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Jill Samuelson, Sonoran Desert Real Estate Expert

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News Update

Q.C. seeks increase in impact fees

By Sara Thorson, Tribune

February 3, 2006

Queen Creek plans to raise fees it charges on new homes built in the town by more than 36 percent, from \$9,881 to \$13,503.

The Town Council on Feb. 15 will hold a second public hearing on proposed system development fees and vote on the increase. If approved, the fee hike would take effect May 16.

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Revenue from the fees, also called impact fees, helps the town pay for infrastructure necessitated by growth. The fees are charged to homebuilders, who generally increase home prices to cover the costs.

The Home Builders Association of Central Arizona, which monitors the levels of system development fees in municipalities, always looks at how increasing the fees might affect home prices, said Lauren Barnett, the association's deputy director of municipal affairs.

"Overnight, the price of a new home in the town will increase by \$4,000, so this clearly impacts housing affordability," she said.

In participating in Queen Creek's fee-setting process, Barnett said the Home Builders Association was doing its due diligence to make sure growth is paying its fair share, but not more.

Mayor Wendy Feldman-Kerr said demand for housing in the town is such that after the last development fee increase a couple years ago, homebuying increased, not decreased.

The increase would set Queen Creek's fees about equal to those in Chandler and Gilbert, communities that have 10 times or more the number of residents as Queen Creek.

Barnett said it's difficult to compare fees across municipalities though, because each charges differently for different services.

Feldman-Kerr said the town needs the additional revenue to preserve its level of service in the face of rapid growth.

"We're keeping up with our level of service, as we have anticipated, and the cost of materials and construction have gone up," she said.

System development fees in the East Valley

System development fees, also called impact fees, are charged by municipalities for each new home built within their boundaries. The fees are calculated based on the impact new residents will have on municipal services. Queen Creek: Current: \$9,881, Proposed: \$13,503 Gilbert: Current: \$13,385, Proposed: \$14,748 Chandler: Current: \$13,582, increased from \$9,771 on Wednesday Mesa: Current: \$5,028, will increase to \$5,233 on Feb. 19 Apache Junction: Current: \$2,527, will increase to \$3,409 on Feb. 13



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