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Thursday, August 25, 2005

Expert: Victorville takes right steps
Economic growth expected to stay on course despite possibility of raising development impact fees

By MIGUEL GONZALEZ

Staff Writer

VICTORVILLE — Attracting new businesses to the area has been the goal of the Victorville City Council. Now more than ever, the creation of more jobs has become a necessity to the area, especially with the high number of commuters moving to the High Desert.

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CIRCULATION

While attracting businesses is the one of the major roles of the department for Economic Development, director Keith Metzler said that incentives given to new companies do not detract from funding to other departments that have the responsibility to create infrastructure for a growing city.

"We are not taking from Peter to give to Paul," said Metzler, who has worked to bring companies that will provide local jobs.

"Jobs are the main drive for bringing businesses. If you are a company that is proposing to employ 1,000 new employees and your median is \$50,000 a year, that is a company we are going to be looking at giving incentives to come into the area," Metzler said.

Recently, the issue of development impact fees has come been a topic of discussion for City Council members and residential and commercial developers. Last week, Victorville Director of Finance Adair Patterson recommended that the city increase fees by 100 percent on Jan. 1.

"As the city's finance director I would say we can't wait to phase in the new fees because the infrastructure that is needed to accommodate the growing population is needed now," Patterson said. "Those are my recommendations, but ultimately it is the City Council who decides whether or not we increase

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the fees by 100 percent or we phase them in a 50-50 way."

On Monday, the city of Fresno announced that it may end a long-standing low fee policy for developers. The announcement came after finding out that financial breaks have put Fresno's future into an economic bind that will affect providing infrastructure for a growing population.



James Quigg / Staff Photographer
Valley-Hi Toyota employees Jesse Rodriguez and Edward Zavala talk about a truck at the dealership. The dealership said Victorville's incentives will help with its plan to move across Interstate 15.

Could something like this happen to Victorville?

"That does not fit here in Victorville because our city is very well financed and economic development incentives are being treated separately with the goal of creating new jobs," Metzler said.

Steven Frates, a senior fellow at the Rose Institute of State and Local Government at Claremont McKenna College, said that Victorville has done a good job in taking the necessary steps to stimulate the local economy.

"Victorville has been active in selling themselves as one of the last affordable areas in Southern California," Frates said. "It is always good public policy for cities to entice businesses to come into the area because it stimulates the economy and it creates more job prosperity," Frates added.

Metzler said that the near completion of two large warehouses — ConAgra and Nutro — at the Foxborough Industrial Park near Hesperia Road, are good examples of companies that will have positive impacts with the local economy.

Another example of businesses benefiting from incentives from the city is Valley Hi-Toyota. General Manager Bruce Fay said that when the Honda dealership moves across Interstate 15 to a redevelopment area, it will be able to offer more jobs.

"We have outgrown this facility and we felt that by splitting the franchises it would speed services for customers," Fay said.

Frates warned that while things seem to be running smoothly locally, it is always important to look ahead, especially in an area with such a high development rate.

"You always want to make sure you are paying attention to the issue of infrastructure, not for the next few years, but for a distant future," he said.

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