

OCONEE COUNTY & WESTERN ANDERSON COUNTY SEWER MASTER PLAN SURVEY RESULTS



The public survey was active from February 1 - April 1, 2024. The survey was promoted on the OJRSA's website and social media accounts and on the project StoryMap website.

Of the 489 total responses, 382 were completed surveys. Assuming respondents were a representative sample of the population, this sample size provides a 95% confidence level and +/-5% margin of error. The results herein reflect only completed surveys.

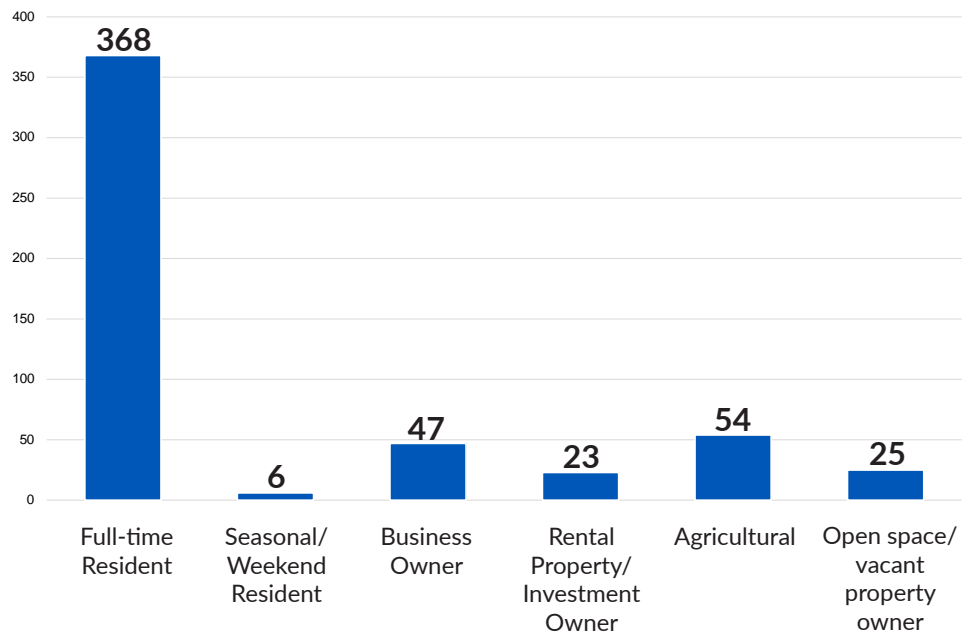
PROPERTY

98.5%

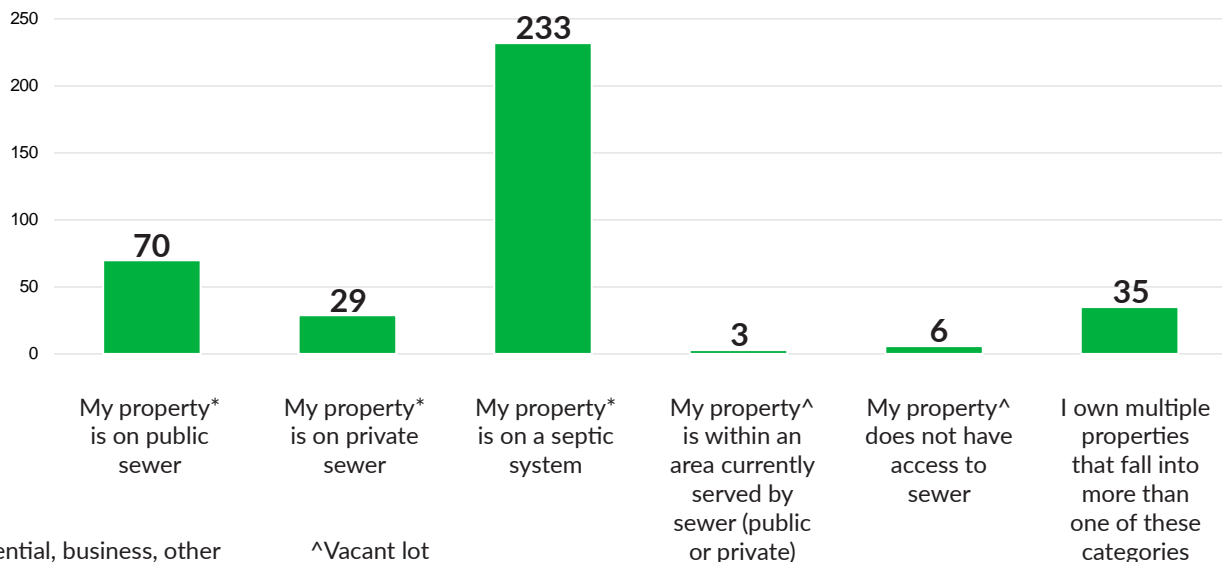
of people reside and/or own a property in Oconee County

