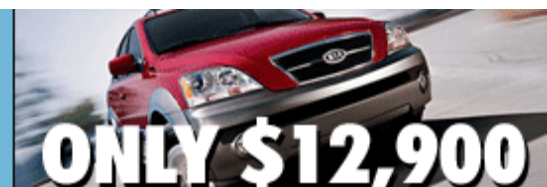



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April 26, 2005

Impact fee decision today

Transportation tab for those building homes may rise more than 200%

 BY JEFF SCHWEERS
 FLORIDA TODAY

VIERA - Faced with a long list of growth-related road projects they can't afford, Brevard County commissioners today will consider raising the transportation impact fee charged on every newly built home by more than 200 percent.

Commissioners asked their staff during a February budget workshop to bring back a proposal to raise the fee from \$1,371 to \$4,353 -- the amount a consultant told commissioners five years ago was needed for growth to pay for itself.

"It's one of the few tools we have," Commissioner Sue Carlson said. "The impact fee is not exactly paying for itself now."

At the same time, they're considering a \$224 increase in the library fee.

If both are approved, it would bring the total impact fees charged to each new home from \$6,205 to almost \$9,400 starting on May 15. Those fees help pay for roads, schools, libraries, parks, solid waste disposal and emergency medical transportation.

Alberta Wilson, president of the

Meeting today

The County Commission will meet at 9 a.m. today in the County Government Center, 2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Viera.

Potential costs

Brevard County is considering a \$3,200 increase in the cost of a new home to help pay for new roads and libraries. According to county planners, using the Space Coast Credit Union's Web site, that would translate into the following increases on a 80 percent loan to value mortgage at 30 years at 6.25 percent: Purchase price: \$208,858 to \$212,000 Loan amount: \$167,086 to \$169,600 Principal and interest: \$1,028.78 to \$1,044.26 Hazard insurance: \$66.83 to \$67.84 Property taxes: \$167.09 to \$169.60 Total payment: \$1,262.70 to \$1,281.70 or Difference: \$19 a month

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Cocoa NAACP, said such an increase would affect the ability of low-income families to get into homes.

An analysis by county planners using Space Coast Credit Union's online loan consultant demonstrates that a family with a median income of \$54,900 could afford the \$19 to \$25 increase in monthly mortgage payments caused by the \$3,200 increase in impact fees.

That may be, housing industry officials said, but the fee could price out a lot of potential first-time and mid-income level homebuyers like teachers, police officers and nurses.

"We need to find another solution for our transportation problems," said Franck Kaiser, executive vice president and CEO of the Home Builders and Contractors Association of Brevard. "Housing will slow down because of these increased costs."

Housing sales haven't stalled since the commission adopted a \$4,445 impact fee for new schools in August.

Sales have continued to rise, along with the price tag.

The median housing price soared 38 percent in the last year, from \$151,200 12 months earlier to \$208,000 in March, according to the Florida Association of Realtors.

Kaiser said he'll ask commissioners to consider these options instead:

- Raising the local option gas tax 6 cents per gallon would give the county \$13.7 million a year, and only be charged to people actually using the roads. About 20 to 25 percent of the money would come from tourists.
- Raising the sales tax 1 cent on the dollar would give the county \$36 million.

Voters already rejected a sales tax increase in 2003, and the timing is bad to raise the gas tax with current prices, Carlson said.

At Phillips Landing off Fiske Boulevard in Rockledge, where houses start at \$250,000, prospective buyers have asked about the proposed increase, said sales representative Tabitha Griffin, but she doesn't think it will affect sales.

"You can't go anywhere without paying impact fees," she said.

Contact Schweers at 242-3642 or jschweers@flatoday.net

What other counties charge for transportation: Indian River: \$4,590 (1,500 to 2,499 square feet) Orange County: \$3,299 (all single family) Osceola: \$2,659 to \$5,660 (depending on district) Volusia County: \$1,919

Prices

Median price for new house in 2004, according to Brevard County Property Appraiser: \$162,000
Median family income in Brevard: \$54,900 or \$4,575 a month (according to HUD) HUD requires that monthly mortgage payments should not exceed 28 percent of income, or \$1,281 of median household monthly income.

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