# The Cost of New Septic Systems.

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One of the most confusing and controversial issues facing hillside residents is that of sewage disposal. The conventional onsite sewage system, consisting of septic tank and leach field, has been the mainstay for many years and serves most hillside residents quite well. There have been some homes constructed on properties that exhibit poor soil conditions or high ground water that make the conventional system a poor choice. Thus the need to explore other technologies. There are also some newer residents to the hillside who may never have experienced onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems and may believe such systems are inferior to that of the public sewer system that magically removes the waste to some far away place; in this case Cook Inlet. It is important to remember that onsite sewer disposal is a **completely safe and acceptable** option for handling sewage for the vast majority or homeowners on the hillside.

So why should we be interested in other more advanced onsite systems when the Municipality would be more than willing to expand the public sewer system to our homes? The bottom line is COST, both monetary and visual. Public sewers are expensive, both to construct and to operate. For our larger hillside lots, the initial cost would exceed the cost of any of the more advanced onsite technologies presently available. It is important to remember the cost of public sewers is born entirely by the homeowners; there are no free rides from Juneau or Washington D.C. And where a small 1/7 acre downtown lot might see an assessment cost of $10,000 to $15,000 for public sewer, our larger 1¼ acre lots might be well over $100,000; maybe approaching $200,000. Typically, you don't have to pay unless you hook up, but it is possible that the cost may be born by everyone that is in the path of the sewer; even those that have a functioning onsite system.

Because private wells are often too close to the new public sewer systems, public water systems become necessary. So you can add that to the bill. To place these services into the ground, it would involve extensive deep excavations on both sides of our rural roads. This means that virtually all the trees we have within the public rights of way that line our roadways would be lost in the construction process. To connect to the new public sewer, homeowners would also incur the cost of reaching the public system from their home. For many of us who have onsite systems in our back yards, we would need to excavate around our homes to reach the public system.

To put the issue in perspective, let us assume that 5 out of 100 homes in your area need something better than conventional onsite sewer. To put in public sewers at $50,000 each for every home in the neighborhood, would mean that the community cost to solve the problem for each of the problem lots would be $5,000,000. The cost to install new and proven state of the art onsite technologies for these problem lots should be below $20,000 each, or less than $100,000 total to solve the problem for those 5 lots. When one looks at the total cost to the community, it quickly becomes obvious that just about any other alternative is cheaper than leaping into the public sewer system.

So what are these other technologies? Below is a list of the more common options available to be used today, including the conventional Septic Tank and Leach Field commonly found on the Hillside. Complete descriptions of the five systems will be available at the October 5th meeting.

- **Conventional Septic Tank and Leach Field:** Typical cost is around $10,000.

- **Package Treatment Systems**: Typical cost is around $15,000.

- **Step Systems**: Typical cost is around $12,000, but can vary considerably depending on the final cost to treat and/or dispose of the liquid waste.

- **Elevated Bed Disposal System**: Typical cost is around $20,000.

- **Holding Tanks**: Typical cost are around $8,000. It should be pointed out that with the water saving devices now available to all homeowners and with the lower up front construction cost, holding tank systems are not much more costly than many of the other systems described above when amortized over say 30 years.