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# THE JOURNALNET

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## News



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### Parkland could benefit from fee

By MICHAEL W. HOSKINS

Daily Journal staff writer

[mhoskins@thejournalnet.com](mailto:mhoskins@thejournalnet.com)

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Franklin wants to charge new residents an additional fee for building a home in the city.

A charge would come in the form of a recreation impact fee, which would be used to buy parkland, add walking trails and build sports fields needed to serve new residents.

The parks and recreation department director plans to ask the city council in June to consider implementing the fee, which by state law could not take effect for six months.

"We're already in need of more trails and parks, and that's only going to grow as more people decide to move into Franklin," department director Suzanne Findley said. "We need to be finding alternate ways to pay for that."

If approved, new homeowners in Franklin would be charged an additional \$870 when applying for a building permit to construct a single-family home.

Impact fees for those building apartments, duplexes or mobile homes would be less than the proposed \$870 charged for single-family homes.

Developers would be able to opt out of the fee if park land is donated to the city, Findley said. She did not know if fees would be waived or changed because of zoning rules allowing developers to increase housing density if open space is added.

The fee was determined based on census data, a historical pattern of building permits in the city and Franklin's five-year master parks plan completed earlier this year.



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At the proposed level, the city could raise about \$3.6 million in the next 10 years, according figures from consulting firm H.J. Umbaugh and Associates.

Money raised would be used for new parks and recreational opportunities, such as buying 104 acres of parkland, creating 2.61 miles of trails and building multiple sports fields.

Repairs to existing parks and maintenance for the city's recreational space would be paid for through the city's budget, which is funded through property tax dollars from residents, Findley said.

Figures show that Franklin currently has \$1.2 million worth of needed projects, which could not be funded through impact fees, Findley said.

New projects such as a new outdoor pool, renovations to the Wonder Five Center or a sports complex would not be paid for with the impact fees, she said.

"Those would be for the entire community, not just incoming residents," Findley said. "It wouldn't be fair to charge new people for something everyone should pay for."

During the next decade, city planners think Franklin's population could top 35,000 people with the estimated 3,872 building permits issued, Findley said.

Other communities, such as Fishers, Noblesville and Greenwood, charge impact fees to new residents.

Franklin's proposed fee would be more than what is charged in Greenwood, the only other Johnson County community that imposes an impact fee. While fees may be lower in Greenwood, the community issues more building permits each year and brings in more money than Franklin.

An eight-member citizen advisory panel met to discuss the proposal Wednesday night. The city's parks board voted in favor of the fee Monday, rejecting two other options that included more projects and would have made fees as high as \$3,123 or \$1,789.

Alternatives to imposing an impact fee include increasing the city's parks and recreation budget, borrowing money to pay for projects or increasing all residents' property taxes, Findley said.

“It’s a philosophical question,” said Chip Orner, a Franklin resident and director of recreation in Greenwood who sits on the citizens panel. “Do you want to pay a flat fee up front or face higher property taxes over the next 10 years?”

Developer Mike Trotta, a Franklin resident and manager at Sentry Homes in Greenwood, said the proposed fee could hurt his and other home building businesses.

“I don’t want to be paying for a park twice,” he said. “Don’t make me pay to build one inside (the subdivision), and then also tack on \$870 to build another one.”

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