

1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to blue ribbon projects; creating s.
3 163.3249, F.S.; providing a purpose and legislative
4 intent; defining terms; requiring that a development
5 project meet certain requirements to qualify as a blue
6 ribbon project; providing maximum residential density
7 and nonresidential intensity permitted within the
8 development area of a blue ribbon project; requiring
9 that a specified percentage of the project's
10 residential units meet certain requirements; requiring
11 the development area to be developed in phases;
12 requiring certain development rights and mitigation of
13 project impacts to be vested for a specified period;
14 requiring a blue ribbon project to have a blue ribbon
15 plan; providing requirements for such plan; providing
16 that a plan is not required to demonstrate certain
17 need; requiring a project to receive dollar-for-dollar
18 credits from a local government under certain
19 circumstances; providing that certain easements or
20 property must be granted without charge; requiring a
21 landowner to apply to the local government for
22 approval of a plan; requiring a plan to meet certain
23 requirements to receive administrative approval;
24 providing local government review requirements;
25 providing that a project may be located on land with

26 any future land use designation or zoning designation;
 27 requiring the local government to record the plan for
 28 an approved project in the public records of the
 29 county in which the project property is located;
 30 prohibiting an applicant from amending a recorded plan
 31 without undergoing a specified review; authorizing an
 32 applicant to hire a private company to conduct plan
 33 reviews and building inspections; providing appeal
 34 procedures for the denial of a blue ribbon project
 35 application; providing environmental review
 36 requirements; providing an effective date.

37

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

39

40 **Section 1. Section 163.3249, Florida Statutes, is created**
 41 **to read:**

42 163.3249 Blue ribbon projects.—

43 (1) PURPOSE AND INTENT.—The purpose of this section is to
 44 balance the protection of important state resources, such as the
 45 natural environment and existing agricultural and silvicultural
 46 uses, with the need to provide longer-term, well-planned
 47 communities and job opportunities for the state's future. It is
 48 the intent of the Legislature to accomplish this goal by
 49 incentivizing large landowners in this state to be good stewards
 50 of the natural environment and existing agricultural and

51 silvicultural land while at the same time promoting a more
52 sustainable pattern of development. The Legislature intends to
53 create blue ribbon projects, and to provide a mechanism by which
54 local governments shall implement those projects within their
55 boundaries, in order to promote the goals of preserving natural
56 areas, encouraging agricultural land uses and rural land
57 stewardship, protecting critical ecological systems, expanding
58 wildlife corridors, and providing more compact mixed-use
59 developments designed for long-term viability.

60 (2) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this section, the term:

61 (a) "Applicant" means the owner of land on which a blue
62 ribbon project is proposed.

63 (b) "Blue ribbon plan" or "plan" means the plan required
64 by subsection (5).

65 (c) "Blue ribbon project" or "project" means a project
66 that meets the requirements of this section.

67 (d) "Blue ribbon project overlay" means an overlay
68 district approved by a local government in its comprehensive
69 plan which must adhere to the requirements of the adopted blue
70 ribbon plan.

71 (e) "Development area" means land that may be used for
72 residential, commercial, industrial, office, civic, and
73 institutional purposes and complies with the requirements of
74 paragraph (3) (c) and subsection (4).

75 (f) "Missing middle housing" means a range of for-sale and

76 for-rent housing types, including, but not limited to, duplexes,
77 triplexes, townhomes, small multifamily buildings, and small
78 detached single-family homes, that fill the gap between larger
79 single-family homes and larger apartment buildings. Such housing
80 may be vertically and horizontally integrated.

81 (g) "New urban design" means a development design that
82 creates walkable, mixed-use places.

83 (h) "Reserve area" means land that is set aside for
84 environmental conservation, wildlife corridors, wetland and
85 wildlife mitigation, lakes, passive recreation, productive
86 agriculture and silviculture, conservation agreements granted to
87 the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services pursuant to
88 s. 570.71, activities permitted by conservation easements
89 entered into with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
90 Services pursuant to s. 570.71, and uses of public benefit and
91 that complies with the requirements of paragraph (3) (b). Reserve
92 areas may not contain golf courses, data centers, or solar
93 farms.

94 (i) "Uses of public benefit" means uses including parks,
95 active recreation, stormwater management facilities, flood
96 control facilities, utility facilities, and reservoirs.

