Abstract: Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to Africa is quickly becoming a centerpiece of China’s approach to promoting development overseas. To this point, however, little is known about the extent to which those investment projects inspire popular support for a China model of development in Africa, or whether Chinese FDI invites skepticism and concern among community members in the region. In this study, we investigate the effects of proximity to Chinese FDI on local perceptions of China’s approach to development in Africa. We geolocate 200 Chinese investment projects, and we spatially connect those data to responses from over 35,000 georeferenced survey respondents across 21 countries. By comparing responses from those living near operational Chinese FDI projects to responses from those living near eventual locations of Chinese investment but where no project yet exists at the time of the survey, we determine the proximity effects of Chinese FDI on views of the China model of development while accounting for the potential nonrandom location of those investment projects. The findings indicate that, on average, living near Chinese FDI projects reduces support for a China model of development. Furthermore, specific types of FDI projects evoke distinct evaluations of China’s presence. Specifically, respondents living near manufacturing projects view infrastructure development as a positive contribution from China, whereas those living near resource-related projects express concerns about Chinese land grabs and job threats. Those living near service projects hold more mixed views. The results suggest that people living in close proximity to Chinese FDI projects in Africa are swayed less by global development narratives than by how those projects shape their everyday lives and experiences.