

Tumalo Basin Sewer District Need's Your Input!



Public Sewer Survey Stakeholder Interviews

August 25, 2026

Tumalo Business and Resident Outreach

TBSD President Rob Fish and consultant Linda Swearingen met with approximately 10 Tumalo businesses on July 21 to discuss their perspectives on constructing a sewer system in Tumalo. One business owner completed the stakeholder survey while Fish and Swearingen were present. Other property owners discussed their current sewer issues and concerns and, in some cases, agreed to return the survey by text or email. To date, only a handful of business owners have returned the surveys. However, the feedback shared directly with Fish and Swearingen has been documented in this report.

Swearingen also met with approximately 15 Tumalo residents between July 22 and August 20, 2026. Several property owners expressed appreciation for receiving accurate information about TBSD and the district's progress to date. Much of the misinformation they encountered related to the Tumalo TPOA system, whether property owners would be required to connect to the sewer once it becomes available, and projected sewer connection costs. After receiving accurate information, many residents were relieved to learn that they would not be required to connect to the sewer and that the current operator of the TPOA system is not affiliated with TBSD.

Recommendations for Ongoing Community Communication

Based on the information gathered through these conversations, TBSD will need to provide regular updates to the Tumalo community to ensure that property owners, residents, and businesses have access to timely and accurate information about the sewerage process.

Communication through the district's website alone is not sufficient. Holding an annual community update meeting or open house would provide an opportunity for residents and business owners to ask questions, receive current information, and address misinformation or concerns directly with district representatives. An annual open house, supplemented by ongoing website updates and other forms of communication, would go a long way toward keeping the Tumalo community informed and engaged as the district moves forward with its sewer planning efforts.

Stakeholder Interviews

Purpose

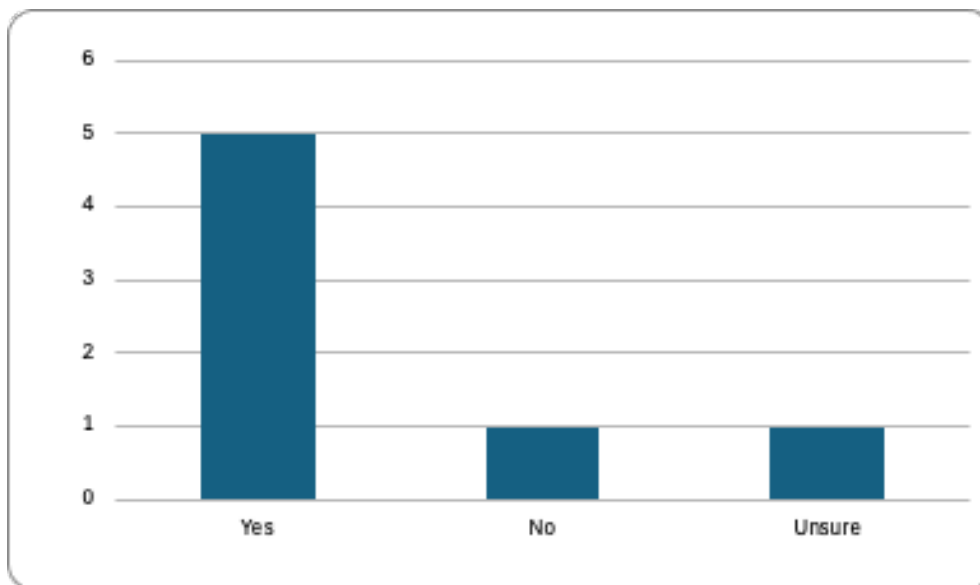
This survey is intended to help the Tumalo Basin Sewer District better understand community interest, priorities, and concerns related to a potential community sewer system in Tumalo. Your responses will help inform future planning and decision-making.

1. Do you have an interest in connecting to a community sewer system if one becomes available to serve your property?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

Comments:

- Many individuals expressed concerns about using the existing TPOA Orenco Treatment System.
 - Most people expressed concerns about the TPOA owner/operator's honesty and ability to operate and maintain a system that functions effectively.
 - Some expressed concern that the TPOA system would not have sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the entire Terrebonne community and that a new treatment option may need to be developed soon.
- Most people were not opposed to the district researching the possibility of acquiring the existing TPOA system. However, they did not want the current owner involved in the system's future operation or management.

