

By Senator McClain

9-00466A-26

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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; specifying 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;
11 authorizing the development of the development area in
12 phases for a specified purpose; providing that
13 development rights and mitigation of project impacts
14 shall be vested for at least a certain period, which
15 may be extended under certain circumstances; requiring
16 that a blue ribbon project have a blue ribbon plan;
17 providing requirements for such plan; specifying that
18 a plan is not required to demonstrate certain need;
19 requiring that a project receive dollar-for-dollar
20 credits from a local government under certain
21 circumstances; specifying that a project may be
22 located on land with any future land use designation
23 or zoning designation; prohibiting the required
24 amendment of a comprehensive plan or a required
25 rezoning for approval of a project; authorizing a
26 landowner to apply to the local government for
27 approval of a project; requiring that a project that
28 meets certain requirements receive administrative
29 approval; limiting local government review of a

9-00466A-26

2026354__

30 project; providing for the automatic approval of a
31 project under certain circumstances; authorizing
32 applicants to hire private companies to conduct plan
33 reviews and building inspections; requiring an
34 applicant to publish notice of an approved project in
35 a specified manner; requiring an applicant to record
36 the plan for an approved project in the public records
37 of the county in which the project property is
38 located; prohibiting an applicant from amending a
39 recorded plan without undergoing a specified review;
40 authorizing an applicant to appeal the denial of a
41 project application to the Department of Commerce in a
42 specified manner; authorizing a person whose
43 substantial interests are or may be affected by
44 approval of a project to file a petition with the
45 department requesting an administrative hearing in a
46 specified manner; providing requirements for such
47 petition; requiring the department to hold certain
48 hearings before issuing certain orders; requiring the
49 department to determine whether a project meets
50 certain requirements and issue a final order;
51 providing applicability; providing an effective date.

52
53 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

54
55 Section 1. Section 163.3249, Florida Statutes, is created
56 to read:

57 163.3249 Blue ribbon projects.—

58 (1) PURPOSE AND INTENT.—The purpose of this section is to

9-00466A-26

2026354__

59 ensure the appropriate use of important state resources and
60 facilities. It is the intent of the Legislature to accomplish
61 this goal by incentivizing large landowners in this state to be
62 good stewards of the natural environment while at the same time
63 promoting a more sustainable pattern of development. The
64 Legislature intends to create blue ribbon projects, and to
65 provide a mechanism by which local governments shall implement
66 those projects within their boundaries, in order to promote the
67 goals of preserving natural areas, encouraging agricultural land
68 uses and rural land stewardship, protecting critical ecological
69 systems, expanding wildlife corridors, and providing more
70 compact mixed-use developments designed for long-term viability.

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

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

74 (b) "Blue ribbon plan" or "plan" means the plan required by
75 subsection (5).

76 (c) "Blue ribbon project" or "project" means a project that
77 meets the requirements of subsection (3).

78 (d) "Development area" means land that may be developed
79 with residential, commercial, industrial, or other uses.

80 (e) "Missing middle housing" means a range of for-sale and
81 for-rent housing types, including, but not limited to, duplexes,
82 triplexes, townhomes, small multifamily buildings, and small
83 detached single-family homes, that fill the gap between larger
84 single-family homes and larger apartment buildings. Such housing
85 may be vertically and horizontally integrated.

86 (f) "New urban design" means a development design that
87 creates walkable, mixed-use, human-centered places.

9-00466A-26

2026354__

88 (g) "Reserve area" means land that is set aside for
89 environmental conservation, wildlife corridors, wetland and
90 wildlife mitigation, productive agriculture and silviculture,
91 parks, recreational activities, utility sites, reservoirs and
92 lakes, or other similar types of open space.

93 (3) MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS.—A development project must meet
94 all of the following requirements to qualify as a blue ribbon
95 project:

96 (a) The project must contain a minimum of 10,000 acres of
97 land which are contiguous, as defined in s. 163.3163(3)(a), and
98 which are owned by the same person or by entities owned or
99 controlled by the same person.

100 (b) At least 60 percent of the land contained in the
101 project must be reserve area. If any project boundary is
102 contiguous to state-owned environmental preservation land or the
103 Florida wildlife corridor, a portion of the project's reserve
104 area must be located adjacent to the state-owned land or the
105 Florida wildlife corridor, as applicable.

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

109 1. Individual development areas within the project must be
110 designed to enhance walkability and mobility and must include a
111 mixture of land uses.

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

114 3. A portion of the development area must be allocated to
115 uses intended to provide economic development and create high-
116 wage jobs. The development area so allocated must be in a

9-00466A-26

2026354__

117 location that is accessible to an interstate interchange, a
118 state road, a rail line, or an airport or other transportation
119 facility.

