



# **South Adams County Fire Protection District Impact Fee Study**

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**FINAL REPORT**

**Final Report**

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# **South Adams County Fire Protection District Impact Fee Study**

**Prepared for:**

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# SECTION I.

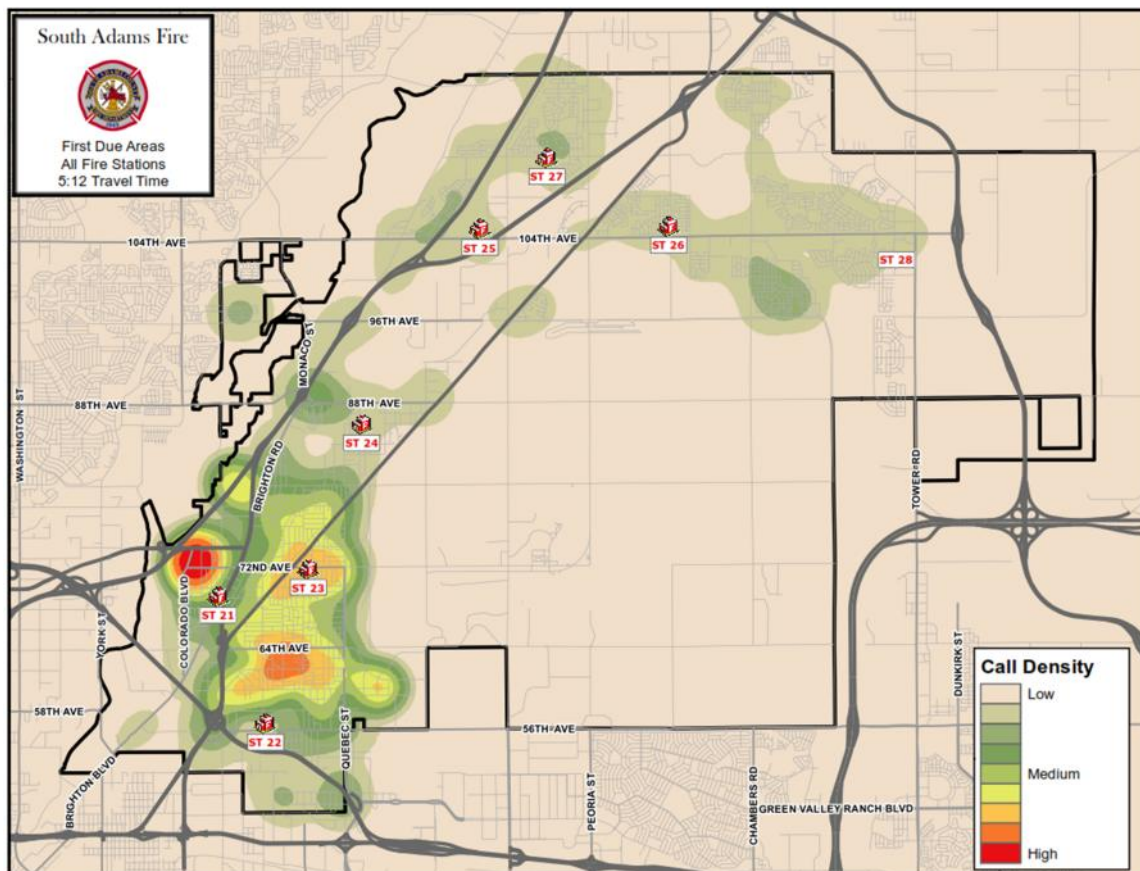
## Impact Fee Design Considerations

This report presents the analysis underlying calculation of proportional development impact fees for the South Adams County Fire Protection District (SACFPD or the District). This section describes fee design requirements and various implementation considerations.

### Background and Objectives

The SACFPD is an ISO 2 rated fire department providing fire, rescue and emergency medical services as well as public education. The District serves Commerce City, the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge and portions of unincorporated Adams County and responds to roughly 8,000 calls per year. Figure 1-1 shows the District's service area and typical call density.

