

**By** the Appropriations Committee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development; the Committee on Community Affairs; and Senator McClain

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30 specified entities for certain review and comment;  
31 requiring such entities to provide written comments to  
32 the department with a specified timeframe; requiring  
33 the department to approve the application or provide  
34 the applicant with a certain notice within a specified  
35 timeframe; providing for automatic approval of a  
36 project under certain circumstances; specifying that a  
37 project may be located on land with any future land  
38 use designation or zoning designation; providing that  
39 local government approval of a project creates a  
40 certain overlay special district; prohibiting a local  
41 government from requiring a comprehensive plan  
42 amendment or rezoning for approval of a project;  
43 requiring a landowner to apply to the local government  
44 for approval of a project upon department approval;  
45 requiring a landowner to apply to multiple local  
46 governments under certain circumstances; requiring a  
47 local government to conduct a certain public workshop  
48 within a specified timeframe after receipt of an  
49 application; requiring that an applicant be permitted  
50 to attend and participate in the workshop; requiring a  
51 local government to review a project within a certain  
52 timeframe after receipt of an application; limiting  
53 the scope of the local government's review; requiring  
54 that certain projects be administratively approved;  
55 providing that projects approved by the department are  
56 presumed to comply with certain provisions; providing  
57 that a local government may overcome such presumption  
58 in a certain manner; providing for automatic approval

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59 of a project under certain circumstances; authorizing  
60 applicants to hire private companies to conduct plan  
61 reviews and building inspections; requiring an  
62 applicant to publish notice of an approved project in  
63 a specified manner; requiring an applicant to record  
64 the plan for an approved project in the public records  
65 of the county in which the project property is  
66 located; prohibiting an applicant from amending a  
67 recorded plan without undergoing a specified review;  
68 limiting the scope of such review; authorizing an  
69 applicant to appeal the denial of a project  
70 application to the department in a specified manner  
71 and within a specified timeframe; authorizing a person  
72 whose substantial interests are or may be affected by  
73 approval of a project to file a written petition with  
74 the department requesting an administrative hearing in  
75 a specified manner and within a specified timeframe;  
76 providing requirements for such petition; authorizing  
77 an applicant to intervene as a party to a hearing  
78 under certain circumstances; requiring the department  
79 to hold certain hearings before issuing certain  
80 orders; requiring the department to determine whether  
81 a project meets certain requirements and issue a final  
82 order; specifying that the department may provide a  
83 different determination in the final order; providing  
84 applicability; requiring that a project comply with  
85 certain provisions; providing an effective date.

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

90 Section 1. Section 163.3249, Florida Statutes, is created  
91 to read:

92 163.3249 Blue ribbon projects.

93 (1) PURPOSE AND INTENT.—The purpose of this section is to  
94 ensure the appropriate use of important state resources and  
95 facilities. It is the intent of the Legislature to accomplish  
96 this goal by incentivizing large landowners in this state to be  
97 good stewards of the natural environment while at the same time  
98 promoting a more sustainable pattern of development. The  
99 Legislature intends to create blue ribbon projects, and to  
100 provide a mechanism by which local governments shall implement  
101 those projects within their boundaries, in order to promote the  
102 goals of preserving natural areas, encouraging agricultural land  
103 uses and rural land stewardship, protecting critical ecological  
104 systems, expanding wildlife corridors, and providing more  
105 compact mixed-use developments designed for long-term viability.

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

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

109 (b) "Blue ribbon plan" or "plan" means the plan required by  
110 subsection (5).

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

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

115 (e) "Missing middle housing" means a range of for-sale and  
116 for-rent housing types, including, but not limited to, duplexes,

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117 triplexes, townhomes, small multifamily buildings, and small  
118 detached single-family homes, that fill the gap between larger  
119 single-family homes and larger apartment buildings. Such housing  
120 may be vertically and horizontally integrated.

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

123 (g) "Reserve area" means land that is set aside for  
124 environmental conservation, wildlife corridors, wetland and  
125 wildlife mitigation, productive agriculture and silviculture,  
126 uses consistent with the public purposes described under s.  
127 570.71(1), parks, recreational activities, utility sites,  
128 reservoirs and lakes, or other uses that support such  
129 activities. Reserve areas may not include golf courses or data  
130 centers.

131 (h) "Special assessment district" means a community  
132 development district, municipal services taxing district,  
133 municipal services benefit district, or other district available  
134 under state law that allows for the assessment of ad valorem or  
135 non-ad valorem taxes on parcels of real property located within  
136 a blue ribbon project for the purpose of constructing,  
137 maintaining, repairing, and replacing capital improvements that  
138 serve the blue ribbon project. The term does not include an  
139 improvement district.

