

A bill for an act
relating to local government; authorizing local governments to finance energy
improvements for property owners to install energy efficient or renewable energy
improvements; providing for repayment as a special assessment; authorizing
issuance of revenue bonds; amending Minnesota Statutes 2008, section 429.101,
subdivision 1; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter
216C.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. **[216C.435] DEFINITIONS.**

Subdivision 1. **Scope.** For the purposes of this section and section 216C.436, the
terms defined in this section have the meanings given them.

Subd. 2. **City.** "City" means a home rule charter or statutory city.

Subd. 3. **Local government.** "Local government" means a city, county, or town.

Subd. 4. **Energy audit.** "Energy audit" means a formal evaluation of the energy
consumption of a building by a certified energy auditor, whose certification is approved by
the commissioner, for the purpose of identifying appropriate energy improvements that
could be made to the building and including an estimate of the length of time a specific
energy improvement will take to repay its purchase and installation costs, based on the
amount of energy saved and estimated future energy prices.

Subd. 5. **Energy improvement.** "Energy improvement" means:

(1) any renovation or retrofitting of a building to improve energy efficiency that
is permanently affixed to the property and that results in a net reduction in energy
consumption without altering the principal source of energy;

(2) installation of new or upgraded electrical circuits to enable electrical vehicle
charging; or

(3) a renewable energy system attached to, installed within, or proximate to a building that generates electrical or thermal energy from a renewable energy source.

Subd. 6. Qualifying real property. "Qualifying real property" means a single-family or multifamily residential dwelling, or a commercial or industrial building, that the city has determined, after review of an energy audit or renewable energy system feasibility study, can be benefited by installation of energy improvements.

Subd. 7. Renewable energy. "Renewable energy" means energy produced by means of solar thermal, solar photovoltaic, wind, or geothermal resources.

Subd. 8. Renewable energy system feasibility study. "Renewable energy system feasibility study" means a written study, conducted by a contractor trained to perform that analysis, for the purpose of determining the feasibility of installing a renewable energy system in a building, including an estimate of the length of time a specific renewable energy system will take to repay its purchase and installation costs, based on the amount of energy saved and estimated future energy prices. For a geothermal energy improvement, the feasibility study must calculate net savings in terms of nongeothermal energy and costs.

Subd. 9. Solar thermal. "Solar thermal" has the meaning given to "qualifying solar thermal project" in section 216B.2411, subdivision 2, paragraph (e).

Subd. 10. Solar photovoltaic. "Solar photovoltaic" has the meaning given in section 216C.06, subdivision 16, and must meet the requirements of section 216C.25.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective the day following final enactment.

Sec. 2. [216C.436] VOLUNTARY ENERGY IMPROVEMENTS FINANCING PROGRAM FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.

Subdivision 1. Program authority. A local government may establish a program to finance energy improvements to enable owners of qualifying real property to pay for cost-effective energy improvements to the qualifying real property with the net proceeds and interest earnings of revenue bonds authorized in this section.

Subd. 2. Program requirements. A financing program must:

(1) impose requirements and conditions on financing arrangements to ensure timely repayment;

(2) require an energy audit or renewable energy system feasibility study to be conducted on the qualifying real property and reviewed by the local government prior to approval of the financing;

(3) inspect the installation and verify the performance of energy improvements financed by the program;

(4) require that all cost-effective energy efficiency improvements be made to a qualifying real property prior to, or in conjunction with, an applicant receiving financing for a renewable energy system for that property;

(5) have work financed by the program done by licensed contractors as required by chapter 326B or other law or ordinance;

(6) require disclosures to borrowers by the local government of the risks involved in borrowing, including the risk of foreclosure if a tax delinquency results from a default;

(7) provide financing only to those who demonstrate an ability to repay;

(8) not provide financing for a qualifying real property in which the owner has a negative equity or is not current on mortgage or real property tax payments;

(9) require a petition by all owners of the qualifying real property requesting collections of repayments as a special assessment under section 429.101;

(10) provide that payments and assessments are not accelerated due to a default and that a tax delinquency exists only for assessments not paid when due; and

(11) that liability for special assessments related to the financing runs with the qualifying real property.