**Figure I-1.**  
**South Adams County FPD Service Area**



Source: South Adams County FPD.

In the 2016 legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly passed House Bill 16-1088 explicitly authorizing fire protection districts, with consent of local governments, to impose an

impact fee on new development. After this legislative action by the state, SACFPD contracted BBC Research & Consulting to calculate proportional and defensible fees, which when implemented will provide assurance to the community that new growth is paying its own way and contributing to the fiscal health of the District.

This report documents BBC's analysis and recommendations for designing and implementing an impact fee system that would recover the proportional capital costs associated with all forms of new development.

## Impact Fee Design Requirements

There is no universally accepted definition of impact fees, but most studies emphasize the fee's one time use; application to new development; design requirements for proportionality; and restricted use for infrastructure expansion purposes only:

*"Fees collected through a set schedule or formula, spelled out in a local ordinance....fees are levied only against new development projects as a condition of permit approval to fund infrastructure needed to serve the proposed development. Impact fees are calculated to cover the proportionate share of the capital costs for that infrastructure..."<sup>1</sup>*

The key requirements of impact fee design are set by Colorado Statute and a series of United States Supreme Court rulings.

**Colorado requirements.** Colorado statutes enable the use of impact fees and dictate the following fee requirements:

- Impact fees are a one-time payment levied on new development;
- Funds can only be used for growth-related capital infrastructure projects;
  - Applicable infrastructure must have at least a five year life;
  - No funds can be diverted for operations, maintenance, repair or facility replacement purposes;
- Fee revenues must be segregated from other general revenues and used for the purposes for which they were collected;
- Fees must be imposed on all forms of development and cannot be limited to one type of land use;
- Impact fee revenues must be used for capital infrastructure expansion. No funds can be used for correction of existing system deficiencies; and
- There must be a reasonable expectation of benefit by the fee payer.

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<sup>1</sup>Juergensmeyer, Julian C., and Thomas E. Roberts. Land Use Planning and Development Regulatory Law. St. Paul, MN: WestGroup, 2003; and ImpactFees.com, Duncan Associates, 20 February 2008.

**U.S. Supreme Court decisions.** Impact fee design must also respect broad guidance offered by a series of United States Supreme Court rulings. The two most notable court decisions that speak to impact fee design and constraints on fee use are often referred to as *Nollan*<sup>2</sup> and *Dolan*<sup>3</sup>.

Guidance from these decisions requires that there be an "essential nexus" between the exaction/fee and the state interest being advanced by that exaction. In the more recent *Dolan v. City of Tigard* (1994) decision, the U.S. Supreme Court held that in addition to an essential nexus, there must be a "rough proportionality" between the proposed exactions and the project impacts that the exactions are intended to mitigate. In *Dolan*, the court further states that rough proportionality need not be derived with mathematical exactitude but must demonstrate some relationship to the specific impact of the subject project:

*"We think a term such as 'rough proportionality' best encapsulates what we hold to be the requirements of the Fifth Amendment. No precise mathematical calculation is required, but the city must make some sort of individualized determination that the required dedication is related both in nature and extent to the impact of the proposed development."*

Over the past two decades since *Dolan*, many communities have imposed impact fees; thus, there now is a broad set of common practices when considering how best to reflect these judicial and statutory requirements in fee design efforts.

## Fee Applicability

As noted above, impact fee revenues can only be used to cover the expansion costs of public infrastructure needed to serve new development and fee amounts can only be set to recover the cost infrastructure expansion that is proportional to the needs of the new project.

**Public infrastructure.** *Public or capital infrastructure* is the physical component of public services, generally including buildings, facilities and related improvements, such as parking, lighting, ball fields or other support facilities. Capital infrastructure includes streets, parks, administrative facilities, specialized fire or police buildings, and developed recreation facilities. Under Colorado statute infrastructure can include all equipment that has at least a five-year lifetime. It does not include personnel or any element of service costs even in circumstances where new staff is required to operate the new facilities.

