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## Los Banos school district OKs higher impact fees

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**LOS BANOS** The Los Banos Unified School District is preparing for a housing boom this summer.

District officials have more than doubled school impact fees for developers planning residential projects in the coming months.

The board of trustees recently voted to increase the fees from \$3.23 per square foot to \$7.35 per square foot. The increase does not apply to developers who already have impact fee agreements with the school district.

"This is the highest fee in the San Joaquin Valley that we're aware of because of the impact we have here in Los Banos," Superintendent Steve Tietjen said. "The good news is that for most of our developers in town, we have a mitigation agreement. This applies to smaller developers who don't have an agreement or individual homeowners who are going to be investing in a new home."

School board members gave unanimous approval to the increase.

"I think this is a great idea," said school board member Tommy Jones. "I'm happy, I wish they would even raise this more. With the impact (of) the homes, we're only getting back a portion of what we need."

District officials are expecting a record-high 10,000 students in the next school year. The additional fees will help pay for building more schools.

Tietjen said the increase is based on city housing projections.

Community Development Director Paula Fitzgerald said she has commitments from two developers who plan to build 42 houses. She said she estimates that Los Banos will see 100 new houses approved within the next year. In the past five years, Los Banos only saw one request for a permit to build a home.

According to district documents, school officials needed to raise the impact fees because Senate Bill 50 prohibits city governments from considering additional dollars to build schools, or the lack thereof, in deciding whether to approve a residential project.

The state allows schools to charge \$3.20 per square foot in impact fees under a Level 1 formula. When districts meet certain criteria — which can involve the number of portable classrooms being used, whether schools have a traditional calendar, if a school bond has been passed, or a district's bond capacity — a higher fee, known as Level 2, can be charged.