Conclusion

House Local Bill No. 24-05 represents a forward-thinking effort to modernize the Saipan Zoning Law by both clarifying the definition of "Automobile Sales & Service" and proactively addressing potential community concerns through screening. We believe that with the recommended clarifications and stakeholder engagement, the bill can effectively balance the need for regulatory clarity, community protection, and business continuity.

Respectfully,


Remedio C. Mafnas
Secretary



COMMONWEALTH ZONING BOARD ZONING OFFICE

Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel. 670-234-9661/2/3, FAX 234-9666
zoningboard@cnmizoning.com



June 18, 2025

The Honorable Corina L. Magofna
Chairwoman
Standing Committee on Zoning
Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation
Twenty Fourth Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature
P.O. Box 500129 Saipan, MP 96950

VIA EMAIL

RE: Comments on House Local Bill 24-05

Dear Chairwoman Magofna:

We are pleased to have the opportunity to submit Zoning's comments to House Local Bill 24-5 which seeks to include a definition for **Automobile Sales & Services** use within the Zoning Law of 2013 (amended).

The Zoning Board and Office support the bill's intention to include a definition of this use for the purpose of providing clarity. However, we would like to suggest to your committee to hold further actions on this bill at this time, and allow staff to recommend an appropriate definition to be included within the upcoming proposed text amendments to the law. These amendments are anticipated to be forwarded to the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation (SNILD) later this year for its review and adoption. In this case, it will allow the Board to review the proposed amendments from staff before transmittal to the SNILD for further actions.

The following outlines a few important reasons for our request to allow Zoning to propose an appropriate definition of this use:

1. This bill's definition of "Automobile Sales & Services" use includes general activities of a "Vehicle Repair, General" or auto shop use which currently requires a Conditional Use application review and public hearing before the Board under the law.
2. All current businesses and future applicants of "Automobile Sales & Services" use may evade the process of Zoning Board review with public hearing before the public – a process that is critical to ensure that land use standards are met to mitigate

environmental issues or potential impacts such as noise, pollution, odor, light, dust, or traffic which may negatively impact adjacent properties and the health, well being, peace, and safety of neighboring residents and businesses if not assessed well through Zoning's review and Conditional Use public hearing.

We once again request for your committee's understanding to hold any action on this bill to allow the Zoning staff to work on the most proper definition for the "Automobile Sales and Services" use for inclusion within the upcoming proposed text amendments to the law.

Thank you for your understanding, and for allowing the Zoning Board and Office to continue assessing land uses as practical as possible in accordance with the standards set forth in the Saipan Zoning Law.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Therese T. Ogumoro", written in a cursive style.

Therese T. Ogumoro
Zoning Administrator

copy: Chairman and members, Commonwealth Zoning Board



July 11, 2025

24th CNMI Legislature
Honorable Jesus P. Mafnas Memorial Bldg.
Capitol Hill, Saipan MP 96950

Attention: Senator Corina L. Magofna, Chairperson
SNILD Standing Committee on Zoning

RE: Joint Comments in Support of HLB 24-5's Inclusion of a Definition of "Automobile Sales and Service" in the SZL but in Strong Opposition to the Screening Requirement

Dear Chairperson Magofna:

This is a joint letter from Triple J Saipan, Inc. dba Triple J Motors and Joeten Motors Company. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this important piece of proposed legislation designated as House Local Bill 24-5 ("HLB 24-5"), which seeks to amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define "Automobile Sales & Service" and to establish a screening requirement for "Automobile Sales & Service" businesses that are adjacent to certain zoning districts.

We support the legislative intent of HLB 24-5 to bring clarity by including a definition of "Automobile Sales & Service" operations under the Saipan Zoning Law ("SZL"). The proposed definition appears appropriately tailored to capture typical automobile dealership activities.

However, we are opposed to the "screening requirement" incorporated as part of the definition stated in HLB 24-5. Definitions are intended to clarify the scope and meaning of terms used throughout a statute, not to impose substantive compliance obligations. By placing the screening mandate with the definition itself, the bill obscures the nature of the requirement and risks confusion and inconsistent enforcement, as other regulatory conditions are generally not imposed this way but are rather incorporated in regulations or as a clear requirement within a law. Further, the blanket application of the screening requirement to all Automobile Sales & Service businesses—including those with longstanding, legally established operations—fails to account for the severe impracticalities of retrofitting existing sites and creates a retroactive burden that disrupts ongoing business activities and imposes potentially severe costs without compelling governmental interests or narrow tailoring.

Moreover, the screening requirement does not account for adjoining properties under common ownership and control as the Automobile Sales & Service business or adjoining properties that are only partially used to support such businesses. In addition to the retroactive burden described above, the lack of a comprehensive framework accounting for the nuances of commercial property ownership and development creates more uncertainties than the HLB seeks to address.

We respectfully suggest that the screening requirement is removed from HLB entirely and that the proposed definition of "Automobile Sales & Service" is amended as shown below:

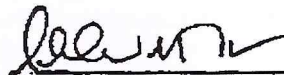
An establishment engaged in the marketing, direct or indirect sales, and servicing of new and used automobiles, including light trucks and motorcycles. Typical activities include vehicle sales, manufacturer recall work, diagnostics, maintenance (e.g., tune-ups and oils changes), mechanical repairs, parts replacement, washing, detailing, and warranty repair work. Automobile Sales & Service businesses may also include sales lots, showrooms, and repair and service centers. ~~Automobile Sales & Service business shall be screened from adjoining properties in Village Residential, Village Commercial, Rural, Mixed Commercial, or Beach Road zoning districts. Such screening shall consist of appropriate vegetation or fencing designed to minimize the business' visual, noise, and operational impacts on neighboring properties.¹~~

The amended definition, as suggested above, is more tailored towards the intent of HLB 24-5, which is "to establish a definition to ensure consistency in regulation and facilitate smoother operations for businesses engaged in such activities" and to "help zoning officials and stake holders apply the law more effectively." The screening requirement is simply unnecessary.

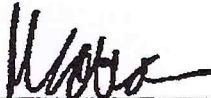
It is noteworthy to mention that in Triple J Motor's 40 years and Joeten Motor's 47 years of operating our respective automobile dealerships, we have not received zoning related complaints from surrounding property owners about the automobile businesses' visual, noise, and operational impacts.

In conclusion, we support the intent of HLB 24-05's inclusion of a definition for "Automobile Sales & Service" but oppose the proposed screening requirement incorporated into the definition and the HLB. We strongly urge our honorable law makers to remove the screening requirements from the HLB.

Very Respectfully,



Somia T. Quan
President
Joeten Motor Company, Inc.



Michael Sablan
Senior Vice President
Triple J Saipan Inc. dba Triple J Motors

¹ For consistency, we also suggest removing part of Line 5 and all of Line 6 on Page 2, to state "Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to amend the Saipan Zoning Law to define 'Automobile Sales & Service' and to establish screening requirement for 'Automobile Sales & Service' businesses that are adjacent to certain zoning districts."