97 (3) MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS.—A property must meet all of the
98 following requirements to qualify as a blue ribbon project:

99 (a) The property must contain a minimum of 10,000 acres of
100 land which are contiguous, as defined in s. 163.3163(3), which

101 are owned by the same person or by entities owned or controlled
102 by the same person, and a majority of which are not located
103 within a municipality.

104 (b) At least 60 percent of the land contained in the
105 project must be reserve area. Land contained in a conservation
106 easement before July 1, 2026, does not qualify as reserve area
107 for the purposes of meeting the 60-percent threshold. The
108 reserve area must meet all of the following requirements:

109 1. If any property boundary is contiguous to state-owned
110 environmental land or the Florida wildlife corridor, a portion
111 of the project's reserve area must be located adjacent to a
112 portion of the state-owned land or the Florida wildlife
113 corridor, as applicable.

114 2. At least 70 percent of the reserve area must be
115 contiguous, as defined in s. 163.3163(3).

116 3. Uses of public benefit may not exceed 15 percent of the
117 reserve area.

118 (c) Up to 40 percent of the land contained in the project
119 may be development area. The development area must meet all of
120 the following requirements:

121 1. Individual development areas within the project must be
122 designed to enhance walkability and mobility and must include a
123 mixture of land uses.

124 2. At least 10 percent of the development area must be
125 allocated to nonresidential land use.

126 3. A portion of the development area must be allocated to
127 uses intended to provide economic development within the area
128 where the property is located. The development area so allocated
129 must be in a location that is accessible to an interstate
130 interchange, a state road, an active rail line, or an airport or
131 other transportation facility.

132 4. The development area must have a dense, walkable,
133 mixed-use development pattern that includes new urban design.

134 5. Types of residential units within the development area
135 must be varied and include single-family, multifamily, and
136 attached and detached residential units.

137 (4) DEVELOPMENT AREA DENSITIES AND INTENSITIES.—

138 (a) A maximum residential density of 12 units per gross
139 acre, and a maximum nonresidential intensity of 85 percent
140 impervious surface ratio per gross acre, are permitted within
141 the development area, as measured in combination throughout all
142 phases of the project. A building that contains residential
143 units and nonresidential uses shall be considered residential.

144 (b) At least 20 percent of residential units within the
145 development area in each phase of the project must be a
146 combination of the following:

147 1. Housing that is affordable, as defined in s. 420.0004,
148 for natural persons or families who meet the extremely-low-
149 income, very-low-income, or low-income limits specified in s.
150 420.0004.

151 2. Missing middle housing.

152 3. Housing that is affordable, as defined in s. 420.0004,
153 for persons eligible for the Florida Hometown Hero Program under
154 s. 420.5096.

155 (c) The development area must be developed in phases.
156 Development rights and mitigation of project impacts shall be
157 vested for 50 years. If the applicant achieves development, as
158 defined in s. 380.04, of at least 50 percent of the development
159 area within 50 years after the project's date of initial public
160 dedication of infrastructure, the vested period must be extended
161 for an additional 25 years.

162 (5) BLUE RIBBON PLANS.—A blue ribbon project must have a
163 blue ribbon plan, which is the conceptual master plan for the
164 project. A blue ribbon plan must comply with the requirements of
165 subsections (3) and (4). Blue ribbon plans also must contain the
166 following documents:

167 (a) A long-term master development map that, at a minimum,
168 depicts the conceptual locations of:

169 1. Reserve area and development area throughout the
170 property.

171 2. Major planned transportation corridors, including
172 roads, multipurpose trails, and transit.

173 3. Proposed civic and school sites.

174 4. Proposed utility sites.

175 (b) A conceptual phasing plan depicting land uses within

176 reserve areas and development areas, densities and intensities
177 of development within development areas, public facility
178 mitigation for such development within each phase, and
179 approximate acreage of reserve area in each phase.

180 (c) A conceptual water supply plan and a conceptual
181 wastewater plan to show the project's compliance with s.
182 163.3180. The plans may allow water and wastewater supplies to
183 be provided in phases.

184 (d) A conceptual transportation and mobility plan to show
185 the project's compliance with s. 163.3180. The plans may allow
186 transportation facilities to be provided in phases.

187 (e) A conceptual parks and recreation plan to show the
188 project's compliance with s. 163.3180. The plans may allow parks
189 and recreational facilities to be provided in phases.

190 (f) A conceptual resource protection plan to show the
191 conservation of, and, as appropriate, restoration and management
192 of, regionally significant natural resources within the reserve
193 area. The protection of regionally significant natural resources
194 within the reserve area is determined to be a net ecosystem
195 benefit.

