

Park impact fees double in Pasco

PASCO, Wash. - Pasco continues to be the fastest growing spot in the state and the city is trying to keep up. New people need new facilities.

It's why Pasco is looking to charge more to build a home as the city continues to appeal to more people.

Pasco wants more green space and residents agree.

Neighbor Lindsey Stone said, "It'd be nice to be able to ride her bike and go up to the park and play and I think it's a great way to meet neighbors."

Lindsey and her daughter have been waiting for a new park on the western side of town. They live in a new development off Saratoga Lane. Lindsey often drives to parks in Kennewick. She thinks the lack of neighborhood parks hurts the community.

"Instead you get a different demographic and a different group of people that move into the neighborhood because you don't have those attractions for children," she said.

Pasco is looking to push the costs of the parks onto the backs of new homeowners. The city would charge an extra \$1500 for a new home permit. That's double what's currently charged for a so-called "park impact fee."

Don't forget the impact on schools. Pasco began tacking on nearly \$5000 to each new home permit last year as a way to lessen this burden. It's all driving up the costs of building that will eventually be passed on to consumers.

More of empty lots are popping up all over Pasco. The Tri-Cities Home Builders Association tells KEPR the number of permits took a nose dive right after the school impact fees hit and they're predicting more of the same when this fee kicks in.

Jeff Losey, director of the association said, "They'll weigh those options on choosing where they live based on the cost of what it is to get a permit."

The Tri-Cities Home Builders Association says building came to a grinding halt in Pasco in the past year. Off 40 percent from the year before on new home permits.

Losey continued, "At every price level, every time you add an increase you're pricing more and more people out of the market."

Sending developers to other parts of the Tri-Cities and residents along with them, if they can't find a more family-friendly environment in their own town.

City council is set to approve the final increase later this week. Parks would go near Chapel Hill and Livingston.