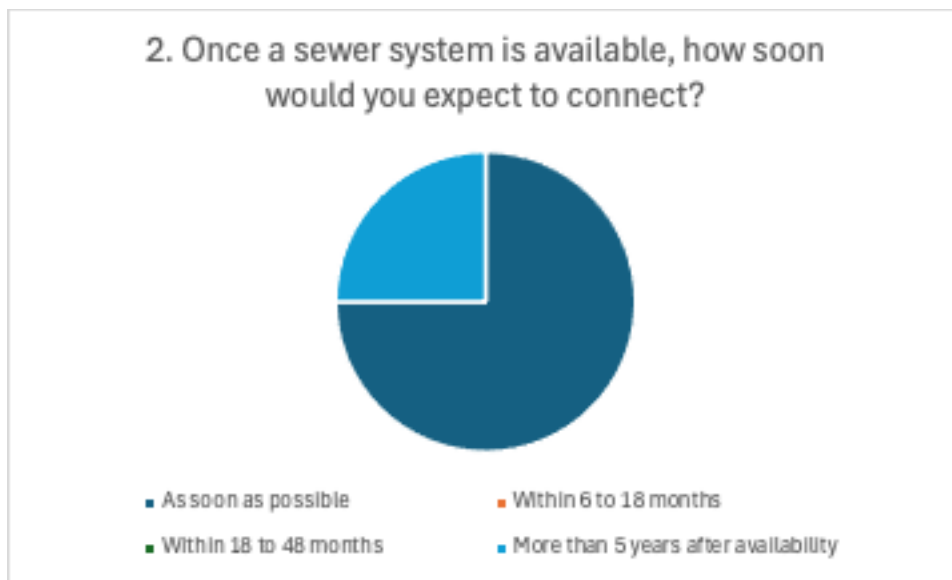


2. Once a sewer system is available, how soon would you expect to connect?

- ☐ As soon as possible
- ☐ Within 6–18 months
- ☐ Within 18–48 months
- ☐ More than 5 years after availability

Comments:

- “My system works—do not want to hook-up to sewer.”
- Most individuals preferred to continue using their existing septic systems until those systems needed to be replaced.
- A few individuals wanted to know the cost of a new system before committing to a timeline for connecting if a new treatment option became available.

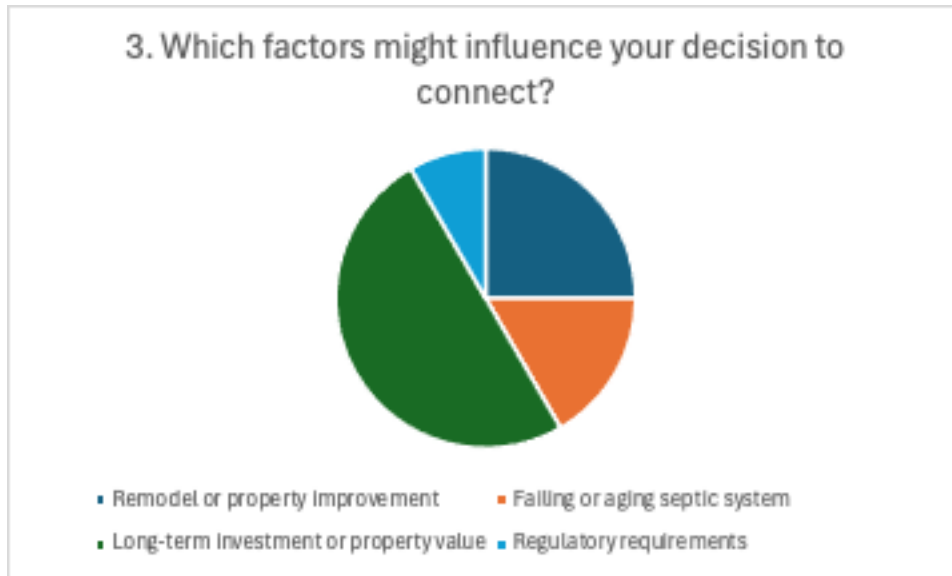


3. Which factors might influence your decision to connect? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ New construction
- ☐ Remodel or property improvement
- ☐ Failing or aging septic system
- ☐ Long-term investment or property value
- ☐ Regulatory requirements
- ☐ Other: _____

Comments:

- Many people expressed interest in having the ability to add an ADU or an addition to an existing home or business, or to partition their property, once sewer service becomes available.
- Some property owners were primarily concerned with having an option to replace their failing septic systems.