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

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

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146 controlled by the same person, and the majority of which are not  
147 located within a municipality.

148 (b) At least 60 percent of the land contained in the  
149 project must be reserve area. If any project boundary is  
150 contiguous to state-owned environmental preservation land or the  
151 Florida wildlife corridor, a portion of the project's reserve  
152 area must be located adjacent to the state-owned land or the  
153 Florida wildlife corridor, as applicable.

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

157 1. Individual development areas within the project must be  
158 designed to enhance walkability and mobility and must include a  
159 mix of land uses.

160 2. At least 15 percent of the development area must be  
161 allocated to nonresidential land uses, which may include mixed-  
162 use buildings that contain ground floor nonresidential units.  
163 Conservation easement areas may not be counted toward the 15  
164 percent.

165 3. A portion of the development area must be allocated to  
166 uses intended to provide economic development and create high-  
167 wage jobs. The development area so allocated must be in a  
168 location that is within 60 miles of an interstate interchange,  
169 an active rail line, or a regional or international airport or  
170 other transportation facility.

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

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175       5. Types of residential units within the development area  
176       must be varied and include single-family, multifamily, and  
177       attached and detached residential units.

178       (4) DEVELOPMENT AREA DENSITIES AND INTENSITIES.—

179       (a) A maximum residential density of 12 units per gross  
180       acre, and a maximum nonresidential intensity of 85 percent  
181       impervious surface ratio per gross acre, is permitted within the  
182       development area, as measured in combination throughout all  
183       phases of the project.

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

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

191       2. Missing middle housing.

192       3. Housing for people eligible for the Florida Hometown  
193       Hero Program under s. 420.5096.

194       (c) The development area may be developed in phases to  
195       accommodate growth projections in the geographical area in which  
196       the project is located. Development rights and mitigation of  
197       project impacts shall be vested for at least 50 years. If the  
198       applicant achieves development as defined in s. 380.04 of at  
199       least 50 percent of the development area within 50 years after  
200       the project's date of initial public dedication of  
201       infrastructure, the vested period must be extended for an  
202       additional 25 years.

203       (5) BLUE RIBBON PLANS.—A blue ribbon project must have a

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204 blue ribbon plan, which is the master development plan for the  
205 project. Blue ribbon plans must include a document that  
206 addresses the requirements of this section and exhibits,  
207 including maps, illustrations, and text supported by data and  
208 analysis, that demonstrate compliance therewith. The plan must  
209 include all of the following:

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

213 (b) Identification and analysis of necessary water supplies  
214 and available sources of water, including water resource  
215 development and water supply development projects, and water  
216 conservation measures required to meet the projected demand from  
217 each phase of the project. Water and wastewater facilities must  
218 be provided in compliance with s. 163.3180. Such facilities may  
219 be provided by the applicant; a local unit of special purpose  
220 government or a special district, except an improvement  
221 district; a local government; or the state. Local governments  
222 are encouraged to enter into public-private partnerships to  
223 accomplish water storage and other water quality and capacity  
224 improvements within the boundaries of blue ribbon projects  
225 pursuant to s. 373.4591.

226 (c) Identification and analysis of the transportation  
227 facilities and future transportation corridors necessary to  
228 serve development area land uses in the master development plan,  
229 including guidelines to be used to establish each modal  
230 component intended to optimize mobility. Transportation  
231 facilities must be provided in compliance with s. 163.3180. Such  
232 facilities must be provided by the applicant or a special

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233 assessment district created at the request of the applicant. A  
234 special assessment district, a local government, or the state  
235 may enter into a public-private partnership with the applicant  
236 pursuant to s. 255.065 to provide such facilities. Internal  
237 roads must be designed in accordance with the Department of  
238 Transportation's traditional neighborhood development guidelines  
239 provided in chapter 19 of the Manual of Uniform Minimum  
240 Standards for Design, Construction and Maintenance for Streets  
241 and Highways, 2023 edition.

242 (d) Identification of other regionally significant public  
243 facilities necessary to support the project's permitted density  
244 as provided in paragraph (4)(a) for each phase of the project,  
245 which facilities must include utilities, parks, and schools, and  
246 policies providing the procedures to mitigate the impacts of the  
247 project's permitted density on public facilities. Public  
248 facilities must be provided in compliance with s. 163.3180. Such  
249 facilities must be provided by the applicant or a special  
250 assessment district created at the request of the applicant. A  
251 special assessment district, a local government, or the state  
252 may enter into a public-private partnership with the applicant  
253 pursuant to s. 255.065 to provide such facilities.

