

Wildomar's Proposed Fee Hike Could Deter Development In The City, Critics Argue

By [Toni McAllister](#)

Mayor Pro Tem Tim Walker and councilwoman Marsha Swanson say the city's proposed development impact fee schedule is too high and could stunt construction.

At the strong urging of two Wildomar city council members, city staff will take another look at a proposed plan that increases fees developers pay to build in the city.

During a special study session Wednesday night, city council and the public were presented with a proposed plan that would significantly increase development impact fees -- the fees charged to developers to pay for local infrastructure, such as roads, parks, trails, drainage and other services.

When the city incorporated in July 2008, it adopted the development impact fees established by the County of Riverside. More than four years later, however, Wildomar is now establishing its own fees based on needs in the city, such as drainage, which is not currently included in the existing county impact fee schedule.

"This is local control policy setting at its best," said Wildomar Public Works Director Tim D'Zmura, who led Wednesday's study session along with officials from Colgan Consulting, who were hired to help formulate a development impact fee plan for Wildomar.

Mayor Pro Tem Tim Walker and councilwoman Marsha Swanson were adamant that the proposed fee schedule was too high and could deter development in the city.

"I would like to see the air let out of this balloon," Swanson said.

Walker and Swanson were particularly concerned about proposed fees charged to developers of commercial/office space. Under the proposed schedule, such a developer would be charged \$10,298.63 per 1,000 square feet. Conversely, a developer looking to build industrial would be charged just \$3,669.01 per 1,000 square feet under the proposed plan.

The figures do not include additional fees such as Transportation Uniform Mitigation Fees (TUMF), Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan fees (MSHCP), school fees, and others.

As a result of council concerns, staff agreed to come back with options on how to reallocate fees and provide more details that could help decide whether the city can afford to trim the fees and consequently the infrastructure it provides to its residents.

Several people spoke both in favor and against the proposed plan Wednesday night.

In a letter emailed to Swanson, Gene Wunderlich, government affairs director for the Southwest Riverside County Association of Realtors, argued against the new fee schedule, saying developers aren't beating the door down in Wildomar and increased fees won't cause them to line up in the future.

Tommy Thompson, director of governmental affairs for the Building Industry Association of Southern California, was on hand Wednesday night and he told council members his organization is against the proposed plan.

"This is not the time to increase ... costs," he said, citing the lackluster economy.

According to Thompson, just 2,800 new homes were built in Riverside County in 2011, and this year the numbers are expected to be the same.

"We're stagnant right now," he said.

But Wildomar residents John and Kristan Lloyd supported the proposed plan. They said the fees are used to shape a community, and with cityhood there is a responsibility to carefully plan for the future.

"You only get one chance to build the community," John said.