

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Community Affairs Committee

BILL: SB 1010

INTRODUCER: Senator Simmons

SUBJECT: Neighborhood Improvement Districts

DATE: March 18, 2011

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Gizzi	Yeatman	CA	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.	_____	_____	JU	_____
3.	_____	_____	BC	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

**I. Summary:**

This bill renames the Safe Neighborhoods Act as the “Neighborhoods Improvement Act” and makes conforming changes to reflect new Legislative intent. This bill also authorizes local government neighborhood improvement districts (NIDs) to borrow money, issue bonds, collect special assessments, charge user fees, and levy ad valorem taxes upon real and tangible personal property within the district by resolution of the governing body, and if required by the Florida Constitution, obtain the affirmative vote of the district electors.

The bill allows special NIDs, community redevelopment NIDs, and property owners’ association NIDs to make and collect special assessments for improvements and reasonable operating expenses subject to referendum approval. The bill also allows NIDs to contract with county or municipal government for legal advice, and to plan for certain public improvements.

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 163.501, 163.502, 163.503, 163.5035, 163.504, 163.5055, 163.506, 163.508, 163.511, 163.512, 163.514, 163.5151, and 163.516.

This bill repeals the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 163.513, 163.517, 163.519, 163.521, 163.5215, 163.522, 163.523, 163.524, and 163.526.

## II. Present Situation:

### Neighborhood Improvement Districts

Part IV of chapter 163, F.S., is known as the “Safe Neighborhoods Act.” The intent of this Act is to:

- Guide and accomplish the coordinated, balanced, and harmonious development of safe neighborhoods;
- Promote the health, safety, and general welfare of these areas and their inhabitants, visitors, property owners, and workers;
- Establish, maintain, and preserve property values and foster the development of attractive neighborhoods and business environments;
- Prevent overcrowding and congestion;
- Improve or redirect traffic and provide pedestrian safety; and
- Reduce crime rates.

Section 163.503(1) defines the term “neighborhood improvement district” to mean:

A district located in an area in which more than 75 percent of the land is used for residential purposes, or in an area in which more than 75 percent of the land is used for commercial, office, business, or industrial purposes, excluding the land area used for public facilities, and where there is a plan to reduce crime through the implementation of crime prevention through environmental design, environmental security or defensible space techniques, or through community policing innovations. . . .

This Safe Neighborhoods Act allows county or municipal governing bodies to create Neighborhood Improvement Districts (NIDs) through the adoption of a planning ordinance. Under current law, there are four types of NIDs: local government NIDs, property owners’ association NIDs, special NIDs, and community redevelopment NIDs.<sup>1</sup> Each NID that is established is required to register within 30 days with both the Department of Community Affairs and the Department of Legal Affairs and provide the name, location, size, and type of NID.<sup>2</sup> To date, there are approximately 25 NIDs in the state of Florida.<sup>3</sup>

Although NIDs have various powers, they do not have bond authority. Of the 25 neighborhood improvement districts in the state of Florida, eight NIDs reported that they do not have *any* type of revenue source and some have reported that they are inactive due to such lack of funding.<sup>4</sup>

In 2006, the Florida Attorney General issued Advisory Legal Opinion 2006-49, stating that an NID created by ordinance pursuant to s. 163.511, F.S., does not have the authority to borrow money for district purposes.<sup>5</sup> The Attorney General’s Office reasoned that a statutorily created

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<sup>1</sup> See ss. 163.506-163.512, F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Section 163.5055, F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Florida Department of Community Affairs, *SB 1010 Agency Analysis*, at 2 (March 11, 2011) (on file with the Senate Committee on Community Affairs).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> Op. Atty Gen. Fla. 2006-49 (2006).

entity is limited to such powers expressly granted or reasonably implanted by law. The opinion further stated that “[w]hen the Legislature has directed how a thing shall be done, that is in effect a prohibition against its being done any other way.”

***Duties of the Department of Legal Affairs.***—The Safe Neighborhoods Act is administered by the Department of Legal Affairs, whose duties include, but are not limited to, the authority to:

- Develop program design and criteria for funding NIDs;
- Develop application and review procedures;
- Review and evaluate applications for planning and technical assistance;
- Utilize staff to provide crime prevention through community policing innovations, environmental design, environmental security, and defensible space training; and
- Review and approve or disapprove safe neighborhood improvement plans prior to the adoption by the local governing body.<sup>6</sup>

***Safe Neighborhoods Program.***—Section 163.517, F.S., provides for the creation of the Safe Neighborhoods Program. The purpose of this program is to “provide planning grants and technical assistance on a 100-percent matching basis to neighborhood improvement districts.” Under this section, planning grants are to be awarded as follows:

- Property owners’ association NIDs may receive up to \$20,000.
- Local government NIDs may receive up to \$100,000.
- Special NIDs may receive up to \$50,000.
- Community redevelopment NIDs may receive up to \$50,000.

Grants are awarded to eligible applicants based on evaluation of specified criteria provided in subsections (2) and (3) of s. 163.517, F.S.

