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Sarasota County weighs rollback of impact fees

By [Zac Anderson](#)

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Heeding calls for help from the construction industry, Sarasota County leaders signaled Wednesday they intend to reduce impact fees paid by developers, a move opposed by growth control advocates.

The County Commission took a preliminary vote to reduce fees that pay for new road construction by about 26 percent, saving the developer of a single-family home \$1,518.

The fee reduction is expected to reduce the county's road budget by about \$1.8 million.

If the plan is finalized at an upcoming public hearing Sarasota County would join Charlotte County, North Port and other governments across the state who are lowering fees in a bid to jump-start the economy.

The Manatee County Commission and School Board are also considering fee rollbacks.

Sarasota County suspended a planned fee increase last spring.

The new rollback rate would be 50 percent of what officials once planned to charge during the construction boom, a difference of more than \$4,200 for a single-family home.

Commissioner Nora Patterson said she wanted to give "people a break in tough times."

Only Commissioner Joe Barbetta voted against the fee reduction.

Barbetta argued that fees should be reduced for certain developments in urban areas that already have good roads, but not for developments that contribute to sprawl.

"We need a massive overhaul of the whole thing," Barbetta said.

Prominent Sarasota developer Henry Rodriguez said Wednesday that the commission is on the right track.

"This is a very good idea that will help expand business," Rodriguez said.

But local growth control activist Bill Earl said the County Commission was allowing short-term economic conditions to unravel a carefully considered and long-planned program.

"It's sad," Earl said. "They're bowing to erroneous arguments by people who have a self-interest and want a free ride."

The majority of commissioners supported Barbetta's request for a tiered impact fee structure, but they agreed there was not enough data to adopt such a plan yet.

This story appeared in print on page BM5

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1. [wtk wtk](#) says...

March 19, 2009 4:34:00 am

RE: This is such bull just like Neal and Taylor Morrison building homes for \$89-109K "hit consumers at low price points"

Can someone please explain to everyone else what we are going to do with all the other homes already built that are now selling at a discount?

Is this really good for Sarasota? <http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20090319/ARTICLE/903191071>

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2. [jjesrq](#) says...

March 19, 2009 6:26:52 am

Why should existing homeowners and tax payers have to support the influx of new homes and new roads, etc?

A rollback of the Impact Fess only increases our Tax burden. If someone wants to purchase a new home let them pay for the new roads and traffic that puts an increased burden on our existing Infrastructure.

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3. [ucfsurfer](#) says...

March 19, 2009 7:01:44 am

With supply and labor costs down there should be no need to reduce impact fees considering the builder passes these

costs down to the buyer and makes his money back plus some. All this is going to achieve is bigger profits for developers and a larger surplus of homes in an already saturated market. I strongly disagree with such a roll back and think it won't make a difference in the decision process of where to build based upon fees. Developers look at location and demand, we have the location but demand is not there so why would they want to build more of what can't be sold? Bradenton has waived the impact fees and with that their market will continue to flood and if the developer does pass down the discount more lower priced homes will continue to drive down values of surrounding existing homes. This is not a good situation for anyone but the developer who reaps all of the profit at the top.

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4. [mike38](#) says...

March 19, 2009 7:33:48 am

Building more homes right now just go's to show how city hall thinks,boy you peopel are some jerks.

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5. [herald](#) says...

March 19, 2009 9:11:08 am

They're always talking about "infill development" instead of building east of 75. Let's have some talk about infill-up-existing-homes before they start trying to encourage building new homes.

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6. [ScottRidener](#) says...

March 19, 2009 9:23:37 am

The county commission is still living in the 90's when they could do this kind of thing and the public was blind to it. They had better take a look at what's happening and realize that there will be another election, and the public will kick them out in the street with the rest of the trash.

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7. [larthur1265](#) says...

March 19, 2009 3:13:20 pm

its about time the county governments realize that strangling the construction industry with overrated impact fees does nothing but keep workers out of jobs. as a construction worker i can say its nice to see the local government taking concern in jump starting the economy by doing this. hurray for them!

