

This is a printer friendly version of an article from **theadvertiser.com**
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Jun 7, 2007

Commentary: Impact fees may be right choice for Lafayette

As one of five members of a steering committee for a grassroots organization named Lafayette Citizens for Common Sense Growth, I think it's time to present an alternative view to the idea of impact fees. As our name implies, we are not against growth for Lafayette, we just feel that this growth should be tempered by the use of common sense.

We recently led an effort to deny (or at least delay) the construction of 74 condos and two office buildings on the already overburdened two-lane section of Kaliste Saloom Road. While the planning commission concluded that this section of roadway is unsafe due to the traffic load, their decision was overturned by the city-parish council. We were not surprised, since 16 of the last 19 appeals were overturned. Why even have a planning commission?

If impact fees like those in St. Tammany Parish had been in effect last year, the 1,077 new residences and 1,000 apartments that were permitted would have generated more than \$4.5 million in revenue. That's for one year. That's real money, in my humble opinion.

Recently, Mac Gibson, Acadiana Home Builders Association president, had an article in *The Daily Advertiser* regarding the negatives of imposing impact fees for new developments. This was followed up by articles from Mary Jane Bauer of the Realtors Association and Steven Hebert, COO of Coldwell Banker, with almost identical arguments against impact fees. Since all three make a living off of the homebuilding industry, their positions are self-serving, and we respectfully disagree. While impact fees might not be the total solution, they could at least be an important part of the equation.

A recent newspaper article highlighted recommendations by the general advisory panel that will be made to the planning commission, and these recommendations seem to exemplify our desires to have common sense injected into the uncontrolled growth we have recently been experiencing. On the other hand, the Growth Opportunity Technical Team committee has publicly stated that it does not support impact fees. Its position is not surprising since this committee is comprised mostly of homebuilders, architects, engineers and others tied to the real estate community. Two weeks ago, a parish councilman said he wants impact fees to come to the council so he can work to defeat this issue. So much for an open mind, right?

Let's have an open debate. The city-parish should hire an impact-fee or managed-growth professional to determine the best common-sense path for the future growth of Lafayette Parish.

Bill Reed, who worked in the telecom industry prior to retirement, is a member of Lafayette Citizens for Common Sense Growth.
