CHAPTER 31

South Carolina Local Government Development Agreement Act

**SECTION 6‑31‑10.** Short title; legislative findings and intent; authorization for development agreements; provisions are supplemental to those extant.

(A) This chapter may be cited as the “South Carolina Local Government Development Agreement Act”.

(B)(1) The General Assembly finds: The lack of certainty in the approval of development can result in a waste of economic and land resources, can discourage sound capital improvement planning and financing, can cause the cost of housing and development to escalate, and can discourage commitment to comprehensive planning.

(2) Assurance to a developer that upon receipt of its development permits it may proceed in accordance with existing laws and policies, subject to the conditions of a development agreement, strengthens the public planning process, encourages sound capital improvement planning and financing, assists in assuring there are adequate capital facilities for the development, encourages private participation in comprehensive planning, reduces the economic costs of development, allows for the orderly planning of public facilities and services, and allows for the equitable allocation of the cost of public services.

(3) Because the development approval process involves the expenditure of considerable sums of money, predictability encourages the maximum efficient utilization of resources at the least economic cost to the public.

(4) Public benefits derived from development agreements may include, but are not limited to, affordable housing, design standards, and on and off‑site infrastructure and other improvements. These public benefits may be negotiated in return for the vesting of development rights for a specific period.

(5) Land planning and development involve review and action by multiple governmental agencies. The use of development agreements may facilitate the cooperation and coordination of the requirements and needs of the various governmental agencies having jurisdiction over land development.

(6) Development agreements will encourage the vesting of property rights by protecting such rights from the effect of subsequently enacted local legislation or from the effects of changing policies and procedures of local government agencies which may conflict with any term or provision of the development agreement or in any way hinder, restrict, or prevent the development of the project. Development agreements will provide a reasonable certainty as to the lawful requirements that must be met in protecting vested property rights, while maintaining the authority and duty of government to enforce laws and regulations which promote the public safety, health, and general welfare of the citizens of our State.

(C) It is the intent of the General Assembly to encourage a stronger commitment to comprehensive and capital facilities planning, ensure the provision of adequate public facilities for development, encourage the efficient use of resources, and reduce the economic cost of development.

(D) This intent is effected by authorizing the appropriate local governments and agencies to enter into development agreements with developers, subject to the procedures and requirements of this chapter.

(E) This chapter must be regarded as supplemental and additional to the powers conferred upon local governments and other government agencies by other laws and must not be regarded as in derogation of any powers existing on the effective date of this chapter.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑20.** Definitions.

As used in this chapter:

(1) “Comprehensive plan” means the master plan adopted pursuant to Sections 6‑7‑510, et seq., 5‑23‑490, et seq., or 4‑27‑600 and the official map adopted pursuant to Section 6‑7‑1210, et seq.

(2) “Developer” means a person, including a governmental agency or redevelopment authority created pursuant to the provisions of the Military Facilities Redevelopment Law, who intends to undertake any development and who has a legal or equitable interest in the property to be developed.

(3) “Development” means the planning for or carrying out of a building activity or mining operation, the making of a material change in the use or appearance of any structure or property, or the dividing of land into three or more parcels. “Development”, as designated in a law or development permit, includes the planning for and all other activity customarily associated with it unless otherwise specified. When appropriate to the context, “development” refers to the planning for or the act of developing or to the result of development. Reference to a specific operation is not intended to mean that the operation or activity, when part of other operations or activities, is not development. Reference to particular operations is not intended to limit the generality of this item.

(4) “Development permit” includes a building permit, zoning permit, subdivision approval, rezoning certification, special exception, variance, or any other official action of local government having the effect of permitting the development of property.

(5) “Governing body” means the county council of a county, the city council of a municipality, the governing body of a consolidated political subdivision, or any other chief governing body of a unit of local government, however designated.

(6) “Land development regulations” means ordinances and regulations enacted by the appropriate governing body for the regulation of any aspect of development and includes a local government zoning, rezoning, subdivision, building construction, or sign regulations or any other regulations controlling the development of property.

