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MIDLOTHIAN LOWERS FEES TO JUMP START GROWTH

The City of Midlothian may now be the first community in North Texas to waive its impact fees as a means of jumpstarting its housing market. At its January 12th meeting, the Midlothian City Council approved an ordinance to temporarily suspend its residential impact fee program, giving a green light to lower fees that will last throughout 2010. The program is effective immediately.

Impact fees in Midlothian can range as high as \$5,209 per new home, depending on location. The new ordinance will zero out fees for twelve months for platted lots within existing subdivisions. According to City Manager Don Hastings, the City has about 700 such infill lots that would qualify for the program.

"These are obviously difficult times for everyone," said Council member Bill Houston, who worked alongside a community stakeholder group to formulate the program. "This recession has made the cost margins for homebuilding razor-thin. The temporary suspension of impact fees will give home builders some needed breathing room. That will hopefully result in more new homes being built here rather than somewhere else in the region."

Impact fees are used by many but not all Texas communities to ensure that certain costs of growth are borne by future residents who can 'opt in' to the fees through their home purchase, rather than saddling existing taxpayers with the inevitable costs of growth. By State law, impact fee revenue can only be used to pay for capital improvements needed by new growth, such as water, sewer and roadway facilities.

When they were adopted in 2003, Midlothian's impact fees were among the highest in the DFW region, with only Flower Mound and certain Lewisville fees being higher. Since then, many North Texas cities have caught up, making Midlothian's current fees fairly average for the region. Prior to the current recession, Midlothian added as many as 425 homes per year. That peak fell to only 108 new homes in 2009.

Council member Steve Massey, who helped spearhead the program along with Mr. Houston, feels that incentivizing growth during a severe recession only makes good business sense. "Every businessman faces a time when you need to draw on your savings to promote your business, to discount your prices, to make yourself more attractive to the market. What we're doing here is not a whole lot different."

Hastings said the issue of waiving impact fees was a difficult one. "Our Council members know how important impact fees are to good growth management. But they also realize that a certain amount of quality growth is healthy and desirable. This incentive, along with streamlining improvements we're making, should make Midlothian more competitive in attracting quality housing growth"

Mayor Boyce Whatley said that the City will spend considerable effort to monitor the program's success, using metrics based on market share and seasonally-adjusted historical building rates. "Obviously no one has a crystal ball, but we're hoping to see a nice bump in our housing starts that will ripple out into our broader economy."



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More information about Midlothian's impact fee incentives is available on the City's website or by calling City Hall at 972-775-7195.

[Impact Fees on Website](#)

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HAITIAN RELIEF FRAUD ALERT

The FBI has released a Press Release warning about Haitian Earthquake Relief requests that may be fraudulent. Please follow the link below to view the Press Release. [FBI Press Release](#)



COMMUNITY MEETING SCHEDULED

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), at the request of Midlothian area residents, will conduct an informational meeting about ATSDR's approach to looking at environmental health concerns related to air quality in the Midlothian area. The community meeting will be held Thursday, January 21, 2010 at the Midlothian Conference Center, Bluebonnet Room 1 from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. [Meeting Announcement](#)



TIPS FOR PREVENTING FROZEN PIPES

Frozen water in pipes can cause water pressure buildup between the ice blockage and the closed faucet at the end of a pipe, which leads to pipes bursting at their weakest point. Pipes in attics, crawl spaces and outside walls are particularly vulnerable to freezing in extremely cold weather, where holes in your house's outside wall for television, cable or telephone lines allow cold air to reach them.

To keep water in pipes from freezing, take the following steps:

- Fit exposed pipes with 2" fiberglass insulation sleeves or wrapping to slow the heat transfer. The more insulation the better.
- Seal cracks and holes in outside walls and foundations near water pipes with caulking. It's especially important to keep cold wind away from pipes, which speeds up the freezing process.
- Keep cabinet doors open during cold spells to allow warm air to circulate around pipes (particularly in the kitchen and bathroom).
- Keep a slow trickle of water flowing through faucets connected to pipes that run through an unheated or unprotected space. Ice might still form in the pipes, but an open faucet allows water to escape before the pressure builds to where a pipe can burst. If the dripping stops, it may mean that ice is blocking the pipe; keep the faucet open, since the pipe still needs pressure relief. Or drain the water system, especially if your house will be unattended during cold periods.
- Pipes in attics and crawl spaces should be protected with insulation or heat. Pipe insulation is available in fiberglass or foam sleeves. Home centers and hardware stores have sleeves providing 1/8 to 5/8 inches of insulation; specialty dealers have products that provide up to 2 inches of insulation. The extra thickness is worth the price and can save a pipe that would freeze with less insulation.
- Heating cables and tapes are effective in freeze protection. Select a heating cable with the UL label and a built-in thermostat that turns the heat on when needed (without a thermostat, the cable has to be plugged in each time and might be forgotten). Follow the manufacturer's instructions closely.



If You Suspect a Frozen Pipe:

If you open a faucet and no water comes out, don't take any chances. Call a plumber. If a water pipe bursts, turn off the water at the main shut-off valve (usually at the water meter or where the main line enters the house); leave the faucet(s) open until repairs are completed. Don't try to thaw a frozen pipe with an open flame; as this will damage the pipe and may even start a building



fire. You might be able to thaw a pipe with a hand-held hair dryer. Slowly apply heat, starting close to the faucet end of the pipe, with the faucet open. Work toward the coldest section. Don't use electrical appliances while standing in water; you could get electrocuted.

Sprinkler Systems:

Drain the water from the pipes and then turn your automatic sprinkler system off. This will prevent your pipes from bursting and also prevent ice accumulation on sidewalks, driveways and roadways.

NOTICE OF DEADLINE TO FILE APPLICATIONS FOR PLACE ON BALLOT

Applications for a place on the May City Council Election Ballot may be filed from February 8, 2010 until March 8, 2010, 8:00am to 5:00pm at City Hall, 104 West Avenue E. [Posted Notice](#)



ELLIS COUNTY ROAD CLOSURE

Westmoreland Road will be closed from FM 664 (Ovilla Road) to Bob White Drive beginning on Monday, January 4, 2010 and will remain closed for approximately 30 days. Precinct 4 workers will be removing the 3-culvert drainage system there and replacing it with a bridge. Road Closed and Detour signs will be posted. If you have any questions, please contact Wendell Compton or Kyle Butler at 972-723-8017 between the hours of 7:00 – 3:30 daily.