**Nature of infrastructure investments.** In considering fee requirements, it should be noted that not all capital infrastructure costs are associated with community growth or with the expansion of facility capacity. Most communities make frequent infrastructure investments regardless of growth pressures for repair and replacement of facilities. Communities considering impact fees must recognize three elements of infrastructure needs:

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<sup>2</sup> *Nollan v. California Coastal Commission*, 483 U.S. 82; 1987 and *Dolan v. City of Tigard* (1994) 114S.Ct. 2309.

<sup>3</sup> *Dolan v. City of Tigard* (1994) 114S.Ct. 2309

- **Repair and replacement of facilities.** The expense of maintaining current facilities, such as annual building maintenance, or replacing a roof.
- **Betterment of facilities.** Implementation of new services or improvement of existing facilities (e.g., adding better training equipment at a recreation center) without increasing service capacity.
- **Expansion of facilities.** e.g., expanding an existing city hall to accommodate growing personnel requirements occurring in association with community growth.

Impact fees can only cover those infrastructure costs associated with the expansion of facilities to serve the needs of new growth.

## Other Fee Design Considerations

Over time a reasonable consensus has emerged as to how best to assure fee compliance with state statute and federal court dictates. In order to develop fees, there are three basic components: definition of community standards; calculation of proportional attribution to new growth and attribution of infrastructure needs across all major land uses. These issues and their resolution for this analysis are discussed below.

**Setting community standards.** The first fee design issue involves determining appropriate capital standards for each category of infrastructure. Some states' enabling legislation describes capital standard criteria with specificity; for instance, Idaho requires that a city use an endorsed capital improvements schedule and then a process of attribution between growth related and other investments—Colorado does not have this same detailed guidance. Facility standards, such as library space per household or recreation facilities per household, can vary widely between communities; thus, it is not appropriate to use standards developed for other towns, or standards applied nationally.

**Calculation methodology.** There are two common methodologies employed in order to meet the standards described above, the current service standard (capital buy-in) and the capital improvement (plan-based):

- Typically, the buy-in fee design process involves documenting the replacement value of specific capital facilities and qualified equipment used for each category of infrastructure, and then defining that level of investment as the city's capital standard. For instance, a city of 2,500 homes with a 20,000 square foot recreation center (capital replacement value of \$5.0 million) would have a recreation center standard of 8 square feet per housing unit ( $20,000 \text{ sq. ft.} / 2,500 \text{ homes} = 8 \text{ sq. ft. per home}$ ). At \$250/square foot (replacement value of equivalent space), each existing residence would have an embedded recreational investment of \$2,000 per home. This would be the community's present facility standard and this is what each new unit could be charged as a "buy-in" amount for a recreational impact fee.
- In the plan-based fee methodology, the cost of new infrastructure is allocated to new growth in proportion to that growth's anticipated demand of the infrastructure. This forward looking approach requires forecasts of households and commercial growth and

detailed data on capital expansion plans. For infrastructure to be eligible for inclusion in the impact fee calculation, it must meet the requirement that only items with a useful life of five years or more are designated a fee-eligible capital asset, per CRS 29-20-104.5.<sup>4</sup> Any improvements used to address current service deficiencies or increase the level of service cannot be included in the fee calculation—in other words, the fee calculations must take into account the current level of service and exclude any elements of the plan that would result in a higher level of service.

BBC used the capital buy-in approach to calculate the impact fees presented in this report. This decision was mutually agreed upon by BBC and the SACFPD as it provides the most accurate and robust fee calculation methodology given all available information.

**Adjustments for debt.** Since facility standards are defined by a community's demonstrated investment in infrastructure, calculations of community standards must recognize, and net out, any applicable debt. Debt service will be paid by all future residents—new and old; it's not appropriate to charge new development a front end impact fee and then charge the same development again, after becoming residents or property owners, requiring them to also pay the remaining equity and interest costs. All capital infrastructure amounts used in the fee calculations are free of any debt financed components.