Subd. 3. **Financing terms.** Financing provided under this section must have:

(1) a term not to exceed the weighted average of the useful life of the energy improvements installed, as determined by the local government, but in no event may a term exceed 20 years;

(2) a principal amount not to exceed the lesser of ten percent of the appraised value of the real property on which the improvements are to be installed or the actual cost of installing the energy improvements, including the costs of necessary equipment, materials, and labor, the costs of each related energy audit or renewable energy system feasibility study, and the cost of verification of installation; and

(3) an interest rate sufficient to pay the financing costs of the program, including the issuance of bonds and any financing delinquencies.

Subd. 4. **Coordination with other programs.** A financing program must include cooperation and coordination with the conservation improvement activities of the utility serving the qualifying real property and other public and private energy improvement programs.

Subd. 5. **Certificate of participation.** Upon completion of a project, a local government shall provide a borrower with a certificate stating participation in the program and what energy improvements have been made with financing program proceeds.

Subd. 6. **Repayment.** A local government financing an energy improvement under this section must:

(1) secure payment with a lien against the benefited qualifying real property; and
(2) collect repayments as a special assessment as provided for in section 429.101
or by charter.

Subd. 7. **Bond issuance; repayment.** (a) A local government may issue revenue
bonds as provided in chapter 475 for the purposes of this section.

(b) The bonds must be payable as to both principal and interest solely from the
revenues from the assessments established in subdivision 4.

(c) No holder of bonds issued under this subdivision may compel any exercise of the
taxing power of the local government that issued the bonds to pay principal or interest on
the bonds. Bonds issued under this subdivision are not a debt or obligation of the local
government that issued them, nor is the payment of the bonds enforceable out of any
money other than the revenue pledged to the payment of the bonds.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective the day following final enactment.

Sec. 3. Minnesota Statutes 2008, section 429.101, subdivision 1, is amended to read:

Subdivision 1. **Ordinances.** (a) In addition to any other method authorized by
law or charter, the governing body of any municipality may provide for the collection
of unpaid special charges as a special assessment against the property benefited for all
or any part of the cost of:

- (1) snow, ice, or rubbish removal from sidewalks;
- (2) weed elimination from streets or private property;
- (3) removal or elimination of public health or safety hazards from private property,
excluding any structure included under the provisions of sections 463.15 to 463.26;
- (4) installation or repair of water service lines, street sprinkling or other dust
treatment of streets;
- (5) the trimming and care of trees and the removal of unsound trees from any street;
- (6) the treatment and removal of insect infested or diseased trees on private property,
the repair of sidewalks and alleys;
- (7) the operation of a street lighting system;
- (8) the operation and maintenance of a fire protection or a pedestrian skyway system;
- (9) inspections relating to a municipal housing maintenance code violation;
- (10) the recovery of any disbursements under section 504B.445, subdivision 4,
clause (5), including disbursements for payment of utility bills and other services, even if
provided by a third party, necessary to remedy violations as described in section 504B.445,
subdivision 4, clause (2); or
- (11) [Repealed, 2004 c 275 s 5]

5.1 (12) the recovery of delinquent vacant building registration fees under a municipal
5.2 program designed to identify and register vacant buildings.

5.3 (b) The council may by ordinance adopt regulations consistent with this section to
5.4 make this authority effective, including, at the option of the council, provisions for placing
5.5 primary responsibility upon the property owner or occupant to do the work personally
5.6 (except in the case of street sprinkling or other dust treatment, alley repair, tree trimming,
5.7 care, and removal, or the operation of a street lighting system) upon notice before the work
5.8 is undertaken, and for collection from the property owner or other person served of the
5.9 charges when due before unpaid charges are made a special assessment.

5.10 (c) A home rule charter city, statutory city, county, or town operating an energy
5.11 improvements financing program under section 216C.436 has the authority granted to a
5.12 municipality under paragraph (a) with respect to energy improvements financed under
5.13 that section.

5.14 **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This section is effective the day following final enactment.