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Monday, January 31, 2005

Adelanto Council likely to raise development fees

By LEROY STANDISH/Staff Writer

ADELANTO — Developers looking to build in this city better be prepared to pay a lot more.

The City Council is on the verge of increasing substantially the park development fees on each new housing unit — from \$100 to \$2,890 — and instituting new drainage fees of up to \$11,900 for a nonresidential-zoned acre.

City leaders are in dire need of the extra funds because the population of Adelanto is on the verge of doubling, according to a recently released staff report.

"As of Jan. 1, 2004 (Adelanto) has a population of 21,271 in 6,269 dwelling units. There are over 4,200 additional dwelling units for which there are approved tract maps and another 2,000 plus dwelling units for which tentative tract maps have been filed. The approved and in-process tract maps therefore will result in doubling the size of the city," the report said.

Since December city leaders have been in discussions with builders. Developers are asking the city to phase in the fees that will allow the city to build parks and drainage systems.

"I don't feel it's right to drop the whole ball on the developers, maybe phase it in," said Mayor Jim Nehmens. "Whatever we do we need to get it going ... We can't wait any longer."

Carlos Rodriguez, senior vice president of the Building Industry Association's Baldy View Chapter, said the construction industry is willing to pay its fair share for infrastructure, whether that be roads, sewerage, drainage or parks.

Yet, an abrupt, drastic raise in development fees could threaten future development of housing, retail and commercial development in Adelanto, Rodriguez said.

"It could threaten the outcome of projects and threaten homeowners if you abruptly change the rules in midstream," Rodriguez said.

He suggests that many of the developments that are in the works should be exempt from the fee increases.

"Folks in the 11th hour, perhaps they should be exempt," he said. "We are looking for a general compromise that enables the housing demand to be met and allows the vital infrastructure to be met (in) a timely manner."

In a letter addressed to the City Council, Rodriguez suggests staggering the fee increases over the next two years.

City leaders and representatives from the building industry will meet today to discuss the fee increases. The City Council is expected to make a final decision on the fee increases at its regularly scheduled Feb. 9 meeting.

"We are just trying to determine where we draw a line in the sand and say at this point, 'We charge these fees,' " Nehmens said. "I don't want to hurt development."

LeRoy Standish may be reached at 951-6277 or leroy_standish@link.freedom.com.

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