**Fee design cost-recovery.** The cost of this study can be recovered through fees and used to reimburse the general fund. Fee design costs have been included in the District's infrastructure valuation.

**Proportionality.** As part of the fee design process it is necessary to ensure that fees only cover the proportional expansion costs caused by new development. The state statutes and aforementioned court decisions require a demonstration of proportionality. In this instance, by using existing infrastructure and service population, then requiring new development to pay fees at an amount scaled by the current level of service, proportionality is reasonably and fairly derived.

**Allocation by land use.** The courts have indicated that all forms of development that have facility impacts (residential, industrial and commercial) must pay their fair share of expansion costs. If one land use is exempted from fees all other land uses have no reasonable expectation of seeing facility expansion completed. Quantification of current residential, commercial, industrial and related non-residential land uses is obtained from the county assessor's data.

**Use specificity.** Impact fee systems vary in how precisely they differentiate between varying forms and size of residential development and varying uses of commercial buildings. Detailed non-residential use or other specificity is merited when there is compelling evidence that use or size variations reflect substantive difference in the demand for public services. The proposed fee structure for SACFPD incorporates a three-tiered structure that differentiates between single family and multifamily residential units and designates all commercial/industrial use as a single category assessed by the square foot.

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<sup>4</sup> Impact Fee Enabling Statute: *CRS 29-20-104.5. Local Government Regulation of Land Use.*



**Redevelopment/credits.** Application of impact fees raises a series of questions about how to approve redevelopment of existing properties and the circumstances under which fees can be waived or adjusted. The redevelopment of a residence, even a complete demolition and home reconstruction, does not mean an increase in public service costs—it is still one residential unit with little or no implications for service delivery costs or capital needs. Redevelopment of larger lots with multiple homes would be assessed a fee based on the number of net new residences. Similarly, non-residential redevelopment will only be charged on the basis of net new space.

**Waivers.** The District should not waive impact fees unless the fund is reimbursed from other sources such as the general fund or the developer/owner is making other contributions to system expansion by other mechanisms that meet or exceed the calculated requirements.

**Timing.** Generally impact fees are collected either at the time of building permit or at the issuance of a certificate of occupancy. BBC recommends the District collect impact fees at the time of building permit, which allows the District more time to extend service.

**Updating.** Fees should be updated periodically; most communities update fees every five years. Inflationary adjustments are recommended on an annual basis.

## **SECTION II.**

### **Impact Fee Calculations**

This section documents the derivation of impact fees for SACFPD.

#### **South Adams County FPD Budget Overview**

The 2017 SACFPD Budget indicates the District will collect revenues of approximately \$9.5 million this year. Property taxes, generated from a 9.900 mill levy on assessed property values, account for 91 percent of the District's projected revenues. The SFPD is expected to incur expenditures of \$9.2 million before transferring any revenue to the Capital Fund. Operating expenditures account for \$8.1 million of all expenditures in 2017, with salaries and benefits being the single largest operational line item at \$5.4 million.

The District currently funds capital improvements through their Capital Reserve Fund, which is funded almost exclusively through budget transfers from the General Fund. Only \$305,000 will be contributed to the Capital Reserve Fund from the General Fund in 2017.

Additional property tax and specific ownership tax revenue from new growth will not likely be sufficient to fund the required level of growth-related capital expansion. Instead, these revenues are likely to be expended for ongoing District expenses and repair and replacement of existing infrastructure as they are currently. This is particularly important given the possible decline property tax revenues based on the results of the 2017-2018 Residential Assessment Rate Study which suggests lowering the residential property tax assessment rate in compliance with the Gallagher Amendment.

If SACFPD chooses to reinstate impact fees of the type calculated later in this analysis, it would retain an independent and equitable source of revenue for capital expenditures required to serve new growth. Without impact fees, the District will likely have to increase property taxes district-wide, reduce service standards for all taxpayers, or do both in order to accommodate growth once the Capital Improvement Fund balance is exhausted.

