

Council OKs Business Fees to Fund Improvements

■ Redevelopment:

Stores, realtors, doctors must pay special licensing costs. Money aimed at revamping Foothill Boulevard.

LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE

By MARC YABLONKA
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

The City Council enacted a business license fee Monday to pay for a program to improve Foothill Boulevard.

The ordinance, which will affect about 750 of the city's 800 businesses, sets fees according to the type of business. Retail stores will pay \$100 annually plus \$5 for each employee more than one. Service businesses such as dry cleaners, film labs and hair salons will pay \$160 annually and \$5 for each employee more than one.

Private schools will be charged from \$50 to \$300 annually per campus, depending on the number of students.

Medical corporations, including physicians, dentists, veterinarians, optometrists and chiropractors, will pay annual fees of \$160, plus \$50 for each professional employee and \$5 each for nursing and clerical staff.

People conducting part-time business ventures at home will be required to pay \$25 yearly plus a one-time \$40 planning permit fee.

Banks and nonprofit organizations are exempted.

The fees will fund improvements outlined in the Foothill Boulevard Master plan. They

include increasing the variety of businesses, improving structures and recruiting retired business people to serve as volunteers to advise merchants.

"Businesses will now make a positive contribution to the community, and we can achieve what we want on Foothill Boulevard," said Mayor Joan Feehan.

Though it will probably take four months for fee monies to accumulate, the city has budgeted \$91,000 for the Foothill Boulevard improvements and is prepared to fund approved projects in advance, to be paid back in installments, said Gabrielle Pryor, city manager.

The Budget Committee meets June 15 to decide what programs to put into effect now that the resolution has passed.

Objections raised by real estate representative persuaded the council to lower annual assessments, initially set at \$160 plus \$25 per agent.

Though acknowledging that they are professionals, real estate agents claimed that most of them work only part time and earn less than medical professionals, whose fees are almost the same.

"Most realtors don't make 50% of what doctors in La Canada Flintridge make," said Bill Woolson of Dilbeck Realtors. "Of the 205 brokers in this town, I can count those who do on two hands."

The council reduced the per-agent fee to \$15, with Feehan and Councilman John W. Hastings dissenting.

"We did the best we could do to balance out the fees," said Feehan.