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Local

Impact fee overhaul supported

Dan Genz, The Examiner

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WASHINGTON -

An influential [Virginia Senate](#) panel Wednesday approved a homebuilder-supported proposal designed to reduce the compensation local governments receive for new home construction.

The [Senate Finance Committee](#) approved 11-2-2 an effort to replace cash proffers — payments local governments receive from developers for the cost of growth — with much smaller impact fees related to transportation, schools and public safety.

While advocates say the measure would drop the cost of new homes substantially, county government leaders contend it would leave them unable to accommodate growth.

"We think it would severely reduce the community amenities that would be contributed by residential developers," said [Stewart Schwartz](#), executive director of the [Coalition for Smarter Growth](#). "The cost of these amenities will now be borne by the taxpayer."

In [Prince William County](#), the proffers would drop from \$37,719 to \$8,000 for each new home. However, the fees would apply to all new home construction, including those that do not need county zoning approval.

Developers, who had long opposed switching to impact fees, saw proffers rising, including a proposal by Prince William County to raise the district's per-home cost 35 percent to \$51,113.

Senators are concerned that new homebuyers are stuck paying for the increased proffers, said [Jim Williams](#), executive vice president of the [Northern Virginia Building Industry Association](#).

"The fees these jurisdictions are charging, amounting to a 10 percent tax on new construction, is not right," he said.

Supervisors in [Loudoun County](#), [Fairfax County](#) and Prince William County have all raised concerns about the legislation, saying it neutralizes their ability to expand.

"Proffers are the only way to force developers to pay for the infrastructure costs of their own developments," Prince William County [Chairman Corey Stewart](#) said.

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