Non-resident respondents (6) identified themselves primarily as concerned citizens living outside the study area.

How would you classify your relationship to Oconee County?
(select all that apply)



Please check the box that best defines the property you own.



*Residential, business, other

^Vacant lot

GROWTH

Oconee County is currently experiencing rapid development in certain areas. With that in mind please choose the statement that best describes your outlook on growth.

3%

I **support** any growth that increases tax base, regardless of location

8%

I **support** growth without any additional land use or development controls

9%

I **support** growth that steers development within Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster

16%

I **support** growth that steers development along main corridors (think I-85 and highway 123)

34%

I **support** growth that drives development both within and around the municipalities (Seneca, Walhalla, Westminster, West Union, Salem) without significant change to rural areas (Mountain Rest, Fair Play, Tamassee, etc.).

16%

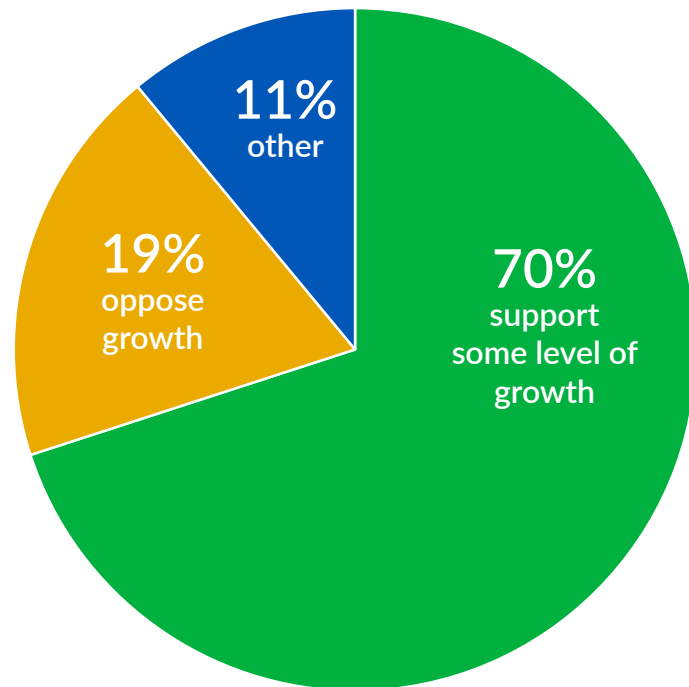
I **oppose** most growth

3%

I **oppose** all growth

11%

Other



There is a strong call for balanced, controlled growth that respects the community's character, preserves natural resources, and involves input from residents

Those who chose "Other" shared the following thoughts on growth:

Supporting Growth

- Emphasized the importance of managed, logical, and sustainable development, with consideration towards infrastructure, the environment, and quality of life
- Presented new suggestions for where growth should occur by noting specific corridors and existing industrial parks
- Requested planning for growth by controlling the type and location of the growth.

