

Municipal Priorities

VLCT Municipal Legislative Priorities

2024

Increasing **revenue** and **capacity** is foundational for the success of Vermont Municipal Government.

Revenue

Authorize local option taxes for all communities and establish a municipal revenue sharing program aimed at expanding capacity of municipalities.

Capacity

Expand the capacity of local government to do statute-defined work and serve their communities. Increasing access to state and federal funding is necessary for effective municipal governance.

Housing

Increase and expand opportunities for housing development through regulatory relief and low barrier, statewide, location-based incentives.

Community Development

Authorize local governments to establish targeted, performance-based contracts to support infrastructure, housing, and climate change mitigation projects.

Reappraisal

Ensure a municipal focus in the design and implementation of the statewide property reappraisal plan.

Open Meeting

Make fully remote meetings a permanent voluntary option under Open Meeting Law.

Public Safety

Support new approaches to address the strained public safety sector, including criminal justice reform and investments in law enforcement and emergency medical services.

Climate Change

Support the resiliency of municipalities with new resources and authority to adapt quickly as they deal with the damaging effects of climate change.

Disaster Response

Provide municipalities affected by the 2023 summer floods with local match, tax abatement, and revenue loss funding necessary to recover fully.

The VLCT Board of Directors adopted [municipal priorities for the 2024](#) legislative biennium at its December 14, 2023 meeting. The Municipal Priorities were drawn from the more comprehensive [Municipal Policy](#) in order to guide the VLCT Board of Directors, advocacy staff, and members in effectively advocating for Vermont local governments. In Vermont, local government resources and authority are severely constrained by state law (statutes). Cities and towns need the funding, flexibility, and professional capacity to meet today's challenges, and VLCT articulates these needs to the Vermont General Assembly (state legislature).

VLCT's Legislative Municipal Priorities for 2024

Expand Municipal Government Capacity

- Provide additional technical assistance to municipalities, including through a \$250,000 appropriation to VLCT to continue its Federal Funding Assistance Program.
- Increase equitable access to state and federal funding by reducing barriers to application.
- Incentivize regional, intermunicipal, and cost sharing initiatives and governance models.
- Enable authority necessary for efficient and effective municipal governance by advancing a list of VLCT technical corrections.
- Limit new mandates and directives on municipalities that strain existing capacity.

Establish Municipal Revenue Sharing

- Authorize municipal voters to adopt a variety of local option taxes in every Vermont city and town.
- Establish revenue sharing programs that are sustainable, equitable, and distributed through a needs-based allocation.
- Consolidate and allocate state grant programs through a non-competitive, equitable, needs-based process.

Increase and Expand Opportunities for Housing Development

- Implement state and regional mapping that greenlights at least five percent of Vermont's land mass for housing development.
- Reform state, regional, and local regulations to encourage new construction and rehabilitation of existing property that will increase the number of "missing middle" and affordable housing units in the state.
- Reform existing state affordable housing priorities to increase funding for the development and construction of "missing middle" housing to at least ten percent of the state's annual affordable housing investment.
- Provide resources and funding for infrastructure development to municipalities that support housing growth.
- Implement State Designation reform, recognizing the need for new designated areas that allow future growth, are climate informed, and are safe from flooding.
- Direct housing incentives and programs to State Designated areas, including new areas recognized for growth in municipal plans.
- Eliminate Act 250 jurisdiction over new and existing projects in all Designated Downtowns, Growth Centers, New Town Centers, and Village Centers, and in municipalities with robust zoning and development capacity.
- Consult with local governments when planning how to provide transitional housing, emergency shelter, and integrated support services to alleviate houselessness.

Renew Support for Public Safety

- Develop new initiatives and incentives to address the critical shortage of public safety personnel (police, fire, and EMS) and implement new ways to recruit, train, and retain them.
- Emphasize wellness, safety, mental health, and critical incident stress management.
- Address community public safety concerns and hold repeat offenders accountable with sensible bail reform.

- Implement recommendations from the Regional Emergency Medical Services (EMS) coordination study and annual EMS Advisory Committee report.
- Enhance procedural justice in law enforcement and continue efforts to:
 - ensure fair, equitable, and impartial practices;
 - build trust especially among marginalized, vulnerable, and disadvantaged people;
 - create policy and oversight mechanisms consistent with local governance structures;
 - embrace community policing principles that include crime reduction strategies; and
 - provide sufficient funding to attain these goals.

Ensure Open Meeting Law Equity

- Support increased public participation by making fully remote meetings a permanent voluntary option under the Open Meeting Law.
- Reduce expenses, carbon emissions, time, and effort by using 21st century technology for more efficient and accessible local government.
- Provide Vermont's public, educational, and government (PEG) channels with funding to continue assisting municipalities with remote and hybrid meetings.

Support Successful Community Development

- Authorize municipalities of all sizes to establish targeted, performance-based contracts with developers to support infrastructure, housing, and climate mitigation projects.
- Allow low barrier Project Based Increment Tax Financing for specific eligible projects that support municipal community development.
- Require third-party project management and consultant contracts for each municipal project supported.

Respond to Climate Change Now

- Support municipal resiliency and adaptation efforts with new resources and the authority to respond as the front-line defense in protecting citizens from the impacts of climate change.
- Ensure municipalities receive their fair share of benefits from the climate change resources included in the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Partner in local government efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors.
- Implement policies that empower municipalities to reduce emissions, plan for and increase resiliency to the effects of climate change, and transition to being powered and sustained by cleaner energy sources.

Fund the Disaster Response and Recovery from Summer Floods

- Provide relief to municipalities for tax abatement of flood-damaged properties. Revise 50 percent substantial damage threshold and include full municipal and education tax reimbursement.
- Provide impacted municipalities with all local match required for FEMA Public Assistance projects regardless of Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund rating.
- Award revenue loss funding to impacted municipalities to fully recover from the 2023 summer floods.
- Fund the Flood Resilient Communities Fund, continuing the mitigation work at the municipal level not eligible for FEMA.
- Support better emergency preparedness coordination at the state and local levels.

Include Municipal Voices in Statewide Reappraisal Proposal

- Ensure that municipal, lister, and appraiser representation is included in the design and implementation plan for any new statewide reappraisal plan.
- Require a cost benefit analysis of existing appraisal system and any new proposed system before implementation.