

# Chapter 9 – Utilities, Facilities, and Services

## Goals, Policies, and Recommendation: Overall Utilities, Facilities, and Services

### Goals

1. The maintenance, expansion, ~~maintenance~~, or construction of new facilities and utilities will be financially sustainable for governments and taxpayers.
2. Investments in utilities, facilities, and recreation enhance the desired pattern of development which is compact village and urban centers surrounded by open countryside.

### Policies

1. Public investments in governmental and public utility facilities and ~~services, and lands~~ should support existing and future development.
2. The scale, type, and design of major public utilities and facilities shall be consistent with ~~undertaken so as to complement~~ the future land use settlement patterns recommended in this Plan and relevant municipal plans. ~~Public investments in municipal, regional, and state facilities should be located within existing or planned Regional Growth, Industrial, and Mixed-Use Areas.~~
3. Public investments in municipal, regional, and state facilities should be located within existing or planned Regional Growth, Industrial, and Mixed-Use Areas.
- ~~3.4.~~ Public facilities such as solid waste disposal facilities, correctional facilities, and wastewater treatment facilities shall be situated in an area where they best serve their purpose while minimizing negative impacts on the surrounding area.
- ~~4.5.~~ TRORC supports the acquisition of future public and quasi-public utility sites, properties, or interests, when such acquisitions ~~they~~ advance the goals and policies of this Plan and relevant local plans.
- ~~5.6.~~ The construction of primary educational facilities, health-care facilities, emergency facilities, post offices, libraries, and other public facilities should occur in or adjacent to existing or planned Regional Growth and Mixed-Use Areas, so as to maximize their convenience and accessibility to people (either locating facilities near transit stops or walking distance), to minimize additional infrastructure improvement costs, and to contribute to the vitality of communities.
6. ~~TRORC supports the development of innovative and stable sources of public facility funding to supplement traditional funding resources.~~

### Recommendations

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- ~~1. TRORC will foster partnerships between public investment planning and implementation activities and the private sector in a manner that advances the goals and policies set forth in this Plan.~~
- ~~2. TRORC should look into developing a capital budget for the Region.~~

### Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Water and Wastewater Systems

#### Goals

1. Municipal water and wastewater systems are secure, financially sustainable, well-maintained and energy efficient.
2. Municipal water supply areas and ~~wastewater systems take into account the water~~ maintain high quality of drinking water ~~for public health and watersheds.~~

#### Policies

1. Municipalities and private utilities should create capital budgets and reserve accounts for utilities and facilities management and operations.
2. TRORC ~~will support~~s proposals to install, upgrade, and improve existing public water supplies and wastewater treatment facilities that serve Regional Growth, Industrial, and Mixed-Use Areas as designated in this Plan, as well as affordable housing in Rural Areas.
3. Proposals for upgrades, improvements, or expansion of water and wastewater treatment infrastructure that promote sprawl, strip development, and scattered land uses ~~are not compatible with this Plan.~~
4. ~~When systems are extended to service a new development, careful consideration must be given to the impacts of additional hookups along the length of the extension. The allowance of new hookups must not promote sprawl or strip development. New hookups must not promote sprawl or strip development.~~
5. TRORC ~~will encourage~~s the location of community water supplies and wastewater treatment facilities primarily in Regional Growth, Industrial, and Mixed-Use Areas; however, systems designed specifically to supply appropriately scaled cluster housing projects in rural areas may be consistent with this Plan.
6. Land development within existing or planned Source Protection Areas shall not ~~that~~ poses a reasonable threat of contamination to public water supplies. ~~is not compatible with this Plan.~~
7. TRORC will support water conservation measures to reduce demand for water and to promote the life span and efficiency of water and wastewater facilities.

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8. TRORC will encourage installation of community wastewater treatment facilities and/or water supply systems in areas of existing concentrated settlement where conventional on-site septic systems and wells are inadequate for public health and development.
9. New water and wastewater systems should be designed to be as energy efficient and secure ~~as possible~~.
10. The village areas of Norwich, Hartland, Sharon, Strafford, and Fairlee are the highest regional priorities for new wastewater treatment facilities.

### Recommendations

1. TRORC will assist communities with the Municipal plans, per Vermont statute, shall identification and prioritization of future capital improvements and major repairs, grant writing, and project management as well as estimate costs and financing for maintenance and future capacity.
- ~~2. TRORC will assist communities with the identification and prioritization of future capital improvements and repairs.~~
- ~~3.2.~~ TRORC will continue to offer capital budgeting services to workshops throughout the townsRegion.
- ~~4.3.~~ Water efficiency programs and codes should be adopted at the state or local level to reduce demand on municipal water systems.
- ~~5.4.~~ TRORC shall seek grant opportunities to map water and wastewater systems throughout the Region.
- ~~6.5.~~ When funding is available, municipal plans should inventory water and wastewater systems to identify current and projected capacity gaps.
- ~~7.6.~~ Municipalities should conduct periodic auditing of all water and wastewater distribution systems to calculate infiltration and losses.
- ~~8. Municipalities are encouraged to adopt regulations or amend current regulations to promote dense development in areas with public sewer and water.~~

## Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Solid Waste

### Goals

1. Solid and hazardous waste generation in the TRO Region is reduced.
2. Reuse, recycling, and composting in the TRO Region is increased.

