

County's impact fees kill construction

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Editor: I have a lot in the Sea Grove neighborhood off of State Road A1A in St. Augustine Beach. My wife and I had started plans to build on the lot when we came upon all of the new fees and taxes associated with construction. There is a \$9,800 impact fee, \$3,000 permitting fee and at least \$2,200 in sewer connection fees; \$15,000 in taxes and fees before turning a shovel-full of dirt. Although the permitting fee is outrageous and the sewer connect is high, the impact fee is the deal killer.

I currently live in the county and my kids are in school here. I drive the roads daily. My moving will have no additional impact on the area. More importantly, this fee has killed my plans to build. It adds so much to the cost of building the house, that we have shelved the project.

How can this be good for St. Johns County or the economy here? The county is not going to get the fee anyway. Rather than stimulating the economy with a new project, a general contractor, architect, carpenter, plumber, electrician, concrete contractor, painter, roofer and drywall contractor will remain unemployed and on government benefits. Material suppliers will continue to suffer and close down.

These ill-advised fees instituted during the boom times to slow growth and better manage development are now an incredible drag on the recovery of the economy. There needs to be an effort by the County Commission or local builders to repeal these fees and maybe lower the permitting costs.

I'd like to do my bit for the local economy but the government is putting a building out of reach for my family.

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