

§ 158-7.3. Development financing.

(a) Definitions. – The following definitions apply in this section:

(1) Development project. – A capital project that includes capital expenditures by both private persons and one or more units of local government and that increases net employment opportunities for residents of the development district or within a two-mile radius of the project, whichever is larger, and increases the local government tax base.

If the district in which such a project will occur is outside a city's central business district (as that district is defined by resolution of the city council, which definition is binding and conclusive), then, of the private development forecast for a development project by the development financing plan for the district in which the project will occur, a maximum of twenty percent (20%) of the plan's estimated square footage of floor space may be proposed for use in retail sales, hotels, banking, and financial services offered directly to consumers, and other commercial uses other than office space. The twenty percent (20%) limitation in the preceding sentence does not apply to development financing districts located in a development tier one area, as defined in G.S. 143B-437.08 and created primarily for tourism-related economic development, such as developments featuring facilities for exhibitions, athletic and cultural events, show and public gatherings, racing facilities, parks and recreation facilities, art galleries, museums, and art centers.

(2) Publish. – Insertion in a newspaper qualified under G.S. 1-597 to publish legal advertisements in the county or counties in which the unit is located.

(3) Unit or unit of local government. – A county, city, town, or incorporated village.

(b) Authorization. – A unit of local government may finance public improvements that are part of a development project with the proceeds of project development financing debt instruments, issued pursuant to Article 6 of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes, together with any other revenues that are available to the unit. Before it receives the approval of the Local Government Commission for issuance of project development financing debt instruments, the unit's governing body must define a development financing district and adopt a development financing plan for the district. The county may act jointly with a city to finance a project, define a development financing district that is within the city, and adopt a development financing plan for the district.

(c) Development Financing District. – A development financing district created pursuant to this section must be comprised of property that is one or more of the following:

(1) Blighted, deteriorated, deteriorating, undeveloped, or inappropriately developed from the standpoint of sound community development and growth.

(2) Appropriate for rehabilitation or conservation activities.

(3) Appropriate for the economic development of the community.

The total land area within development financing districts in a unit, including development financing districts created pursuant to G.S. 160A-515.1, may not exceed five percent (5%) of the total land area of the unit. For the purposes of this section, land in a district created by a county that subsequently becomes part of a city, town, or incorporated village does not count against the five-percent (5%) limit for the city, town, or incorporated village unless the city, town, or incorporated village and the county have entered into an agreement pursuant to G.S. 159-107(e). A county may not include in a district created pursuant to this section any land that, at the time the district is created, is inside a city, town, or incorporated village.

(d) Development Financing Plan. – The development financing plan must include all of the following:

- (1) A description of the boundaries of the development financing district.
- (2) A description of the proposed development of the district, both public and private.
- (3) The costs of the proposed public activities.
- (4) The sources and amounts of funds to pay for the proposed public activities.
- (5) The base valuation of the development financing district.
- (6) The projected incremental valuation of the development financing district.
- (7) The estimated duration of the development financing district.
- (8) A description of how the proposed development of the district, both public and private, will benefit the residents and business owners of the district in terms of jobs, affordable housing, or services.
- (9) A description of the appropriate ameliorative activities which will be undertaken if the proposed projects have a negative impact on residents or business owners of the district in terms of jobs, affordable housing, services, or displacement.
- (10) A requirement that the initial users of any new manufacturing facilities that will be located in the district and that are included in the plan will comply with the wage requirements referred to in subsection (e) of this section.