254 (e) Identification of regionally significant natural  
255 resources within the reserve area based on the best available  
256 data and policies, and provision of mechanisms to ensure the  
257 perpetual protection or conservation of specific resources,  
258 consistent with the overall conservation and development  
259 strategy for the project area. The provision of regionally  
260 significant natural resources within the reserve area is  
261 determined to be a net ecosystem benefit.

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262        (f) General principles and guidelines that do all of the  
263        following:

264        1. Address the land uses within the development area and  
265        reserve area, and the interrelationships between such areas.  
266        2. Address the protection and, as appropriate, restoration  
267        and management of reserve areas identified in the recorded blue  
268        ribbon plan for permanent conservation and public use, which  
269        must be phased in coordination with the phased development  
270        within the development area as specified in the master  
271        development plan.

272        3. Achieve a cleaner, healthier environment.  
273        4. Limit urban sprawl.  
274        5. Provide a range of housing types.  
275        6. Protect wildlife and natural areas.  
276        7. Advance the efficient use of land and other resources.  
277        8. Create quality communities of a design that reduces and  
278        captures vehicle trips and promotes mobility options.  
279        9. Enhance the prospects for state and local economic  
280        development objectives and high-wage job creation.

281        (g) Development standards for each type of land use  
282        proposed within the development area which is typically found in  
283        a planned unit development as defined in s. 163.3202(5)(b) and  
284        which is consistent with new urban design.

285        (h) Provision for an easement granted without charge to the  
286        Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services under s. 570.71  
287        for any portion of the reserve area which will be reserved for  
288        uses consistent with the public purposes provided in s.  
289        570.71(1). The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
290        and the landowner must enter into an agreement regarding

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291 allowable uses for the easement interest before an easement is  
292 granted. The plan must also include a covenant that any easement  
293 or property granted to another state agency, a water management  
294 district, or a local government will be granted without charge.

295  
296 A blue ribbon plan must be based on a planning period longer  
297 than the generally applicable planning period of the local  
298 comprehensive plan and must specify the projected population  
299 within the planning area during the chosen planning period. A  
300 plan is not required to demonstrate need based on projected  
301 population growth or any other basis. If under the plan a  
302 project contributes land or funds or otherwise causes the  
303 construction of public facilities pursuant to s. 163.3180, the  
304 project must receive dollar-for-dollar credits against impact,  
305 mobility, proportionate share, or other fee credits from the  
306 local government for such facility improvements as required by  
307 s. 163.3180. Impact fees must be calculated as applicable at the  
308 time of issuance of building permits.

309 (6) STATE ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OF BLUE RIBBON PLANS.—In  
310 order to initiate approval of a blue ribbon plan, a landowner  
311 shall apply first to the Department of Commerce for approval of  
312 a blue ribbon project. The application must include a blue  
313 ribbon plan that meets the requirements of subsection (5). The  
314 department's review of a project is limited to a review for  
315 compliance with this section. The department shall provide  
316 copies of the application to the Department of Agriculture and  
317 Consumer Services, the Department of Environmental Protection,  
318 the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Department of  
319 Transportation, and the applicable water management district for

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320 review and comment within each entity's respective legal purview  
321 on the plan's compliance with this section. Such entities shall  
322 provide written comments to the Department of Commerce within 21  
323 days after receipt of the application by the department. Within  
324 45 days after receipt of the application, the department shall  
325 approve the application or provide to the applicant a written  
326 notice that identifies with specificity any areas of  
327 noncompliance and includes the written comments received from  
328 the specified entities. If the department fails to either  
329 approve the application or provide such notice within 45 days  
330 after receipt of the application, or fails to provide a written  
331 approval or denial of the application within 20 days after the  
332 applicant provides a response to the notice, the application is  
333 automatically approved by the department. At any point after the  
334 department's initial 45-day review period, the applicant may  
335 request a final determination of approval or denial by the  
336 department, and the department must provide the determination  
337 within 7 days after receipt of the request. If the department  
338 fails to provide the determination within the 7-day period, the  
339 application is automatically approved by the department.