With impact fees, new development pays only their equitable pro rata share of new infrastructure required to serve them while existing taxpayers will not subsidize growth. At the same time, the District's capital and operating funds will be reserved for fiscally appropriate, non-growth related uses.

## Impact Fee Calculations

BBC's methodology for SACFPD impact fee includes the following tasks:

1. Quantify the fire infrastructure standards and investments needed to maintain the current level of service;
2. Develop estimates of the District's current land use pattern; and
3. Calculate the fire protection infrastructure costs per unit of development (per household, or per square foot of commercial development).

**Fire infrastructure.** A conservative method of establishing the District's current level of service for fire protection is to quantify its financial investment in infrastructure and capital equipment. Specifically, SACFPD has five types of capital infrastructure related spending that should be included in a calculation of current infrastructure investment:

- Land and buildings including eight stations, training tower and a vehicle maintenance building;
- Major apparatus such as fire engines and specialized vehicles located at each station;
- A variety of life-saving and fire-fighting apparatus located at individual fire stations or on pieces of equipment;
- Business personal property such as fire station and office furniture, computers and related durable assets; and
- The cost of this impact fee study.

Figure II-1 on the following page presents the District's current capital infrastructure. Replacement values are based on information provided by SACFPD, including a detailed description of the District's capital assets from Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool.

As discussed earlier in this report, only the District's equity share of assets can be included in the impact fee calculation (i.e., debt used to finance fire stations or vehicle must be excluded).<sup>5</sup> Presently, the District has entered into the following lease purchase agreements:

- 1) \$5.83 million for a new Headquarters Building scheduled to open in 2017 (principal balance due as of 12/31/16 is 5.83 million);
- 2) \$1.40 million for two new firetrucks ordered in June 2016 to be delivered in 2017 (principal balance due as of 12/31/16 is \$1.27 million); and

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<sup>5</sup> See Section I page 5 for an explanation of debt adjustments.

- 3) \$760,000 for one new firetruck ordered in December 2016 to be delivered in 2018 (principal balance due as of 12/31/16 is \$760,000).

Though these assets are not yet in service, the District does have \$86,000 of equity in the new trucks scheduled for delivery in 2017. Only that equity is included in the impact fee calculation.

The full cost of infrastructure acquired specifically for fighting wildfires is also excluded from the total value used for the fee calculation. Additional residential or commercial development in the district will not directly contribute to capital requirements of fighting wildland fires. Therefore, the fee system should not replicate wildfire-specific infrastructure investments. SACFPD property tax or other revenue sources will maintain the wild land fire standard of service. Accordingly, the three Brush Trucks used exclusively for wildfires are not included in the impact fee calculations (shown as 0% “portion to include in impact fees” in Figure II-1).

The total replacement value of the District’s current capital infrastructure eligible to be included in the impact fee calculation is approximately \$25 million.

**Figure II-1.  
South Adams  
County Fire  
Protection  
District's  
Current Assets**

Notes:

(1) Reflects District's equity in each piece of capital infrastructure, net of any outstanding debt.

(2) Equipment used exclusively for brush fire response and/or antique show vehicles are excluded from the impact fee calculation.

(3) District equity multiplied by replacement value equals allocated replacement value.

Sources:

South Adams County Fire Rescue District, Colorado Special Districts Property & Liability Pool Insurance Inventory and BBC Research & Consulting.