(7) “Laws” means all ordinances, resolutions, regulations, comprehensive plans, land development regulations, policies and rules adopted by a local government affecting the development of property and includes laws governing permitted uses of the property, governing density, and governing design, improvement, and construction standards and specifications, except as provided in Section 6‑31‑140 (A).

(8) “Property” means all real property subject to land use regulation by a local government and includes the earth, water, and air, above, below, or on the surface, and includes any improvements or structures customarily regarded as a part of real property.

(9) “Local government” means any county, municipality, special district, or governmental entity of the State, county, municipality, or region established pursuant to law which exercises regulatory authority over, and grants development permits for land development or which provides public facilities.

(10) “Local planning commission” means any planning commission established pursuant to Sections 4‑27‑510, 5‑23‑410, or 6‑7‑320.

(11) “Person” means an individual, corporation, business or land trust, estate, trust, partnership, association, two or more persons having a joint or common interest, state agency, or any legal entity.

(12) “Public facilities” means major capital improvements, including, but not limited to, transportation, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water, educational, parks and recreational, and health systems and facilities.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1; 1994 Act No. 462, Section 3.

**SECTION 6‑31‑30.** Local governments authorized to enter into development agreements; approval of county or municipal governing body required.

A local government may establish procedures and requirements, as provided in this chapter, to consider and enter into development agreements with developers. A development agreement must be approved by the governing body of a county or municipality by the adoption of an ordinance.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑40.** Developed property must contain certain number of acres of highland; permissible durations of agreements for differing amounts of highland content.

A local government may enter into a development agreement with a developer for the development of property as provided in this chapter provided the property contains twenty‑five acres or more of highland. Development agreements involving property containing no more than two hundred fifty acres of highland shall be for a term not to exceed five years. Development agreements involving property containing one thousand acres or less of highland but more than two hundred fifty acres of highland shall be for a term not to exceed ten years. Development agreements involving property containing two thousand acres or less of highland but more than one thousand acres of highland shall be for a term not to exceed twenty years. Development agreements involving property containing more than two thousand acres and development agreements with a developer which is a redevelopment authority created pursuant to the provisions of the Military Facilities Redevelopment Law, regardless of the number of acres of property involved, may be for such term as the local government and the developer shall elect.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1; 1994 Act No. 462, Section 4.

**SECTION 6‑31‑50.** Public hearings; notice and publication.

(A) Before entering into a development agreement, a local government shall conduct at least two public hearings. At the option of the governing body, the public hearing may be held by the local planning commission.

(B)(1) Notice of intent to consider a development agreement must be advertised in a newspaper of general circulation in the county where the local government is located. If more than one hearing is to be held, the day, time, and place at which the second public hearing will be held must be announced at the first public hearing.

(2) The notice must specify the location of the property subject to the development agreement, the development uses proposed on the property, and must specify a place where a copy of the proposed development agreement can be obtained.

(C) In the event that the development agreement provides that the local government shall provide certain public facilities, the development agreement shall provide that the delivery date of such public facilities will be tied to defined completion percentages or other defined performance standards to be met by the developer.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑60.** What development agreement must provide; what it may provide; major modification requires public notice and hearing.

(A) A development agreement must include:

(1) a legal description of the property subject to the agreement and the names of its legal and equitable property owners;

(2) the duration of the agreement. However, the parties are not precluded from extending the termination date by mutual agreement or from entering into subsequent development agreements;

(3) the development uses permitted on the property, including population densities and building intensities and height;

(4) a description of public facilities that will service the development, including who provides the facilities, the date any new public facilities, if needed, will be constructed, and a schedule to assure public facilities are available concurrent with the impacts of the development;

(5) a description, where appropriate, of any reservation or dedication of land for public purposes and any provisions to protect environmentally sensitive property as may be required or permitted pursuant to laws in effect at the time of entering into the development agreement;

(6) a description of all local development permits approved or needed to be approved for the development of the property together with a statement indicating that the failure of the agreement to address a particular permit, condition, term, or restriction does not relieve the developer of the necessity of complying with the law governing the permitting requirements, conditions, terms, or restrictions;

(7) a finding that the development permitted or proposed is consistent with the local government’s comprehensive plan and land development regulations;

(8) a description of any conditions, terms, restrictions, or other requirements determined to be necessary by the local government for the public health, safety, or welfare of its citizens; and

(9) a description, where appropriate, of any provisions for the preservation and restoration of historic structures.

