A bill to be entitled

An act relating to local government comprehensive plans; amending s. 163.3184, F.S.; revising the review process for adoption of comprehensive plan amendments; providing that the prevailing party in a challenge to a plan or plan amendment is entitled to recover attorney fees and costs; providing retroactive applicability; amending s. 163.3187, F.S.; providing that the prevailing party in a challenge to the compliance of a small scale development order is entitled to recover attorney fees and costs; amending s. 163.3202, F.S.; providing applicability; amending s. 163.3215, F.S.; making technical changes; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Paragraph (c) of subsection (3) of section 163.3184, Florida Statutes, is amended, and paragraph (g) is added to subsection (5) of that section, to read:

163.3184 Process for adoption of comprehensive plan or plan amendment.—

(3) EXPEDITED STATE REVIEW PROCESS FOR ADOPTION OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS.—

(c)1. The local government shall hold its second public

hearing, which shall be a hearing on whether to adopt one or more comprehensive plan amendments pursuant to subsection (11). If the local government fails, within 180 days after receipt of agency comments, to hold the second public hearing, the amendment is ~~amendments shall be~~ deemed withdrawn unless extended by agreement with notice to the state land planning agency and any affected person that provided comments on the amendment. If the amendment is not adopted at the second public hearing, the amendment must be formally adopted by the local government within 180 days after the second public hearing or the amendment is deemed withdrawn ~~The 180-day limitation does not apply to amendments processed pursuant to s. 380.06~~.

2. All comprehensive plan amendments adopted by the governing body, along with the supporting data and analysis, shall be transmitted within 10 working days after the second public hearing to the state land planning agency and any other agency or local government that provided timely comments under subparagraph (b)2.

3. The state land planning agency shall notify the local government of any deficiencies within 5 working days after receipt of an amendment package. For purposes of completeness, an amendment shall be deemed complete if it contains a full, executed copy of the adoption ordinance or ordinances; in the case of a text amendment, a full copy of the amended language in legislative format with new words inserted in the text

underlined, and words deleted stricken with hyphens; in the case of a future land use map amendment, a copy of the future land use map clearly depicting the parcel, its existing future land use designation, and its adopted designation; and a copy of any data and analyses the local government deems appropriate.

4. An amendment adopted under this paragraph does not become effective until 31 days after the state land planning agency notifies the local government that the plan amendment package is complete. If timely challenged, an amendment does not become effective until the state land planning agency or the Administration Commission enters a final order determining the adopted amendment to be in compliance.

(5) ADMINISTRATIVE CHALLENGES TO PLANS AND PLAN AMENDMENTS.—

(g) The prevailing party in a challenge filed under this subsection is entitled to recover attorney fees and costs in challenging or defending a plan or plan amendment, including reasonable appellate attorney fees and costs.

Section 2. The amendment made by section 1 of this act to s. 163.3184(3)(c), Florida Statutes, is remedial in nature, is intended to clarify existing law, and applies retroactively to January 1, 2022.

Section 3. Paragraph (a) of subsection (5) of section 163.3187, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

163.3187 Process for adoption of small scale comprehensive

plan amendment.—

(5)(a) Any affected person may file a petition with the Division of Administrative Hearings pursuant to ss. 120.569 and 120.57 to request a hearing to challenge the compliance of a small scale development amendment with this act within 30 days following the local government's adoption of the amendment and shall serve a copy of the petition on the local government. An administrative law judge shall hold a hearing in the affected jurisdiction not less than 30 days nor more than 60 days following the filing of a petition and the assignment of an administrative law judge. The parties to a hearing held pursuant to this subsection shall be the petitioner, the local government, and any intervenor. In the proceeding, the plan amendment shall be determined to be in compliance if the local government's determination that the small scale development amendment is in compliance is fairly debatable. The state land planning agency may not intervene in any proceeding initiated pursuant to this section. The prevailing party in a challenge filed under this paragraph is entitled to recover attorney fees and costs in challenging or defending the order, including reasonable appellate attorney fees and costs.

Section 4. Subsection (6) of section 163.3202, Florida Statutes, is renumbered as subsection (7), and a new subsection (6) is added to that section to read:

163.3202 Land development regulations.—

(6) Land development regulations relating to any characteristic of development other than use, or intensity or density of use, do not apply to Florida College System institutions as defined in s. 1000.21(3).

