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ONLY ON ABC-7: Analyzing the impact fee debate

ABC-7 finds out what analysis the city evaluates to O-K new developments

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POSTED: 10:13 PM MDT Mar 24, 2014

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EL PASO, Texas - ABC-7 continues to try to get to the bottom of the impact fee debate. Now, we're asking what analysis does the city evaluate to OK new developments.

Impact fees are what developers pay to build new communities on the city's outskirts. Currently, the developer pays 75 percent of the fee -- and anyone who pays a bill to El Paso Water Utilities pays the other 25 percent. The fee can vary from \$1,400 to \$1,600 dollars per home, depending whether it's in Northeast, West, or East El Paso.

City Council voted two weeks ago to put off the decision on whether to raise those fees for another year.

The debate flared last week during ABC-7 Xtra after a former city representative and a representative from the El Paso Association of Builders disagreed over the time it takes to recoup the cost of new developments. Former city representative Susie Byrd said a report by the National Association of Home Builders found it takes 26 years; Ray Adatao, Executive Vice President of the EPAB said "his" report the city conducted found it took seven years.

Adatao later admitted to ABC-7 he doesn't have a copy of the city report to which he said he was referring. City staff has also not been able to produce a document which states the "break-even" time is seven years.

ABC-7 spoke with the El Paso City Development Department Monday. The coordinator confirmed when it comes to city development, the city uses the analysis found in the NAHB report. The 26-year "break even" time refers to the time to recoup the cost of infrastructure, emergency and medical services, schools, and other investments needed to support the estimated 3,250 new homes built annually in El Paso.

The city development coordinator said they do not use the seven-year time frame cited by Adatao.

Adatao returned ABC-7's call from Friday on Monday afternoon. He told ABC-7 he will no longer refer to the "break even" time at seven years. But in his opinion, the focus shouldn't be on the amount of time it takes to break even on the investment of development. Adatao said, "Regardless of the payback, whether it's seven years, 17 years, or 26 years, at least it's a payback."

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Rotten Peppers • 3 days ago

Adauto and the builders are fact-free advocates for others to pay the cost of their business activity, a microcosm of the AAA stadium business model. The city study was done by an accountant who had never looked at the subject before, not by economic consultants capable of understanding the larger picture of everything connected to a new subdivision - parks; libraries; roads; safety... This is too important a matter to be left to political rants and the city needs to find a credible source to study and report on the real costs of development, or we're going to be doing another QoL bond issue in 10 years.

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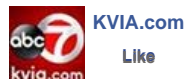
John Dungan → Rotten Peppers • 3 days ago

We may need to learn more, but God forbid yet another taxpayer funded study performed by yet another outside entity! I really do not see why they cannot seek this kind of information from the State or Federal Government, because I suspect there are taxpayer funded agencies out there that have this kind of information already. Bottom line is rather obvious: as Rotten Peppers says, QoL Bond issues should not be either so expensive or so necessary, if proper planning is carried out.

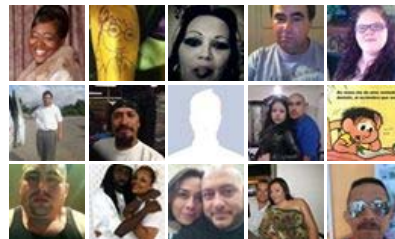
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