

[<< Back](#)



Lee County considering impact fee reduction

Posted: Nov 01, 2010 4:18 PM CDT

Updated: Nov 01, 2010 5:10 PM CDT

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LEE COUNTY: The medical industry is one of Lee County's most prosperous and some commissioners want to make it easier for medical developments to expand there. But the move would come with a price to taxpayers.

For developer Magnus Karlstedt, new medical suites are tough sell. He says many of those - even with a prime location next to Gulf Coast Medical Center - are still vacant.

He explained every medical suite he leases comes with a tacked on 20-percent increase, per month.

Karlstedt says that amount makes up for infrastructure fees he paid upfront just to build there.

"The tenants do not understand. They think it's all about money going into the owner's pocket, but it's going to costs like impact fees," said Karlstedt, with MK Construction.

Lee County's impact fees are among of the highest in the state. And the fees for medical offices are three times as much as any other development because they bring in more traffic.

But Lee County Commissioners are considering reducing medical impact fees to the same level as any other development.

They're also considering reducing impact fees by 25-percent for all development across the board.

But the more they reduce for developers, the more taxpayers will have to fork over.

"What we don't want to have happen is a bunch of stuff gets built that we don't need built," said Lee County Commissioner Tammy Hall.

And she says new development won't solve the ongoing problem of vacant strip malls, office buildings and lots.

Karlstedt says perspective tenants won't move in if they can get a break somewhere else.

"If they lower impact fees for other developments, that'll hurt those who already paid - like us," he said.

Collier and Charlotte have lowered their impact fees and officials with those counties say it has spurred development.

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