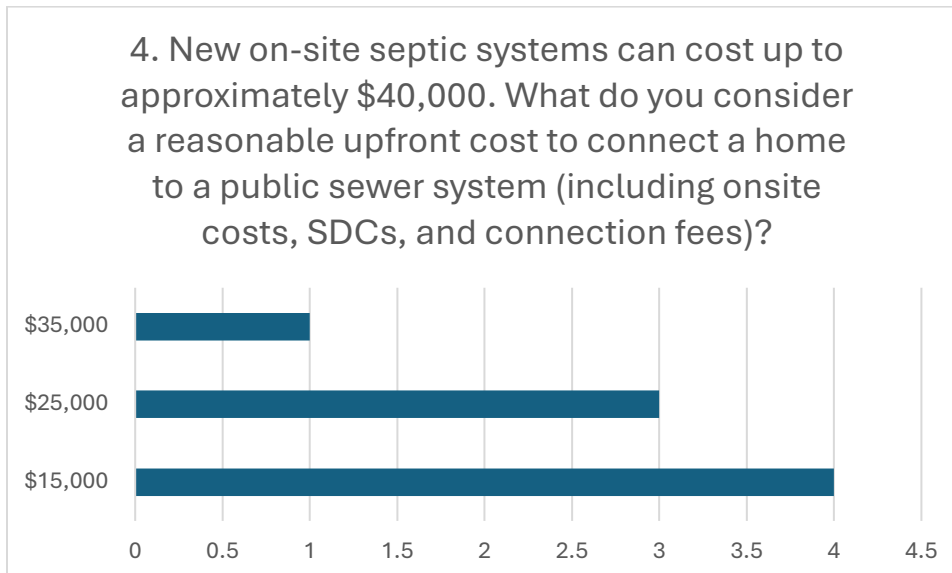


4. New on-site septic systems can cost up to approximately \$40,000. What do you consider a reasonable upfront cost to connect a home to a public sewer system (including onsite costs, SDCs, and connection fees)?

- ☐ \$15,000
☐ \$25,000
☐ \$35,000
☐ \$45,000
☐ Other: \$ _____

Comments:

- Property owners who currently have advanced treatment systems, or who have researched the cost of installing one, indicated that connecting to the sewer would be a less expensive and more favorable option for them.

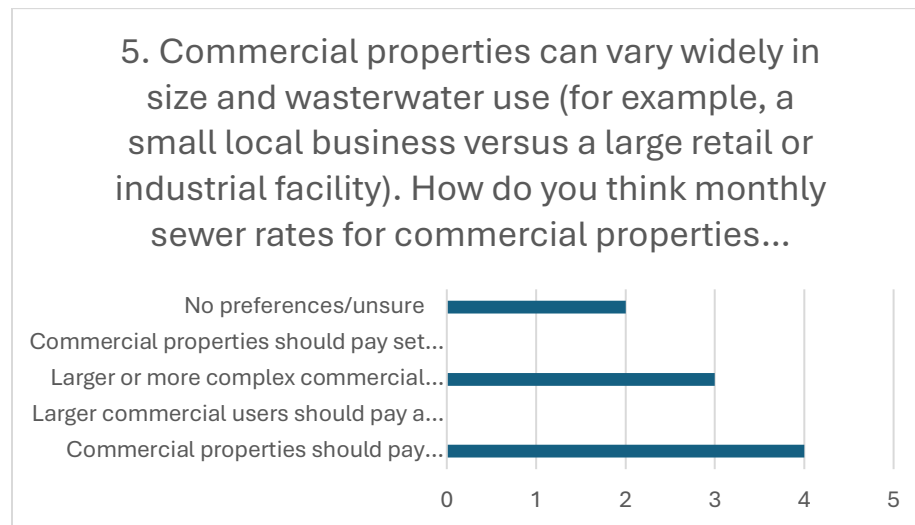


5. Commercial properties can vary widely in size and wastewater use (for example, a small local business versus a large retail or industrial facility). How do you think *monthly sewer rates* for commercial properties should generally be structured relative to residential properties?

