The Florida Senate

BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Rules

BILL:	CS/CS/CS/SB 354
INTRODUCER:	Rules Committee; Appropriations Committee on Transportation, Tourism and Economic Development; Community Affairs Committee; and Senator McClain
SUBJECT:	Blue Ribbon Projects
DATE:	March 3, 2026 REVISED:

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Hackett	Fleming	CA	**Fav/CS**
2.	Griffin	Nortelus	ATD	**Fav/CS**
3.	Hackett	Kruse	RC	**Fav/CS**

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/CS/SB 354 creates a framework for "Blue Ribbon Projects," large scale development projects which trade state preemption over local governments' comprehensive planning and land use regulations in exchange for a certain amount of "reserve area." Such projects must include at least 15,000 acres of land, with at least 60 percent reserved for uses such as environmental protection, agriculture, recreation, and utilities sites, while the remainder may be developed over 50 years into towns and cities regardless of underlying comprehensive planning and land use allocations.

The bill provides the requirements under which a plan for such a project must be crafted and administratively approved by the local government. The bill also provides for an appeal procedure for a denied applicant or an individual impacted by an approval.

The bill will have an indeterminate fiscal impact on private and governmental sectors. See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

II. Present Situation:

Comprehensive Plans

The Community Planning Act directs counties and municipalities to plan for future development by adopting comprehensive plans.[1] Each local government must maintain a comprehensive plan to guide future development.[2]

All development, both public and private, and all development orders approved by local governments must be consistent with the local government's comprehensive plan.[3] A comprehensive plan is intended to provide for the future use of land, which contemplates gradual and ordered growth, and establishes a long-range maximum limit on the possible intensity of land use.

Comprehensive plans lay out the locations for future public facilities, including roads, water and sewer facilities, neighborhoods, parks, schools, and commercial and industrial developments. They are made up of 10 required elements, each laying out regulations for different facets of development.[4]

The 10 required elements consider and address capital improvements; future land uses; transportation; general sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water, and natural groundwater aquifer recharge; conservation; recreation and open space; housing; coastal management; intergovernmental coordination; and property rights. Other plans and programs may be added as optional elements to a comprehensive plan.[5]

Future Land Use Element and Compatibility

Comprehensive plans must include an element regarding future land use that designates the proposed future general distribution, location, and extent of the uses of land for a number of uses and categories of public and private uses of land.[6] Each future land use category must be defined in terms of uses included, and must include standards to be followed in the control and distribution of population densities and building and structure intensities.[7] The proposed distribution, location, and extent of the various categories of land use must be shown on a land use map or map series. Future land use plans and plan amendments are based on surveys, studies, and data regarding the area.[8]

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[1] Section 163.3167(1), F.S.
[2] Section 163.3167(2), F.S.
[3] Section 163.3194(3), F.S
[4] Section 163.3177(3) and (6), F.S.
[5] *Id*.
[6] Section 163.3177(6)(a), F.S. Applicable uses and categories of public and private uses of land include, but are not limited to, residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, conservation, educational, and public facilities. Section 163.3177(6)(a)10., F.S.
[7] Section 163.3177(6)(a)1., F.S.
[8] Section 163.3177(6)(a)2., F.S.

A comprehensive plan's future land use element establishes a range of allowable uses and densities and intensities over large areas, and the specific use and intensities for specific parcels within that range are decided by a more detailed, implementing zoning map.[9]

The future land use element must consider what uses are compatible with one another to guide rezoning requests, development orders, and plan amendments.[10] Compatibility means "a condition in which land uses or conditions can coexist in relative proximity to each other in a stable fashion over time such that no use or condition is unduly negatively impacted directly or indirectly by another use or condition."[11] In other words, the compatibility requirement permits local governments to consider whether a proposed use can peacefully coexist with existing uses.