Opposition to Growth

- Concerned about the negative effects of growth, including increased traffic, property tax increases, and loss of rural qualities
- Presented specific areas where growth should not occur

DEMOGRAPHICS

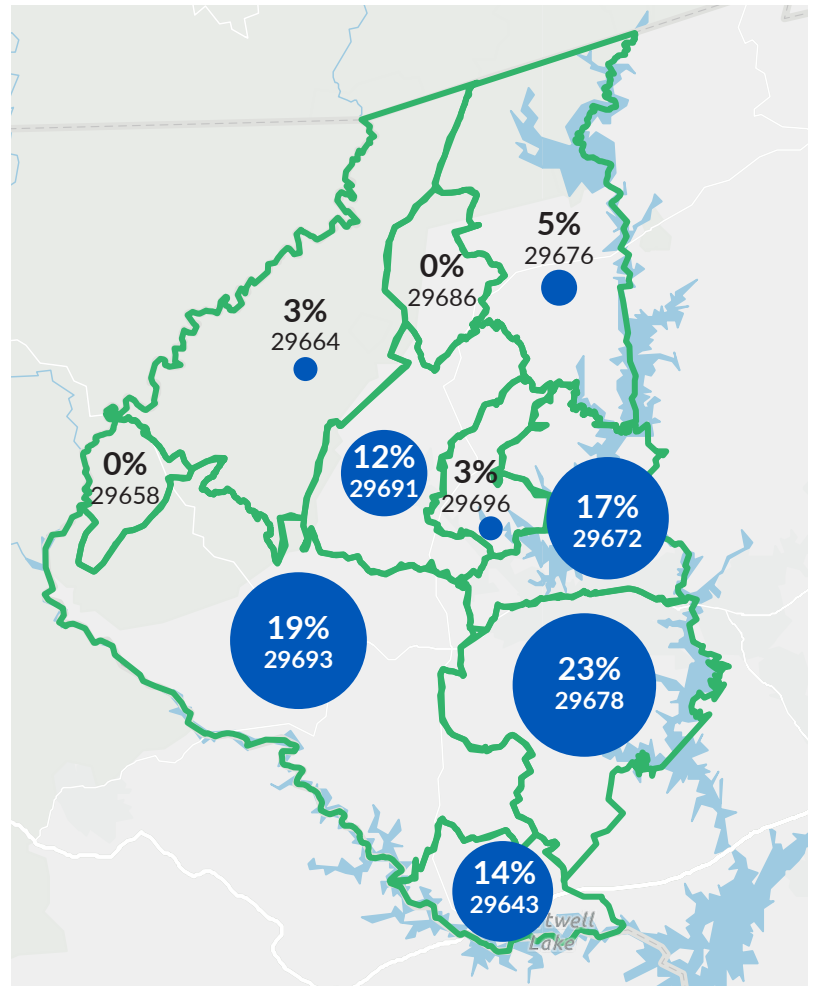
Why do we ask demographic questions?

Demographic information helps us better understand our audience, confirms results are representative of the population, and allows us to filter results based on sub-audiences.