- ☐ Commercial properties should pay monthly rates based on the amount of wastewater they generate compared to a typical home.
- ☐ Larger commercial users should pay a lower cost per unit of wastewater because fixed system costs are spread over more use.
- ☐ Larger or more complex commercial users should pay a higher cost per unit to account for factors such as higher strength wastewater, monitoring needs, or potential risks.
- ☐ Commercial properties should pay set rates based on business type or size categories rather than exact wastewater use.
- ☐ No preference / unsure

Comments:

- “Charges should be based on what you use.”



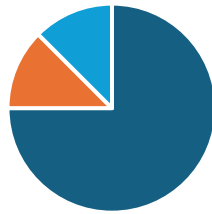
6. Do you generally prefer that Tumalo wastewater be treated locally, or would you consider regional treatment outside the community if it were feasible?

- ☐ Prefer local treatment
- ☐ Would consider regional treatment
- ☐ No preference
- ☐ Unsure / need more information

Comments:

- Most individuals liked the thought of a local treatment facility.

6. Do you generally prefer that Tumalo wastewater be treated locally, or would you consider regional treatment outside the community if it were feasible?



- Prefer local treatment
- Would consider regional treatment
- No preference
- Unsure/need more information

7. Would you be opposed to district staff accessing your property for periodic sewer system maintenance (with advance notice)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Depends on circumstances

Comments:

- Most people did not have a problem with district staff accessing their property for periodic sewer system maintenance.

7. Would you be opposed to district staff accessing your property for periodic sewer system maintenance (with advance notice)?

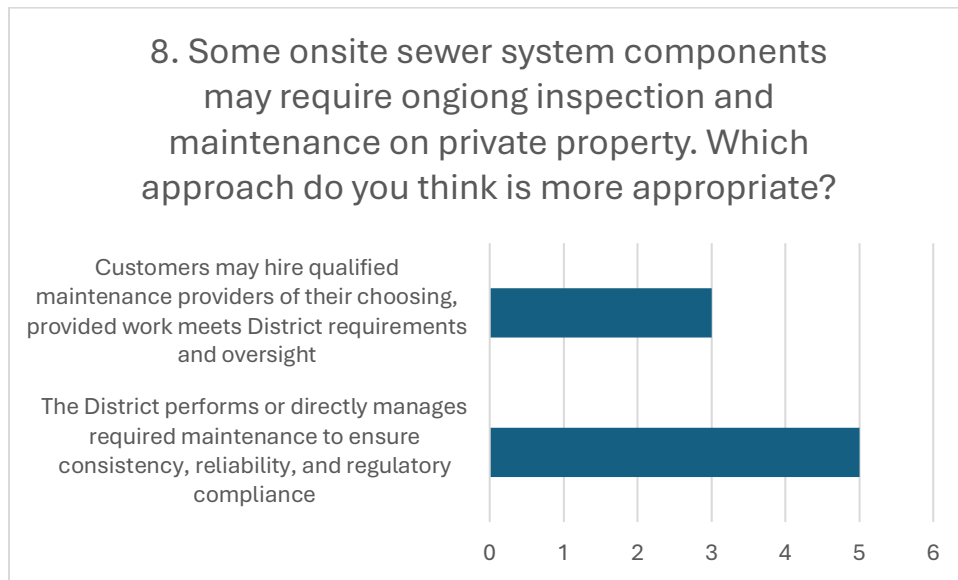


8. Some onsite sewer system components may require ongoing inspection and maintenance on private property. Which approach do you think is more appropriate?