120 4. The development area must have a dense, walkable, mixed-
121 use, human-centered development pattern that includes new urban
122 design, including, but not limited to, towns, villages, and
123 hamlets that have reserve area between them.

124 5. Types of residential units within the development area
125 must be varied and include single-family, multifamily, and
126 attached and detached residential units.

127 (4) DEVELOPMENT AREA DENSITIES AND INTENSITIES.-

128 (a) A maximum residential density of 12 units per gross
129 acre, and a maximum nonresidential intensity of 85 percent
130 impervious surface ratio per gross acre, is permitted within the
131 development area, as measured in combination throughout all
132 phases of the project.

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

136 1. Affordable housing, with initial sale prices and ongoing
137 rents at or below 80 percent of adjusted gross income, as
138 defined in s. 420.602, for the county in which the development
139 area is located.

140 2. Missing middle housing.

141 3. Housing for people eligible for the Florida Hometown
142 Hero Program under s. 420.5096.

143 (c) The development area may be developed in phases to
144 accommodate growth projections in the geographical area in which
145 the project is located. Development rights and mitigation of

9-00466A-26

2026354__

146 project impacts shall be vested for at least 50 years. If the
147 applicant achieves development as defined in s. 380.04 of at
148 least 50 percent of the development area within 50 years after
149 the project's date of initial public dedication of
150 infrastructure, the vested period must be extended for an
151 additional 25 years.

152 (5) BLUE RIBBON PLANS.—A blue ribbon project must have a
153 blue ribbon plan, which is the master development plan for the
154 project. Blue ribbon plans must include a document that
155 addresses the requirements of this section and exhibits,
156 including maps, illustrations, and text supported by data and
157 analysis, that demonstrate compliance therewith. The plan must
158 include all of the following:

159 (a) A long-term master development map that, at a minimum,
160 generally depicts the locations of reserve area and development
161 area throughout the project area.

162 (b) Identification and analysis of necessary water supplies
163 and available sources of water, including water resource
164 development and water supply development projects, and water
165 conservation measures required to meet the projected demand from
166 each phase of the project. Water and wastewater facilities must
167 be provided in compliance with s. 163.3180. Such facilities may
168 be provided by the applicant, a local unit of special purpose
169 government, a special district, a local government, or the
170 state. Local governments are encouraged to enter into public-
171 private partnerships to accomplish water storage and other water
172 quality and capacity improvements within the boundaries of blue
173 ribbon projects pursuant to s. 373.4591.

174 (c) Identification and analysis of the transportation

9-00466A-26

2026354__

175 facilities and future transportation corridors necessary to
176 serve development area land uses in the master development plan,
177 including guidelines to be used to establish each modal
178 component intended to optimize mobility. Transportation
179 facilities must be provided in compliance with s. 163.3180. Such
180 facilities may be provided by the applicant, a local unit of
181 special purpose government, a special district, a local
182 government, or the state. Internal roads must be designed in
183 accordance with the Department of Transportation's traditional
184 neighborhood development guidelines provided in chapter 19 of
185 the Manual of Uniform Minimum Standards for Design, Construction
186 and Maintenance for Streets and Highways, 2023 Edition.

187 (d) Identification of other regionally significant public
188 facilities necessary to support the project's permitted density
189 as provided in paragraph (4) (a) for each phase of the project,
190 which facilities must include utilities, parks, and schools, and
191 policies providing the procedures to mitigate the impacts of the
192 project's permitted density on public facilities. Public
193 facilities must be provided in compliance with s. 163.3180. Such
194 facilities may be provided by the applicant, a local unit of
195 special purpose government, a special district, a local
196 government, or the state. Local governments are encouraged to
197 enter into public-private partnerships pursuant to s. 255.065 to
198 provide qualifying public facilities within the boundaries of
199 blue ribbon projects.

200 (e) Identification of regionally significant natural
201 resources within the reserve area based on the best available
202 data and policies, and provision of mechanisms to ensure the
203 perpetual protection or conservation of specific resources,

9-00466A-26

2026354__

204 consistent with the overall conservation and development
205 strategy for the project area.

206 (f) General principles and guidelines that do all of the
207 following:

208 1. Address the land uses within the development area and
209 reserve area, and the interrelationships between such areas.

210 2. Address the protection and, as appropriate, restoration
211 and management of reserve areas identified in the recorded blue
212 ribbon plan for permanent conservation and public use, which
213 must be phased in coordination with the phased development
214 within the development area as specified in the master
215 development plan.

