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Raise builders' impact fees

Palm Beach Post Editorial

Tuesday, August 16, 2005

Today, the Palm Beach County Commission will consider raising by 18 percent the fees the county charges builders. The increase makes sense because that money helps build parks, schools, libraries and roads. Those growth-related costs are rising along with the rest of South Florida construction.

The so-called "impact fees" are reviewed every two years. Consultant James Nicholas, a University of Florida professor, calculated the need to raise the fee for homes with 1,400 to 1,999 square feet to \$10,030 from \$8,520, which will be the state's third-highest, behind Osceola and Collier counties. The fee for the increasingly popular larger homes, up to 3,600 square feet, will rise 17 percent to \$11,368.

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Home builders will complain that the fee is another blow to affordable housing. But more than half of new homes in Palm Beach County sell for more than \$500,000. An increase of \$1,600 won't drive those buyers away. Martin County just raised impact fees significantly. Finding ways to build less costly homes may include subsidizing those fees. But it's only fair that new homeowners in Florida help meet the rising cost of growth.

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