



**WEKIWA SPRINGS SEPTIC TO SEWER PROJECT  
PHASE 7B – LAKE MENDELIN ESTATES AND  
LAKE CORTEZ WOODS- DISTRICT 2  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2024**

**PRESENTED BY:  
David S. Arms, P.E.  
Chief Engineer  
Orange County Utilities**

# Agenda

- Welcome
- Background
- Septic-to-Sewer Program
- Phase 7B Project Details
- Balloting Process
- Summary
- Questions and Answers



# Welcome



District 2 Commissioner  
Christine Moore  
District2@ocfl.net

# Welcome

- Orange County Utilities
  - Wastewater services for a population of 1,046,000
  - Four Regional Wastewater Plants
  - 1,421 miles of gravity mains and 641 miles of force mains
  - 823 pump stations
  - Ranked #1 in Customer Satisfaction for Midsize Water Utilities in the South by J.D. Power



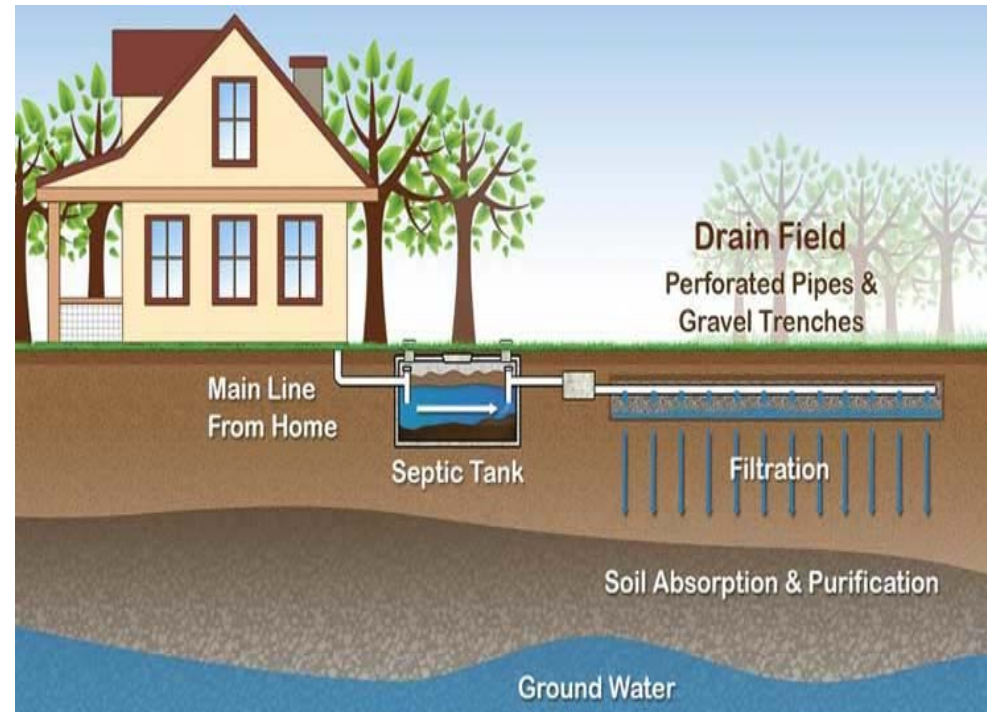
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# Background

- Onsite Sewage Treatment & Disposal System (OSTDS)
  - Collect wastewater in a water-tight tank
  - Solids settle to the bottom
  - Liquid (effluent) exits the tank to a drain field
- Drain field
  - Spreads effluent into unsaturated soil, where it is filtered and treated
  - Water is discharged into the groundwater
  - Some nutrients remain in the treated water



