

**OVERVIEW/FACT SHEET
FRANKLIN COUNTY IMPACT FEE PROGRAM
MAY 1, 2023**

WHAT IS AN IMPACT FEE?

A development impact fee is a one-time payment of money imposed upon development as a condition of development (building) approval to pay for a proportionate share of the cost of system improvements needed to serve new growth and development. It is paid at the time of a building permit.

WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF AN IMPACT FEE PROGRAM?

Without an impact fee program:

- The costs of providing facilities serving new development are paid for mostly if not exclusively through property taxes (capital improvement budget) and special local option sales taxes.
- All property owners pay for the necessary improvements to serve new development. That is an arrangement that can be viewed as unfair and inequitable to residents, who may not want to subsidize the costs of facilities for new development.
- Facilities may not be funded at the most appropriate level of service.

With impact fees:

- The local government puts together a plan that identifies needs and provides for new facilities.
- That portion of the costs of providing facilities for new development are attributed to and paid for by new development as it occurs.

WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF AN IMPACT FEE PROGRAM?

There are two primary components, a planning element and an ordinance.

Capital improvements element (CIE) of the comprehensive plan

To support a development impact fee program, the local government's comprehensive plan must be amended to include a Capital Improvements Element (CIE) that meets state administrative rules for Capital Improvements Elements (CIEs). Those rules are titled "Rules of Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Chapter 110-12-2, Development Impact Fee Compliance Requirements."

Development Impact Fee Ordinance(s)

Impact fee ordinances must comply with the Georgia Development Impact Fee Act of 1990 (O.C.G.A. 36-71). State law requires establishment of an impact fee advisory committee composed of members as prescribed by the law.

FOR WHAT FACILITIES AND SERVICES WILL AN IMPACT FEE BE CHARGED?

This has not been decided yet, but the impact fee program could include various aspects of public safety (sheriff, courts, fire, and emergency medical services), libraries, and parks and recreation.

WHO IS SUBJECT TO PAYING THE IMPACT FEES ONCE ESTABLISHED?

Parks and recreation and library impact fees, if included, are assessed on residential development only. Public safety, and emergency medical services if adopted, are assessed on both residential and nonresidential development. The fees apply to development in the jurisdiction that has adopted impact fees only, unless an intergovernmental agreement is adopted for one local government to charge the fees adopted by another (e.g., if a city collects a county impact fee).

HOW MUCH WILL THE IMPACT FEE BE?

The amount of the fee cannot be predicted in advance. It will be calculated based on impact costs minus credits for existing revenue sources. A schedule of fees will be included in the adopted ordinance. The board of commissioners (with input from an appointed committee) will decide how much a fee should be after considering the consultant's recommendations.

WHO IS DOING THE WORK ON THE PROGRAM?

Franklin County, Royston, and Lavonia have contracted with Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc., Planning and Development Consultants, to complete impact fee programs.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS TO BE FOLLOWED IN PREPARING THE PROGRAM?

Some initial work has already been completed. From here, the process is likely to take six months or possibly more. The capital improvements element (CIE) once prepared requires review by the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The plan component and ordinance must both be adopted by the board of commissioners. If a city elects to charge an impact fee proposed and implemented by the county, an intergovernmental agreement is required.

WHO WILL ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM ONCE ADOPTED?

Because impact fees are charged at the time of a building permit, the county planning department will administer the program. Individual trust funds (one for each facility or service) will be established for the fees collected, and such funds are overseen by financial and accounting personnel.

An annual update of the comprehensive plan is required, once a local government has adopted impact fees.