

City strives to boost growth; Red Bluff offers deferral, waiver on project fees

By Janet O'Neill

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RED BLUFF — The city has declared a new holiday.

In an effort to kick-start the local economy and boost jobs, Red Bluff has launched a yearlong suspension and deferral program for development impact fees.

"I am thrilled," City Councilman Wayne Brown said Thursday.

The council adopted the program unanimously last week. Brown said he first started promoting the idea during his re-election campaign in the fall, after he read about a Central California city that successfully put a similar fee holiday in place.

It also was on the wish list of Red Bluff Rebound, a group that works to stimulate growth in the area.

For one year beginning March 3, the fees are suspended in freeway commercial and general apartment-professional zones. For all other zones, they're applied according to size.

Fees for projects on less than 3 acres are waived for one year. For those on more than 3 acres, fees will be deferred until occupancy.

As of Wednesday, no one had come forward to take advantage of the week-old program. But given a depressed construction sector nationwide, that's to be expected, City Manager Martin Nichols said.

Councilors endorsed the measure with the knowledge the city could lose nearly \$1 million from proposed projects, including a 56-unit apartment complex, a development with 60 single-family homes and a Holiday Inn. "Certainly it's a valid thing to consider," Brown said. But the hope is the fee holiday will push such projects from concept to reality, bringing with them much-needed tax revenues and jobs.

City Councilwoman Daniele Jackson agreed.

"We're kind of looking for anything to stimulate some growth," she said.

Adopted in 2006, the fees are meant to help the city fund new infrastructure to accommodate the additional residents that development brings. The money can't be used for salaries, and is earmarked for facilities and equipment.

It's also intended to maintain the level of city services as population grows. Expenditures might include things such as parks, street improvements and fire stations, Nichols said.

In October, the Board of Supervisors suspended for six months work on establishing a development impact fee schedule for Tehama County's unincorporated areas. The impending retirement of then-county Planning Director George Robson was one factor in that decision.



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