

City Commission Policy 416 - High Wage Employment Slope Exception

DEPARTMENT: Economic Development

DATE ADOPTED: April 10, 2002

DATE OF LAST REVISION: N/A

416.01 Authority: City Commission. Ordinance No. 01-O-37.

416.02 Scope and Applicability: The policy and procedures shall apply to all individuals, companies, organizations and governmental units requesting a high wage employment exception from the requirement of the Environmental Management Ordinance that at least 50% of a Significant Grade must be left undisturbed.

416.03 Definitions:

Significant Number: a minimum of 20 new jobs within three years of the date of the first Certificate of Occupancy for the new building or expansion.

High Wage Employment: both the average annualized salary (not including benefits) of the new jobs will be at or above the existing average annualized salary for Leon County and more than 30% of the new jobs will be at or above the existing average annualized salary for Leon County.

New Jobs: full time, permanent employees expected to be hired due to the new building or expansion, including those hired after the date permits are obtained. Full time equivalent positions (FTE's) shall not count toward job creation.

Long Term Level Of Commitment: 10 years after receipt of the first Certificate of Occupancy, if less than 75% of the significant grade areas are to be developed, and 20 years if 75% or more of the significant grade areas are to be developed.

416.04 General Description: The City's Environmental Management Ordinance requires that at least 50% of a Significant Grade and 100% of a Severe Grade must be left undisturbed in order to maintain local topography and minimize erosion, maintain existing vegetation, and protect water quality. There are two exceptions from the Significant Grade requirements: development in the urban core, and high wage employment development. Proposed development that exclusively contains industrial and/or office uses and that creates a significant number of new high wage employment can develop more than 50% of significant grade areas at the discretion of the City Commission. The Ordinance states that the Commission may consider factors like the number of jobs, the average annual wage of Leon County, and the applicant's long-term level of commitment and ability to provide the jobs.

416.05 Criteria For Usage:

Development must be committed to be exclusively industrial and/or office for a long-term level of commitment and must receive approval from the City Commission at a public hearing.

Development must create a significant number of new high wage employment and show an ability to provide the jobs.

Developers shall assure that the amount of Significant Grade Area to be developed, in addition to the 50% already allowed, is necessary for the viability of the development, is minimized to the extent reasonable, and is the least environmentally-sensitive area available on the site.

Following Commission approval, an Agreement will be written specifying the length of time for which the development must remain industrial and/or office. This Agreement shall be tied to the land and officially recorded at the Leon County Courthouse. All costs of recording shall be borne by the Applicant.

416.06 Procedures:

Exception applications shall be filed with the City's Economic Development Department after filing a proposed site plan for a new building or expansion with Growth Management. Copies of the application will be sent to the Economic Development Council (EDC) and Growth Management.

Applications will include an explanation of the project, the proposed location, the proposed type and number of jobs and their salaries, and a brief explanation of why the exception is needed. In order to show that the applicant has the ability to provide the jobs expected, applications will also include a business plan and audited financial statements from the past two years; a history of the business applying, including how long it has existed; all existing locations and how long the business has been at those locations; and the existing number of employees at each location. If the number of existing locations exceeds five, generalized information concerning the locations and number of employees will be acceptable.

The Growth Management Department shall be responsible for verifying that the development is proposed to be located within a Significant Grade Area, and that the proposal is exclusively industrial and/or office. The Growth Management Department shall also verify that the amount of Significant Grade Area to be developed, in addition to the 50% already allowed, is necessary for the viability of the development, is minimized to the extent reasonable, and is the least environmentally-sensitive area available on the site.

Accounting Services shall review the business plan and the audited financial statements.

Economic Development, in coordination with the EDC and Accounting Services, shall be responsible for verifying the projected number of employees and the salary levels and determining the Applicant's ability to provide the jobs.

The Growth Management and Economic Development Departments will make a recommendation to the City Commission at the next available Commission public hearing. The City Commission will make the final determination as to eligibility.

The Applicant, or its successor, shall file annual reports for 10 years, beginning one year after the date of the first Certificate of Occupancy, providing verification of the number of employees working at the new business or expanded business for the past year, the type of employment, and the annualized salary levels of these employees.

416.07 Administration: The Director of the Economic Development Department will serve as the City Manager's designee for administration of this policy.

416.08 Effective Date: The policy and procedures shall become effective on April 10, 2002, upon approval of the City Commission.

Approved this 10th day of April, 2002.