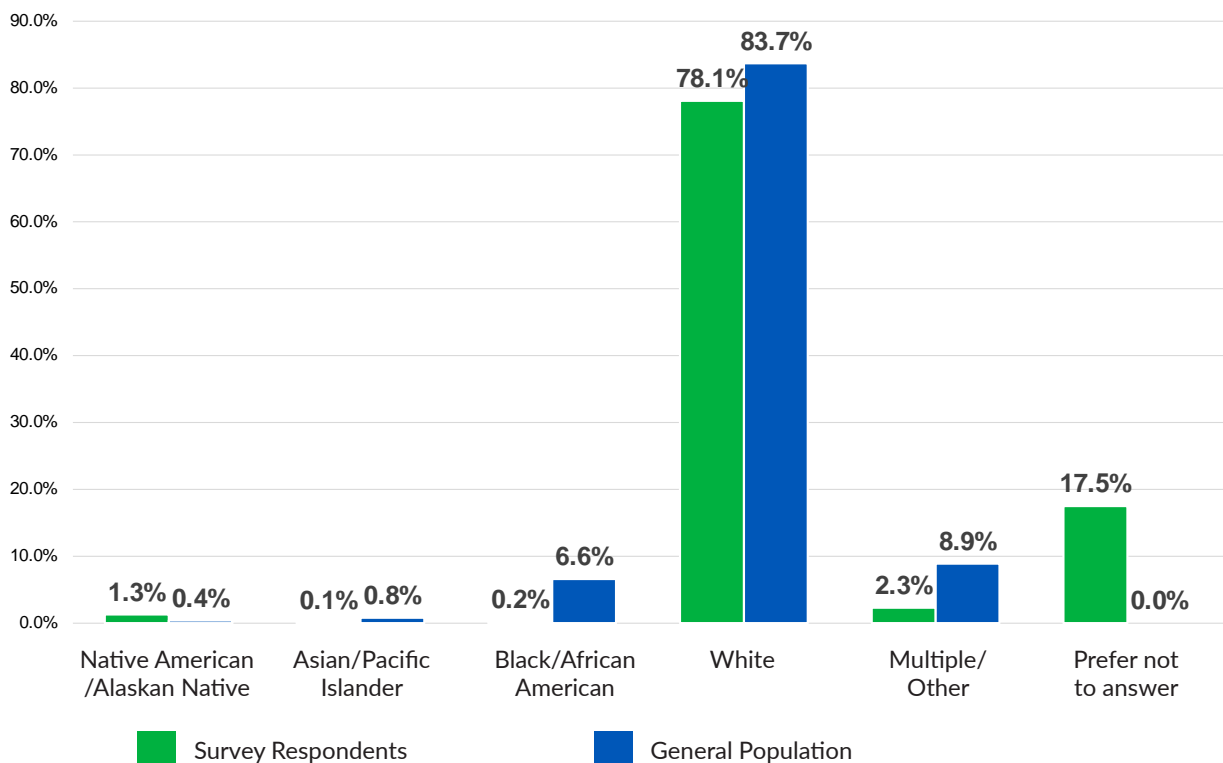
Results sometimes vary between demographic categories. For example, 100% of respondents who reported living within the 29664 zip code area support growth. The breakdown between supporting and opposing growth in other zip codes aligns with the total survey responses.

These insights were considered in the development of the 20-year master plan.