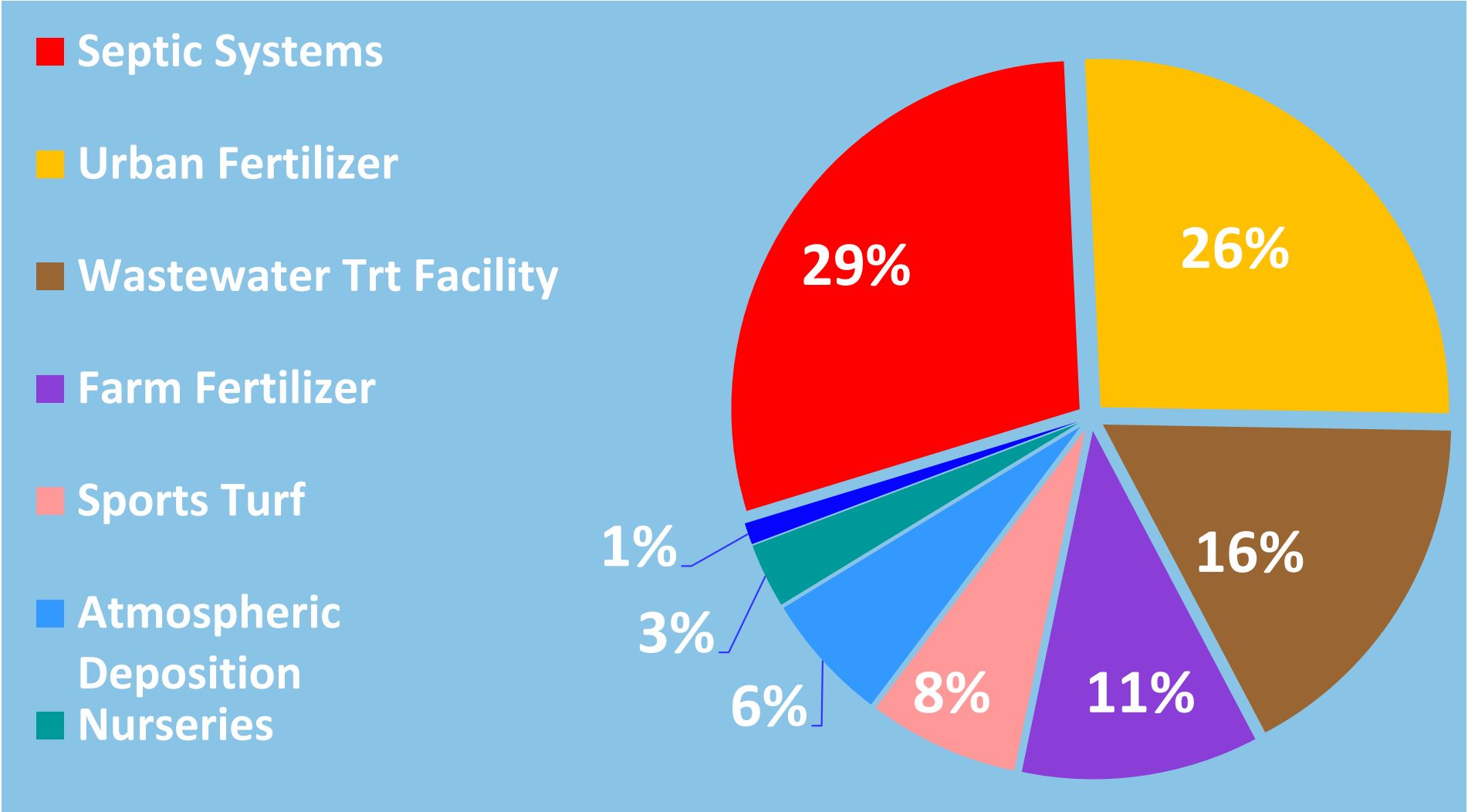


# Background

- The Wekiwa River and Rock Springs Run are impaired by nutrients:
  - Phosphorous
  - Nitrogen
- Excess nutrients cause overabundance of algae
  - Reduce diversity of plants and animals
  - Cause fish kills



# Background





# Background

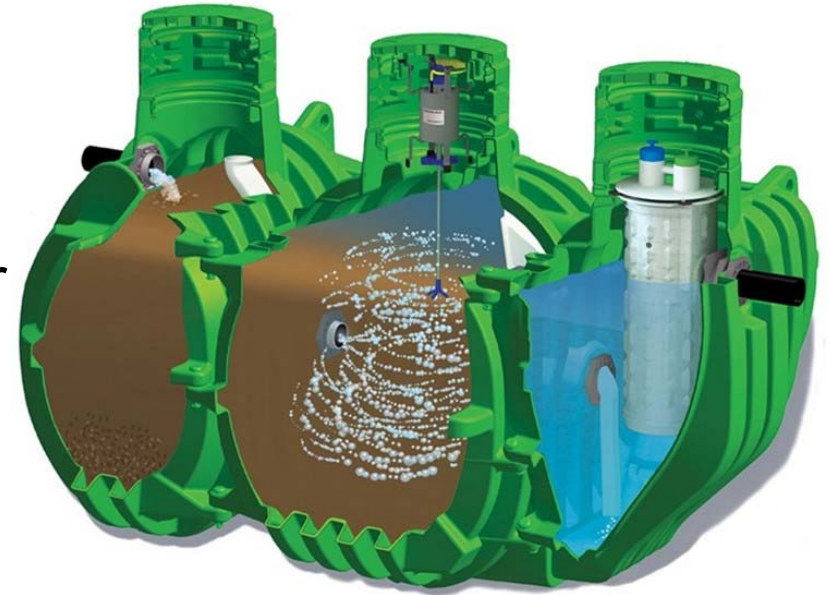
- Spring protection initiatives have been ramping up for more than 15 years
- Wekiwa Spring and Rock Springs Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP)
  - Became effective in 2021
  - Creates Priority Focus Area (PFA) Boundary
  - Identifies septic tanks as the source of 29% of nitrogen in the springs
  - Requires treatment of septic loads
  - Establishes 5-, 10- and 15-year milestones for nutrient reductions
- Effective 1/1/2024, FDEP will begin enforcement moving forward for septic systems in the PFA for lots that are less than one acre
  - Connect to sanitary sewer
  - Upgrade to enhanced OSTDS that reduces nutrient loads
    - Estimated costs range from \$15,000 to \$25,000 per system
- **BOTTOM LINE: Homeowners in the PFA less than one acre will have to upgrade to an enhanced OSTDS or connect to sewer. This is true if/when repairs are needed or in 20 years for everyone. No exceptions!**



# What are your options?

## Option 1: Enhanced Nutrient Treatment Septic Systems

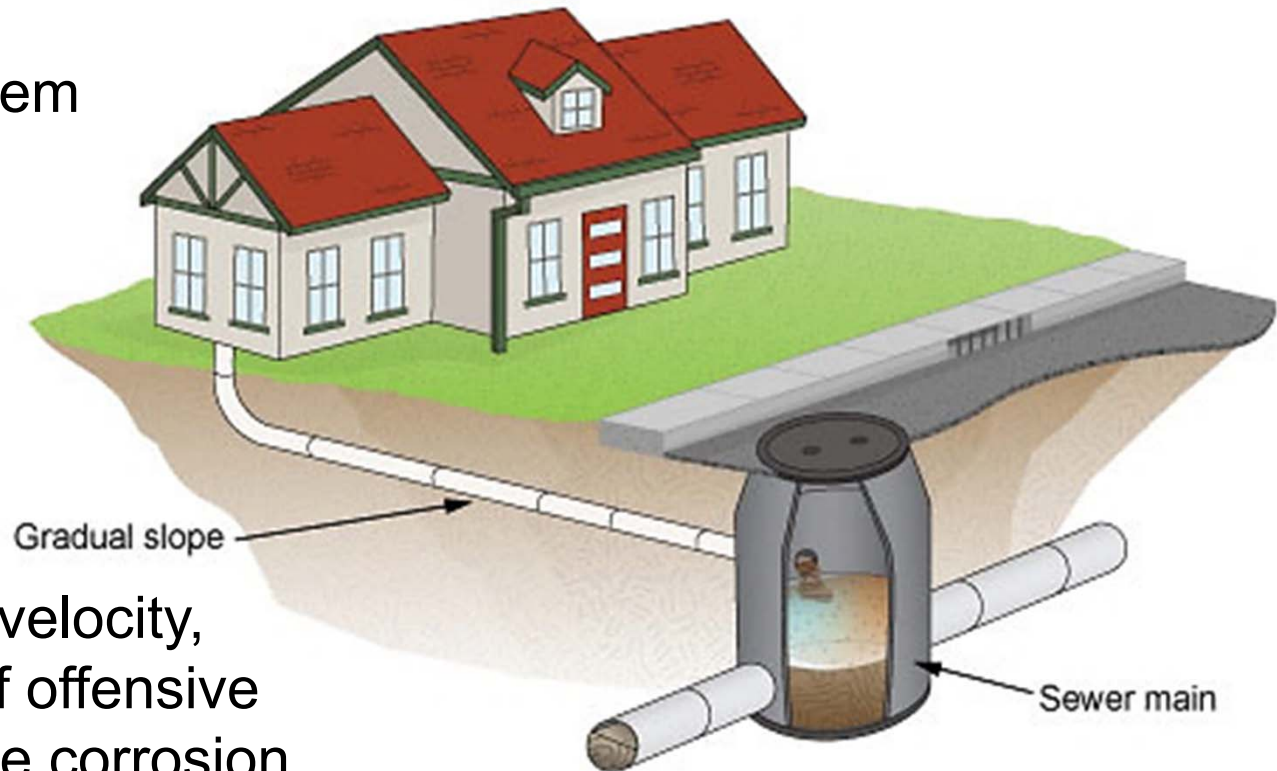
- Similar to a Conventional Septic Tank:
  - Collects wastewater in a watertight tank
  - Liquid (effluent) exits to a drain field
- Enhanced Nutrient Reducing Features:
  - Uses aeration, recirculation, or other method to filter effluent
  - Reduces nutrients before filtered effluent seeps into the groundwater
  - Requires operation, maintenance, and power by homeowner