### Policies

1. Solid waste collection systems should be coordinated to lessen costs and increase efficiency.
2. Products that are fully recyclable are encouraged to be recycled.

### Recommendations

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1. TRORC will continue to assist member towns, alliances, and the Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste Management District in the update and implementation of municipal and regional solid waste plans.
2. TRORC will support and participate in any future discussions regarding the development of regional waste management services.
3. TRORC should assist towns in meeting the Universal Recycling Law requirements through outreach and education, with assistance from the Agency of Natural Resources.
4. All towns or districts of this Region are encouraged to contact TRORC offices regarding their current planning activities and determine if their SWIP revisions meet the overall goals and policies of this Plan.
5. ~~TRORC should study the affordability of solid waste services in the Region.~~

### Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Educational Facilities and Services

#### Goals

1. Accessible and affordable educational facilities and services are available throughout the Region that meet or exceed statewide standards, including life-long learning opportunities.
2. Students have access to quality vocational and workforce training opportunities to prepare them for future careers.

#### Policies

1. The construction of primary educational facilities should occur in or within close proximity to existing or planned Regional Growth and Mixed-Use Areas, so as to maximize their accessibility to people and infrastructure, ~~as well as contribute to the vitality of communities.~~
2. Expansion of continuing education and vocational education opportunities is encouraged.
3. ~~Adaptive reuse of vacant school facilities that occurs in a manner that enhances villages and downtowns and stimulates the local economy is supported.~~

#### Recommendations

1. Town and school authorities should create and maintain safe pedestrian access and transit opportunities to educational facilities, in line with Safe Routes to School efforts.
2. Towns must assess and incorporate the needs of disabled children and staff into educational facility and budgetary planning efforts to ensure the provision of free and appropriate education for all children.

3. Towns should consider applying for funding opportunities enhancing educational facilities as early as possible (i.e., a year in advance) in order to request help from TRORC, if needed.

## Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Child Care Services

### Goals

1. An adequate supply of safe and affordable child care services and facilities is available.
2. A regional network of high-quality child care programs fulfills the needs of families and employers.
- ~~3. Major employers (employing more than 35 employees) provide child care services on site or create a partnership with a local child care service.~~

### Policies

1. TRORC supports initiatives to develop child care facilities where a need has been proven and the location conforms to this Regional Plan.
- ~~2. TRORC should work collaboratively with child care providers and towns to help them locate into convenient and safe areas.~~

### Recommendations

1. TRORC should encourage major employers (employing more than 35 employees) to provide childcare services and create a partnership with a local childcare service.
- ~~1-2.~~ TRORC should work with towns to address identified needs for child care facilities or services by:
  - a. Identifying publicly owned buildings throughout the Region; and
  - b. Evaluating and prioritizing their suitability to serve as child care facilities after considering Vermont regulations.
- ~~2-3.~~ Towns should review their zoning regulations (if adopted) to determine the ability of the regulations to allow child care providers to be located in the town.
- ~~3. Develop business “how-to” guides for providers to navigate local permitting.~~
- ~~4. Conduct a child care needs assessment in the Region.~~

## Goals, Policies, and Recommendations: Telecommunications

### Goals

1. Universal broadband access using fiber is available throughout developed areas in the TRO Region.
2. Universal availability of mobile cellular service is available throughout developed areas in the TRO Region.
- ~~3. Speeds and pricing for residential broadband are on par with national urban areas.~~

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- ~~4. The enhancement of telecommunications networks is supported, when such facilities do not have significant adverse environmental, health, or aesthetic impacts.~~

### Policies

1. Public and private efforts to expand telecommunications access is supported, when done in a manner that does not have an undue adverse impact on the rural character of our communities.
2. Efforts to provide free public broadband access in places such as village centers and public buildings is supported.
3. Telecommunications facility development shall be excluded from the following areas:
  - a. Floodways shown on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps.
  - b. Wetlands as indicated on Vermont State Wetlands Inventory maps or identified through site analysis.
  - c. Rare, threatened, or endangered species habitat or communities.
4. All new telecommunications facilities and related infrastructure must be sited and designed to avoid or, if no other reasonable alternative exists, to otherwise minimize and mitigate adverse impacts to the following:
  - a. Historic districts, landmarks, and sites.
  - b. State or federally designated scenic byways and municipally designated scenic roads and viewsheds.
  - c. Special flood hazard areas identified by National Flood Insurance Program maps.
  - d. Necessary wildlife habitat identified by the State or through analysis, including core habitat areas, migration, and travel corridors.
5. New telecommunications facilities and related infrastructure (this includes access roads, site clearing, on-site power lines, lighting, and off-site power lines) must be sited to avoid the fragmentation of large priority and high priority forest blocks.
6. Telecommunications facilities development shall minimize site clearing and highly visible roadways.
7. The developer shall make reasonable efforts to minimize the aesthetic impact of the telecommunications facility or infrastructure on the surrounding landscape. This includes options such as the utilization of “stealth towers,” camouflage through paint scheme, or designs that blend into the surroundings, such as asymmetrical mono-poles disguised as pine trees.
8. Telecommunications facilities shall be designed to be the minimum height necessary to achieve coverage.
9. All new facilities shall incorporate reasonable options for sharing space on the proposed towers. Applicants for new towers must demonstrate that there is no reasonable opportunity for colocation on existing towers.