Local governments, through the future land use plan, are responsible for ensuring compatibility of uses on adjacent lands, and particularly those lands in proximity to military installations and airports.[12] To act on this requirement, land use regulations are required to contain specific and detailed provisions necessary to ensure the compatibility of adjacent land uses.[13] In practice, these regulations take the form of zoning codes with compatibility standards for height, density, setbacks, parking, and other general regulations on what types of developments can coexist.[14]

Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Development that does not conform to the comprehensive plan may not be approved by a local government unless the local government amends its comprehensive plan first. State law requires a proposed comprehensive plan amendment to receive two public hearings, the first held by the local planning board, and subsequently by the governing board.[15]

Comprehensive plan amendment adoption must be by an affirmative vote of at least a majority of the governing body's members present at the hearing, and failure to hold a timely adoption hearing causes the amendment to be deemed withdrawn unless the timeframe is extended by agreement with specified notice to the state land planning agency, which is currently the Department of Commerce (Department), and other parties.[16]

Within 10 working days, the local government must transmit the plan amendment to the Department and any affected person who provided timely comments on the amendment.[17] If no deficiencies are found following Department review, the amendment takes effect 31 days after the Department notifies the local government that the amendment package is complete for the expedited state review process, 31 days after the adoption of the amendment for small-scale

[9] Richard Grosso, *A Guide to Development Order "Consistency" Challenges Under Florida Statutes Section 163.3215,* 34 J. ENVTL. L. & LITIG. 129, 154 (2019) (citing *Brevard Cty. v. Snyder,* 627 So. 2d 469, 475 (Fla. 1993)).
[10] Section 163.3194(3), F.S.
[11] Section 163.3164(9), F.S.
[12] Section 163.3177(6)(a)2., F.S.
[13] Section 163.3202(2)(b), F.S.
[14] *See, e.g.,* s. 5.10 (Residential Compatibility Standards), Land Development Code of Maitland, Florida.
[15] Sections 163.3174(4)(a) and 163.3184, F.S.
[16] Section 163.3184(3), (4), and (11), F.S.
[17] *Id.*

development amendments, or pursuant to the Department's notice of intent determining the amendment is in compliance for the state coordinated review process.[18]

Amendments to comprehensive land use plans are legislative decisions that are subject to "fairly debatable" standard of review, even when amendments to plans are being sought as part of a rezoning application in respect to only one piece of property.[19] "Fairly debatable" means that the government's action must be upheld if reasonable minds could differ as to the propriety of the decision reached.[20]

Land Development Regulations

Comprehensive plans are implemented via land development regulations. Land development regulations are ordinances enacted by governing bodies for the regulation of any aspect of development and include any local government zoning, rezoning, subdivision, building construction, or sign regulations or any other regulations controlling the development of land.[21]

Each county and municipality must adopt and enforce land development regulations that are consistent with and implement their adopted comprehensive plan.[22] Local governments are encouraged to use innovative land development regulations[23] and may adopt measures for the purpose of increasing affordable housing using land use mechanisms.[24] Land development regulations relating to all public and private development, including special district projects, must be consistent with the local comprehensive plan.[25]

Zoning

A comprehensive plan's future land use element establishes a range of allowable uses and densities[26] and intensities[27] over large areas, while the specific use and intensities for specific parcels within that range are decided by a more detailed, implementing zoning map.[28]

Zoning maps and zoning districts are adopted by a local government for developments within each land use category or sub-category. While land uses are general in nature, one or more zoning districts may apply within each land use designation.[29] Common regulations within the zoning map districts include density, height and bulk of buildings, setbacks, and parking

[18] Sections 163.3184(3)(c)4., 163.3184(4)(e)4.-5., and 163.3187(5)(c), F.S.
[19] Martin Cty. v. Yusem, 690 So.2d 1288, 1293-94 (Fla. 1997).
[20] Gary K. Hunter Jr. and Douglas M Smith, ABCs of Local Land Use and Zoning Decisions, 84 Fla. B.J. 20 (January 2010).
[21] Section 163.3164(26), F.S.
[22] Section 163.3202(1), F.S.
[23] Section 163.3202(3), F.S.
[24] Sections 125.01055 and 166.04151, F.S.
[25] *See* ss. 163.3161(6) and 163.3194(1)(a), F.S.
[26] "Density" means an objective measurement of the number of people or residential units allowed per unit of land, such as residents or employees per acre. S. 163.3164(12), F.S.
[27] "Intensity" means an objective measurement of the extent to which land may be developed or used, including the consumption or use of the space above, on, or below ground; the measurement of the use of or demand on natural resources; and the measurement of the use of or demand on facilities and services. S. 163.3164(22), F.S.
[28] Richard Grosso, A Guide to Development Order "Consistency" Challenges Under Florida Statutes Section 163.3215, 34 J. Envtl. L. & Litig. 129, 154 (2019) citing Brevard Cnty. v. Snyder, 627 So. 2d 469, 475 (Fla. 1993).
[29] See, e.g., Indian River County, Planning and Development Services FAQ (last visited Jan. 11, 2026).

