

## DeKalb proposal would triple impact fees on new homes

*By Chris Rickert - City Editor*

DeKALB - Impact fees charged on new home construction and used to pay for things like roads, schools and parks would more than triple under a proposal before the DeKalb Plan Commission tonight.

The plan - put together by the city's Community Development Department with input from the DeKalb school and park districts, but not from local housing developers - includes four new fees and increases in two existing ones. The changes would raise the total amount in impact fees on a new, four-bedroom detached home from \$4,799.14 to \$16,806.14.

The biggest winner under the proposed fee structure would be the DeKalb School District, which has long complained that the fees and taxes it collects on new housing don't come close to covering the cost of educating the school-aged children who live in it.

Under current city ordinance, the district is now assured of at least \$1,928.75 in impact fees on a four-bedroom home. The city's draft proposal would add a \$7,200 "school capital fee" and a \$1,200 "school transition fee" to that - for a total of more than \$10,000.

"In our opinion, this is where we need to be in order to make us whole," school board President Andy Small said. "They're certainly better than what we are receiving."

The DeKalb Park District also would see a \$1,284 increase in the fee it collects under the city's land-cash ordinance, bringing it to \$2,854.39. The extra money would come from increasing the number of acres the ordinance requires developers to donate for park space.

That figure - which would go from 5.5 acres for every 1,000 people to 10 acres - is one variable in a formula the city uses to determine how much in cash developers are required to pay to the park district if they choose to pay a cash impact fee rather than donate land.

"We want to stay abreast of growth, and we want to be able to provide the maximum amount of parkland that will meet the needs of that growth," park district Executive Director Dave Mogle said about the proposed changes.

The city also is looking to increase a road impact fee from \$250 to \$1,240 and to institute an annexation fee of \$1,000 per acre and a "public building contribution" of \$1,000 per home.

The new and higher fees put DeKalb on a par with communities including Elgin, Sugar Grove and Genoa in the total amount in fees charged, according to data provided by DeKalb officials. But the totals are lower than they are in Algonquin and higher than in Aurora.

Brian Grainger, president of the DeKalb County Building and Development Association, said he hasn't yet formally seen the city's proposal, but said, "I know that the fees only go up; they don't go down."

He acknowledged that impact fees in DeKalb have been lower in recent years than in other growing DeKalb County communities, such as Sycamore and Genoa, and he said developers will most likely be willing to pay higher fees in DeKalb.

But he said that in the long term, property taxes on new homes mean more to the school district than impact fees, and he contended that most new homes are in a higher price category and have few school-aged children living in them.

As such, "the growth is helping to pay for our schools right now," he said.

Unlike in 2002, the last time DeKalb's school impact fees were increased, the DCBDA was not included in negotiations on how much to increase them.

"From a planning standpoint, it's much easier to share with someone a written, firm proposal and have them react to it," said Acting Community Development Director Russ Farnum, explaining the decision not to include the group this time around.

Farnum and City Manager Mark Biernacki also emphasize that the fees are subject to change based on feedback from the public. The park district, school district and city council are expected to discuss the fees during meetings later this month and in September, and city officials have repeatedly said the public will have opportunities to comment on them.

The council is expected to vote on a new set of fees in September.

Chris Rickert can be reached at [crickert@daily-chronicle.com](mailto:crickert@daily-chronicle.com).