

**WEST VALLEY****West Valley**Type Size: [A](#) [A](#) [A](#)[Print](#)[Email](#)[Most Popular](#)[Digg this](#)**Petition asks Surprise to lower impact fees**by **Lily Leung** - Jul. 2, 2009 10:50 AM  
The Arizona Republic

A community activist says city officials are dragging their feet in addressing residents' concerns of higher development-impact fees in north Surprise, keeping retail developers away from the area.

Before raising the issue at a recent council meeting, James Collis collected more than 500 signatures from residents who support lowering the fees.

Supporters say it is the best way to lure a grocery store and pharmacy to Surprise Spectrum, a long-planned retail project at 163rd Avenue and Jomax Road. It would mainly serve the residents of the Desert Oasis and Asante communities.

Mayor Lyn Truitt on Tuesday responded by scheduling an Aug. 6 council workshop at the new City Hall chambers, 16000 N. Civic Center Plaza, to address the issue.

Collis, a Desert Oasis resident, hoped for an agenda item - not a workshop, and an earlier meeting date.

"They are kicking the can," he said. "They are doing this workshop with no intention of changing the plan."

Truitt said the City Council faces a "fairly busy schedule" ahead, with the bond decision on July 2 and a full agenda on July 23. The July 9 meeting was canceled.

"But we promised to revisit it," Truitt said.

The key question in the debate is this: Who pays for growth? In other words, do residents or developers foot the bill for future roads, waterlines and other infrastructure?

The previous council held that it would be unfair for residents to pick up the tab for new development. As a result, it stuck by collecting impact fees from commercial and residential developers to pay for needed infrastructure.

"Impact fees are very important to fund orderly, well-planned growth in Surprise," wrote Truitt, in an e-mail reply Tuesday to residents inquiring about the issue.

In the same e-mail, Truitt points to Bell Road as a mistake the city does not want to repeat, calling it a major thoroughfare that was "built without consideration for future growth."

"We don't want to see that again," Truitt said.

Three years ago, the city revised its impact-fee schedule by hiring economic consulting firm TischlerBise. The new formula was based on the expected traffic count that would be generated in developing areas, according to the "Roads of Regional Significance Development Fee Study" released in December 2006.

The fees affected all of Surprise, except land south of Beardsley Canal, or Special Planning Area 1, where most of the land is built out.

The result was higher impact fees for north Surprise. For instance, the cost of bringing in a Fry's grocery store was \$361,752, but the amount increased to \$1,381,065 once the fee schedule changed.

Collis said it's time for the city to review the study and lower the fees.

It would take about a year to do another study, at a cost of \$60,000 to \$100,000, said City Manager Randy Oliver.

"There are no funds budgeted for that," Oliver said.

District 1 Councilman John Longabaugh is asking for patience from his constituents living in Desert Oasis and Asante. He stressed to Collis that city policy does not change overnight.

"James wants this changed yesterday," Longabaugh said. "He doesn't accept that (the issue) needs to be aired thoroughly and investigated fairly."


Type Size: [A](#) [A](#) [A](#)

 [Print](#)

 [Email](#)

 [Most Popular](#)

 [SHARE](#)

 [Digg this](#)