requirements. Regulations for a zoning category in a downtown area may allow for more density and height than allowed in a suburb, for instance.

If a developer or landowner believes that a proposed development may have merit but it does not meet the requirements of a zoning map in a jurisdiction, the developer or landowner can seek a rezoning through a rezoning application.[30] Rezoning applications are initially reviewed by local government staff, followed by a review by an appointed body that makes recommendations to the governing body of the local government, which makes the final determination.[31] If a property has unique circumstances or small nonconformities but otherwise meets zoning regulations, local governments may ease restrictions on certain regulations such as building size or setback through an application for a variance.[32] However, any action to rezone or grant a variance must be consistent with the local government's comprehensive plan.

Concurrency and Proportionate Share

"Concurrency" is a phrase referring to a set of land use regulations requiring local governments to ensure that new development does not outstrip a local government's ability to provide necessary services. Developments meet concurrency requirements when the local government has the infrastructure capacity to serve the new growth.

A concurrency requirement is a law stating that certain infrastructure must be in place and available to serve new development before the local government may allow new citizens to live in the new development.[33] For example, before a local government can approve a building permit to allow a new development, it must consult with its water suppliers to ensure adequate supplies to serve the new development will be available by the time citizens can move in.[34] Certain services are subject to concurrency statewide (sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, and potable water) while other services, such as public transportation or schools, may optionally be subjected to concurrency by a local government.[35]

Proportionate share is a tool local governments may use to require developers to help mitigate the impacts of their development notwithstanding a failure to achieve and maintain the adopted level of service standards.[36] Proportionate share generally requires developers to contribute to costs, or build facilities, necessary to offset a new development's impacts.[37]

[30] See e.g., City of Tallahassee, Application for Rezoning Review (last visited Jan. 11, 2026).
[31] See id. and City of Redington Shores, Planning and Zoning Board (last visited Jan. 11, 2026).
[32] See e.g., City of Tallahassee, Variance and Appeals and Seminole County, Variance Processes (last visited Jan. 11, 2026).
[33] Section 163.3180(2), F.S.
[34] *Id.*
[35] Section 163.3180(1), F.S.
[36] Florida Department of Community Affairs (now Department of Economic Opportunity), *Transportation Concurrency: Best Practices Guide*, pg. 64 (2007), available at https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1041&context=cutr_tpppfr (last visited Jan. 10, 2026).
[37] *Id.*

Development Rights

Land development, especially large-scale development, is completed in stages. During the development process, a landowner will often commence a particular land use activity in accordance with then-current zoning regulations that are amended at some later point in the development process in a manner that would prohibit the use. At this point, a landowner may claim a vested right to complete the project under the prior zoning regulations, asserting that when development activities commenced under the prior zoning scheme, he or she acquired a property right, which cannot now be abridged by the government's exercise of its police powers, that is, the amended zoning ordinance.[38]

Florida common law provides that vested rights may be established if a landowner or development has made a substantial change in position or has incurred extensive obligations that would make interfering with the acquired right inequitable in good faith reliance on an act or omission of government.[39]

Florida law also allows for local governments to enter into development agreements with developers.[40] These agreements are "contract[s] between a local government and a property owner/developer, which provides the developer with vested rights by freezing the existing zoning regulations applicable to a property in exchange for public benefits."[41] A development agreement must contain:

