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# SR may lower or kill impact fees in historic districts

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The Santa Rosa County Commission is considering lowering or eliminating the impact fees assessed in historic areas, among other changes to the fees.

Santa Rosa adopted impact fees to help pay for roads and bridges in 2005, and began collecting them on Jan. 1 2006. The commission is conducting the annual review of the impact fee ordinance at a workshop this morning.

New single family homes in the urban southern and central part of the county pay $2,090 in impact fees, while new homes in the rural north pay $1,222.

New commercial development pays varying fees depending on the type of business, the amount of traffic it generates and location.

One area of discussion was the impact the fees have on revitalization efforts in historic districts.

"We desperately want to protect and encourage anyone willing to invest their money into historic buildings," said Pat D'Asaro, a resident of the historic district in Bagdad.

"There is a great push now (in tourism) to come to the authentic sites, and we've got them."

Commissioner Bob Cole, whose district includes the historic districts in Bagdad as well as Milton, said he would support eliminating the fee on historic buildings, and cutting it on other structures in the districts.

Commissioner Tom Stewart said he would also like to look at some changes, including credit for businesses that change locations within the same district.

While Commissioner Don Salter said he would consider some changes -- especially protecting economic development projects -- but he reminded the rest of the commission of why the fees were adopted in the first place. Voters had rejected a sales tax increase to pay for roads.

"There was a big push in this county to make new development pay for itself," Salter said. "It's the only significant source of revenue we have to improve our roads. Some of our roads are in trouble now."

The commission is not expected to make any final decisions at today's workshop.