# What are your options?

## Option 2: Central Sewer System

- Components
  - Service laterals
  - Cleanouts
  - Gravity mains
  - Manholes
  - Pump stations
- Can maintain a minimum velocity, reducing the production of offensive odors, blockages, and pipe corrosion
- Do not require onsite pre-treatment or storage of residential wastewater before it is discharged
- Can handle grit and solids in sanitary sewage



# Comparison of Septic Tanks & Sewer Systems

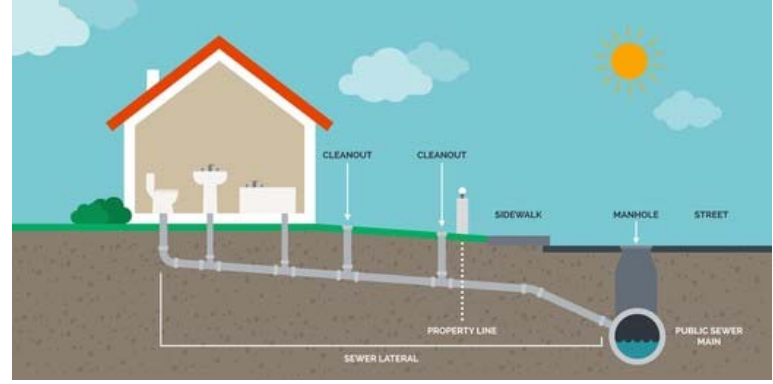
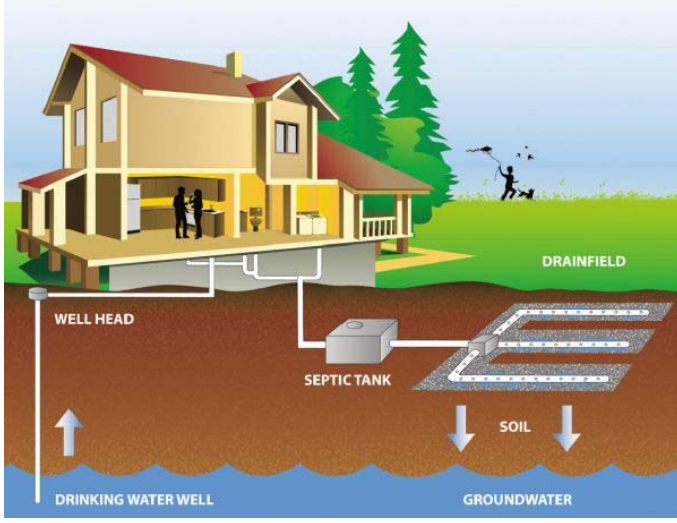
## SEPTIC TANK

### BENEFITS:

- Sunk Cost
- Independence

### CONCERNS

- High Repair/ Replacement Cost
- Frequent Clogs
- Environmental Regulations/ Inspections
- Maintenance by Homeowner



## CENTRAL SEWER SYSTEM

### BENEFITS:

- Higher Capacity
- Passive Operation
- No Septic Backups
- Less Odors
- No Dampness & Seepage
- Maintenance by Orange County

### CONCERNS

- Connection Cost
- New Construction/Site Impacts

### POTENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFITS Connecting to the sanitary sewer:

- Water Protection
- Nitrate Control
- Reduced Diseases
- Reduced Insects



# Agenda

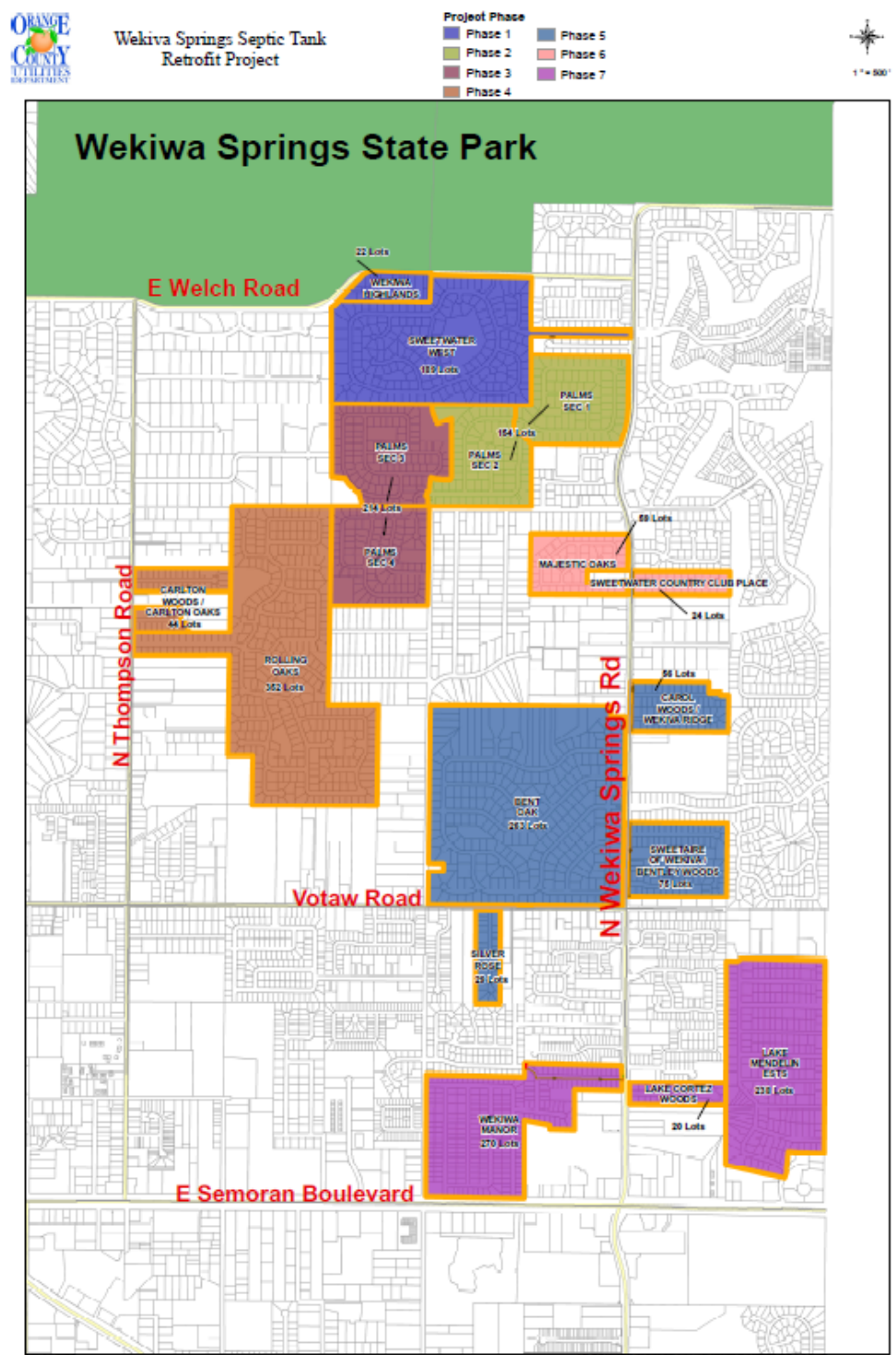
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- **Septic-to-Sewer Program**
- Phase 7B Project Details
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# Septic-to-Sewer Program