- A legal description of the land subject to the agreement and the names of its legal and equitable owners.
- The duration of the agreement.
- The development uses permitted on the land, including population densities, and building intensities and height.
- A description of public facilities that will service the development, including who will provide such facilities, the date any new facilities (if needed) will be constructed, and a schedule to assure public facilities are available concurrent with the impacts of the development.
- A description of any reservation or dedication of land for public purposes.
- A description of all local development permits approved or needed to be approved for the development of the land.
- A finding that the development permitted or proposed is consistent with the local government's comprehensive plan and land development regulations.
- A description of any conditions, terms, restrictions, or other requirements determined to be necessary by the local government for the public health, safety, or welfare of its citizens.
- A statement indicating that the failure of the agreement to address a particular permit, condition, term, or restriction does not relieve the developer of the necessity of complying

[38] 35 Am. Jur. Proof of Facts 3d s. 385 (1996).
[39] Monroe Cnty. v. Ambrose, 866 So.2d 707, 710 (Fla. 3rd DCA 2003).
[40] Section 163.3220(4), F.S.; See ss. 163.3220-163.3143, F.S., known as the "Florida Local Government Development Agreement Act."
[41] Morgran Co., Inc. v. Orange County, 818 So. 2d 640 (Fla. 5th DCA 2002); 7 Fla. Jur 2d Building, Zoning, and Land Controls § 168 (2019).

with the law governing said permitting requirements, conditions, terms, or restrictions.[42]

Within 14 days after a local government enters into a development agreement, the local government must record the agreement with the clerk of the circuit court in the county where the local government is located, and such an agreement is not effective until it is properly recorded.[43] A development agreement binds any person who obtains ownership of a property already subject to an agreement (successor in interest).[44] A development agreement may be amended or canceled by mutual consent of the parties to the agreement or by their successors in interest.[45]

Preemption

Preemption refers to the principle that a federal or state statute can supersede or supplant state or local law that stands as an obstacle to accomplishing the full purposes and objectives of the overriding federal or state law.[46]

Where state preemption applies, a local government may not exercise authority in that area.[47] Whether a local government ordinance or other measure violates preemption is ultimately decided by a court. If a local government improperly enacts an ordinance or other measure on a matter preempted to the state, a person may challenge the ordinance by filing a lawsuit. A court ruling against the local government may declare the preempted ordinance void.[48]

Affordable Housing

One major goal at all levels of government is to ensure that citizens have access to affordable housing. Housing is considered affordable when it costs less than 30 percent of a family's gross income. A family paying more than 30 percent of its income for housing is considered "cost burdened," while those paying more than 50 percent are considered "extremely cost burdened."

What makes housing "affordable" is a decrease in monthly rent so that income eligible households can pay less for the housing than it would otherwise cost at "market rate."[49] Lower monthly rent payment is a result of affordable housing financing that comes with an enforceable agreement from the developer to restrict the rent that can be charged based on the size of the household and the number of bedrooms in the unit.[50] The financing of affordable housing is made possible through government programs such as the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program and the Florida's State Apartment Incentive Loan program.[51]

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[42] Section 163.3227(1) and (2), F.S.; 7 Fla. Jur 2d Building, Zoning, and Land Controls § 168 (2019).
[43] Section 163.3239, F.S.; 7 Fla. Jur 2d Building, Zoning, and Land Controls § 168 (2019).
[44] A successor in interest is one who follows another in ownership or control of property. A successor in interest retains the same rights as the original owner, with no change in substance. Black's Law Dictionary 1473 (8th ed. 2004); s. 163.3239, F.S
[45] Section 163.3237, F.S.
[46] Preemption Definition, Black's Law Dictionary (12th ed. 2024).
[47] *D'Agastino v. City of Miami*, 220 So. 3d 410 (Fla. 2017); Judge James R. Wolf and Sarah Harley Bolinder, *The Effectiveness of Home Rule: A Preemptions and Conflict Analysis*, 83 Fla. B.J. 92 (June 2009).
[48] See, e.g., *Nat'l Rifle Ass'n of Am., Inc. v. City of S. Miami*, 812 So. 2d 504 (Fla. 3d DCA 2002).
[49] The Florida Housing Coalition, *Affordable Housing in Florida*, p. 3, available at: https://flhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Affordable-Housing-in-Florida.pdf (last visited Jan. 10, 2026).
[50] *Id.*
[51] *Id.*