(B) A development agreement may provide that the entire development or any phase of it be commenced or completed within a specified period of time. The development agreement must provide a development schedule including commencement dates and interim completion dates at no greater than five year intervals; provided, however, the failure to meet a commencement or completion date shall not, in and of itself, constitute a material breach of the development agreement pursuant to Section 6‑31‑90, but must be judged based upon the totality of the circumstances. The development agreement may include other defined performance standards to be met by the developer. If the developer requests a modification in the dates as set forth in the agreement and is able to demonstrate and establish that there is good cause to modify those dates, those dates must be modified by the local government. A major modification of the agreement may occur only after public notice and a public hearing by the local government.

(C) If more than one local government is made party to an agreement, the agreement must specify which local government is responsible for the overall administration of the development agreement.

(D) The development agreement also may cover any other matter not inconsistent with this chapter not prohibited by law.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑70.** Agreement and development must be consistent with local government comprehensive plan and land development regulations.

A development agreement and authorized development must be consistent with the local government’s comprehensive plan and land development regulations.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑80.** Law in effect at time of agreement governs development; exceptions.

(A) Subject to the provisions of Section 6‑31‑140 and unless otherwise provided by the development agreement, the laws applicable to development of the property subject to a development agreement, are those in force at the time of execution of the agreement.

(B) Subject to the provisions of Section 6‑31‑140, a local government may apply subsequently adopted laws to a development that is subject to a development agreement only if the local government has held a public hearing and determined:

(1) the laws are not in conflict with the laws governing the development agreement and do not prevent the development set forth in the development agreement;

(2) they are essential to the public health, safety, or welfare and the laws expressly state that they apply to a development that is subject to a development agreement;

(3) the laws are specifically anticipated and provided for in the development agreement;

(4) the local government demonstrates that substantial changes have occurred in pertinent conditions existing at the time of approval of the development agreement which changes, if not addressed by the local government, would pose a serious threat to the public health, safety, or welfare; or

(5) the development agreement is based on substantially and materially inaccurate information supplied by the developer.

(C) This section does not abrogate any rights preserved by Section 6‑31‑140 herein or that may vest pursuant to common law or otherwise in the absence of a development agreement.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑90.** Periodic review to assess compliance with agreement; material breach by developer; notice of breach; cure of breach or modification or termination of agreement.

(A) Procedures established pursuant to Section 6‑31‑40 must include a provision for requiring periodic review by the zoning administrator, or, if the local government has no zoning administrator, by an appropriate officer of the local government, at least every twelve months, at which time the developer must be required to demonstrate good faith compliance with the terms of the development agreement.

(B) If, as a result of a periodic review, the local government finds and determines that the developer has committed a material breach of the terms or conditions of the agreement, the local government shall serve notice in writing, within a reasonable time after the periodic review, upon the developer setting forth with reasonable particularity the nature of the breach and the evidence supporting the finding and determination, and providing the developer a reasonable time in which to cure the material breach.

(C) If the developer fails to cure the material breach within the time given, then the local government unilaterally may terminate or modify the development agreement; provided, that the local government has first given the developer the opportunity:

(1) to rebut the finding and determination; or

(2) to consent to amend the development agreement to meet the concerns of the local government with respect to the findings and determinations.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑100.** Amendment or cancellation of development agreement by mutual consent of parties or successors in interest.

A development agreement may be amended or canceled by mutual consent of the parties to the agreement or by their successors in interest.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑110.** Validity and duration of agreement entered into prior to incorporation or annexation of affected area; subsequent modification or suspension by municipality.

