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Calimesa lowering some fees

CALIMESA - In an effort to attract businesses and stay competitive with neighboring cities, Calimesa lowered the fees developers pay to gain access to develop.

Critics have long complained that Calimesa's rural lifestyle did not warrant the high fees that it charged developers to build just about anything. Another criticism was that the fees - some more than 200 times higher than in nearby Beaumont - were that high to keep most development out.

The City Council recently lowered the developer fees on two of seven categories, general government, and streets and traffic.

The other categories are storm drains, library, fire, police and parks.

Fees to pay for a new city hall were lowered by 16 percent, and fees to build streets and install traffic lights were lowered by 82

percent, said Casey Dailey, management analyst for the City Manager's Office.

The general-government category was modified because the initial plan for building a new city hall was revised to a 10,000-square-foot building, shaving off 5,000 feet, Dailey explained.

The current city hall, at 908 Park Ave., is considered too small for a growing population, city officials said.

As an example of the fees, Yucaipa requires developers to pay \$408 per 1,000 square feet under construction in the streets-and-traffic category.

Beaumont's fees in the same category are \$69.

But for Calimesa, the fee was an eye-popping \$14,467.

Why was

Calimesa's fee so high?

City officials presumed that they needed the surplus money to get aging infrastructure updated - plus provide enough money to hire police and firefighters.

The fee dwarfs anything neighboring cities charge.

"We were worried they were too high, but (city) staff said we can always change them if they're too high," said Councilman Jim Hyatt.

David Lane, Calimesa's city manager, declined to identify which developers complained about the high fees because the city is in discussions on luring them in for yet-to-be-named projects.

Hyatt mentioned a hotel developer interested in Calimesa, but he couldn't recall the name. At a recent council meeting, the board voted to lower "development-impact fees" in two of the seven

categories - first adopted in early 2007.

In November, after receiving complaints from developers who wanted to build in Calimesa but said

the fees were too high, city officials decided to revisit the fees and consider lowering them, Hyatt said.

"I think it's been a process where city staffers came up

with a conclusion that they were faulty in their previous recommendation," he said.