Resident eligibility for Florida's state and federally funded housing programs is typically governed by area median income (AMI) levels. These levels are published annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for every county and metropolitan area.[52] Florida Statutes categorizes the levels of household income as follows:

- Extremely low income – households at or below 30 percent AMI;[53]
- Very low income – households at or below 50 percent AMI;[54]
- Low income – households at or below 80 percent AMI;[55] and
- Moderate income – households at or below 120 percent AMI.[56]

Florida Hometown Hero Program

The Live Local Act[57] established in statute the Florida Hometown Hero Program,[58] a homeownership assistance program administered by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC). Under the program, eligible first-time homebuyers have access to zero-interest loans to reduce the amount of down payment and closing costs by a minimum of $10,000 and up to 5 percent of the first mortgage loan, not exceeding $35,000. Loans must be repaid when the property is sold, refinanced, rented, or transferred unless otherwise approved by the FHFC. Repayments for loans made under this program must be retained within the program to make additional loans.

Such loans are available to those first-time homebuyers[59] seeking first mortgages whose family incomes do not exceed 150 percent of the state or local AMI, whichever is greater, and is employed full-time by a Florida-based employer.

Conservation Lands

Article X, section 18 of the Florida Constitution requires that "the fee interest in real property held by an entity of the state and designated for natural resources conservation purposes as provided by general law shall be managed for the benefit of the citizens of this state…"[60]

Conservation Land Management

The Board of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (board) is charged with the management, control, supervision, conservation, and protection of all lands owned by, or which may hereafter inure to, the state or any of its agencies, departments, boards or commissions.[61] Section 253.034, F.S., specifies that state lands acquired pursuant to ch. 259, F.S., are required to be managed to

[52] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Income Limits*, *Access Individual Income Limits Areas – Click Here for FY 2023 IL Documentation*, available at https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html#2021 (last visited Jan. 10, 2026).
[53] Section 420.0004(9), F.S.
[54] Section 420.0004(17), F.S.
[55] Section 420.0004(11), F.S.
[56] Section 420.0004(12), F.S.
[57] The "Live Local Act", Ch. 2023-17, Laws of Fla., made various changes to affordable housing related programs and policies at the state and local levels, including zoning and land use preemptions favoring affordable housing, funding for state affordable housing programs, and tax provisions intended to incentivize affordable housing development.
[58] Section 420.5096, F.S.
[59] The requirement to be a first-time homebuyer does not apply to those qualifying as servicemembers or veterans.
[60] FLA. CONST. art. X, s. 18.
[61] Section 253.03, F.S.

ensure the conservation of the state's plant and animal species and to ensure the accessibility of state lands for the benefit and enjoyment of all people of the state, both present and future.[62] Additionally, all lands acquired and managed under ch. 259, F.S., are required to be managed in a manner that provides the greatest combination of benefits to the public and to the resources, for public outdoor recreation which is compatible with the conservation and protection of public lands, and for the purposes for which the lands were acquired.[63]

Short-term and long-term management goals must include measurable objectives for the following, as appropriate:

- Habitat restoration and improvement.
- Public access and recreational opportunities.
- Hydrological preservation and restoration.
- Sustainable forest management.
- Exotic and invasive species maintenance and control.
- Capital facilities and infrastructure.
- Cultural and historical resources.
- Imperiled species habitat maintenance, enhancement, restoration, or population restoration.[64]

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, on behalf of the board, is authorized to allocate money to acquire perpetual, less-than-fee interests in land, enter into agricultural protection agreements, and enter into resource conservation agreements.[65] To qualify for acquisition, the agricultural land must protect the integrity and function of working landscapes, ensure opportunities for viable agricultural activities on working lands threatened by conversion to other uses, and meet at least one of the following public purposes:

- Promoting and protecting wildlife habitats.
- Perpetuating open space on working lands that contain significant natural areas.
- Protecting, restoring, or enhancing water bodies, aquifer recharge areas, wetlands, or watersheds.
- Protecting agricultural lands threatened by conversion to other uses.[66]