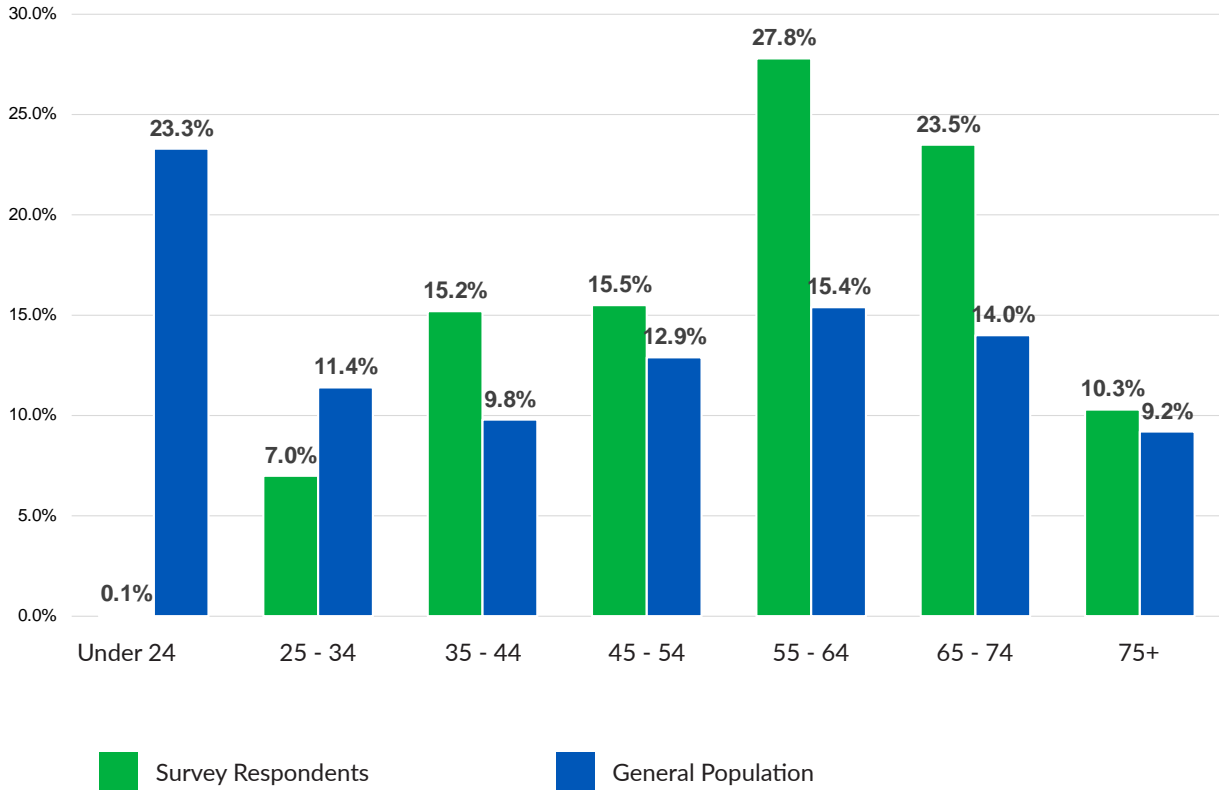
What is your zip code?



What is your race?



What is your age?



Rate the following items with respect to public sewer growth based on their importance to you.

	Not Important	Somewhat Not Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Cost to tax/rate payers	4%	3%	11%	19%	63%
The organization in charge of sewer collection and/or treatment	3%	2%	16%	21%	57%
Location of new public sewer	5%	2%	7%	21%	65%
Installation of new public sewer more generally	7%	4%	10%	28%	51%
Current public sewer infrastructure maintenance	3%	1%	12%	20%	63%
Economic development	8%	8%	15%	26%	44%
Environmental concerns (would like to see more public sewer)	18%	9%	20%	20%	33%
Environmental concerns (would NOT like to see more public sewer)	19%	8%	28%	14%	32%

Rate in importance the type of development that you would like to see in Oconee County.

	Not Important	Somewhat Not Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Commercial	13%	8%	17%	37%	26%
Residential (large lot rural)	16%	12%	27%	24%	21%
Residential (dense development)	48%	14%	15%	10%	14%
Multi-family	38%	16%	23%	13%	11%
Industrial	17%	10%	21%	29%	23%
Agricultural	4%	2%	16%	23%	55%
Institutional (i.e., community facilities such as schools, municipal, healthcare, etc.)	7%	5%	24%	34%	30%

 Most Important to Respondents

 Second Most Important to Respondents

Zoning and other types of land use regulations have many objectives. Rate the following items according to importance to you.