Type of Capital Infrastructure	Total Replacement Value	Portion to Include in Impact Fees <sup>(1)</sup> , <sup>(2)</sup>	Allocated Replacement Value <sup>(3)</sup>
<b>Buildings and Land</b>			
Station 1	\$745,010	100%	\$745,010
Station 2	\$792,165	100%	\$792,165
Station 3	\$1,544,120	100%	\$1,544,120
Station 4 (and vehicle maintenance)	\$5,068,218	100%	\$5,068,218
Station 5 (and Burn Building)	\$2,189,065	100%	\$2,189,065
Station 6	\$546,661	100%	\$546,661
Station 7	\$1,158,857	100%	\$1,158,857
Station 9	\$3,528,362	100%	\$3,528,362
Maintenance Shop	\$321,441	100%	\$321,441
Headquarters Building (to open in 2017)	\$5,830,000	0%	\$0
<b>Vehicles</b>			
1992 Scotty Trailer	\$20,000	100%	\$20,000
1992 GMC Truck (Haz Mat)	\$500,000	100%	\$500,000
1993 Trailer	\$10,000	100%	\$10,000
1998 Smeal Fire Truck (Pumper)	\$200,000	100%	\$200,000
2002 Chevy Silverado (Brush Truck)	\$75,000	0%	\$0
2003 Chevy Silverado (Brush Truck)	\$75,000	0%	\$0
2003 HME Aerial	\$850,000	100%	\$850,000
2004 Chevy Tahoe	\$40,000	100%	\$40,000
2005 Spartan Elite Power Fire Truck	\$700,000	100%	\$700,000
2007 GMC Sierra	\$75,000	100%	\$75,000
2007 Spartan (Heavy Rescue)	\$500,000	100%	\$500,000
2009 Pierce Arrow XT 75' Aerial	\$1,000,000	100%	\$1,000,000
2009 Pierce Arrow XT Pumper	\$700,000	100%	\$700,000
2009 Pierce Arrow XT Pumper	\$700,000	100%	\$700,000
2009 Pierce Arrow XT 75' Aerial	\$1,000,000	100%	\$1,000,000
2009 Echo Trailer	\$950	100%	\$950
2011 Chevy Tahoe	\$50,000	100%	\$50,000
2011 Chevy Tahoe	\$50,000	100%	\$50,000
2012 Utility Trailer	\$1,000	100%	\$1,000
2012 Trailer	\$100,000	100%	\$100,000
2013 Chevy Tahoe	\$50,000	100%	\$50,000
2014 GMC Sierra Pickup	\$50,000	100%	\$50,000
2014 GMC Sierra Pickup	\$50,000	100%	\$50,000
2014 Chevy Imapala	\$35,000	100%	\$35,000
2014 Chevy Imapala	\$35,000	100%	\$35,000
2015 Skeeter Brush Truck (to be delivered 2017)	\$181,946	0%	\$0
2017 Ford Explorer	\$29,810	100%	\$29,810
2017 Ford Explorer	\$29,810	100%	\$29,810
2017 Ford Explorer	\$30,000	100%	\$30,000
2017 Ford F-150	\$37,600	100%	\$37,600
Trucks to be delivered in 2017 and 2018 (4 total)	\$2,160,000	4%	\$86,000
<b>Fire Equipment and Business Property</b>			
Station and office business personal property	\$763,023	100%	\$763,023
SBCAs and compressors	\$862,810	100%	\$862,810
Emergency Signal, Security and Communications	\$203,678	100%	\$203,678
Training equipment	\$175,416	100%	\$175,416
Generator	\$68,550	100%	\$68,550
Thermal imaging	\$54,772	100%	\$54,772
Hoses	\$55,449	100%	\$55,449
Exhaust system	\$53,748	100%	\$53,748
Extrication	\$47,575	100%	\$47,575
<b>Fee Study</b>			<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Total Value of Fire Infrastructure for Fee Calculation</b>			<b>\$25,119,089</b>

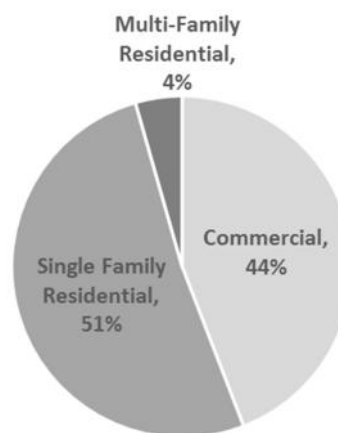
**Current land use.** This report utilizes the current distribution of development in the District as a basis for allocating certain infrastructure expansion costs over different types of land uses. It is consistent with the Colorado Municipal League’s recommendation that cost allocation be based on a measure of land use.

