

**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.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Community Affairs

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BILL: SB 1496

INTRODUCER: Senator Thurston

SUBJECT: Neighborhood Improvement Districts

DATE: March 31, 2017

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

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Cochran	Yeatman	CA	<b>Favorable</b>
2.			AFT	
3.			AP	
4.			RC	

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**I. Summary:**

SB 1496 authorizes local government neighborhood improvement districts (NIDs) to borrow money, incur debt and pledge special assessments to finance capital projects. A loan contracted by a district under the authority of the bill may not have a term that exceeds the life of the projects secured by the loan.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Neighborhood Improvement Districts**

*Purposes and Creation*

Part IV of ch. 163, F.S., is known as the "Safe Neighborhoods Act." The intent of the 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> See s. 163.502, F.S.

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...

The Safe Neighborhoods Act allows county or municipal governing bodies to create NIDs through the adoption of a planning ordinance. Each NID that is established is required to register within 30 days with both the Department of Economic Opportunity and the Department of Legal Affairs and provide the name, location, size, type of NID, and such other information that the departments may require.<sup>2</sup> Under current law, there are four types of NIDs:

- Local government NIDs,
- Property owners' association NIDs,
- Community redevelopment NIDs, and
- Special NIDs, which are further classified as either residential or business.<sup>3</sup>

As of March 2017, there are 27 active NIDs in the state of Florida.<sup>4</sup>

### ***NID Boards and Revenue Sources***

The board of directors of a local government NID is the local governing body of the municipality or county that created the NID; however, as an alternative, a majority of the local governing body may also appoint a different board.<sup>5</sup> The officers of an incorporated property owners' association serve as the board of directors for property owners' association NIDs.<sup>6</sup> The board of a special NID is a three-member body appointed by the governing body of the municipality or county that created the district.<sup>7</sup> The board of a community redevelopment NID is the community redevelopment board of commissioners, which is designated by the governing body of the municipality or county that created the board.<sup>8</sup>

Local government NIDs are authorized to levy an ad valorem tax on real and personal property of up to two mills annually.<sup>9</sup> Special NIDs have the same taxing authority; however, this authority is subject to referendum.<sup>10</sup> Special *residential* NID ad valorem taxes are approved by a majority of the district electors voting in a referendum.<sup>11</sup> Special *business* NID ad valorem taxes

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

<sup>3</sup> See ss. 163.506-163.512, F.S.

<sup>4</sup> Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Division of Community Development, *Official List of Special Districts Online*, available at <http://dca.deo.myflorida.com/fhcd/sdip/OfficialListdeo/> (last visited March 29, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Sections 163.506(1)(e), 163.506(3), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 163.508(1)(e), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Section 163.511(1)(f), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 163.356, F.S.

<sup>9</sup> Section 163.506(1)(c), F.S.

<sup>10</sup> Section 163.511(1)(a) and (b), F.S.

<sup>11</sup> Section 163.511(3)(g), F.S.

are approved if freeholders representing in excess of 50 percent of the assessed value of the property within the district approve the levy.<sup>12</sup>

All NIDs are also authorized, subject to referendum approval, to make and collect special assessments.<sup>13</sup> Assessments may not exceed \$500 for each individual parcel of land per year and require an affirmative vote by a majority of the registered voters residing in the district.<sup>14</sup> Community redevelopment NIDs may also utilize community redevelopment trust funds to implement district planning and programming.<sup>15</sup>

### ***NID Dissolutions***

Local government and community redevelopment NIDs may be dissolved by the governing body that established them.<sup>16</sup> Property owners' association NIDs continue in perpetuity as long as the property owners' association created when establishing the NID exists.<sup>17</sup> Special NIDs are dissolved at the end of the 10th fiscal year of operation.<sup>18</sup>

### ***NIDs and Bond Authority***

Although NIDs have various powers, they do not have express authority to borrow funds. In 2006, the Florida Attorney General issued 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 to carry out the purposes of the district.<sup>19</sup> The Attorney General's Office reasoned that a statutorily created entity is limited to such powers expressly granted by law or reasonably implied to carry out its expressly granted power. The opinion further stated that "[w]hen the Legislature has directed how a thing shall be done, that is in effect a prohibition against it[] being done any other way."

### **Other Sources of Funding for Local Government Improvement Efforts**

County and municipal governments have authority under current law and under their constitutional home rule authority to raise revenue that could be used for many of the purposes identified by the Safe Neighborhoods Act.

Section 125.01(1)(q), F.S., provides that counties may establish:

municipal service taxing or benefit units for any part or all of the unincorporated area of the county, within which it may provide fire protection, law enforcement, beach erosion control, recreation service and facilities, water..., streets, sidewalks, street lighting, garbage and trash collection and disposal, waste and

<sup>12</sup> Section 163.511(4)(g), F.S.

<sup>13</sup> Section 163.514(16), F.S. This authority and any of the other NID powers enumerated in s.163.514, F.S., may be prohibited by the NID's enacting ordinance.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> Section 163.512(1)(c), F.S.

<sup>16</sup> Sections 163.506(4) and 163.512(3), F.S.

<sup>17</sup> Section 163.508(4), F.S.

<sup>18</sup> Section 163.511(13), F.S. Special NIDs may continue for subsequent 10-year periods if the continuation of the district is approved through referendum.

<sup>19</sup> Op. Atty Gen. Fla. 2006-49 (2006).

sewage collection and disposal, drainage, transportation, indigent health care services, mental health care services, and other essential facilities and municipal services from funds derived from service charges, special assessments, or taxes within such unit only.... This paragraph authorizes all counties to levy additional taxes, within the limits fixed for municipal purposes, within such municipal service taxing units under the authority of the second sentence of s. 9(b), Art. VII of the State Constitution.

Section 125.01(1)(r), F.S., grants counties the power to levy and collect ad valorem taxes, and provides that no referendum is required for the levy by a county of ad valorem taxes for county purposes or for providing municipal services within any municipal service taxing unit. The distinction between a municipal service taxing unit and a municipal service benefit unit is that in a benefit unit the services are funded by a service charge or a special assessment rather than a tax.

All taxes, other than ad valorem taxes, are reserved to the state.<sup>20</sup> Local governments may levy other taxes only if they are authorized by general law. Not all local government revenue sources are taxes. Counties and municipalities may levy fees, assessments, or charges for services under their home rule authority. Special assessments may be used to fund certain services and to construct and maintain capital facilities, such as those appropriate for NIDs, if they meet two requirements: (1) the property subject to assessment must derive a special benefit from the service or improvement funded by the assessment, and (2) the assessment must be fairly and reasonably apportioned among the properties that receive the special benefit.<sup>21</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

**Section 1** authorizes local government NIDs to borrow money, contract loans, and incur indebtedness to finance capital projects. Loan terms may not exceed the life of the capital project secured by the loan.

The governing body of local government NIDs will be able to issue a resolution authorizing bonds. Bonds must be approved by the board of the district, the governing body of the municipality or county that created the district, and by referendum. The referendum required for bonds is the same referendum currently required to impose special assessments. Local government NIDs will be able to pledge special assessments to secure or repay district obligations.

**Section 2** provides that the bill shall take effect upon becoming a law.

### IV. Constitutional Issues:

#### A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

<sup>20</sup> Fla. Const. Art. VII, s. 1(a).

<sup>21</sup> See *City of Boca Raton v. State*, 595 So. 2d 25 (Fla. 1992).

**B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

Under the bill, local governments may incur additional costs associated with conducting referenda.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill creates an undesignated section of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.