

**PRINCIPLE**

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The effectiveness of taxpayer dollars should be maximized by investing government funds in public infrastructure and facilities in the most efficient manner possible.

## Cost of Infrastructure

Investments in public infrastructure and facilities represent a significant portion of local taxpayer dollars. At the county level, capital construction and facility and infrastructure maintenance, including debt service, requires nearly \$12 million annually. Total transportation expenditures by all levels of government in Tompkins County total over \$35 million a year.

The cost and distribution of many public services can be directly linked to growth and development decisions. Development patterns that result in increased costs for public infrastructure may reduce funds available for public services such as education and health care.

## Responsible Public Spending

Decisions about investments in public facilities and infrastructure can complement other community goals – or be in conflict with them. Compact, higher density development patterns can reduce the cost to taxpayers of additional miles of road, feet of water and sewer lines, miles of transit travel, and number of public facilities.

A public spending ethic that recognizes that it is generally more cost-effective to utilize existing infrastructure, and to add to the capacity of existing systems before building new ones, can support and reinforce the quality of life in existing communities while lightening the burden on taxpayers. Particularly in these days of constrained resources at all levels of government, we must recognize that land use

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Every new foot of road, sewer line, and water line is not only a current capital cost but is an ongoing maintenance expense and will one day need to be replaced. Unlike many expenditures for current services, capital investments represent a long term commitment of public resources. Dispersed development can also result in ongoing increased public service costs for public or special transportation to allow residents to gain access to needed medical and other services; busing of school children; public safety patrols; emergency

response capability; and provision of other community services at more sites for a given population than would otherwise be necessary.

## Quality of Community Life

High public costs can discourage private investment and result in a downward spiraling cycle of community decline. On the other hand compact development may allow taxpayers to purchase a higher level of public services for the same tax dollar. Communities that can maintain higher levels of public facilities and services in a cost effective manner are more attractive locations for private investment. Private investment in compact development, in turn, provides the tax base to support desired services and results in successful, sustainable communities.

## Policies

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Maintain County facilities to protect the public’s investment, to effectively serve residents, and to provide an efficient working environment for employees now and in the future.
- Optimize the value of community investments in water treatment and distribution facilities and in sewer collection and treatment facilities by encouraging higher density in areas served by these facilities.
- Save public costs by encouraging new development to locate in places contiguous to existing development where sewer, water, roads and other infrastructure already exist, or are planned as part of a comprehensive plan to accommodate projected growth.
- Consider intermunicipal alternatives when addressing issues related to water supply and wastewater disposal.

## Action Items

*Action items are activities that Tompkins County government or community partners can undertake to implement policies.*

**TO DO** → Develop or identify model land development regulations and design standards that support denser development in areas with water and sewer services (including infill and mixed-use) and limited development in areas without such services.

**TO DO** → Review highway jurisdictional patterns in Tompkins County.

**TO DO** → Facilitate intermunicipal cooperation in sharing equipment, purchasing materials, and storing materials.

**TO DO** → Evaluate a downtown office plan for future County facility needs.

**TO DO** → Determine the location of future County Health Department facility and the future use of Biggs B building

**TO DO** → Implement the countywide Public Safety Communications System project.

**TO DO** → Renovate and expand the County Public Safety building to meet projected needs.