- ☐ The District performs or directly manages required maintenance to ensure consistency, reliability, and regulatory compliance.
- ☐ Customers may hire qualified maintenance providers of their choosing, provided work meets District requirements and oversight
- ☐ No preference / unsure

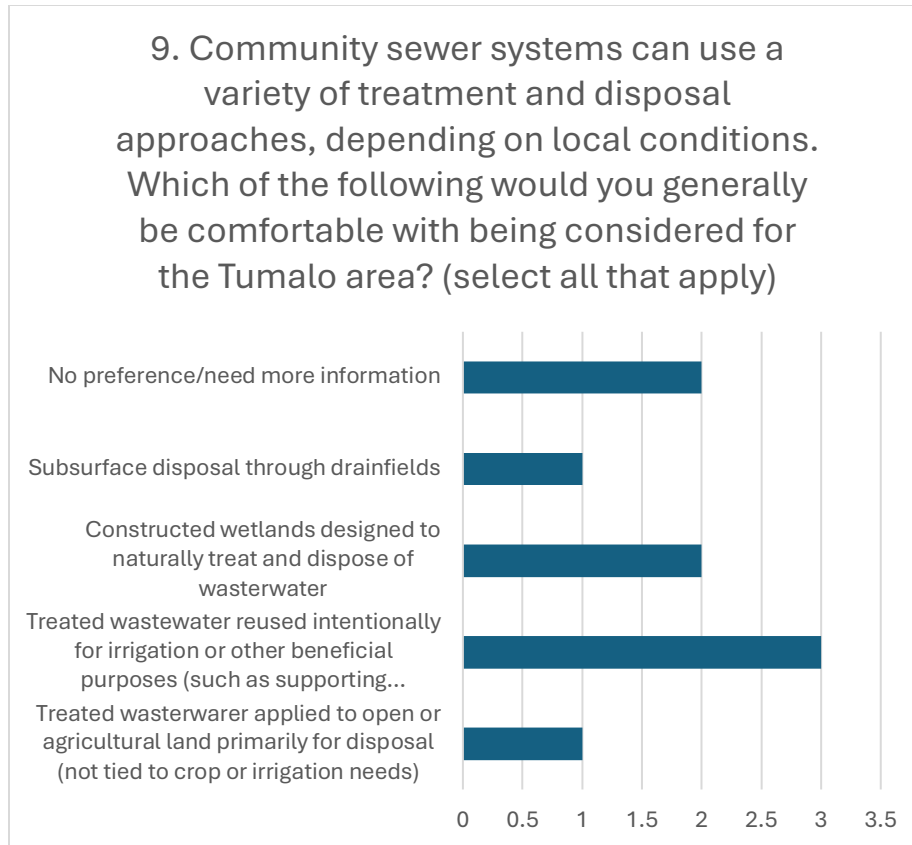
Comments:

- **Approximately half of the individuals wanted the district to handle the required maintenance, while the other half preferred to hire their own qualified maintenance providers.**



9. Community sewer systems can use a variety of treatment and disposal approaches, depending on local conditions. Which of the following would you generally be comfortable with being considered for the Tumalo area? (Select all that apply).

- ☐ Treated wastewater applied to open or agricultural land primarily for disposal (not tied to crop or irrigation needs)
- ☐ Treated wastewater reused intentionally for irrigation or other beneficial purposes (such as supporting agriculture or landscaping)
- ☐ Constructed wetlands designed to naturally treat and dispose of wastewater
- ☐ Subsurface disposal through drainfields
- ☐ No preference / need more information
- ☐ None of the above