196 (g) Development standards for each type of land use
197 proposed within the development area which is typically found in
198 a planned unit development as defined in s. 163.3202 (5) (b).

199
200 A blue ribbon plan must be based on a planning period longer

201 than the generally applicable planning period of the local
202 comprehensive plan and must specify the projected population
203 within the planning area during the chosen planning period. A
204 plan is not required to demonstrate need based on projected
205 population growth or any other basis. If under the plan a
206 project contributes land or funds or otherwise causes the
207 construction of public facilities pursuant to s. 163.3180, the
208 project must receive dollar-for-dollar credits against impact,
209 mobility, proportionate share, or other fee credits from the
210 local government for such facility improvements as required by
211 s. 163.3180. All park and recreational uses in the parks and
212 recreation plan required by paragraph (e) must comply with the
213 achieved level of service based on the latest local government
214 impact fee study in place at the time of enactment of this
215 section.

216
217 A blue ribbon plan must provide that any easement granted to the
218 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services pursuant to s.
219 570.71 for portions of the reserve area that will be reserved
220 for uses consistent with that section must be granted without
221 charge. The granting of the easement shall occur upon agreement
222 between the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and
223 the landowner regarding allowable uses of the easement interest.
224 If an easement or property is granted to any other state agency,
225 water management district, or local government, the easement or

226 property shall be granted without charge.

227 (6) LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW OF BLUE RIBBON PLANS.—

228 (a) A landowner must apply to the local government for
229 approval of a blue ribbon plan. A plan that meets the
230 requirements of this section must be approved by the local
231 governing body during a public hearing. The local governing
232 body's review of a plan is limited to review for compliance with
233 this section. The local government's staff must review an
234 application for a blue ribbon plan in the same manner as it
235 reviews applications for rezonings. At any time during the local
236 government staff's review of the blue ribbon plan, the landowner
237 shall have the right to request that the application be placed
238 on the soonest-available agenda of the local governing body for
239 a public hearing. The local government must conduct two public
240 hearings relating to a blue ribbon plan application, the first
241 at the local government's land planning agency and the second at
242 the local government's commission or council, at which time a
243 decision on the application must be made by the commission or
244 council.

245 (b) The local government shall provide public notice of
246 the public hearings on the blue ribbon plan application in the
247 same manner as it provides notice for rezoning applications.

248 (c) Within 30 days after final approval of a blue ribbon
249 plan, a local government shall adopt the blue ribbon plan as a
250 site-specific text amendment to its comprehensive plan and the

251 blue ribbon plan overlay shall be depicted on the comprehensive
252 plan future land use map. The text amendment shall govern use of
253 the property in lieu of applicable comprehensive plan future
254 land use requirements and applicable land development
255 regulations. The blue ribbon plan shall serve as the governing
256 document for the blue ribbon project overlay.

257 (d) A blue ribbon project may be located on land with any
258 future land use designation provided in the applicable local
259 government's comprehensive plan and with any zoning designation
260 listed in the applicable local government's land development
261 regulations.

262 (e) After a blue ribbon plan has been approved, the local
263 government must record the blue ribbon plan in the public
264 records of the county in which the property is located, and the
265 plan shall run with title to the land. The applicant may not
266 amend the recorded plan without undergoing review of the plan
267 amendment in accordance with paragraph (a). Review of a plan
268 amendment is limited to the portions of the plan which are being
269 revised.

270 (f) The applicant may hire a private company to conduct
271 plan reviews and building inspections pursuant to s. 553.791.

272 (7) APPEAL PROCEDURE.—

273 (a) The applicant may appeal the local government's denial
274 of an application for a blue ribbon project by filing a de novo
275 action for declaratory, injunctive, or other relief requiring

276 | the local government to approve the application if the applicant
277 | demonstrates through competent and substantial evidence that its
278 | application is compliant with this section. The local government
279 | has the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence
280 | that the application is not in compliance with this section. The
281 | court shall not use a deferential standard for the benefit of
282 | the government. Before initiating such an action, the applicant
283 | may use the dispute resolution procedures under s. 70.45.

284 | (b) A local government's approval of a blue ribbon plan
285 | may be appealed in the same manner as provided in s.
286 | 163.3184(5).

287 | (8) ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW.—A blue ribbon project must
288 | comply with applicable provisions of chapters 373 and 403.

289 | **Section 2.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.