(A) Except as otherwise provided in Section 6‑31‑130 and subject to the provisions of Section 6‑31‑140, if a newly‑incorporated municipality or newly‑annexed area comprises territory that was formerly unincorporated, any development agreement entered into by a local government before the effective date of the incorporation or annexation remains valid for the duration of the agreement, or eight years from the effective date of the incorporation or annexation, whichever is earlier. The parties to the development agreement and the municipality may agree that the development agreement remains valid for more than eight years; provided, that the longer period may not exceed fifteen years from the effective date of the incorporation or annexation. The parties to the development agreement and the municipality have the same rights and obligations with respect to each other regarding matters addressed in the development agreement as if the property had remained in the unincorporated territory of the county.

(B) After incorporation or annexation the municipality may modify or suspend the provisions of the development agreement if the municipality determines that the failure of the municipality to do so would place the residents of the territory subject to the development agreement, or the residents of the municipality, or both, in a condition dangerous to their health or safety, or both.

(C) This section applies to any development agreement which meets all of the following:

(1) the application for the development agreement is submitted to the local government operating within the unincorporated territory before the date that the first signature was affixed to the petition for incorporation or annexation or the adoption of an annexation resolution pursuant to Chapter 1 or 3 of Title 5; and

(2) the local government operating within the unincorporated territory enters into the development agreement with the developer before the date of the election on the question of incorporation or annexation, or, in the case of an annexation without an election before the date that the municipality orders the annexation.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑120.** Developer to record agreement within fourteen days; burdens and benefits inure to successors in interest.

Within fourteen days after a local government enters into a development agreement, the developer shall record the agreement with the register of mesne conveyance or clerk of court in the county where the property is located. The burdens of the development agreement are binding upon, and the benefits of the agreement shall inure to, all successors in interest to the parties to the agreement.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑130.** Agreement to be modified or suspended to comply with later‑enacted state or federal laws or regulations.

In the event state or federal laws or regulations, enacted after a development agreement has been entered into, prevent or preclude compliance with one or more provisions of the development agreement, the provisions of the agreement must be modified or suspended as may be necessary to comply with the state or federal laws or regulations.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑140.** Rights, duties, and privileges of gas and electricity suppliers, and of municipalities with respect to providing same, not affected; no extraterritorial powers.

(A) The provisions of this act are not intended nor may they be construed in any way to alter or amend in any way the rights, duties, and privileges of suppliers of electricity or natural gas or of municipalities with reference to the provision of electricity or gas service, including, but not limited to, the generation, transmission, distribution, or provision of electricity at wholesale, retail or in any other capacity.

(B) This chapter is not intended to grant to local governments or agencies any authority over property lying beyond their corporate limits.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑145.** Applicability to local government of constitutional and statutory procedures for approval of debt.

In the event that any of the obligations of the local government in the development agreement constitute debt, the local government shall comply at the time of the obligation to incur such debt becomes enforceable against the local government with any applicable constitutional and statutory procedures for the approval of this debt.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑150.** Invalidity of all or part of Section 6‑31‑140 invalidates chapter.

If Section 6‑31‑140 or any provision therein or the application of any provision therein is held invalid, the invalidity applies to this chapter in its entirety, to any and all provisions of the chapter, and the application of this chapter or any provision of this chapter, and to this end the provisions of Section 6‑31‑140 of this chapter are not severable.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.

**SECTION 6‑31‑160.** Agreement may not contravene or supersede building, housing, electrical, plumbing, or gas code; compliance with such code if subsequently enacted.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a development agreement adopted pursuant to this chapter must comply with any building, housing, electrical, plumbing, and gas codes subsequently adopted by the governing body of a municipality or county as authorized by Chapter 9 of Title 6. Such development agreement may not include provisions which supersede or contravene the requirements of any building, housing, electrical, plumbing, and gas codes adopted by the governing body of a municipality or county.

HISTORY: 1993 Act No. 150, Section 1.