- Eliminate septic tanks in 20 neighborhoods closest to Wekiwa Springs
  - Multi-year plan
  - 2,009 septic tanks
  - \$140 million
- Phase 1 complete
- Phase 2 & Phase 3 under construction
- Phases 4, 5 & 6 in design phase



# Septic-to-Sewer Program

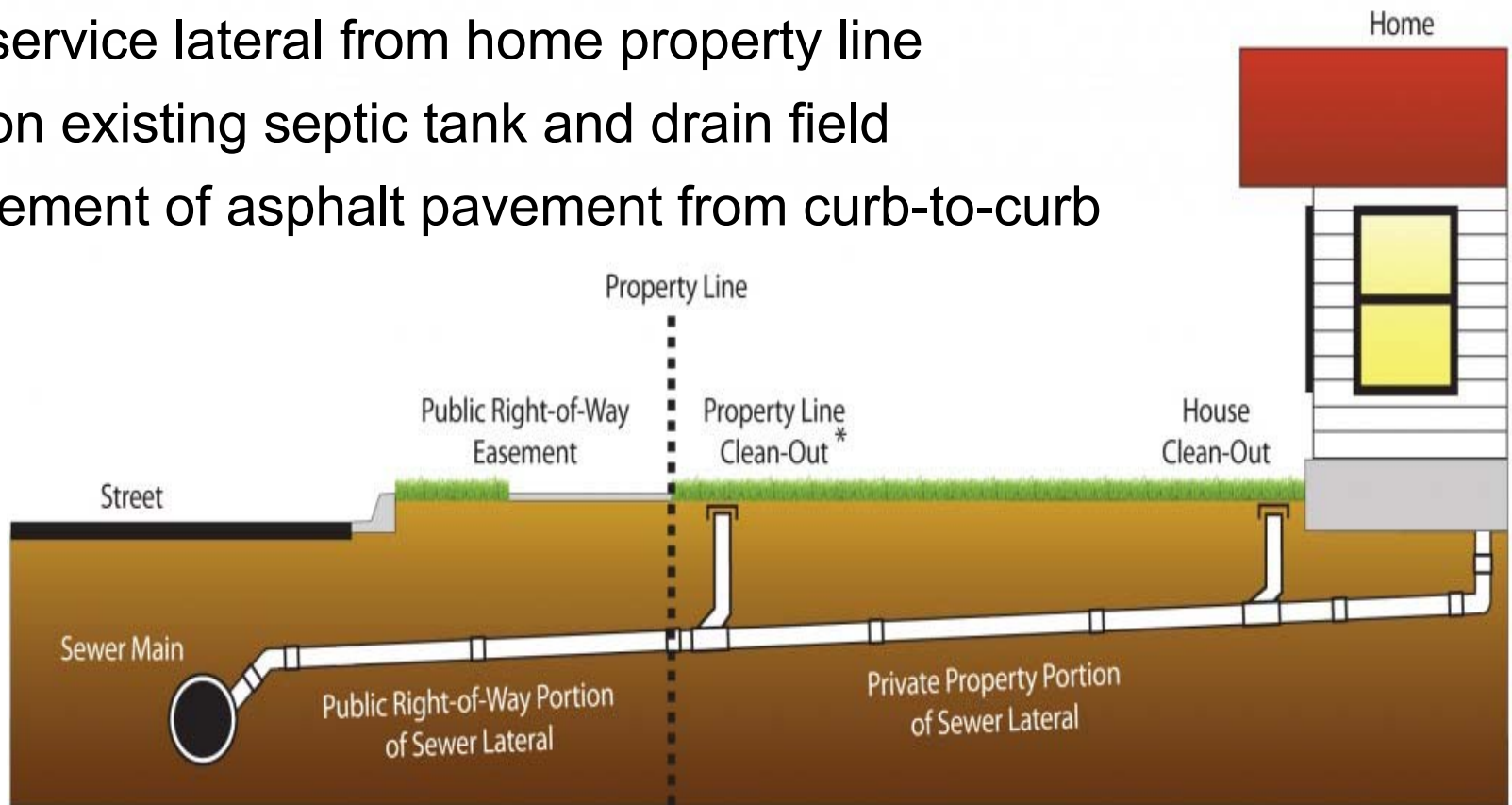
- Project Considerations
  - Partial public funding is secured for all septic-to-sewer connections in the program
  - Phase 7B (Lake Mendelin Estates and Lake Cortez Woods) is included (246 homes)
  - Community buy-in needed prior to design
- Project Objectives
  - Construct a gravity sewer system
  - Eliminate septic tanks to reduce nutrient loading of the springs
- Project Requirements
  - MSBU ballot
  - Design and construction
  - Connection to gravity sewer system required by County Code