The distribution of commercial and residential building square footage is set forth in Figure II-2, based on data from the Adams County Assessor. The District is 56 percent residential development and 44 percent nonresidential (i.e., commercial and industrial) development. The vast majority of residential development is comprised of single family homes.

**Figure II-2.**  
**Distribution of Commercial and Residential Square Footage, 2017**

Source:

Adams County Assessor and BBC Research & Consulting.



**Impact fee calculation.** Figure II-3 uses the District’s current service standards and infrastructure replication costs to determine appropriate household and commercial fees. The District’s existing land use pattern is used as a reasonable proxy for the assignment of costs to particular types of development.

Full cost-recovery impact fees for SACFPD, total \$732 per single family residential dwelling unit and \$337 per multifamily dwelling unit. Nonresidential fees total \$0.46 per square foot. The District can choose to charge less than this amount but discounts must be uniformly applied to all land use categories.

**Figure II-3.  
Fire Impact Fees**

Source:  
BBC Research & Consulting, 2017.

Calculation of Impact Fees	
<b>Value of Fire Infrastructure</b>	\$25,119,089
<b>Current Land Use Distribution</b>	
Nonresidential	44.1%
Residential	55.9%
Single family	51.4%
Multifamily	4.4%
<b>Costs by Land Use Category</b>	
Nonresidential	\$11,084,664
Residential	\$14,034,426
Single family	\$12,920,247
Multifamily	\$1,114,179
<b>Existing Development</b>	
Nonresidential (in square feet)	24,062,969
Residential (in dwelling units)	20,964
Single family (in dwelling units)	17,660
Multifamily (in dwelling units)	3,304
<b>Impact Fee by Land Use</b>	
Nonresidential (per square foot)	<b>\$0.46</b>
Single family (per dwelling unit)	<b>\$732</b>
Multifamily (per dwelling unit)	<b>\$337</b>

The full-cost recovery fees calculated for SACFPD are very similar to neighboring District, Brighton Fire Rescue District (\$688 per single family unit, \$550 per multifamily unit and \$.43 per square foot of nonresidential development). It is not anticipated that the slightly higher single family residential fee for SACFD would negatively impact development in the District.

In general, Fire District Impact Fees are a very small proportion of the overall development costs in a community. A Development Fee Comparison Study Report conducted for Commerce City in 2016 found that development fees for a single family residential unit in the City were just over \$40,000—about half of which is related to water and wastewater fees. Costs to develop a similar single family unit in Brighton were about \$45,000.<sup>6</sup>

## Summary and Recommendations

In light of the South Adams County Fire Protection District's expected growth, and its lack of a sustainable method to finance resulting capital expenditures absent fee revenue, impact fees are recommended for your consideration.

The fees listed in Figure II-3 should be considered maximum defensible amounts, although it is recognized that the District may choose not to adopt fees as high as the maximum defensible amounts set forth in this analysis.

<sup>6</sup> The South Adams County Water & Sanitation District and the City of Commerce City Development Fee Comparison Study. Final Report March 21, 2016. Prepared by Raftelis Financial Consultants, inc.

We also offer the following recommendations for your consideration:

- The District should maintain the Impact Fee Fund separate and apart from the General Fund, withdrawn only to pay for growth-related infrastructure.
- The District should adhere to a written policy governing its expenditure of monies from the Impact Fee Fund. The Fund should be prohibited from paying for District operational expenses including the repair and replacement of existing infrastructure not necessitated by growth. In cases when new infrastructure is expected to partially replace existing capacity and to partially serve new growth, cost sharing between the General Fund and Impact Fee Fund should be allowed on a pro rata basis as determined by the District's board.
- The fees calculated in this study should be updated periodically as the District invests in additional fire protection infrastructure beyond what is listed in Figure II-1, and/or the District's population or inventory of commercial square footage change significantly.
- The fees should be updated annually based on established inflation indices, such as the Consumer Price Index or the Engineering News Record.
- Finally, consider a fee amount that balances infrastructure needs with economic development goals.