



Village Wastewater & Vermont's Policy Priorities: Growing the Economy, Improving Affordability, and Protecting the Most Vulnerable

Maintaining Vermont's historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside is impossible in the absence of community wastewater and water systems.

- Small lot sizes, coupled with on-site septic systems and wells in Vermont villages, almost always precludes the development of any additional dwelling units, including homes, accessory apartments and in-law apartments.
- These same conditions preclude any changes to use of commercial properties that would intensify wastewater and water needs.
- Our villages are frozen in time and stagnating. Even retention of both homes and businesses is at risk or already in decline.
- Beyond the limitations to growth and threats to retaining what we have, there are the issues of human health as wells and septic systems shadow one another.
- This compromises the ability to build housing where it should be built, including senior housing and workforce housing.

When growth does come, where will it go?

- Growth in and around larger downtowns can support some, but not all, growth when it comes. Supporting growth in and around our historic villages while maintaining their character is the policy solution.
- Ostensibly no growth is possible in and around our historic villages without community wastewater systems.
- The path of least resistance is unplanned development along rural roads.
 - Rural, large lot subdivisions will cause infrastructure to chase development, which is unplanned and more costly.
 - Concentration of services such as daycare, senior care, health care, and transit to take advantage of economies of scale will be undermined.
 - Dispersion can lead to even greater social isolation of those most at risk and vulnerable.

Meeting the state's health, climate change, energy, economic and land conservation policy goals will not be possible as compact settlement is a necessary condition for each.

- Each of these policy areas either explicitly or implicitly assume or require compact settlement patterns going forward as a means by which to achieve policy goals.

- In the absence of the infrastructure necessary to achieve compact settlement patterns, most of Vermont's development and conservation policies cannot be implemented.

We have a solid foundation upon which to build if we don't let our villages decline.

- The layout of Vermont's villages, with a commercial and civic center surrounded by residences, is what other states attempt to create in order to mitigate sprawl and its related costs.
- Vermont's villages are remarkably intact. Relative to other rural states, our villages are still inhabited and often support some level of commerce. We don't have to recreate them.
- Our villages are typically walkable and bikeable, and can be made more so with investment in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Market research shows that young families and seniors want to live in walkable communities.
- Vermont's health initiatives depend on village settlement patterns. From stemming our epidemic of falling seniors to pursuing the 3-4-50 (mitigating 3 behaviors that lead to 4 diseases that lead to more than 50 percent of deaths) approach to preventing chronic disease, settlement patterns should promote regular daily physical activity.

Investment in village wastewater systems is foundational to Vermont's future.

- Investment in village wastewater systems is essential to provide an avenue for all of Vermont to participate in economic growth and housing that accommodates all stages of life.
- From a policy standpoint, compact settlement patterns are foundational to most of Vermont's health, development, energy, greenhouse gas reduction, clean water, and land conservation policies.
- Soil-based systems are the solution rather than conventional wastewater treatment systems.
- Costs of developing community systems are too great for those living in villages alone to bear. Furthermore, systems should be designed to accommodate future growth.
- Grants, not loans, are needed to develop the systems. Operations and maintenance can then be supported by users.
- All of Vermont has a stake in village wastewater investments, and an all-in strategy should be considered in the funding of system design and development.

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