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ANDERSON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Impact fees likely most effective for intersection improvements, park additions in Anderson County

By Heidi Cenac

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ANDERSON COUNTY — Impact fees could make the biggest impact in [Anderson County](#) if used to correct intersections and fund parks and recreation projects, according to a preliminary report presented this week.

County officials hired [TischlerBise](#), a consulting firm from Bethesda, Md., to study whether impact fees would be a feasible way to help the county cover the cost of its steady growth.

More than 1,600 new housing units were built in Anderson County last year, and the county's population has continued to grow about 2 percent each year for the past decade.

The population increased from 166,260 in 2000 to an estimated 191,000 in 2007, according to Anderson County Planning Division officials.

New residents are coming with expectations for public services. Impact fees won't help Anderson County get ahead, but they will allow the local government to maintain the service levels already established, said Paul Tischler, president of TischlerBise.

Transportation is the area where impact fees would be most effective, according to the study.

Each month residents plead with the Anderson County Planning Commission to vote against developments because of the increased traffic that could be placed on already dangerous intersections.

Current funding levels only would allow the county to pave each county road every 65 years, according to a separate study completed in 2006.

If Anderson County charged a \$200 to \$500 impact fee on all new structures in unincorporated areas, it could generate between \$320,000 and \$800,000 annually for roads, according to the TischlerBise study.

The county likely would see the most bang for the buck by putting the money toward intersection improvements, such as acceleration and deceleration lanes and traffic signals, according to the study. Because most of the improvements probably would be needed where local streets meet with state roads, the county would be able to get matching funds from the South Carolina Department of Transportation.

Impact fee revenue also could work well as financial support for meeting parks and recreation needs, according to the study. Money could be use for buying land and improving existing facilities. Charging \$150 to \$200 per house across the county could create \$240,000 to \$320,000 annually, according to the study.

Impact fees for other service areas such as solid waste, fire protection and law enforcement are trickier for different reasons, Mr. Tischler said.

He recommended that the county create a master plan before considering impact fees for law enforcement needs such

as a new detention center.

The \$60 a year household fee for solid waste should alleviate the need for impact fees in that area, but Mr. Tischler suggested that county officials think about recalibrating the fee structure so tap fees and capacity fees more accurately reflect their respective costs.

Mr. Tischler is halfway through a six-month study. His final report should come out in October, Anderson County Planning Director Jeff Ricketson said.

The Planning Commission, which would first have to approve an impact fee ordinance, agreed to let Mr. Tischler move forward with the study. But many of its members had their own reservations about the fees when the information was presented Tuesday night.

“If you open the door to impact fees, where does it stop?” asked Russell Vickery, commission chairman.

Commissioner Wes Hulsey said he believes only three options really are available to the county: watch the quality of life diminish, increase taxes or address the growth issues through impact fees.

“I don’t think this disadvantages buyers at all,” Commissioner Bob Martin said.

Those paying the fee benefit from services that result, Mr. Martin said.

Over the next three months, TischlerBise and county officials plan to draft an impact fee ordinance, determine the appropriate amounts and draw a map of where intersection improvements are needed.

The Planning Commission would schedule a public hearing and approve the ordinance before it goes to the Anderson County Council.

County Council also would need to arrange a public hearing and would have to approve the document on three readings for the fees to take effect, Mr. Ricketson said.

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