

LAND DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY

July 18, 2011

Florida Adopts Important School Choice Legislation

On June 27, 2011 Governor Rick Scott signed Senate Bill 1546: "School Choice." This legislation is intended to increase the number of successful Charter Schools that achieve "High Performing" status, by allowing them to expand annually beyond their charter. The legislation creates a new designation called "High-Performing" Charter Schools. Charter Schools that meet the standards and criteria for that designation are afforded special benefits, ranging from automatic expansions of student enrollment and opportunities for additional funding, to modifications in management policies and relaxed training requirements.

While many of the benefits of Senate Bill 1546 are targeted to High-Performing Charter Schools, the legislation also includes provisions relating to the operation and organization of all Charter Schools, including the creation of new funding opportunities, placing new research and monitoring requirements on the Department of Education and eliminating the Charter School Review Panel.

Although the School Choice Bill will not take effect until the 2012-2013 school year, the legislation will immediately impact the planning and development of Charter Schools, especially existing Charter Schools that are able to meet the "High-Performing" criteria which allows further expansion. There are several land use and zoning considerations, procedures and requirements that need to be addressed from the beginning of the Charter School approval process.

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