Florida Wildlife Corridor

The 2021 Legislature created the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act to "create incentives for conservation and sustainable development while sustaining and conserving green infrastructure that acts as the foundation of the state's economy and quality of life."[67] The Legislature appropriated $300 million,[68] directing the DEP to encourage and promote investments in areas that protect and enhance the Wildlife Corridor by establishing a "network of connected wildlife

[62] Section 253.034(5)(a), F.S.
[63] Section 259.032(7), F.S.; s. 259.032(7)(a)2, F.S., provides that "such management may include, but not be limited to, the following public recreational uses: fishing, hunting, camping, bicycling, hiking, nature study, swimming, boating, canoeing, horseback riding, diving, model hobbyist activities, birding, sailing, jogging, and other related outdoor activities compatible with the purposes for which the lands were acquired."
[64] Section 253.034(5)(b), F.S.
[65] Section 570.71(1), F.S.
[66] *Id.*
[67] Section 259.1055(3), F.S.
[68] Chapter 2021-37. L.O.F., s. 152.

habitats required for the long-term survival of and genetic exchange amongst regional wildlife populations which serves to prevent fragmentation by providing ecological connectivity of the lands needed to furnish adequate habitats and allow safe movement and dispersal."[69]

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Blue Ribbon Projects

The bill creates a framework for "Blue Ribbon Projects," large scale development projects which trade state preemption over local governments' comprehensive planning and land use regulations in exchange for a certain amount of "reserve area."[70] An individual will develop a "Blue Ribbon Plan" which, when administratively approved, grants development rights regardless of the land's underlying comprehensive plan, zoning, and land development regulations.

An eligible project must contain at least 15,000 acres of contiguous land controlled by a single owner, and the majority must not be within a municipality. At least 60 percent of the land must be reserved, while the other 40 percent may be developed.

Reserve Area

The bill provides that the reserve area is land set aside for any or all of the following:

- Environmental conservation, wildlife corridors, or wetland and wildlife mitigation;
- Productive agriculture and silviculture (forestry);
- Uses consistent with the public purposes described by 570.71(1), which include:
  - Promotion and improvement of wildlife habitat;
  - Protection and enhancement of water bodies, aquifer recharge areas, wetlands, and watersheds;
  - Perpetuation of open space on lands with significant natural areas; or
  - Protection of agricultural lands threatened by conversion to other uses;
- Parks and recreational activities;
- Utility sites;
- Reservoirs and lakes; or
- Other similar types of open space.

Reserve areas may not include golf courses, data centers, or solar farms. Some proposed uses for the reserve area, particularly recreational activities and utility sites, are undefined and unclear as to the breadth of permitted use. Uses of public benefit including including parks, active recreation, stormwater management facilities, flood control facilities, utility facilities, and reservoirs may not exceed 15% of the reserve area.

[69] Section 259.1055(4)(g), F.S.

[70] The bill's stated intent is to balance environmental stewardship with the need for development to provide for future growth. The bill states the Legislature intends for these projects to promote the preservation of natural areas, encourage agricultural land uses and rural land stewardship, protect critical ecological systems, expand wildlife corridors, and provide for more compact mixed-use developments designed for long-term viability.

If any project boundary is contiguous to state-owned environmental preservation land or the Florida wildlife corridor, an unspecified amount of the project's reserve area must be adjacent to such land.

Development Area

The remaining area, up to 40 percent of the project, may be utilized for development, subject to the following limitations:

- Individual development areas within the project must promote walkability, mobility, and mixed uses;
- At least 10 percent of the development must be nonresidential, which may include mixed use where the ground floor is nonresidential;
- An unspecified portion must be allocated to provide economic development in a location accessible to an interstate interchange, rail line, airport, or any other transportation;
- The area must have a dense, walkable, mixed-use, "human-centered" development pattern; and
- Residential units must include single-family, multifamily, attached, and detached units.

The bill grants the development area a maximum residential density of 12 units per gross acre, and nonresidential intensity of 85 percent surface ratio per acre within the development area. At least 20 percent of residential units within the development area in each phase must include affordable housing, missing middle housing,[71] or housing for people eligible for the Florida Hometown Hero Program.[72]

The development area may be developed in phases, with development rights to be vested for at least 50 years. If the development is at least 50 percent developed within 50 years, the vested period must be extended another 25 years.