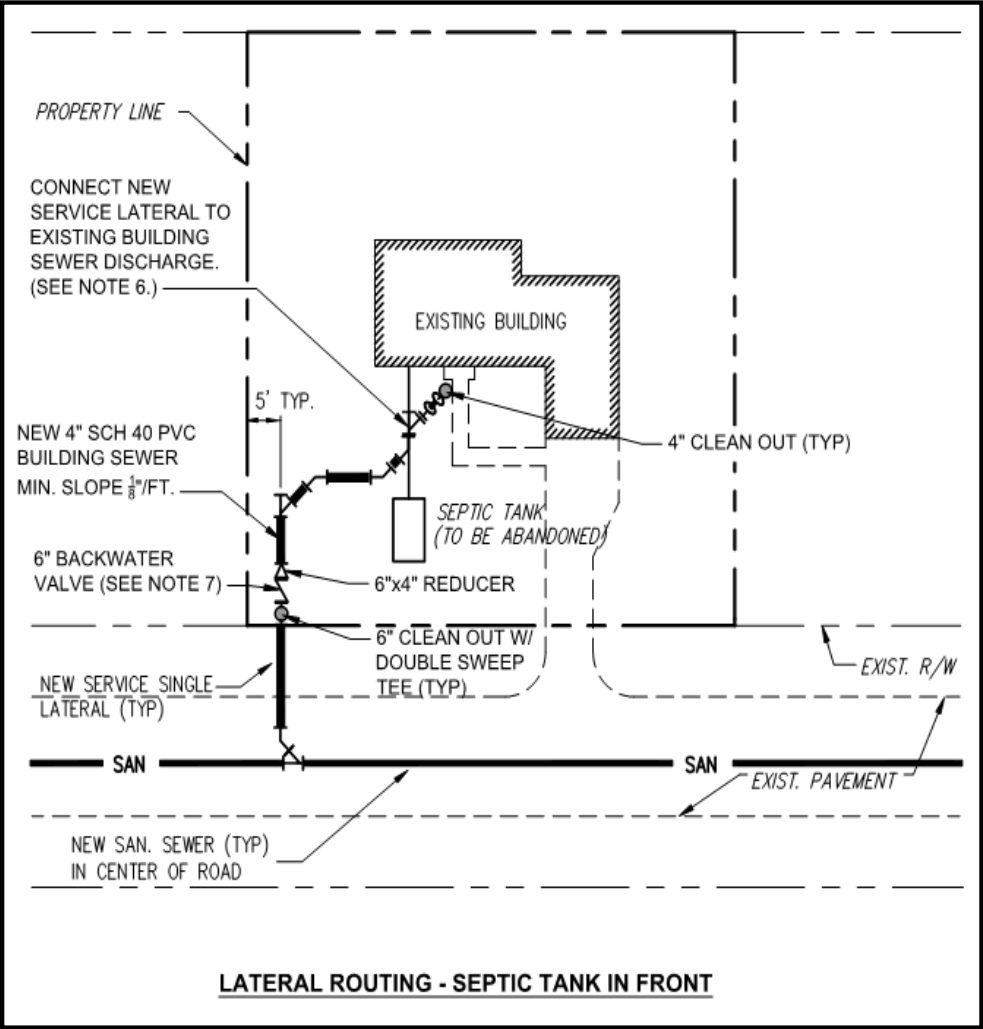


# Septic-to-Sewer Program

- Construction of new gravity sewer system in the right-of-way
- Ensure reasonable efforts to maintain access to each home at the end of the day
- Install service lateral from home property line
- Abandon existing septic tank and drain field
- Replacement of asphalt pavement from curb-to-curb