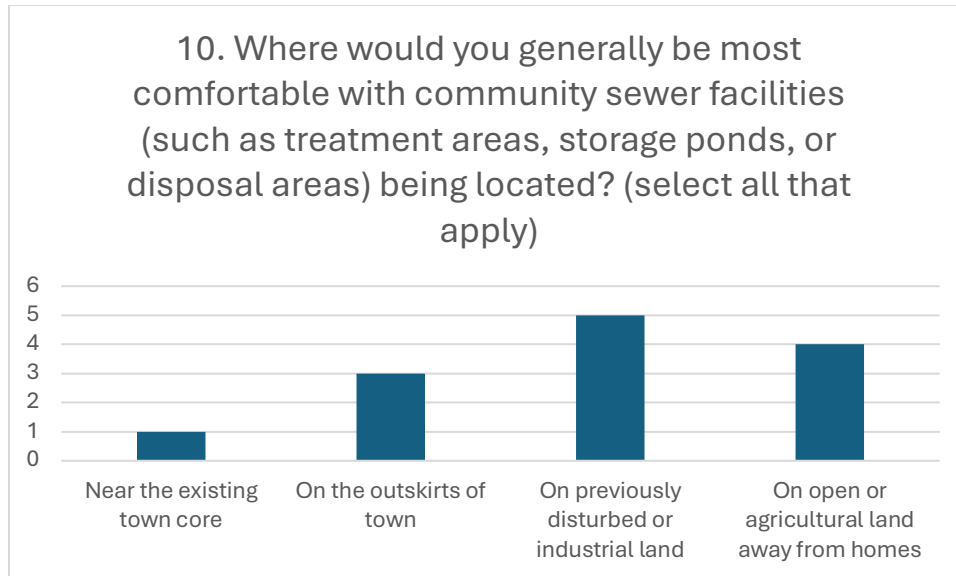


10. Where would you generally be most comfortable with community sewer facilities (such as treatment areas, storage ponds, or disposal areas) being located? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Near the existing town core
- ☐ On the outskirts of town
- ☐ On previously disturbed or industrial land
- ☐ On open or agricultural land away from homes
- ☐ Location does not matter to me
- ☐ Unsure / need more information

Comments:

- Property owners expressed strong concerns about seeing a traditional wastewater treatment facility or experiencing foul odors. They emphasized that any treatment facility constructed should be designed to complement and preserve the rural character of Tumalo.
- When shown the three potential treatment facility sites, most individuals felt the sites could be suitable if the facility were designed and constructed to blend in with the surrounding ranch properties.

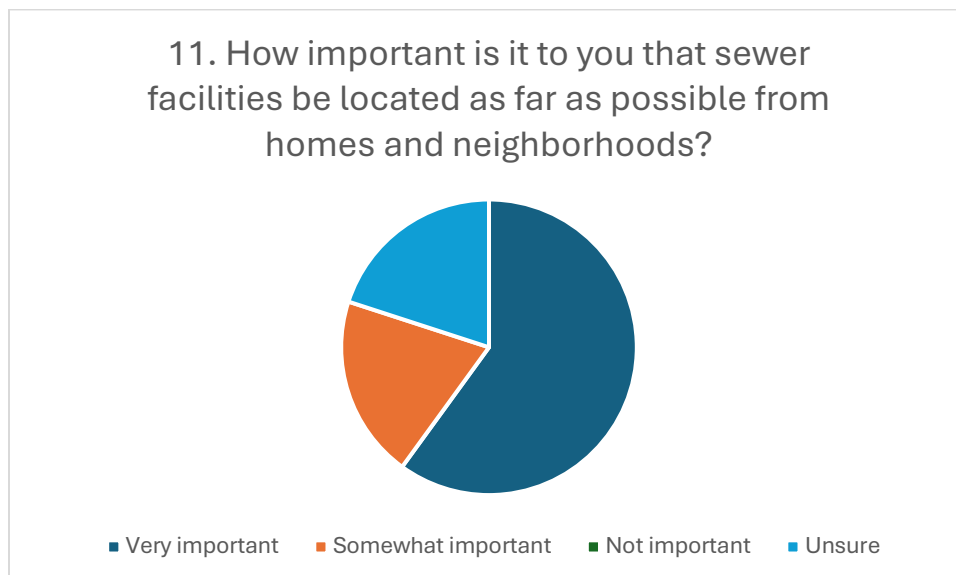


11. How important is it to you that sewer facilities be located as far as possible from homes and neighborhoods?

- ☐ Very important
☐ Somewhat important
☐ Not important
☐ Unsure

Comments:

- **Whatever is developed should be designed to blend in with the surrounding ranching and farming operations and complement the rural character of Tumalo.**
- **Property owners strongly expressed that they do not want to experience odors from the treatment system.**