According to the State Attorney General’s Office, funding under the Safe Neighborhood Program has not been provided to NIDs since 1993.<sup>7</sup>

***Safe Neighborhood Improvement Plan.***—All NIDs are currently required to prepare a safe neighborhood improvement plan that addresses the statutory criteria provided in s. 163.516, F.S. The safe neighborhood improvement plan must be consistent with the adopted county or municipal comprehensive plan and must be “sufficiently complete to indicate such land acquisition, demolition and removal of structures, street modifications, redevelopment, and rehabilitation as may be proposed to be carried out in the district.”<sup>8</sup>

***Neighborhood Preservation and Enhancement Program.***—The governing body of a municipality or county may authorize participation in the Neighborhood Preservation and Enhancement Program through the adoption of a local ordinance. Neighborhood Preservation and Enhancement Districts shall be created by the residents of a particular neighborhood or through county or municipality initiative by identifying those areas which are in need of enhancement. Neighborhood Preservation and Enhancement plans shall be enforced through an

<sup>6</sup> See s. 163.519(1)-(11), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Conversation with Legislative Affairs Staff at the Office of the State Attorney General (March 22, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Section 163.516(3), F.S.

agency created by the local government which may be composed of the local code department or any other agency that will provide adequate enforcement of the plan.

After the boundaries and size of the Neighborhood Preservation and Enhancement District have been defined, the residents therein shall create a Neighborhood Council, consisting of five elected members who shall have the authority to receive grants from the Safe Neighborhoods Program under s. 163.517, F.S. The established Neighborhood Council and local government designated enforcement agency shall have such powers and duties as provided under s. 163.526, F.S.

***Neighborhood Improvement Districts inside Enterprise Zones.***—The local governing body of any municipality or county in which the boundaries of an enterprise zone, in whole or in part, include a NID, may request the Department of Legal Affairs to submit provisions to fund capital improvements within its budget request to the Legislature.<sup>9</sup> Local governments must demonstrate the ability to implement the project within two years after the date of appropriation. All requests received for capital improvement functions must be ranked by the Department of Legal Affairs based on the following:

- The necessity of the improvements to overall implementation of the safe neighborhood plan;
- The degree to which the improvements help the plan achieve crime prevention through community policing innovations, environmental design, environmental security, and defensible space objectives;
- The effect of the improvements on residents of low or moderate income; and
- The fiscal inability of a local government to perform the improvements without state assistance.<sup>10</sup>

***Community Organization Involvement.***—Section 163.523, F.S., authorizes local governments to cooperate and seek the involvement of certain community organizations to assist in the creation of safe neighborhood improvements districts. Except for the preparation of safe neighborhood improvement plans, NIDs may contract with such community organizations to carry out any activities therein and may compensate such organizations for the value of their services in an amount not to exceed 1 percent of the total annual budget of the NID.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

**Section 1** amends s. 163.501, F.S., to rename part IV of ch.163, F.S., as the “Neighborhood Improvement Act.”

**Section 2** amends s. 163.502, F.S., to amend the Legislative findings and purposes for this Act to include “lack of adequate public improvements such as streets, street lights, street furniture, street landscaping, sidewalks, traffic signals, way-finding signs, mass transit, stormwater systems, and other public utilities and improvements.”

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<sup>9</sup> Section 163.521, F.S.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

**Section 3** amends s. 163.503, F.S., to amend the definition for “neighborhood improvement district,” and to delete the definitions for the following terms: “environmental security,” “crime prevention through environmental design,” “defensible space,” “enterprise zone,” and “community policing innovation.”

**Section 4** amends s. 163.5035, F.S., to delete the term “safe” in the title of this section.

**Section 5** amends 163.504, F.S., to delete provisions relating to the Safe Neighborhoods Program and safe neighborhood improvement plans.

**Section 6** amends s. 163.5055, F.S., to provide that neighborhood improvement districts shall be required to notify (rather than register with) the Department of Community Affairs and to delete obsolete provisions.

**Section 7** amends s. 163.506, F.S., to authorize local government neighborhood improvement districts to borrow money, contract loans, and issue bonds, certificates, warrants, notices or other evidence of indebtedness to finance the undertaking of any capital or other projects for purposes permitted under the Florida Constitution and this part. This section also authorizes the district to pledge the funds, credit, property, and taxing power of the improvement district for payment of such debts and bonds. Bonds issued under this part shall be authorized by a resolution of the governing board of the district, and if so required by the Florida Constitution, by affirmative vote of the electors of the district. The bill provides criteria and governing board authority regarding the issuance, sale and distribution of bonds and allows for the establishment and administration of sinking funds for the payment, purchase, or redemption of any outstanding bond indebtedness of the district.

The bill also allows the governing body of the district to levy ad valorem taxes upon real and tangible personal property within the district as it deems necessary to make payment, including principal and interest, upon the general obligation and ad valorem bond indebtedness of the district or into any sinking fund so created.