# Septic-to-Sewer Program

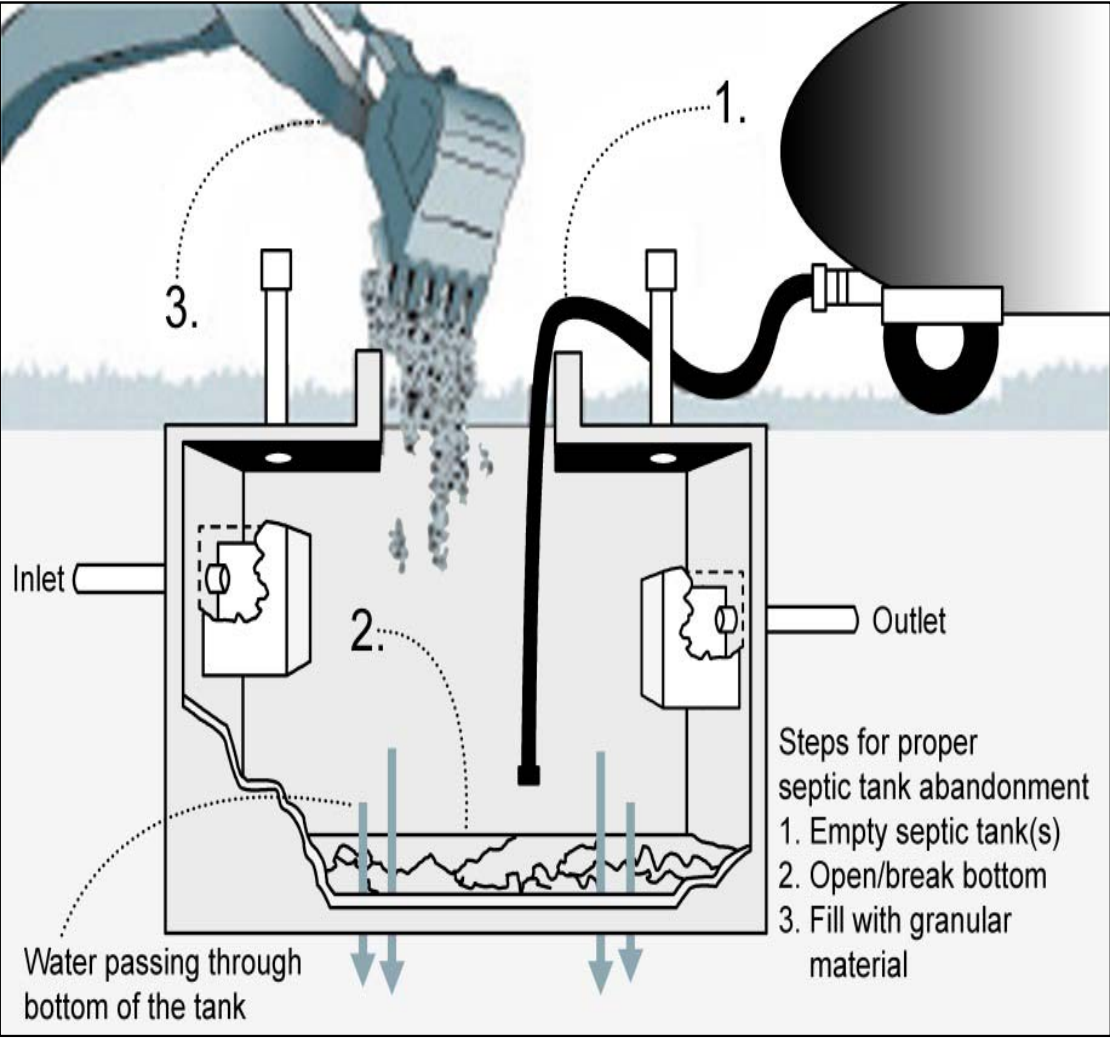


- Install new 4-inch sewer lateral and connect at existing discharge point
- Includes connection of each home to central sewer by the OCU contractor upon receiving authorization from the homeowner via license agreement
- Septic tanks will be abandoned in place in accordance with law: remove liquids and sludge, break up the bottom and sides to 12 inches below grade, backfill, and restore with sod
- Any impacts to existing driveways, sidewalks, sod, irrigation, etc. will be fixed by the OCU contractor
- All of this work is included in the project; there will be no additional costs to the homeowner



# Septic-to-Sewer Program

- Septic Tank Abandonment



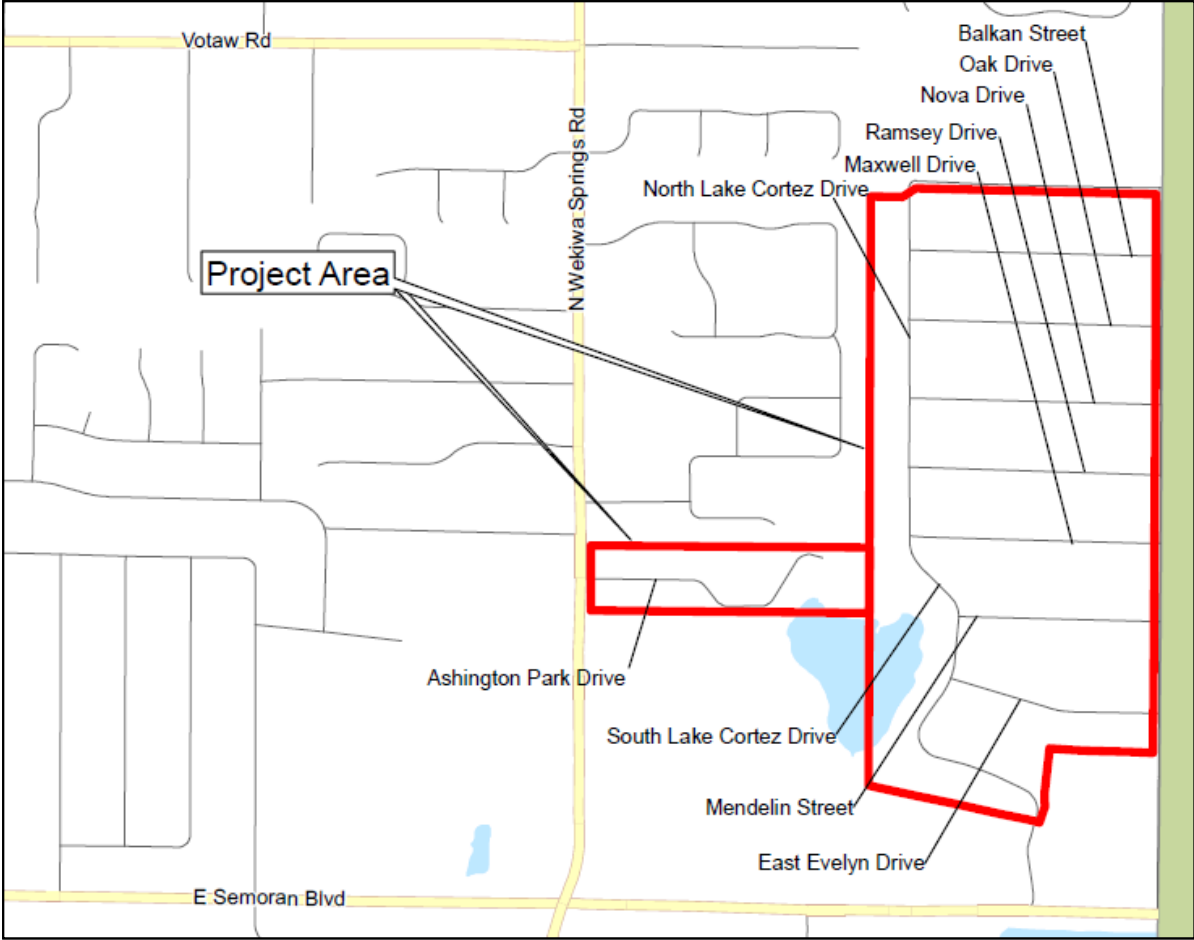
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# Septic-to-Sewer Program

- Lake Mendelin Estates and Lake Cortez Woods
  - 246 parcels
  - \$75,000 per parcel
  - \$18.45 million



# Phase 7B Project Details

- Cost Summary for Phase 7B – 246 parcels

	Current Estimate
▪ Design	\$ 1,660,500
▪ Other (preconstruction)	\$ 369,000
▪ Construction	\$ 14,760,000
▪ Other (post-construction)	\$ 1,660,500
▪ TOTAL	\$ 18,450,000



# Phase 7B Project Details

- Average Cost Per Parcel for Phase 7B – 246 parcels
  - Public Utility System \$ 54,750
  - Capital Charges, Meters, etc. \$ 5,250
  - Individual Site Work & Restoration \$ 7,350
  - Septic Tank Abandonment \$ 7,650
  - TOTAL \$ 75,000



