Les Cochran, *San Carlos Park*

Deep impact

Brent Batten's column Tuesday on the "impact fee experiment in Lee" raised the right question, but trying to determine whether reduced impact fees spur economic growth is only part of the issue.

A history lesson tells more.

Local governments collect income, property and sales taxes or some combination thereof to provide basic services. The high inflation rates of the 1980s spawned the wide use of impact fees — short-term fees used for major community projects such as civic centers, schools and water treatment plants.

With exploding population growth in the 1990s, particularly in Arizona, California and Florida, politicians found the expanded use of impact fees an easy way (without raising taxes) to meet infrastructure needs that were outpacing regular revenue sources.

Some states banned the use of impact fees because of a concern over double taxation of local residents. Since impact fees are paid by the builder at the time of construction then passed along as part of the sales price, opponents refer to them as a "hidden tax."

Reducing impact fees is not an experiment. The population explosion is over. It's time to restore the use of impact fees to their original purpose — funding school construction and other special community projects.