Blue Ribbon Plans

Each project must be developed in accordance with a blue ribbon plan that is the master development plan for the project. These plans, which are based on a planning period longer than the 20-year period required in a local government's comprehensive plan, must specify a population projection for the planning area during the chosen planning period. A plan is not required to demonstrate need based on projected population growth or any other basis.

Each blue ribbon plan must contain documentation that includes:

- A long-term master development map that depicts the locations of the reserve and development areas.
- A conceptual phasing plan depicting land uses, densities and intensities, public facility mitigation for each phase of development, and acreage of reserve area in each phase.
- A conceptual water supply and wastewater plan to show compliance with statutory concurrency requirements.

[71] Defined by the bill as any of a range of for-sale and for-rent housing types more dense than single-family home and less dense than large apartments.

[72] A borrower must be seeking to purchase a home as a primary residence; must be a first-time homebuyer and a Florida resident; and must be employed full-time by a Florida-based employer. Section 420.5096(3), F.S.

- A conceptual transportation and mobility plan to show compliance with statutory concurrency requirements.
- A conceptual parks and recreation plan to show the compliance with statutory concurrency requirements.
- A conceptual resource protection plan to show conservation, restoration, and management of significant natural resources.
- Development standards for each type of land use proposed within the development area which is typically found in a planned unit development.[73]

It is unclear whether compliance with statutory concurrency requirements requires the master plan to comply with the local government's adopted concurrency standards in their comprehensive plan, and how that would interact with the nature of the blue ribbon plan's overruling the comprehensive plan, in addition to its extended development outlook far beyond the standard 5 years' managed growth. Florida statutes only require concurrency for wastewater and water supply, while many local governments opt to apply concurrency requirements to schools and transportation, and few apply concurrency to recreation and open space.

Park and recreational uses in the parks and recreation plan required above must comply with the achieved level of service based on the latest local government impact fee study in place at the time of enactment of this section.

If a project under a blue ribbon plan contributes land, funds, or otherwise causes the construction of public facilities necessary for achieving concurrency, the project must receive dollar-for-dollar credits against impact, mobility, proportionate share, or other fee credits from the local government for such facility improvements as required under the concurrency statute.[74]

Local Government Review

A landowner applies to the relevant local government(s) for approval. The application must include the proposed text amendment to the comprehensive plan's future land use element and a site-specific comprehensive plan future land use amendment to designate the property a blue ribbon project overlay. A blue ribbon plan that meets the requirements of the bill is presumed to be consistent with the local government's comprehensive plan, a presumption which may be overcome by the local government upon a finding of substantial inconsistency with the comprehensive plan.

A project may be located on land with any future land use designation and with any zoning designation listed in the applicable local government's land development regulations. The local government may not require a comprehensive plan amendment or rezoning for approval of the project. The plan, including the proposed text amendment and site-specific future land use map

[73] A "planned unit development" is an area of land that is planned and developed as a single entity or in approved stages with uses and structures substantially related to the character of the entire development, or a self-contained development in which the subdivision and zoning controls are applied to the project as a whole rather than to individual lots.
Section 163.3202(5)(b)2., F.S.
[74] Section 163.3180, F.S.

amendment, governs use of the property in lieu of applicable comprehensive plan future land use requirements and applicable land development regulations.

The bill requires the local government to conduct two public hearings related to an application, including the proposed comprehensive plan amendments, the first at the local government's land planning agency, and the second at the local government's commission or council, at which time a decision on the application will be made by the commission or council. The bill provides that, at any time during the local government staff's review of the plan, the landowner has the right to request that the application be placed on the soonest-available agenda of the local governing body for a public hearing, provided that such a request is not made sooner than 60 days after the public notice of the first public hearing.

If a plan is approved, the bill requires the local government to record the blue ribbon plan in the public records of the county in which the project is located, and the plan shall run with title to the land. The local government must also insert the text amendment into the comprehensive plan's future land use element and denote the site-specific amendment on the comprehensive plan's future land use map. A recorded plan may be amended using the same review procedures as the initial application, with the local government's review being limited to the portion of the plan being amended.