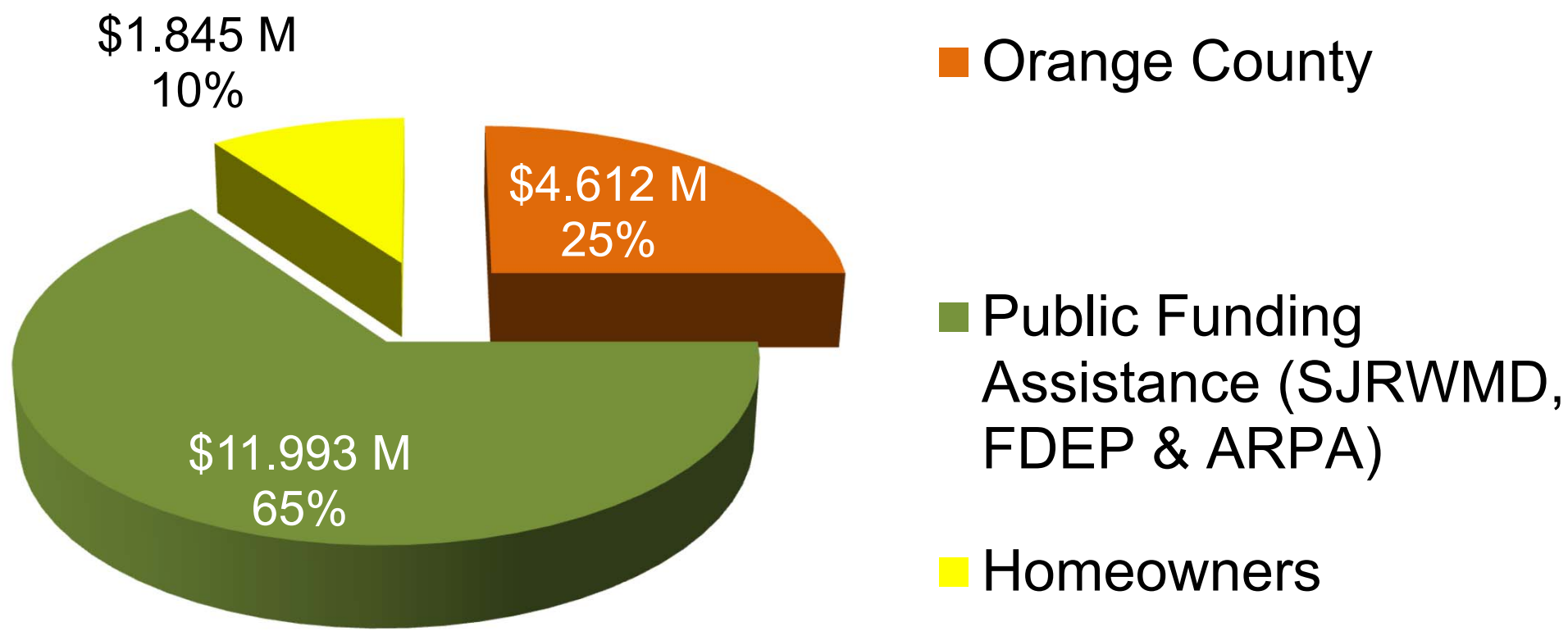


# Phase 7B Project Details

- Orange County Utilities Contribution
  - \$4,612,500 (25%)
- SJRWMD Cost Share Program/FDEP Springs Restoration Program
  - ±\$5,000,000 (will be applied for in future cycle)
- FDEP Funding Assistance
  - Water Protection Grant Program
    - Orange County was notified of a multi-phase, multi-year grant in the amount of \$16,000,000; approx. 50% to be used of Phase 7B
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding
  - Orange County received funding through ARPA for Wekiwa Septic to Sewer program
- Phase 7B Homeowners
  - \$7,500 each x 246 parcels = \$1,845,000 (10%)



# Phase 7B Project Details – Funding Breakdown



# Phase 7B Project Details – Schedule

- Following dates are approximated
- Design
  - 30% Design 08/31/2024
  - 90% Design 12/31/2024
  - 100% Design 03/31/2025
- Bid
  - Advertise 04/01/2025
  - BCC Award 08/01/2025
- Construction
  - Start 10/01/2025
  - Completion 04/01/2027



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# Balloting Process (Comptroller's Office)

- The Orange County Comptroller will mail ballots to establish a Municipal Service Benefit Unit (MSBU)
- Ballots must be returned to the Comptroller to be counted
- Ballots must be returned/postmarked within 30 days
- 67% of returned ballots “In Favor” of project required
- If ballot passes, each homeowner will be responsible for \$7,500
  - Financed over a 10-year period or may be paid up front
  - If financed, homeowner will pay annually – included with property taxes
    - Interest rate and \$2.50 annual admin fee applied
    - Balance may be paid at any time during the 10-year period
- If the home is sold, the MSBU remains with the property, not the individual
- Once connection to sewer is established, residents will receive bill revised to include wastewater fees. Typical monthly charge is ± \$50.00.
  - Previous ballots/voting to gauge commitment levels (straw polls) or for land acquisition (pump station) did not provide the basis for assessing an MSBU and proceeding with the sewer project. That is what this ballot will do.




# Sample Ballot

The ballot will arrive in an envelope from the Orange County Comptroller

**SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS**  
**OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER**

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**ORANGE COUNTY FLORIDA**  **Phil Diamond, CPA**  
County Comptroller  
Department of Finance and Accounting  
Post Office Box 38  
Orlando, Florida 32802-0038

Name 1  
Address 1  
Address 2  
City, State Zip

**OFFICIAL BALLOT ENCLOSED**



# Sample Ballot & Cover Letter

OFFICE OF COMPTROLLER



ORANGE COUNTY FLORIDA

Phil Diamond, CPA  
County Comptroller  
Finance and Accounting Department  
Special Assessments  
PO Box 38  
Orlando, FL 32802-0038  
Telephone: 407-836-5770  
Fax: 407-836-5753

March 6, 2024

Subject: Wekiwa Springs Septic Tank Retrofit Project- Phase 7B Lake Mendelin Estates and Lake Cortez Woods

Dear Property Owner:

Enclosed is your ballot for voting on the construction of an Orange County wastewater project in Lake Mendelin Estates and Lake Cortez Woods. This wastewater project would be proposed as a part of the Wekiwa Springs Septic Tank Retrofit Program. In addition to a gravity sewer collection system, the project will also include connection of each dwelling's plumbing to the sewer main, connection of individual residences to the municipal water system (in Lake Mendelin Estates), abandonment of the existing septic tank, landscape and site restoration, resurfacing of existing roadways with materials to match existing conditions, (i.e. repaving existing asphalt roadways from curb to curb), installation of a new irrigation service with a meter at each benefiting property, and any associated wastewater capital charges and connection fees. Your property has been identified as one that would be included in the project, and you would be responsible for any costs indicated below.