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10. To support resiliency, applicants shall make space available on towers for municipal communication systems to enhance or expand road and emergency service communication networks.
11. To minimize conflict with scenic values, facility design and construction shall employ the following principles:
  - a. In rural locations, be located in forested areas or be sufficiently landscaped to screen the lower sections of towers and related ground fixtures from public vantage points, such as trails, roads, or water bodies;
  - b. In more developed areas, utilize materials, architectural styles, color schemes, lighting fixtures, size, and other design elements to promote aesthetic compatibility with surrounding uses and to avoid adverse visual impacts; and
  - c. Be located downgrade of the ridge so as not to exceed the elevation of the tree line as seen from public highways.
12. Consideration shall be given to the environmental limitations of any given site. Impacts on wildlife habitats, soil erosion, forestry and agricultural lands, and similar resources should be carefully addressed. Projects that materially impact these resources are discouraged.
13. The clearing of land associated with site development for tower and facility construction should not negatively impact the scenic views present.
14. Towers or facilities that are designed to resemble trees or natural features shall not be placed unnaturally~~conspicuously~~ higher than the tree line.
15. Permits must require removal of facilities that are no longer used.

### **Recommendations**

1. TRORC should continue to participate actively in the Section 248a permitting process.
2. Communities should seek out funding to implement new or sustain existing Wi-Fi zones in villages and downtowns.
3. The State should continue to support programs that achieve universal broadband and cellular communication access.

## Goal, Policies, and Recommendations: Municipal Buildings and Properties

### **Goal**

1. The Region has adequate municipal buildings to serve town needs.

### **Policies**

1. Town buildings should be carefully sited and designed to meet the future energy efficiency needs of the town and built with both construction and operating costs in mind.

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2. Towns are encouraged to rehabilitate historic buildings that are located in existing developed areas for their offices.
3. The State ~~shall~~ should only construct new office buildings in Regional Growth Areas

### Recommendations

1. Towns should assess expected maintenance and upgrades for town buildings and create reserve funds to cover these so that these buildings remain in good condition.
2. TRORC should assist towns with planning, public dialogue, and grant writing, if requested, when considering, constructing, and renovating new buildings so that they meet community needs and are located wisely.
3. The State must consider effects on the Region and our towns if they are considering siting new buildings so they fit well with the Region's needs.

## Goal, Policies, and Recommendations: Recreational Facilities

### Goal

1. The Region is home to a variety of indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities.

### Policies

1. The maintenance and development of recreation trail networks (e.g., Appalachian and Long Trails, Cross Vermont and Cross Rivendell Trails, regional and state snowmobile networks, and cross-country ski trails) is encouraged.
2. New development and land subdivisions that have an undue adverse impact on the enjoyment or continued use of recreational uses should be discouraged ~~are inconsistent with this Plan.~~
3. Consistent with private property rights, ~~ownership and management practices that maintain~~ maintenance or enhancement of public access to and uses of recreational amenities on privately held land are encouraged.
4. Where development interacts with the Appalachian or Long Trails and other related side trails, design plans and construction must maintain the predominant scenic character and the primitive qualities of the trail corridor.
5. TRORC supports the development of multipurpose trails using abandoned railroad beds and other public rights-of-way.
6. TRORC encourages federal, state, and local acquisition of land and facilities well-suited for outdoor recreation, provided that adequate financial and management plans and arrangements are made with involved local governments.

### Recommendations

1. TRORC will assist communities with the establishment of Conservation Commissions and will support existing Conservation Commissions when possible.



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2. TRORC should help towns develop highway policies that address recreation needs and should encourage the adoption of walkable communities programs within the Region.
3. TRORC should assist towns with establishing and managing town forests.
4. TRORC should work with the State, White River Partnership, ~~and~~ the Vermont River Conservancy, and other groups on increased river access.
5. TRORC will continue to assist towns with their efforts to improve public access to outdoor recreational opportunities, while ensuring consistency with local and regional land use plans.

### Goal, Policies, and Recommendations: Opportunities for Shared Services/Infrastructure

#### Goal

1. Shared sServices and infrastructure are provided efficiently and effectively.

#### Policy

1. TRORC encourages communities to seek opportunities for shared staffing, services, and infrastructure with other municipalities ~~in an effort~~ to reduce costs and improve quality of service.

#### Recommendation

1. TRORC will assist communities with the development of inter-local agreements, union municipal districts, and other cooperative agreements whenever possible.