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Study: Fort Collins' development fees on par with other cities Slow review process is costly, builders say

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Fort Collins' claim to development-fee parity is falling on deaf ears in the building and development industry, though some applaud changes that could make it easier to build in the community.

The city released a study earlier this month by Littleton-based Home Builders Research that compared Fort Collins' residential development fees with other Front Range cities, towns and counties. The report shows the city's fees on par with other communities and disproves developers' perception that it's expensive to develop in Fort Collins, the city said.

It costs \$24,819 to get a building permit for a 2,000-square-foot home in Fort Collins, according to the report. That includes charges for water and sewer taps, road impacts and park fees. Loveland charges \$25,527, while Greeley charges \$23,702, the report said.

"I'd say we're very competitive," said Felix Lee, director of neighborhood and building services.

Builders and developers, however, say the study looks only at a sliver of the development process to draw a broader conclusion one called "disingenuous." For example, the city's lengthy development review process makes Fort Collins more expensive than other Front Range municipalities, they say.

"Time is money, and that's been a pretty significant thing," said Stan Everitt, executive vice president of Everitt Enterprises.

The city has tried to improve that, shrinking comment periods and giving developers feedback earlier in the process, said Les Kaplan, president of Imago Enterprises and a Fort Collins city planner from 1975 to 1980. The city should be "complimented" for those steps, which made the process "significantly better over the last two years."

Still, Kaplan's last project in Fort Collins took 1½ years to get through planning, and he criticizes a process that, as a whole, is more cumbersome and expensive than in other Front Range cities, he said.

"Fort Collins has done a lot to improve the development review process," Kaplan said. "But it's a much more complex regulatory environment than other cities on the Front Range."

A similar report on commercial fees is due from the city in the next 10 days, Lee said.

A Fort Collins developer is doing a similar study on the assertion that it costs about \$15 more per square foot to develop commercial projects in the city.

"We aren't as competitive as we once were," said Gino Campana, who owns Bellissimo Inc.

But city leaders, who are "rebranding Fort Collins to be a developer-friendly community," are moving the city in the right direction, Campana said.

"I'm extremely optimistic, which is not typical of most developers," Campana said.
