

Cary Looks at Boosting New-Home Impact Fees

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CARY &MDASH; New homes help build a strong economy in Cary, but the town's new mayor says the fee that builders pay on each home will not be set in stone.

"There's cost associated with all growth, and if it's not picked up by the developer, it will be picked up by taxpayers," Mayor Harold Weinbrecht said Wednesday.

Impact fees help cover that cost, and the town council voted at a recent work session to increase the transportation impact fee by 25 percent.

That is an average of \$370 more per new home.

"We were trying to accomplish staying competitive and taking some burden off our existing citizens," Weinbrecht said.

As part of the effort, developer fees for water and sewer could go up 40 to 75 percent. Only impact fees in the downtown area would stay about the same as a way to encourage growth there.

Cary's impact fees have been on a roller coaster ride. In 2002 under Mayor Glen Lang, they went up. In 2004 under Mayor Ernie McAlister, they went down to 1999 levels.

Developers say that increasing fees was a mistake Cary made back in 2002 and would be again.

"Cary is the model across North Carolina in terms of what you can do in harming the housing industry and economy as well," said Tim Minton, executive vice president of the Homebuilders Association of Raleigh-Wake County.

The association says builders went elsewhere after the last increase, taking income from jobs and materials out of Cary.

Some downtown business owners say Cary's housing growth grows their businesses.

"The growth has been good for us, but beyond us, I think the growth has been good for the town," Paul Ashworth said.

The council may see things otherwise.

The Cary Town Council will hold a public hearing next month on raising the impact fee, then make a final decision.

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