(e) Wage Requirements. – A development financing plan shall include a requirement that the initial users of a new manufacturing facility to be located in the district and included in the plan must pay its employees an average weekly manufacturing wage that is either above the average manufacturing wage paid in the county in which the district will be located or not less than ten percent (10%) above the average weekly manufacturing wage paid in the State. The plan may include information on the wages to be paid by the initial users of a new manufacturing facility to its employees and any provisions necessary to implement the wage requirement. The issuing unit's governing body shall not adopt a plan until the Secretary of Commerce certifies that the Secretary has reviewed the average weekly manufacturing wage required by the plan to be paid to the employees of a new manufacturing facility and has found either (i) that the wages proposed by the initial users of a new manufacturing facility are in compliance with the amount required by this subsection or (ii) that the plan is exempt from the requirement of this subsection. The Secretary of Commerce may exempt a plan from the requirement of this subsection if the Secretary receives a resolution from the issuing unit's governing body requesting an exemption from the wage requirement and a letter from an appropriate State official, selected by the Secretary, finding that unemployment in the county in which the proposed district is to be located is especially severe. Upon the creation of the district, the unit of local government proposing the creation of the district shall take any lawful actions necessary to require compliance with the applicable wage requirement by the initial users of any new manufacturing facility included in the plan; however, failure to take such actions or obtain such compliance shall not affect the validity of any proceedings for the creation of the district, the existence of the district, or the validity of any debt instruments issued under Article 6 of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes. All findings and determinations made by the Secretary of Commerce under this subsection shall be binding and conclusive. For purposes of this section, the term "manufacturing facility" means any facility that is used in the manufacturing or production of tangible personal property, including the processing resulting in a change in the condition of the property.

(f) County Review. – If the unit creating a development financing district and adopting a development financing plan is a city, town, or incorporated village, before adopting the plan the unit's governing body shall send notice of the plan, by first-class mail, to the board of

county commissioners of the county or counties in which the development financing district is located. The person mailing the notice shall certify that fact, and the date thereof, to the governing body, and the certificate is conclusive in the absence of fraud. Unless the board of county commissioners (or either board, if the district is in two counties) by resolution disapproves the proposed plan within 28 days after the date the notice is mailed, the governing body may proceed to adopt the plan.

(g) Environmental Review. – Before adopting a plan for development financing districts, the issuing unit's governing body shall submit the plan to the Secretary of Environmental Quality to review to determine if the construction and operation of any new manufacturing facility in the district will have a materially adverse effect on the environment and whether the company that will operate the facility has operated in substantial compliance with federal and State laws, regulations, and rules for the protection of the environment. If the Secretary finds that the new manufacturing facility will not have a materially adverse effect on the environment and that the company that will operate the facility has operated other facilities in compliance with environmental requirements, the Secretary shall approve the plan. In making the determination on environmental impact, the Secretary shall use the same criteria that apply to the determination under G.S. 159C-7 of whether an industrial project will have a materially adverse effect on the environment. The findings of the Secretary are conclusive and binding.

(h) Plan Adoption. – Before adopting a plan for a development financing district, the issuing unit's governing body shall hold a public hearing on the plan. The governing body shall, no more than 30 days and no less than 14 days before the day of the hearing, cause notice of the hearing to be published once and shall cause notice of the hearing to be mailed, by first-class mail, to all property owners and mailing addresses of the development financing district and to the governing body of any special district, as defined by G.S. 159-7, within which the development financing district is located. The notice shall state the time and place of the hearing, shall specify its purpose, and shall state that a copy of the proposed plan is available for public inspection in the office of the unit's clerk. At the public hearing, the governing body shall hear anyone who wishes to speak with respect to the proposed district and proposed plan. Unless a board of county commissioners or the Secretary of Environmental Quality has disapproved the plan pursuant to subsection (f) or (g) of this section, the governing body may adopt the plan, with or without amendment, at any time after the public hearing. However, the plan and the district do not become effective until the unit's application to issue project development financing debt instruments has been approved by the Local Government Commission, pursuant to Article 6 of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes.

(i) Plan Modification. – Subject to the limitations of this subsection, a governing body may, after the effective date of the district, amend a development financing plan adopted for a development financing district. Before making any amendment, the governing body shall follow the procedures and meet the requirements of subsections (e) through (h) of this section. The boundaries of the district may be enlarged only during the first five years after the effective date of the district and only if the area to be added has been or is about to be developed and the development is primarily attributable to development that has occurred within the district, as certified by the Local Government Commission. The boundaries of the district may be reduced at any time, but the unit may agree with the holders of any project development financing debt instruments to restrict its power to reduce district boundaries.

(j) Plan Implementation. – In implementing a development financing plan, a unit may act directly, through one or more contracts with other public agencies, through one or more contracts with private agencies, or by any combination thereof. A private agency that enters into a contract with a unit for the implementation of a development financing plan is subject to the provisions of Article 8 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes only to the extent specified in

the contract. (2003-403, s. 19; 2005-238, s. 1; 2005-407, s. 1; 2006-211, s. 3; 2006-252, s. 2.10; 2015-241, s. 14.30(v).)