

Building in Watsonville just got more expensive

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The Watsonville City Council has approved a traffic-impact fee on development that will run well into six figures on some projects, but it still won't pay for all the road projects the city has planned for the next 15 years.

The council unanimously approved a fee schedule based on the amount of traffic a project

generates. For single-family homes, it's \$1,000, or 10 trips a day at \$100 a trip.

Using the same \$100 per trip basis, the traffic-impact charge for some commercial projects may be quite high. For the Pajaro Hill shopping center, for example, now under construction at South Green Valley Road and Main Street, the tab would have been \$337,000. It's too late for the city

to collect that fee, because permits with a traffic-impact fee of \$91,000 were granted for the center. The old fees were imposed only in certain parts of the city; the new ones are citywide.

The new fees will raise \$5.4 million when the city's available land is built out, Public Works Director John Cooper told the council. But that's short of the \$8.6 million worth of major street

projects the city is projecting will be needed over the next 15 years.

"We'll just have to be selective" on which projects to build, said Cooper, who recommended the \$100 fee. A fee of \$30 a trip was discussed several months ago, but that was before a study on the city's road needs had been completed.

The \$30 fee would be "woefully inadequate," Cooper told the

council.

In addition to the \$8.6 million needed for city-maintained roads, there's \$8.3 million more in state highway projects (within the city) needed over the next 15 years. Whether the state will fund those projects remains to be seen.

"In the past the north part of the county seems to get the lion's share of the state highway funds," Cooper said.

The Town Plaza, the name of the redevelopment project in the 200 block of Main Street, would have a \$249,000 tab for traffic-impact fees under the new fee schedule. Cooper said he wasn't sure whether developer Barry Swenson's contract with the city precludes the fee, but would check. Swenson contracted with the city, because it was the city that bought the block under eminent domain proceedings.