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Whittier council expected to approve lower development fees

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WHITTIER - The days of tough negotiations with housing developers over park fees should be over once the City Council gives final passage to a lower development impact fee, city officials believe.

The City Council is expected to give final approval next Tuesday to new fees that are only about a quarter of what the existing code requires.

It now requires a fee of about \$25,000 per unit, but new fees are \$7,693 per unit for single-family homes or \$6,417 per unit for multiple-family such as apartments or condominiums.

"We felt the market wouldn't bear that price at this point in time," said Jeff Collier, director of community development, referring to the existing rate.

"We want to make sure we recoup as much as we can so we can put it toward new park and recreation facilities," Collier said. "We also don't want to put such a burden that would discourage new developments."

In 2006, the City Council reduced the fee for the Ravello townhomes to nearly \$9,000 per unit and in 2008 it reduced the price to about \$5,000 per unit for the Gables townhomes.

In both cases, developers had said the city's \$25,000 per-unit fee would have killed their projects. As a result, the city compromised.

"We've come down considerably (from that fee)," Collier said. "We're about a quarter of where we were at. These fees are in line with what we've negotiated with developers."

Money from these fees can be spent on the purchase of new

park land, other recreation facilities and for libraries.

City staff already has compiled a \$64 million wish list of priorities.

But the money it has collected so far from the two developments, \$470,490, won't go far toward this list, said Nancy Mendez, assistant city manager.

Mendez said no decisions have been made and she's not sure how this money and any other new fees would be spent.

"Staff will go to the Parks and Recreation Commission (to ask) how to expend these funds," Mendez said.

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