216 3. Achieve a cleaner, healthier environment.

217 4. Limit urban sprawl.

218 5. Provide a range of housing types.

219 6. Protect wildlife and natural areas.

220 7. Advance the efficient use of land and other resources.

221 8. Create quality communities of a design that reduces and
222 captures vehicle trips and promotes mobility options.

223 9. Enhance the prospects for state and local economic
224 development objectives and high-wage job creation.

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

228
229 A blue ribbon plan must be based on a planning period longer
230 than the generally applicable planning period of the local
231 comprehensive plan and must specify the projected population
232 within the planning area during the chosen planning period. A

9-00466A-26

2026354__

233 plan is not required to demonstrate need based on projected
234 population growth or any other basis. If under the plan a
235 project contributes land or funds or otherwise causes the
236 construction of public facilities pursuant to s. 163.3180, the
237 project must receive dollar-for-dollar credits against impact,
238 mobility, proportionate share, or other fee credits from the
239 local government for such facility improvements as required by
240 s. 163.3180.

241 (6) LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OF BLUE RIBBON
242 PLANS.-

243 (a) A blue ribbon project may be located on land with any
244 future land use designation provided in the applicable local
245 government's comprehensive plan and with any zoning designation
246 listed in the applicable local government's land development
247 regulations. A comprehensive plan amendment or rezoning may not
248 be required for approval of a project.

249 (b) A landowner may apply to the local government for
250 approval of a blue ribbon project. A project that meets the
251 requirements of this section must be administratively approved
252 without further action by the local government or any quasi-
253 judicial or administrative reviewing body. Local government
254 review of a project is limited to review for compliance with
255 this section. If the local government fails to provide written
256 comments on a project application within 60 days after receipt
257 of the application, or within 30 days after the applicant files
258 amended application documents that are responsive to initial
259 local government review, the application is automatically
260 approved. At any point after the local government's initial 60-
261 day review period, the applicant may request a final

9-00466A-26

2026354__

262 determination by the local government, and the local government
263 must provide the determination within 7 days after receipt of
264 such request. If the local government fails to provide the
265 determination within the 7-day period, the application is
266 automatically approved.

267 (c) Applicants may hire private companies to conduct plan
268 reviews and building inspections pursuant to s. 553.791.

269 (d) If a blue ribbon project is approved, the applicant
270 must publish notice of such approval in a newspaper of general
271 circulation in the area in which the land is located. The notice
272 must include the local government order number, if any; the
273 section, township, and range in which the land is located; and a
274 description of the project. The notice must be published within
275 14 days after the approval is issued.

276 (e) After a blue ribbon project has been reviewed and
277 approved, the applicant must record the blue ribbon plan in the
278 public records of the county in which the project property is
279 located, and the plan shall run with title to the land. The
280 applicant may not amend the recorded plan without undergoing
281 local government review of the plan amendment in accordance with
282 paragraph (b). Local government review of a plan amendment is
283 limited to the portions of the plan which are being revised.

284 (7) APPEAL PROCEDURE.—

285 (a) If a local government denies an application for a blue
286 ribbon project, the applicant may appeal the decision by filing
287 a written petition with the Department of Commerce within 21
288 days after the date on which the applicant receives the local
289 government's written notice of application denial. The applicant
290 shall provide a copy of the notice of appeal to the local

9-00466A-26

2026354__

291 government.

292 (b) Any person whose substantial interests are or may be
293 affected by the local government's approval of a blue ribbon
294 project may request an administrative hearing by filing a
295 written petition with the Department of Commerce pursuant to ss.
296 120.569 and 120.57. The petition must be filed with the
297 Department of Commerce within 21 days after newspaper
298 publication of the notice of the local government decision in
299 accordance with paragraph (6) (d). The petition must clearly
300 state the reasons for the petition and describe how the project
301 will adversely affect the person more substantially than the
302 general population of the geographical area in which the project
303 is located. A copy of the petition must also be provided to the
304 local government. If a petition is timely filed pursuant to this
305 subsection, the applicant may intervene as a party to the
306 hearing.

307 (c) Before issuing an order on an appeal or petition under
308 this subsection, the Department of Commerce must hold a hearing
309 in accordance with chapter 120.

310 (d) The Department of Commerce shall determine whether the
311 blue ribbon project meets the requirements of this section and
312 issue a final order granting or denying the application. The
313 department may attach conditions and restrictions to the order.

314 (e) Section 120.595 applies to proceedings brought by a
315 person whose substantial interests are or may be affected by the
316 local government's approval of a blue ribbon project under this
317 section.

318 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.