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Builders vow to reduce prices if impact fees cut

By [MICHAEL D. BATES](#) | Hernando Today

Builder-members of the Hernando Builders Association have agreed to reduce the price of their homes "dollar for dollar" by the amount of the impact fee reduction," according to an HBA press release issued Wednesday.

"This will ensure that no builder will experience any windfall profit by a reduction," the HBA said. Builders also pledge that, to the best of their ability, they will use only local subcontractors and suppliers on job sites that have the impact fee reduction to ensure it boosts the local economy, according to the HBA.

HBA President Jeff West said in a statement that, if the proposed fee reduction is enacted, it would be the largest tax reduction in Hernando County history and "will go a long way to help stabilize home prices, property tax revenue and put people back to work."

County commissioners will meet Nov. 10 to consider rolling back impact fees for residential and commercial construction to 2001 levels — from the current \$9,200 to \$4,848.

The rollback would last one year, after which commissioners will review its effects.

Commissioners hope the rollback will prompt new home construction, put contractors and trades people back to work and circulate new money among local merchants.

HBA Executive Officer Brenda McDaniel said she made phone calls to all 55 to 60 builder-members and the majority said they would participate in the price reduction.

Other members had not called back as of Wednesday, she said.

McDaniel said builders can reflect the homebuyer savings in various ways.

For Bob Eaton, owner of Artistic Homes and chairman of the HBA government affairs committee, it will be as a line-item reduction on the contract.

"I want to reflect it very straightforward and clear on the contract and list it as a credit so it comes off the price of the home," he said.

Eaton stressed that his price sheet for home prices is already at "bare bones" and will not change.

Eaton said there has been an 80 to 90 percent decline in residential construction in Hernando County and he sees the impact fee reduction as a way of saving jobs and the construction sector.

"If things stayed at this level for another year, you'd virtually wipe out the industry." He said. "It's that bad."