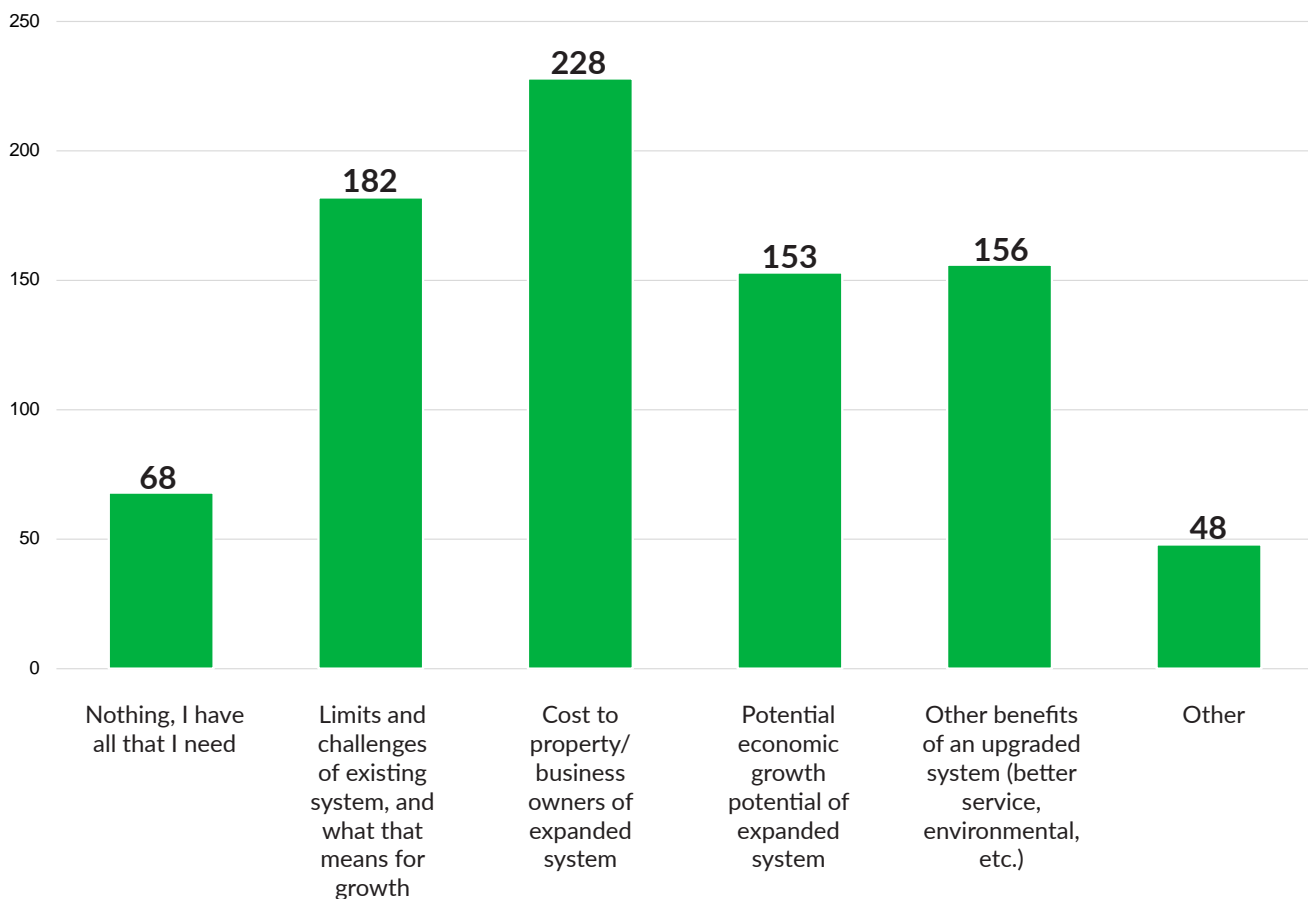
	Not Important	Somewhat Not Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Protect property value	5%	3%	12%	23%	57%
Maintain rural nature of Oconee County	3%	3%	9%	14%	71%
Protect open space and recreational areas	3%	2%	5%	15%	75%
Protect farmland	2%	4%	7%	11%	76%
Protect quality of the environment	2%	2%	6%	15%	75%
Enhance tax base within Oconee County	13%	7%	26%	29%	24%
Control the pace of development	3%	3%	8%	23%	63%
Control the type of development	4%	2%	7%	17%	70%
Development Moratorium to temporarily halt specific development to allow for municipalities to plan for growth	12%	3%	14%	20%	51%

