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## Inverness may dump county fees

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Inverness City Manager Frank DiGiovanni said Wednesday the city may opt out of the county's impact fees next year and adopt lower fees of its own.

DiGiovanni estimated the city's impact fees would be one-third to one-half of what the county charges. He said the current county impact fees inhibit business in the city.

Speaking to the Chronicle Editorial Board, DiGiovanni cited the planned sale of Cinnamon Sticks restaurant as an example of how the county's impact fees are affecting the city. He said the sale of the restaurant fell through because of the size of the impact fees.

DiGiovanni told the Chronicle Editorial Board the city would have to conduct its own impact fee study before it could opt out of the county's fees. He said the study would probably begin in November and run parallel to the city's Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) process associated with updating the comprehensive plan.

Impact fees are assessed on new construction to pay a portion of the cost of building new infrastructure such as roads, streets and public buildings.

DiGiovanni said the city has most of its infrastructure in place, which means the impact fees should be lower. The county, by contrast, is paying high impact fees to fund a transportation system that feeds urban sprawl, he said.

DiGiovanni said he has discussed impact fees with Crystal River City Manager Andy Houston. Houston has made his council aware of what Inverness is planning to do.

"We're perfectly willing to let Inverness blaze the trail," Houston said Wednesday in an interview. "We're going to watch to see how it goes with them. I agree with Frank: If we do a study, our impact fees should be lower because our infrastructure is in place."

Houston said the city's transportation system is constructed, which means if the city opted out of the county impact fee system, Crystal River residents would probably be assessed a smaller transportation impact fee. But Houston said he realizes the county would argue that the transportation system doesn't stop at the city limits.