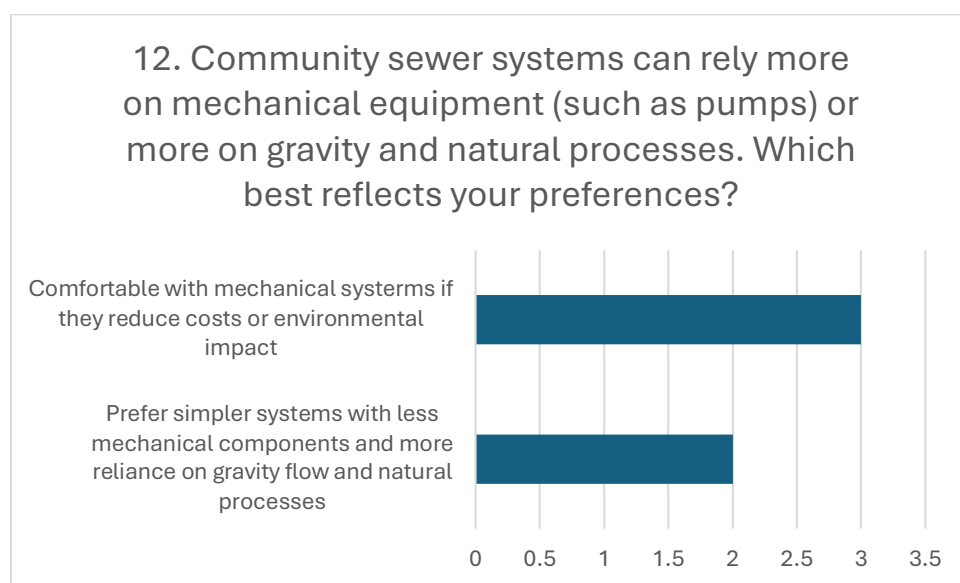


12. Community sewer systems can rely more on mechanical equipment (such as pumps) or more on gravity and natural processes. Which best reflects your preference?

- ☐ Prefer simpler systems with less mechanical components and more reliance on gravity flow and natural processes
- ☐ Comfortable with mechanical systems if they reduce costs or environmental impact.

Comments:

- **Property owners were divided between preferring a gravity-flow system and a mechanical system.**
- **Many property owners felt they needed more information about the advantages, disadvantages, costs, and maintenance requirements of each system before deciding which option they would prefer.**



GENERAL COMMENTS:

- **Property owners expressed serious concerns about septic systems potentially contributing to contamination of the Deschutes River.**
- **Some property owners asked whether there would be financial incentives to connect to the sewer system for properties located near the river.**
- **Property owners wanted to know how the district would fund the construction, operation, and ongoing maintenance of the sewer system.**
- **Questions were raised about how the district would expand the sewer system over time to meet the needs of the Tumalo community.**
- **Most residential property owners with advanced treatment technology (ATT) systems were not interested in connecting to the sewer system until their existing systems failed.**
- **Nearly all businesses currently using ATT systems expressed interest in connecting to the sewer as soon as it becomes available. The primary reasons were the high cost of operating ATT systems and the opportunity to expand their businesses without being limited by on-site wastewater systems. Most businesses indicated that they would not mind continuing to use their existing septic tanks once connected to the sewer system.**

- **The Tumalo Store reported that approximately \$300,000 has been invested in its ATT system. The system also occupies usable property that could otherwise be used for store operations if the business were able to connect to the sewer.**
- **Most residential property owners were satisfied with their existing septic systems and preferred to continue using them as long as they remained functional. However, property owners experiencing septic system problems, considering an expansion of their building footprint, or interested in partitioning their property were more likely to express interest in connecting to the sewer once it becomes available.**
- **Most individuals thanked the district for seeking their input on the proposed sewer system. They also indicated that they had received little information—or, in some cases, what they considered to be misleading information—about the TBSD planning process and what would be required to obtain sewer service in the future.**
- **Many property owners wanted to know whether the TPOA system would be a viable option for serving the growing Tumalo community. When informed that expansion of the TPOA system would provide capacity for only approximately 50% of Tumalo, some expressed reservations about the district acquiring a system that would still require additional property to serve the entire community at build-out.**