The bill authorizes a commercial local government NID to make and collect special assessments to pay for capital improvements within the district and for reasonable operating expenses of the district, including those in the district budget. Such special assessments may not exceed \$1,500 for each individual parcel of land per year.

The bill further allows the district to charge, collect, and enforce fees and other user charges.

This section deletes provisions in statute that allow a majority of the local governing body of a city or county to appoint a board of directors as an alternative to designating the local governing body as the board of directors of the local government NID.

This section specifies differences between residential local government NIDs and commercial local government NIDs.

**Section 8** amends s. 163.508, F.S., to delete provisions relating to the Safe Neighborhoods Program and safe neighborhood improvement plans. This section also allows property owners’

association NIDs to request grants from the state and requires the property owners' association in a property owners' association NID to be a not for profit corporation.

**Section 9** amends s. 163.511, F.S., to make conforming changes and to revise the method of appointing and removing directors of a special NID.

**Section 10** amends s. 163.512, F.S., to make conforming changes and to delete provisions allowing the use of the community redevelopment trust fund to be used to further crime prevention through community policing innovations, environmental design, environmental security, and defensible space techniques.

**Section 11** repeals s. 163.513, F.S., which relates to crime prevention through community policing innovations, environmental design, environmental security, and defensible space functions of neighborhood improvement districts.

**Section 12** amends s. 163.514, F.S., to amend the powers provided to NIDs to:

- Delete references to the power to contract with experts on crime prevention through community policing innovations, environmental design, environmental security, and defensible space, or other experts.
- Allow NIDs to contract with county or municipal government for legal advice.
- Allow NIDs to plan, design, construct, operate, provide and maintain street lighting, parks, streets, drainage, utilities, swales, parking facilities, transit, landscaping, and open areas.
- Allow special NIDs, community redevelopment NIDs, and property owners' association NIDs, to make and collect special assessments, subject to referendum approval, for improvements and reasonable operating expenses.

**Section 13** amends s. 163.5151, F.S., to state that each "local government" and special NID levying an ad valorem tax on real or personal property shall establish its budget pursuant to ch. 200, F.S.

**Section 14** amends s. 163.516, F.S., so that certain information is no longer required to be included in neighborhood improvement plans.

**Section 15** repeals s. 163.517, F.S., relating to the Safe Neighborhoods Program.

**Section 16** repeals s. 163.519, F.S., relating to the duties of the Department of Legal Affairs.

**Section 17** repeals s. 163.521, F.S., addressing NIDs inside enterprise zones.

**Section 18** repeals s. 163.5215, F.S., which states that the provisions of this part shall not be construed to modify, limit, expand, or supersede any existing laws relating to the closing or abandonment of public records, the denial of access to areas for public ingress or egress, or the use of public facilities.

**Section 19** repeals s. 163.522, F.S., relating to state redevelopment programs.

**Section 20** repeals s. 163.523, F.S., relating to safe neighborhood districts and the cooperation and involvement of community organizations.

**Section 21** repeals s. 163.524, F.S., relating to the Neighborhood Preservation and Enhancement Program.

**Section 22** repeals s. 163.526, F.S., relating to neighborhood councils and local government designated agencies.

**Section 23** provides that this act shall take effect July 1, 2011.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:**

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

This bill will allow local government NIDs to collect special assessments, charge user fees and levy ad valorem taxes upon real and personal property within the district by resolution of the district's governing body, and if so required by the Florida Constitution, obtain the affirmative vote of the district electors.

This bill will allow special NIDs, community redevelopment NIDs, and property owners' association NIDs to make and collect special assessments for improvements and reasonable operating expenses subject to the referendum approval.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Individuals residing in NIDs may be subject to special assessments, ad valorem taxes, and user fees as provided in this bill.

C. Government Sector Impact:

This bill will allow local government NIDs to borrow money, issue bonds, collect special assessments, charge user fees, and levy ad valorem taxes upon real and tangible personal property within the district by resolution of the governing body, and if required by the Florida Constitution, obtain the affirmative vote of the district electors..

The bill will allow special NIDs, community redevelopment NIDs, and property owners' association NIDs to make and collect special assessments for improvements and reasonable operating expenses subject to referendum approval.

The bill will also allow NIDs to contract with the county or municipal government for legal advice.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

In order to provide a uniform notification process to the Department of Community Affairs' Special District Information Program and to eliminate duplication, the Department of Community Affairs recommends deleting lines 220-223 of the bill and inserting the following:

Pursuant to Section 189.418(1), F.S., and the Department of Legal Affairs by providing ~~these departments~~ the Department of Legal Affairs with the district's name, location, size, and type, and such other information as the ~~departments~~ Department of Legal Affairs may request require.<sup>11</sup>

**VIII. Additional Information:**

**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**  
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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<sup>11</sup> Florida Department of Community Affairs, *SB 1010 Agency Analysis*, at 5-6 (March 11, 2011) (on file with the Senate Committee on Community Affairs).