

## City explores impact fees

Money would aid services that grow with population

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BRUNSWICK -- Impact fees may be in Brunswick's future.

The City Council has given the go-ahead for a study to explore the feasibility of impact fees for any new construction in Brunswick.

Such fees provide dollars to offset the impact of added population on local services. The fees are intended to pay for libraries, schools, roads, parks, police and other services needed when an area gets a boost in population.

"The feasibility study will determine if it's worth it," said City Administrator Dave Dunn during the Tuesday council meeting. "You have to have a legal basis to do it."

"This does not mean Brunswick will have impact fees," said Mayor Carroll Jones. "This is an exploration."

Dunn will seek bids for the study.

Two council members, Tom Smith and Ron Bruchey, opposed the study, but the other four members approved it.

Brunswick has about 5,400 residents according to the latest U.S. Census estimates. That could double in the next 10 years as a large development, Brunswick Crossing, is built on the west end of the city.

Brunswick Crossing would be exempt from any impact fees imposed, but the neighborhood already has a special tax district to cover its costs to the community, Dunn said.

Any other new neighborhoods or commercial development or expansions would be charged the fees.

"The impact fee study tells you what the fee should be," Dunn said. According to the website [impactfees.com](http://impactfees.com), 60 percent of all cities with more than 25,000 residents and 40 percent of all metropolitan counties have impact fees.

The study would also recommend whether impact fees should be implemented in Brunswick. Once the study is complete, the council will consider the findings, Dunn said. He has been talking with TischlerBise, a Rockville firm that studies the cost of growth for municipal and county governments across the country.

Impact fees do increase the cost of new housing, said housing industry representatives. "It has a direct relationship," said Bryan Patchan, executive officer of the Frederick County Builders Association.

"Dollar for dollar, whatever they come up with will be tacked on to the price of the home," he said.

"In my opinion, those fees should come from a broad-based tax," said Terry Fox, president of the



Photo by Travis Pratt

The Brunswick City Council is studying the feasibility of impact fees for new construction in Brunswick, like the Galyn Manor development.

Frederick County Association of Realtors. A tax would be more consistent, while impact fees go up and down with the housing market, she said.

Impact fees can be designed to target whatever growth area city officials want, Patchan said. Frederick County's impact fee, which is \$13,121 for single-family homes, targets schools and libraries.

"They would want to be consistent with the county," Patchan said of Brunswick.

Middletown has had impact fees for many years. Thurmont adopted impact fees in July of 2005. The city of Frederick also has impact fees.

Fox said impact fees may persuade homebuyers to look for existing rather than new construction.

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