

Introduction

A Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is designed to be a catalyst in the development of a community's downtown district. The DDA provides for a variety of funding options, including millage and tax increment financing, for public improvements in the downtown district.

Authorizing legislation

1975 PA 197, MCL 125.1651 allows the governing body of a city, village or township to create a Downtown Development Authority (with one or more development districts).

What is the purpose of the Act?

The Act provides municipalities with a tool to halt property value deterioration, to increase property tax valuation, to eliminate the causes of the deterioration, and to promote economic growth in their business district.

How can this Act be used?

Specifically, this Act allows Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and millage revenues to be used for any public facility. The power and authority of the Act cannot be used for the personal benefit of a private person or corporation.

How is this Act different?

One of the first economic development tools to be enacted by the legislature, a DDA can only be used by a municipality in an area principally zoned and used for business. Only one DDA may be established in each municipality, although more than one development area may be defined within the DDA boundaries.

What are the financing options?

- Tax Increment Financing
- Millage (up to 2 mills for municipalities with population of less than 1 million; up to 1 mill for municipalities with population over 1 million)
- Special assessments
- Revenue bonds
- Revenues from property owned or leased by the DDA
- Grants and/or donations

Establishment of a DDA

Note: The following steps are offered as general guidelines only. A municipality should consult with an attorney prior to initiating the process creating a DDA.

1. The governing body finds that:
 - there is a business district area within the municipality which it desires to designate as a “downtown district,”
 - within such area the general property values are (and have been) deteriorating,
 - property tax valuation must be increased in such area,
 - the community must eliminate the causes of deterioration, and
 - economic growth must be promoted in such area.
2. A resolution shall set a date for a public hearing on the adoption of a proposed ordinance creating the authority.
3. Notice must be given of the public hearing by publication and posting within the district. It must also be mailed to taxpayers within the proposed district and to the governing body of each taxing jurisdiction levying taxes that would be subject to capture for tax increment revenues.
4. Governing body takes comments at the public hearing.
5. Within 60 days, the other taxing jurisdictions may opt out.
6. Not less than 60 days following the hearing, the governing body may adopt a proposed ordinance creating the DDA and designating the boundaries of the DDA district.
7. The ordinance must be published at least once in a local newspaper and filed with the Secretary of State.
8. The governing board of the DDA shall be appointed or may, for municipalities of less than 5,000, be the same as the planning commission.

Reporting requirements

Each year a DDA (or the municipality on behalf of the DDA) must report to the state tax commission regarding the tax increment revenues received and the extent to which, and why, school taxes have been retained.

Provisions of the Downtown Development Authority Act

- Authorizes a city, village or township to create a Downtown Development Authority by ordinance after providing notice and holding a public hearing. The local unit shall also designate the DDA district area boundaries by ordinance.
- Provides for the supervision and control of an authority by a board that includes the municipality’s chief executive officer and eight to twelve members appointed by the governing body. (The local governing body would decide the size of the authority board.) A majority of the board must be individuals with an ownership or business interest in property in the district and one member must reside in the district if there are more than 100 residents in the district.
- Allows the board to hire a director to serve as chief executive officer of the authority, subject to the approval of the municipality’s governing body. Other personnel may be hired as deemed necessary by the board.

- Allows an authority to prepare and submit to the city, village or township governing body a tax increment financing plan, which must include a development plan for the development area(s). TIF plans and development plans would be subject to public hearings. Affected local taxing jurisdictions must be notified.
- Allows an authority, with the approval of the governing body, to levy up to two mills on real and personal property in the district for municipalities with less than one million in population or up to one mill for municipalities with more than one million population.
- Provides for the financing of authority activities, including borrowing money and issuing bonds. The authority can issue negotiable revenue bonds under the Revenue Bond Act and can, with local unit approval, issue revenue bonds or notes to finance all or part of the costs of acquiring and constructing property.
- Allows an authority to authorize, issue and sell bonds to finance a TIF plan's development program. The municipality can issue limited tax bonds payable from the authority's tax increment revenues or notes with governing body approval but is required to obtain voter approval to pledge its unlimited tax full faith and credit for bonds or notes.
- Allows a city, village or township to dissolve an authority after it has completed its purpose and provides that the authority's property and assets remaining after the satisfaction of its obligations belong to the local unit.
- Allows the governing body, at the request of the DDA board, to amend either the development or TIF plans. It may also amend the boundaries of the DDA district. However, caution should be taken in amending the DDA district boundaries as the other taxing units (county, schools, etc.) may opt out of the TIF capture.

