

Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development

B-2 Statewide STAR Bond Authority

STAR Bond Q&A

What is a STAR Bond?

A STAR Bond is a tax increment financing (TIF) program that allows city governments to issue special revenue bonds, which are repaid by all of the revenues received by the city or county from incremental increases in transient guest taxes, local sales taxes, and use taxes collected from taxpayers doing business within the designated portion of the city's "sales tax and revenue" (STAR) bond district. All or a portion of the increased state sales and use tax revenues also may be used to repay the bonds, which typically have a 20-year repayment period.

What type of project can use STAR Bond financing?

- A project with at least a \$50.0 million capital investment and \$50.0 million in projected gross annual sales revenues;
- A project located outside of a metropolitan statistical area that has been found by the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) to be in an eligible area under Tax Increment Financing law and of regional or statewide importance;
- A major commercial entertainment and tourism area as determined by the Secretary;
- Auto racetrack facilities, multi-sport athletic complexes, river walk canal facilities, historic theaters, the Manhattan Discovery Center, the Wyandotte County Schlitterbahn Project, museum facilities, or a major motorsports complex in Shawnee County; or
- A project involving buildings 65 years old or older and include contiguous lots that are vacant or condemned.

Is any project specifically excluded from use of STAR Bonds?

Projects including a gaming casino are specifically excluded from use of STAR Bonds.

How does the STAR Bond project work?

The law allows the governing body of a city to establish one or more special bond projects in any area in the city or outside a city's boundaries with the written approval of the county commission. However, each special bond project must be approved by the Secretary based on the required feasibility study prior to utilizing STAR Bonds.

The city is also required to propose a project plan, hold a hearing on the plan, and adopt the project plan. One mandated component of the project plan is a marketing study conducted to examine the impact of the special bond project on similar businesses in the projected market area.

Finally, the city must complete a feasibility study, which includes:

- Whether a project's revenue and tax increment revenue and other available revenues are expected to exceed or be sufficient to pay for the project costs;
- The effect, if any, the project will have on any outstanding special obligation bonds payable from the revenues used to fund the project;
- A statement of how the jobs and taxes obtained from the project will contribute significantly to the economic development of the state and region;
- Visitation expectations, the unique quality of the project, an economic impact study, and integration and collaboration with other resources or businesses;
- The quality of service and experience provided as measured against national consumer standards for the specific target market;
- Project accountability, measured according to best industry practices;
- The expected return on state and local investment that the project is anticipated to produce;
- A statement concerning whether a portion of the local sales and use taxes are pledged to other uses and are unavailable as revenue for the project

and, if the revenues are so committed, a detailed explanation of the commitment and the effect; and

- An anticipated principal and interest payment schedule on the bond issue.

The Secretary places a limit on the total amount of STAR Bonds that may be issued for any project.

A city is also required to have a certified public accountant conduct an annual audit of each project. STAR Bond districts are prohibited from including real property that was part of another project or district unless that project or district has been approved by the Secretary prior to March 1, 2016. A district is limited to those areas being developed and any areas reasonably anticipated to directly benefit the project. However, STAR Bond districts created and approved in 2017 or later must exclude tax increment revenues derived from retail automobile dealers. If a STAR Bond district adds area, the base tax year for the newly annexed area will be the 12-month period immediately prior to the month in which the new area is added to the district.

What are the constraints placed on the developer?

The developer of a special bond project is required to commence work on the project within two years from the date of adoption of the project plan. If the developer does not commence work on the project within the two-year period, funding for the project ceases and the developer has one year to appeal to the Secretary for re-approval of the project. If the project is re-approved, the two-year period for commencement applies.

Also, the law requires that Kansas residents be given priority consideration for employment in construction projects located in a special bond project area.

What are eligible uses for STAR Bond proceeds?

- Purchase of real property, which may be acquired by means of eminent domain;

- Relocation assistance for property owners moving out of the project district;
- Site preparation work, including relocations of utilities;
- Drainage conduits, channels, levees, and river walk canal facilities;
- Parking facilities, including multi-level parking structures devoted to parking only;
- Street improvements;
- Street light fixtures, connection, and facilities;
- Utilities located within the public right-of-way;
- Landscaping, fountains, and decorations;
- Sidewalks and pedestrian underpasses or overpasses;
- Drives and driveway approaches located within the public right-of-way of an auto racetrack facility, major multi-sport athletic complex, museum facility, and major motorsports complex; and
- Up to 1.0 percent of the bond proceeds, but not exceeding \$200,000, plus any actual administrative costs incurred by the Department of Commerce (Department) that exceed the fee.

What are ineligible uses for the STAR Bond proceeds?

Costs incurred in connection with the construction of buildings or other structures are not eligible. In addition, proceeds are not available for fees and commissions paid to real estate agents, financial advisors, or any other consultants who represent the developer or any other businesses considering locating or located in a redevelopment district; salaries for local government employees; moving expenses for employees of the businesses locating within the redevelopment district; property taxes for businesses that locate in the redevelopment district; lobbying costs; bond origination fees paid to the city; any personal property as defined in KSA 79-102; or travel, entertainment, and hospitality.

Other Important Information

All cities that have projects financed with STAR Bonds are to prepare and submit an annual report to the Secretary by October 1 of each year. The Department compiles an annual report on all STAR Bond projects and submits them to the Governor; the Senate Committee on Commerce; and the House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development by January 31 each year. For the past three calendar years and year to date, each STAR Bond district must report the following information:

- The amount of sales and use tax collected;
- The amount of bond payments and other expenses incurred;
- The amount of bonds issued and the balance of bonds, by district and by project;
- The remaining cash balance in the project to pay for future debt service and other permissible expenses;
- Any new income-producing properties brought into the district, identifying the base amount of revenue the State would retain and the incremental amount that goes to the district;
- The amount of bonds issued to repay private investors, identifying the share of the indebtedness financed by private and public financing;
- The percentages of state and local effort committed to the district; and
- The number of visitors to the district, identifying the number of in-state and out-of-state visitors.

Reauthorized in 2017, the authority to issue debt pursuant to the STAR Bond Financing Act will sunset on July 1, 2020, unless continued by an act of the Legislature.

For more information, please contact:

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