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Some builders not happy with impact fees

DESOTO COUNTY -- The Charlotte-DeSoto Building Industry Association issued a media release last week that took issue with DeSoto and Charlotte counties for enacting impact fees to pay for the upcoming costs of development.

The building association represents 700 companies in the building industry.

It is not that the association is totally opposed to impact fees, but it urged the two counties to spread the pain more widely.

"The members of the construction industry in DeSoto and Charlotte counties do not believe impact fees on new homes should be the only target to fund the infrastructure required by continued population growth," association president Suzanne T. Graham stated. Graham is a licensed residential building contractor. She appeared before the DeSoto County Commission Feb. 28 to make the same argument to the commission just before it approved a county impact fee.

The next day, the association issued its release, in which it said the county commission had "instituted huge impact fees on first-time buyers and persons hoping to purchase new homes by adding thousands of dollars to the price of a new home."

The Charlotte County Commission enacted higher impact fees after going for 12 years without an adjustment, the builders' association noted.

"Both actions will make new home purchases unaffordable for many people -- existing residents, the young people in our community starting their own families here, as well as newcomers to the area," Graham stated. She said the relative affordability of DeSoto and Charlotte counties were threatened by the actions of the two counties.

The building industry association, said Graham, represents a major segment of employment and produces much of the economic vitality of the area. Along with other organizations in the two-county area, the association has been working to convince elected officials to enact measures that would spread the burden among the

"beneficiaries of infrastructure improvements."

Graham said there were other sources of funding that could help mitigate the increased demands for public infrastructure. She listed increases in ad valorem taxes for road construction, gasoline taxes for road construction, fees for other services and local option real estate transfer fees.

"According to studies done locally by the National Association of Home Builders, growth does pay its own way," Graham said. "We don't think the commissioners are giving enough weight to that study when calculating the levels they are proposing to adopt."


She said association members did not want to see homes priced so high that young people could not afford to stay in the area and build a home or buy a house.

"We don't want our retired parents to be unable to move here to comfortable and affordable homes as well," added association executive officer Jon Bednerik.

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