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The town should review incentives in the draft ordinance and existing water pricing policies and enhance incentives for directing development closer to town and encouraging compact, higher density development.

How a community grows affects both water demand and the cost of providing water to homes and businesses. In general, low density, dispersed development translates into more water loss through leakages, increased water demand, and a higher cost of infrastructure. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that drinking water systems can lose 6 - 25% of their water through leaks and breaks depending upon condition, with longer length systems leaking more than shorter systems. Smart growth development techniques, including compact and infill development, can be used to reduce the cost of water and the amount of water needed. An assessment by the American Planning Association notes that the "annual cost of providing water and sewer service to a half-acre lot in a centrally located, dense development is \$238 per household, while it is \$472 for the same lot in a highly dispersed development far from the water service center."

Taking care of our existing infrastructure is critical for the efficiency of the entire water distribution system and can cut down costs and water loss. How can the town take on operation and maintenance of additional infrastructure when it has trouble maintaining the existing system? Directing development closer to town can maintain investment in the existing system, and help solve a real current funding problem that is already resulting in deferred maintenance problems and substandard service.

The town should link water policies to land use planning

In order to work most effectively and allow for orderly, planned development, the water main extension ordinance can't be considered independently of other policies and ordinances. It needs to be coordinated and integrated with the town's land use code, the county's subdivision

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review ordinance and the joint review process for developments in the Extraterritorial Zone (ETZ), an area 1 - 3 miles outside Silver City limits. Imagine this scenario for effective long-term planning: the town's land use code, managed in combination with the water main extension policy, can become an effective tool for directing development where the community wants it and away from critical areas such as groundwater recharge zones and open space and greenways.

And back to the point that water is the lifeblood for every member of the community. Maintaining water quality is crucial to the sustainability of our water supplies. In order to limit water contamination from septic tanks and to capture return flow credit, the draft ordinance requires that new developments also hook up to the town's sewer system or install a community liquid waste system for developments of more than five homes. These requirements should be effective tools for avoiding water quality problems and minimizing the amount of septage needing to be treated and disposed of. But the draft ordinance isn't enough. These requirements should also be extended to proposed developments that are to be located in the ETZ or county, but do not request town water service. The method for doing this is to incorporate the above requirements into the county's subdivision rules. This requires county-wide planning, and effective interaction between Town and County government. Too much is at stake to allow anything but effective governance when it comes to protection of our water resources.

The Town of Silver City is expected to issue a notice of intent to adopt the water main extension policy at the August 8 town council meeting at 7:00 pm in the Grant County Administration Building, 1400 Highway 180 East. It is not too late to offer public comment to your town councilors. Feel free to use the above recommendations when contacting your public official. It's your future drinking water at stake.

To download a copy of the draft water main extension ordinance, visit www.townofsilvercity.org

1 "Growing Toward More Efficient Water Use: Linking Development, Infrastructure, and Drinking Water Policies" January 2006. www.epa.gov/smartgrowth.

2 "Does Sprawl Cost Us All? Isolating the Effects of Housing Patterns on Public Water and Sewer Costs." Cameron Speir, Kurt Stevenson, 2002. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 68(1): 56-70.