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8. [herald](#) says...

March 19, 2009 3:35:20 pm

Yeah. Residents should subsidize my boss to keep me working!

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9. [lARTHUR1265](#) says...

March 19, 2009 4:36:58 pm

only ignorant people believe that rolling back impact fees will make residents subsidize employers. your impact fees don't do all the things you people think, if they did the council wouldn't be as eager to do rollbacks. the truth is the fees were created by greed and greed alone. if the money was soooooo needed this issue wouldn't be considered. so sorry herald, your tax dollars might just get spent on what they're meant for instead of new home builders paying to fix your street.to bad so sad.

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10. [cos.kaif](#) says...

March 20, 2009 7:17:11 am

While I am all about lowering fees and taxes for the people of Sarasota, I feel this is one area fees need to be raised. We don't need any need new housing since there is such a HUGE inventory of empty foreclosed houses. If we want to but some of out constructing workers back to work lets come up with a program to encourage builders to fix up our empty foreclosed houses. Maybe by lower permit costs or tax breaks for the home owners? Also what you see for sale is only a fraction of the bank owned properties. Many banks are not even putting their foreclosed proprieties up for sale yet, since that will have a major effect on what their balance sheets look like. Allow me to explain, if a bank has a \$400,000 note on a house and forecloses on said house, the bank can still keep that \$400,000 on their books as an assist. Now if the bank sells that house for only \$200,000 it just lost \$200,000 off its balance sheet. Banks know we are in a depressed housing market and "feel" the market will turn around "soon" so they are just sitting on these houses to keep the inflated values on their books. Once we start to see home prices on the rise again banks will release these houses back into the market. I don't want to see any one out of work, but it is the same as tens of thousands banker and investment brokers are laid off from Wall St. The banking and construction industry has changed. We can not sustain the same level of rapid development as we have for the past 40 years in Florida. Its time to come up with new jobs for out or work construction workers. How about a program they just did in [Gainesville](#)? Or some other city in CA where they loan home owners money to install solar panels on your house. Then the home owner pays back this loan through their propriety taxes over the next 20-30 years. Not only do you create clean energy, you put people to work, and the city makes a nice profit since they charge about 5% on the loan. These are the kind of projects we need, not rows and rows of new cookie cutter housing.

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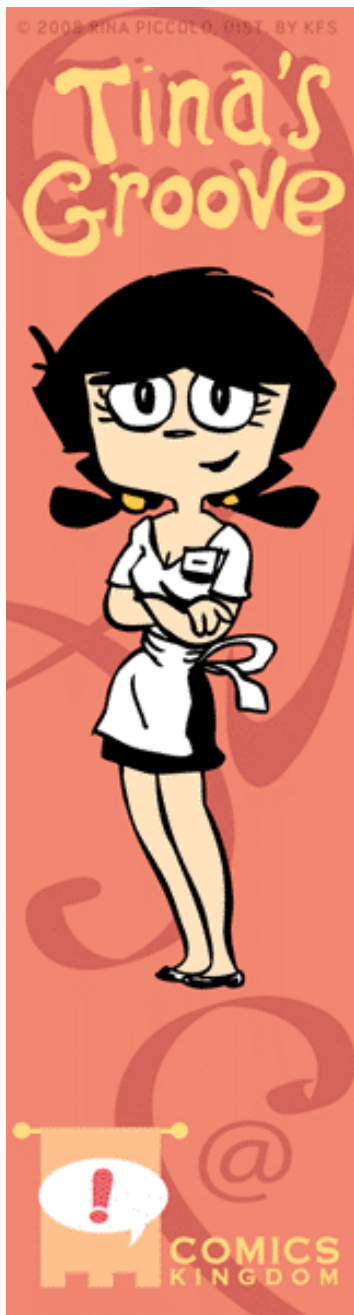
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