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Study calls for 400 percent increase in Cape park impact fee

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Buying a new home in Cape Coral's paradise could add the price of a fully loaded Honda Civic LX to the deal if a proposed park impact fee increase is adopted.

A city study proposes increasing the current parks fee by more than 400 percent.

The study, by consultants Burton & Associates of Jacksonville, states that the current park and recreation impact fee — \$1,115 for a new single-family home — won't cover the costs of land acquisition, sports field construction and other recreational facilities.

If adopted, the Cape's park impact fee would top \$5,150 for all single-family homes, bringing the total impact fees to \$17,712 for a new home. That's roughly the price of the shiny red Honda, said Honda of Fort Myers salesman Vince Dieres.

The consultants plan to present the study at the Cape Coral Committee of the Whole meeting at 3 p.m. Monday in City Hall. There the committee plans to hear the consultants explain why Cape Coral needs the major increases.

The rush of about 10,000 people a year to live in the city has brought the proposed increase in impact fees, said the city's parks and recreation director Steve Pohlman.

"It cost \$6,000 to \$10,000 a lot to acquire park space in 2002, 2003," Pohlman said. "Now it costs \$90,000 a lot. The parks master plan put the (total) costs at \$70 million. That's not even close today. People want their kids to play soccer. There isn't even a playground, not one, north of Pine Island Road. That is an expanding part of the city."

Builders cried foul, calling the impact fee burden bringing higher new home prices outrageous, absurd and irrational.

"They are pricing a large number of people out of the market. It is the people buying their first home who are hurt the most," said Darryl Aubuchon, president of the Cape Coral Construction Industry Association.

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"It isn't just the people buying the new houses that are responsible for the impacts on the city. People buying existing homes pay no impact fees and use the parks, roads, and their children go to school just like new homeowners' families."

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