Homeowners of all benefiting properties are required to contribute to the cost of the wastewater project in the form of a fixed amount as outlined below. The sum total of the contributions from the homeowners is equal to 10% of the project cost. The remainder will be funded by contributions from Orange County Utilities (at 25%) and multiple state appropriations and grants (at 65%). In accordance with the Orange County Utilities Department Septic Tank and Private Well Retrofit Program Policy, for a retrofit project at 50% or greater publicly funded to be considered for implementation, 67% of the returned ballots from the property owners must indicate their interest in connecting to the County system. The approximate funding structure for the project is detailed in the table below.

Source	Funding	Percentage of Total	Funding Contribution per Home
FDEP	\$7,472,250	40.5%	\$30,375
Orange County	\$4,612,500	25.0%	\$18,750
Homeowners	\$1,845,000	10.0%	\$7,500
Other Funding Sources	\$4,520,250	24.5%	\$18,375
Totals	\$18,450,000	100.0%	\$75,000

Property owners must also indicate their desire for the County to establish the project area as a Municipal Service Benefit Unit (MSBU). An MSBU designation provides property owners the opportunity to pay for their share of the cost of the wastewater project over a 10-year period. A fixed amount assessment would be included in the annual property tax bill of all benefiting properties. County policy requires that input from affected property owners be obtained to determine if a significant interest exists for the establishment of the MSBU before scheduling a public hearing with the Orange County Board of County Commissioners.

Your vote is to be indicated on the enclosed ballot. Please read the following and the enclosed ballot carefully.

The ballot options are:

**OPTION 1: CONSTRUCTION OF A WASTEWATER PROJECT AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A MUNICIPAL SERVICE BENEFIT UNIT**

Voting for this option would signify a desire for the construction of a wastewater project to serve the project area and the establishment of an MSBU. The total fixed costs to the OWNER of each benefiting property is \$7,500.00 and may be either paid in full or financed as presented below.

The designation of the project area as an MSBU allows property owner costs to be amortized (financed) over a 10-year period. The cost would be added to your property real estate tax bill as an annual assessment. The assessment includes interest at 5.8% and a \$2.50 administration fee.

Utilizing the 10-year MSBU financing, the annual assessment for the wastewater project and fees would be a total of **\$1,011.88** for each of the following ten years.

**OPTION 2: NO CONSTRUCTION OF A WASTEWATER PROJECT**

Voting for this option would signify a desire against the construction of a wastewater project to serve the project area. No wastewater project would be constructed and no MSBU would be established.

**PLEASE READ THE BALLOT CAREFULLY.** Then indicate on the ballot whether you are in favor of construction of a wastewater project and establishment of an MSBU (Option 1), or you are not in favor of construction of a wastewater project (Option 2). If you vote in favor of the construction of a wastewater project (Option 1), you agree to pay your share of the cost.

The final decision concerning the construction of the Lake Mendelin Estates and Lake Cortez Woods Project rests with the Orange County Board of County Commissioners (Board). The results of the community meetings and balloting will be submitted to the Board for review. Potential projects presented to the Board for consideration will not be acted upon until a public hearing is conducted. All affected property owners would be notified of the date and time of such a public hearing by mail. The public hearing would be held during the customary 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday working hours. If you cannot attend the public hearing, you may contact your County Commissioner at 407-836-7350 to present comments concerning this matter.

If you have any questions concerning this, please call David Arms at 407-254-9694. Questions may also be emailed to David.Arms@ocfl.net.

Sincerely,

*Ann Dawkins*

Ann Dawkins  
MSBU Supervisor, Special Assessments

Enclosures

[www.OrangeCountyFL.net](http://www.OrangeCountyFL.net)

Para más información, por favor llame al Departamento de Utilidades del Condado de Orange y pida hablar con un representante en español. El número de teléfono es 407-836-7000.

## BALLOT

### LAKE MENDELIN ESTATES AND LAKE CORTEZ WOODS WASTEWATER PROJECT

I am/we are the owners of the property included in the boundaries of the proposed of Wekiwa Manor Wastewater Project, parcel identification of the property being as follows:

«F1»  
«F2»  
«F3»  
«MAILING\_ADDRESS»  
«F9» «F10», «F11»

I am/we are aware of the proposed Project. I am/we are a property owner within the boundary of said proposed project and I/we hereby cast my/our vote as follows:

**PLEASE MARK YOUR CHOICE WITH A CHECK**  Please choose only one option. Sign your Ballot.

**OPTION 1:** I am in favor of the construction of a wastewater project for the Lake Mendelin Estates and Lake Cortez Woods Wastewater Project. In addition to a gravity sewer collection system, the project will also include connection of each dwelling's plumbing to the sewer main, connection of individual residences to the municipal water system (in Lake Mendelin Estates), abandonment of the existing septic tank, landscape and site restoration, resurfacing of existing roadways with materials to match existing conditions, (i.e. repaving existing asphalt roadways from curb to curb), installation of a new irrigation service with a meter at each benefiting property, and any associated wastewater capital charges and connection fees. I understand I am responsible for paying the applicable costs described in 1 through 2 below:

- For each benefiting property, the cost is \$7,500 per parcel for the collection system and other improvements and fees.
- I am in favor of the project area being designated as a Municipal Service Benefit Unit (MSBU), which if I choose, would allow the payment of the above costs over 10 years by way of a yearly addition to my property taxes plus fixed interest at 5.8% annual rate plus an annual \$2.50 administration fee. I understand that I may choose to pay all costs up front or the unpaid balance of costs at any time during the 10-year period by one lump sum payment.

**OPTION 2:** I am not in favor of the construction of a wastewater project for the Lake Mendelin Estates and Lake Cortez Woods Project area.

PRINT NAME \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE DATE

PRINT NAME \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE DATE

Owners of the property described above should sign exactly as their names appear on the property deed. Please note that only one property owner's signature per household is necessary. Please return this ballot in the self-addressed return envelope provided. It must be postmarked April 5, 2024, to be counted in the tabulation of ballots.





# Balloting Process (Comptroller's Office)

- **IMPORTANT: If you do not receive your ballot or you lose your ballot, Contact the Orange County Comptroller Special Assessments Office**
  - Phone number: (407) 836-5770
  - Email: [special.assessments@occompt.com](mailto:special.assessments@occompt.com)
  - In person: 201 S. Rosalind Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor



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# Summary

- Wekiwa BMAP requires reduction of conventional septic tanks
- Phase 7B consists of 246 homes in Lake Mendelin Estates and Lake Cortez Woods. Public funding available for ~ 90% of cost
  - Goal to complete project by April 2027
- Community commitment is essential
  - 67% of responding homeowners must vote to pay for ~10% of the cost

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# Questions & Answers