 Most Important to Respondents

 Second Most Important to Respondents



What information would you need to make a more informed decision on sewer expansion? (check all that apply)



Those who chose “Other” shared the following information they would like before making an informed decision on sewer expansion

- **Financial Transparency:** Detailed breakdowns of costs, who oversees financial decisions, clarity on taxation, funding sources, and accountability for spending.
- **Infrastructure Planning:** Assurance that existing systems are maintained before investing in expansions, as well as detailed plans for new infrastructure, including location, size, and necessity.
- **Environmental Impact:** Environmental repercussions of sewer expansion, such as effects on wildlife, ecosystems, and natural resources. Residents want preservation efforts and sustainability measures integrated into expansion plans.
- **Community Input and Engagement:** Open communication channels, accessible information, and opportunities for public input (forums, surveys, etc.) throughout the decision-making process including acquiring public approval when department is involved.
- **Local Governance and Oversight:** Distrust or skepticism toward government involvement. Request for transparency in decision-making processes and clarity on roles and responsibilities of officials and agencies involved in sewer expansions.
- **Impact on Residents and Property Owners:** More information on how sewer expansion will affect them personally, including mandatory connections, property rights, and financial burden. Would like to have assurance that expansion plans consider individual circumstances and respect property rights
- **Development and Growth Management:** Concerns about unchecked growth, urban sprawl, and overdevelopment, request for growth management strategies, such as zoning regulations, development standards, and controlled expansion to preserve the character of their communities

COMMENTS

What comments/concerns do you have about sewer expansion. Use this space to be specific and concise about your thoughts.

Overall, the survey reflects a diverse range of opinions and concerns regarding sewer expansion in Oconee County as summarized in these key themes:

Environmental Concerns and Preservation: Many respondents expressed concerns about the environmental impact of sewer expansion on surrounding areas, including the disruption to natural beauty, wildlife habitats, and ecosystems. They emphasize the importance of preserving Oconee County's natural resources and scenic beauty.

Opposition to Forced Connection and Potential Tax Burden: There is opposition to being forced to connect to sewer systems, especially if residents feel they do not need it or if they are content with their current septic systems. Additionally, there is resistance to shouldering the financial burden of expansion, particularly if it is perceived as benefiting only a few individuals or developers. The concern around financial implications also includes potential burden on taxpayers, ratepayers, potential cost overruns, and the need for transparent budgeting and spending.

Transparency and Public Involvement: Many respondents highlighted the importance of transparency and public involvement in decision-making processes related to sewer expansion. They want to be kept informed and included in discussions and decisions regarding infrastructure projects that will impact their communities.

Planned and Sustainable Growth: Some respondents support sewer expansion but emphasize the need for careful planning and sustainable growth strategies. They advocate for expansion to be targeted towards areas where it is necessary and appropriate, rather than promoting unchecked development. There are concerns about the potential for sewer expansion to lead to rapid overdevelopment, particularly in rural areas, and the strain it could place on existing infrastructure, such as roads and traffic congestion. They emphasized the importance of smart growth principles and balancing residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial development.

Infrastructure Concerns and Maintenance: Respondents expressed frustration with the current state of sewer more generally across the study area, including the need to maintain and upgrade the current system across the county regardless of ownership based on capacity needs and failing infrastructure. There is a strong demand for improved infrastructure and maintenance practices. Additionally, some residents currently on privately owned sewer systems (e.g., Chickasaw Point) mentioned the desire to convert over to the public system.

Local Control and Governance: Respondents expressed distrust of elected officials and those in charge of making sewer infrastructure decisions across the county and they called for transparency, and suggested involving the community in decision-making through initiatives like ballot voting.