Appeal Procedure

The bill allows an applicant to appeal the local government's denial of the application by filing a de novo action for declaratory, injunctive, or other relief . However, before initiating such an action, the applicant may use the dispute resolution procedures related to land use and environmental disputes.

The bill prohibits the court from using a deferential standard for the benefit of the local government.

The bill provides that a local government's approval of a blue ribbon project, including the proposed text amendment and site-specific future land use map amendment, may be appealed in the same manner as challenges to comprehensive plans and plan amendments.

The bill requires a blue ribbon project to comply with applicable provisions of Ch. 373, F.S., related to water resources, and Ch. 403, F.S., related to environmental control.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The bill will have an indeterminate, likely positive impact on private sector developers able to utilize the Blue Ribbon Project process to bypass various local approval processes, saving time and money on development where applicable.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill will have an indeterminate, likely negative impact on local governments attempting to maintain required services and general levels of service for various government functions with regard to entire towns developed outside the scope of a comprehensive plan or future land use map.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

The bill lacks technical details in various respects and does not specify mechanisms by which:

- The reserve area's restrictions will be maintained;
- Concurrency, mobility, proportionate share, and impact fees will be calculated for a large scale development entirely outside the local government's comprehensive plan and future land use;
- Concurrency will be maintained through fees and agreements, with concurrency being incalculable due to working outside the comprehensive plan and land use regulations;
- The state or local government will be involved in ensuring transportation, energy, and school services.

The bill states that a blue ribbon plan may be located on land with any future land use designation and with any zoning designation listed in the applicable local government's land development regulations, may not require a comprehensive plan amendment or rezoning for approval of the project, and governs use of the property in lieu of applicable comprehensive plan future land use requirements and applicable land development regulations. The bill also states

that an application for a blue ribbon project can be denied following a finding of substantial inconsistency with the local government's comprehensive plan. These provisions appear to conflict directly.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill creates section 163.3249 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS/CS/CS by Rules on March 3, 2026:

The CS substantially revises each section of the bill. Specifically, the amendment:

- Increases the minimum acreage of a blue ribbon project to 15,000 acres.
- Revises the effect of the blue ribbon master plan to act as an "overlay" on the local comprehensive plan.
- Revises approved uses of the reserve area to permit 15% "uses of public benefit" including active recreation, stormwater and flood management facilities, utility facilities, and reservoirs, but specifically excluding golf courses, data centers, or solar farms.
- Specifies that land subject to a preexisting conservation easement does not count towards the 60% reserve area calculation.
- Revises the required documents associated with a blue ribbon plan to require proposed civic, school, and utility sites, and conceptual plans describing land uses, water and transportation plans, and resource protection.
- Revises the approval process to limit review to local government review for compliance with the section.
- Revises the appeals process to limit appeal to a court action for relief following denial, or the appeals process used for comprehensive plan amendments for relief following approval.

CS/CS by Appropriation Committee on Transportation, Tourism and Economic Development on February 12, 2026:

The committee substitute:

• Adds and revises definitions, including establishment of "special assessment district" as an authorized financing mechanism for project related infrastructure.

• Codifies minimum eligibility criteria for blue ribbon project designation, including a minimum 10,000 contiguous acres under common ownership or control.

• Requires at least 60% of project acreage to be designated as reserve/conservation land, with adjacency and protection requirements near state conservation lands and wildlife corridors.

• Limits the developable area to no more than 40% of total acreage and excludes certain uses (e.g., golf courses and data centers) from counting toward reserve requirements.
• Imposes additional land use and design standards intended to ensure mixed-use, walkable, and integrated development patterns within the developable area.
• Authorizes use of special assessment or improvement districts to finance capital facilities and infrastructure serving the project.

CS by Community Affairs on January 13, 2026:
The committee substitute adds to the list of approved uses of reserve land uses consistent with public purposes under s. 570.71(1), F.S., and requires a Blue Ribbon Plan to include provision for an easement granted to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for any portion of the reserve area to be reserved for such uses; the department and landowner must enter into an agreement regarding uses for the easement interest prior to an easement being granted. A Blue Ribbon Plan must also include a covenant requiring easements granted to state or local governments be granted without charge.

B. Amendments:

None.