

HB 548 -- Informed Growth Act

Sponsor: Englund

This bill establishes the Informed Growth Act which requires a comprehensive economic impact study to be completed as part of a municipal reviewing authority's review of land use permit applications for large-scale retail developments. In its main provisions, the bill:

- (1) Requires the study to be completed by a person other than the applicant who is listed by the Department of Economic Development as someone who is qualified to prepare the study;
- (2) Requires a permit applicant to pay a \$40,000 fee to be deposited into the newly created Comprehensive Economic Impact Study Fund. Upon appropriation, moneys in the fund will be used to reimburse municipalities in an amount equal to the projected costs of the study, notice of public hearing, and related municipal staff support. The municipality must ensure that the \$40,000 fee will be sufficient to cover these costs. Any portion of the fee that is unexpended will be returned to the applicant. The fund must be a dedicated fund;
- (3) Requires the study to be completed within four months of filing the permit application and to be made available to the authority, the applicant, and the public;
- (4) Requires the study to identify and estimate the economic effects of the development on certain factors specified in the bill including existing retail operations, employment, retail wages and benefits, and municipal revenues generated;
- (5) Requires the authority to conduct a public hearing presenting the study before the permit application is approved. Requirements of the hearing notice are specified in the bill;
- (6) Specifies that the authority must issue a finding of undue adverse impact or no undue adverse impact based on the study, testimony received during the public hearing, and other presented information. The authority may only issue permits for large-scale retail developments if it determines that there is likely to be no undue adverse impact; and
- (7) Exempts from the act any municipality which has adopted economic and community impact review criteria and which has required a study of these impacts as part of reviewing applications for large-scale retail development land use permits.