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Lakeland offers incentives to lure well-paying jobs

By [JENNIFER LEIGH](#) | News Channel 8

The city wants to attract the best and brightest workers.

What community doesn't?

In Lakeland though, city commissioners are offering breaks on impact fees to new and expanding businesses that bring high skill, high wage jobs to the city to make that happen.

"We're looking at jobs that create at least 115 percent of the average annual wage," said Jason Willey, Lakeland's economic development coordinator.

Willey said that translates to jobs that pay about \$40,000 a year.

Lakeland's impact fee reduction incentive program would break down like this.

A business that creates 10 to 50 of those high wage jobs would get a 50 percent break in impact fees.

An employer that brings 51 to 100 high dollar positions to Lakeland would get a 70 percent impact fee reduction.

Businesses that bring more than 100 new high wage jobs to the city would see a 90 percent break in impact fees.

Claudia Tritton, business development director with the Lakeland Economic Development Council, said luring high paying employers doesn't just benefit the community. It benefits individual workers too.

"We have just as many people that are going to work in Tampa as are coming into Lakeland. We know that a lot of those jobs, they are leaving our community for the more high wage jobs, value added jobs, so we'd love to keep those workers at home and have jobs for them here," Tritton said.

City commissioners do want a progress report on this program. They've asked staffers to give them an annual update detailing just how well the incentive program is working, so they can decide whether it should continue.

Willey expects the program will be a success.

"We've gotten a number of calls. It's only been in effect about a week, and there is a great amount of interest."