Downtown Development Authority board powers:

- Prepare an analysis of economic changes taking place in the downtown district.
- Study and analyze the impact of metropolitan growth upon the downtown district.
- Plan and propose the construction, renovation, repair, remodeling, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, or reconstruction of a public facility, an existing building, or a multiple-family dwelling unit which may be necessary or appropriate to the execution of a plan which, in the opinion of the board, aids in the economic growth of the downtown district.
- Plan, propose, and implement an improvement to a public facility within the development area to comply with the barrier free design requirements of the state construction code (1972 PA 230, MCL 125.1501).
- Develop long-range plans, in cooperation with the agency which is chiefly responsible for planning in the municipality, designed to halt the deterioration of property values in the downtown district and to promote the economic growth of the downtown district, and take such steps as may be necessary to persuade property owners to implement the plans to the fullest extent possible.
- Implement any plan of development in the downtown district necessary to achieve the purposes of this act, in accordance with the powers of the authority as granted by this act.
- Make and enter into contracts necessary or incidental to the exercise of its powers and the performance of its duties.
- Acquire by purchase or otherwise, on terms and conditions and in a manner the authority considers proper or own, convey, or otherwise dispose of, or lease as lessor or lessee, land and other property, real or personal, or rights or interests in property, which the authority determines is reasonably necessary to achieve the purposes of this act, and to grant or acquire licenses, easements, and options with respect to that property.

- Improve land and construct, reconstruct, rehabilitate, restore and preserve, equip, improve, maintain, repair, and operate any building, including multiple-family dwellings, and any necessary or desirable appurtenances to that property, within the downtown district for the use, in whole or in part, of any public or private person or corporation, or a combination of them.
- Fix, charge, and collect fees, rents, and charges for the use of any building, property, or facility under its control and pledge the fees, rents, and charges for the payment of revenue bonds issued by the authority.
- Lease any building or property under its control, or any part of a building or property.
- Accept grants and donations of property, labor, or other things of value from a public or private source.
- Acquire and construct public facilities.
- Create, operate, and fund marketing initiatives that benefit only retail and general marketing of the downtown district.
- Contract for broadband service and wireless technology service in the downtown district.
- Create, fund and operate retail business incubators with preference given to tenants who would provide goods and/or services unavailable or underserved in the DDA area.
- Create, fund and operate a loan program to pay for improvements for existing buildings located in the DDA district in order to make them marketable for sale or lease. Loans could be at or below market rate.

Definitions

Business District: an area in the downtown of a municipality zoned and used principally for business.

Downtown District: part of an area in a business district that is specifically designated by ordinance of the governing body of the municipality pursuant to this act. A downtown district may include one or more separate and distinct geographic areas in a business district as determined by the municipality if the municipality enters into an agreement with a qualified township under section 3(7) or if the municipality is a city that surrounds another city and that other city lies between the two separate and distinct geographic areas. If the downtown district contains more than one separate and distinct geographic area in the downtown district, the separate and distinct geographic areas shall be considered one downtown district.

Public Facility: a street, plaza, pedestrian mall, and any improvements to a street, plaza, or pedestrian mall including street furniture and beautification, park, parking facility, recreational facility, right-of-way, structure, waterway, bridge, lake, pond, canal, utility line or pipe, building, and access routes to any of the foregoing, designed and dedicated to use by the public generally, or used by a public agency. Public facility includes an improvement to a facility used by the public or a public facility, as defined by 1966 PA 1, which improvement is made to comply with the barrier free design requirements of the state construction code promulgated (1972 PA 230, MCL 125.1501).