

Daily Herald

Big Picture . Local Focus

Des Plaines to consider impact fees

By Ames Boykin

Daily Herald Staff Writer

Posted Friday, June 23, 2006

Des Plaines Park District and library officials are pressing the city to begin charging impact fees for new developments.

The city is reviewing the issue after discussions with the Des Plaines Public Library, City Manager David Niemeyer said.

Park district officials also plan to lobby the city to begin imposing the fees, similar to what suburbs such as Arlington Heights already charge.

Park Finance Superintendent Donald Miletic already has sent a letter to city officials and plans to follow up with more pressure. Miletic said the fees could help improve parks that residents of the new developments would use.

Arlington Heights has collected impact fees for more than a decade, Village Manager Bill Dixon said. Last fall, the village decided to nearly double the fees to help offset the impact of new residents on its schools, park district and library.

The village now charges \$165,000 per acre for new developments.

Northbrook charges \$500,000 per acre, while Buffalo Grove levies \$141,000 an acre.

"If a person or a firm is going to develop something of any magnitude, it demonstrably is going to have an effect on parks and schools," Dixon said. "Those are essential components of a community."

The fees haven't driven away development in towns that charge them, he said.

The fees are generally used for improvements, although developers donate land for parks in towns where open space is still readily available.

Des Plaines Community and Economic Development Director Tim Bleuher said he likes the idea of impact fees if they will mean adding green space — but that's becoming more of a rarity in landlocked Des Plaines. His staff is surveying what other towns do.

Niemeyer said he believes the city must weigh its decision carefully.

"I think there's been developers that have questioned the power of city to do assessed fees," Niemeyer said. "Basically, with impact fees, you have to make sure that it's actually needed for future impact of the city."

That's the issue many developers have with the fees, said Colin McRae, chief executive officer of Attainable Housing Alliance. The builders group represents more than 800 members.

"Really, what this is is double taxation," said McRae, a former Mundelein mayor.

Taxing bodies get reimbursed for services with the added property taxes from new residents, he said.

McRae's group is currently entangled in a legal dispute with McHenry County schools over what it sees as the inflated calculation of impact fees.

[dailyherald.com](http://www.dailyherald.com)