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## Clermont considers big impact-fee hike

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**CLERMONT** - Lake County's most-populated city is considering several large impact-fee increases to offset demands from its enormous growth.

The proposal will raise fees that Clermont charges for newly constructed homes by as much as 61 percent - to \$7,502. Fees on commercial and industrial buildings also could go up.

Combined with Lake County's impact fees, new-home buyers could pay nearly \$17,000 on top of costs to buy their properties. But city officials say their fees are sorely needed to help build new fire and police facilities, water and sewer utilities, and parks and recreational areas - all of which are heavily impacted by hefty development.

The proposal would raise impact fees for parks and recreational facilities about 210 percent - from \$673 to \$2,087 - for the average new home built in the city. Officials say that dramatic increase is needed partly to cover the rising land costs in south Lake.

The city currently has jobs for 45 police officers to serve a population of more than 20,000 people. About 71 officers will be needed by 2020, when the population is expected to top 35,000, according to a city report.

Clermont's proposal would help to pay for new buildings and equipment for those officers by raising police impact fees 147 percent next year from \$185 to \$457.

Council member Elaine Renick agreed that impact fees are needed to help Clermont pay for key capital expenses such as new buildings, land and equipment. But they will not cover paying for more city staff to provide the growing public services.

Renick said impact fees don't cover the cost of operating new facilities.

"You can build a fire station and buy a fire truck, but the cost of running a fire station and the salaries and maintenance is not covered by impact fees," she said.

The proposed increase is the first time Clermont has considering overhauling impact fees in several years.