Section 5. Subsections (3) and (4) of section 163.3215, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

163.3215 Standing to enforce local comprehensive plans through development orders.—

(3) Any aggrieved or adversely affected party may maintain a de novo action for declaratory, injunctive, or other relief against any local government to challenge any decision of such local government granting or denying an application for, or to prevent such local government from taking any action on, a development order, as defined in s. 163.3164, on the basis that the development order ~~which~~ materially alters the use or density or intensity of use on a particular piece of property rendering it ~~which is~~ not consistent with the comprehensive plan adopted under this part. The de novo action must be filed no later than 30 days following rendition of a development order or other written decision, or when all local administrative appeals, if any, are exhausted, whichever occurs later.

(4) If a local government elects to adopt or has adopted an ordinance establishing, at a minimum, the requirements listed in this subsection, the sole method by which an aggrieved and adversely affected party may challenge any decision of local

government granting or denying an application for a development order, as defined in s. 163.3164, which materially alters the use or density or intensity of use on a particular piece of property, ~~on the basis that it is not consistent with the comprehensive plan adopted under this part,~~ is by an appeal filed by a petition for writ of certiorari filed in circuit court no later than 30 days following rendition of a development order or other written decision of the local government, or when all local administrative appeals, if any, are exhausted, whichever occurs later. An action for injunctive or other relief may be joined with the petition for certiorari. Principles of judicial or administrative res judicata and collateral estoppel apply to these proceedings. Minimum components of the local process are as follows:

(a) The local process must make provision for notice of an application for a development order that materially alters the use or density or intensity of use on a particular piece of property, including notice by publication or mailed notice consistent with the provisions of ss. 125.66(4)(b)2. and 3. and 166.041(3)(c)2.b. and c., and must require prominent posting at the job site. The notice must be given within 10 days after the filing of an application for a development order; however, notice under this subsection is not required for an application for a building permit or any other official action of local government which does not materially alter the use or density or

intensity of use on a particular piece of property. The notice must clearly delineate that an aggrieved or adversely affected person has the right to request a quasi-judicial hearing before the local government for which the application is made, must explain the conditions precedent to the appeal of any development order ultimately rendered upon the application, and must specify the location where written procedures can be obtained that describe the process, including how to initiate the quasi-judicial process, the timeframes for initiating the process, and the location of the hearing. The process may include an opportunity for an alternative dispute resolution.

(b) The local process must provide a clear point of entry consisting of a written preliminary decision, at a time and in a manner to be established in the local ordinance, with the time to request a quasi-judicial hearing running from the issuance of the written preliminary decision; the local government, however, is not bound by the preliminary decision. A party may request a hearing to challenge or support a preliminary decision.

(c) The local process must provide an opportunity for participation in the process by an aggrieved or adversely affected party, allowing a reasonable time for the party to prepare and present a case for the quasi-judicial hearing.

(d) The local process must provide, at a minimum, an opportunity for the disclosure of witnesses and exhibits prior to hearing and an opportunity for the depositions of witnesses

to be taken.

(e) The local process may not require that a party be represented by an attorney in order to participate in a hearing.

(f) The local process must provide for a quasi-judicial hearing before an impartial special master who is an attorney who has at least 5 years' experience and who shall, at the conclusion of the hearing, recommend written findings of fact and conclusions of law. The special master shall have the power to swear witnesses and take their testimony under oath, to issue subpoenas and other orders regarding the conduct of the proceedings, and to compel entry upon the land. The standard of review applied by the special master in determining whether a proposed development order is consistent with the comprehensive plan shall be strict scrutiny in accordance with Florida law.

(g) At the quasi-judicial hearing, all parties must have the opportunity to respond, to present evidence and argument on all issues involved which are related to the development order, and to conduct cross-examination and submit rebuttal evidence. Public testimony must be allowed.

(h) The local process must provide for a duly noticed public hearing before the local government at which public testimony is allowed. At the quasi-judicial hearing, the local government is bound by the special master's findings of fact unless the findings of fact are not supported by competent substantial evidence. The governing body may modify the

conclusions of law if it finds that the special master's application or interpretation of law is erroneous. The governing body may make reasonable legal interpretations of its comprehensive plan and land development regulations without regard to whether the special master's interpretation is labeled as a finding of fact or a conclusion of law. The local government's final decision must be reduced to writing, including the findings of fact and conclusions of law, and is not considered rendered or final until officially date-stamped by the city or county clerk.

(i) An ex parte communication relating to the merits of the matter under review may not be made to the special master. An ex parte communication relating to the merits of the matter under review may not be made to the governing body after a time to be established by the local ordinance, which time must be no later than receipt of the special master's recommended order by the governing body.

(j) At the option of the local government, the process may require actions to challenge the consistency of a development order with land development regulations to be brought in the same proceeding.

Section 6. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.