

This is a printer friendly version of an article from [www.heraldtribune.com](http://www.heraldtribune.com)  
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

---

Article published Jan 6, 2006

## **A necessary adjustment**

### **Higher impact fees would help Charlotte meet the costs of growth**

Charlotte County lags behind neighboring counties and the rest of the state in the amount of impact fees it collects from new development.

The county hasn't raised those fees in more than 10 years, even though the cost of providing roads and public infrastructure has risen dramatically -- along with the population.

On Tuesday, the Charlotte County Commission will conduct a workshop on impact fees and capital-improvement projects.

Arguments against a substantial increase in impact fees will be difficult to maintain in the face of rising costs and a study by Dr. James Nicholas of the University of Florida. He recommends that the county raise impact fees on a single-family home from \$2,642 to \$9,263, a 251 percent hike.

According to a recent Herald-Tribune report, Charlotte's current fees are about \$3,000 less than Sarasota County's and about \$9,000 less than those in Manatee, which recently raised its charges.

Charlotte County should consider regularly reviewing the fees to avoid such steep increases in the future.

But, now, Charlotte would be wise to adjust the impact fee schedule to reflect the fair-share costs of accommodating growth before developers break ground on major projects such as those planned for the Burnt Store Road area, Murdock Village and Babcock Ranch.

The county is running uphill in an attempt to catch up on building roads and other infrastructure, such as parks, libraries and public safety. Already, Charlotte faces an estimated shortfall of about \$100 million in funding for capital-improvement projects. Meanwhile, road-building costs continue to grow: Nicholas' study cites a rate of \$2.2 million per lane mile for road improvements.

Most of the proposed impact-fee increase -- \$6,493 of \$9,263 -- is dedicated to roads. Those who drive Charlotte County's crowded, mostly two-lane roads can clearly see that road widening and hurricane-evacuation projects are sorely needed.

Charlotte recently raised the local-option gas tax to the 9-cent maximum it can charge in an attempt to generate more funding for road improvements.

Levying higher impact fees is an unfortunate necessity, but it should help Charlotte build the infrastructure required for maintaining a high quality of life.

---