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### **Alachua County is frugal with its use of impact fees**

Are impact fees a cash cow (Sun editorial, June 29) or a vital part of Florida's growth management law?

In 2005, the Florida Legislature passed the so-called "pay-as-you-grow" growth management law. The legislation created a 15-member advisory body, the Florida Impact Fee Review Task Force, to survey the current use of impact fees as a method of financing local infrastructure. An impact fee is a charge on new development to pay for the construction or expansion of capital improvements that are necessitated by the new development.

The task force concluded that local governments in Florida do not have adequate revenue generating resources with which to meet the demand for infrastructure. Because Florida counties vary widely, from urban to rural, small to large, the legislation did not mandate uniform impact fees. Thus, impact fees can remain flexible to address the needs of the specific jurisdiction.

One of the arguments against impact fees is the problem of affordable housing. The legislation mandates that all impact fee ordinances significantly address affordable housing. Local governments can waive, defer, adjust, or exempt such fees.

Alachua County is near the bottom of counties that use impact fees to maintain a quality of life for its residents. On the other hand, Collier County aggressively uses impact fees to ensure that certain standards are maintained. For example, Collier's comprehensive plan expresses the commitment to maintain specified levels of service with regard to parks and recreation. Collier is completing a massive regional park, and has programmed \$50 million for community and regional park improvements over the next five years.

Collier County currently has 12 impact fees: Community parks, regional parks, libraries, fire, school, roads, jail, ems, government buildings, law enforcement, water and sewer. In contrast, Alachua County fees fit neatly on one printed page, and do not begin to cover the real costs of growth.

To discuss the pros and cons of impact fees, Women for Wise Growth will present a public forum: Impact Fees - Who Should Pay for Growth?

This forum is free and open to the public. It will begin at 7 p.m., on Wednesday, July 18, in the Oak Room at Oak Hammock.

*Gladys Lane is a member of Women for Wise Growth.*

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