340 (7) LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OF BLUE RIBBON  
341 PLANS.—

342 (a) A blue ribbon project may be located on land with any  
343 future land use designation provided in the applicable local  
344 government's comprehensive plan and with any zoning designation  
345 listed in the applicable local government's land development  
346 regulations. A local government's approval of a project creates  
347 an overlay special district within the local government's  
348 comprehensive plan which must adhere to the project's blue

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349 ribbon plan. A local government may not require a comprehensive  
350 plan amendment or rezoning for approval of a project.

351 (b)1. Upon approval of a blue ribbon project by the  
352 Department of Commerce, the landowner shall apply to the local  
353 government for approval of the project. If the project is  
354 located within more than one local government's jurisdiction,  
355 the landowner must apply to each applicable local government. In  
356 reviewing the project, each applicable local government shall  
357 apply subsections (3), (4), and (5) to the project as a whole.

358 2. Within 30 days after receipt of an application for  
359 approval of a project, the local government shall conduct a duly  
360 noticed public workshop at which the project is presented. The  
361 applicant must be permitted to attend and participate in the  
362 workshop.

363 3. The local government shall review the project within 15  
364 days after receipt of the application. The review is limited to  
365 a review for compliance with this section. A project that is in  
366 compliance with this section must be administratively approved  
367 without further action by the local government or any quasi-  
368 judicial or administrative reviewing body. A project approved by  
369 the Department of Commerce is presumed to be in compliance with  
370 this section. In order for a local government to overcome such  
371 presumption, the local government must find that the blue ribbon  
372 plan does not comply with subsection (5). If the local  
373 government makes such a finding, the local government must  
374 provide a written notice to the applicant which identifies with  
375 specificity the area of noncompliance and provides the applicant  
376 60 days to respond and submit any information necessary to  
377 comply with subsection (5). If the local government fails to

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378 provide such notice within 90 days after receipt of the  
379 application, or fails to provide a written approval or denial of  
380 the application within 30 days after the applicant provides a  
381 response to such notice, the application is automatically  
382 approved. At any point after the local government's initial 90-  
383 day review period, the applicant may request a final  
384 determination of approval or denial by the local government, and  
385 the local government must provide the determination within 7  
386 days after receipt of the request. If the local government fails  
387 to provide the determination within the 7-day period, the  
388 application is automatically approved.

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

391 (d) If a blue ribbon project is approved, the applicant  
392 must publish notice of such approval in a newspaper of general  
393 circulation in the area in which the land is located. The notice  
394 must include the local government order number, if any; the  
395 section, township, and range in which the land is located; and a  
396 description of the project. The notice must be published within  
397 14 days after the approval is issued.

398 (e) After a blue ribbon project has been reviewed and  
399 approved, the applicant must record the blue ribbon plan in the  
400 public records of the county in which the project property is  
401 located, and the plan shall run with title to the land. The  
402 applicant may not amend the recorded plan without undergoing  
403 local government review of the plan amendment in accordance with  
404 paragraph (b). Local government review of a plan amendment is  
405 limited to the portions of the plan which are being revised.

406 (8) APPEAL PROCEDURE.-

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407        (a) 1. If the Department of Commerce denies an application  
408        for a blue ribbon project, the applicant may request an  
409        administrative hearing pursuant to ss. 120.569 and 120.57 within  
410        21 days after the date on which the applicant receives the  
411        department's written denial.

412        2. If a local government denies an application for a blue  
413        ribbon project, the applicant may appeal the decision by filing  
414        a written petition with the Department of Commerce within 21  
415        days after the date on which the applicant receives the local  
416        government's written denial. The applicant shall provide a copy  
417        of the notice of appeal to the local government.

418        (b) Any person whose substantial interests are or may be  
419        affected by the local government's approval of a blue ribbon  
420        project may request an administrative hearing by filing a  
421        written petition with the Department of Commerce pursuant to ss.  
422        120.569 and 120.57. The petition must be filed with the  
423        Department of Commerce within 21 days after newspaper  
424        publication of the notice of the local government decision in  
425        accordance with paragraph (7) (d). The petition must clearly  
426        state the reasons for the petition and describe how the project  
427        will adversely affect the person more substantially than the  
428        general population of the geographic area in which the project  
429        is located. A copy of the petition must also be provided to the  
430        local government. If a petition is timely filed pursuant to this  
431        paragraph, the applicant may intervene as a party to the  
432        hearing.

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

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436        (d) The Department of Commerce shall determine whether the  
437        blue ribbon project meets the requirements of this section and  
438        issue a final order granting or denying the application. The  
439        department may attach conditions and restrictions to the order.  
440        The department may provide a determination in the final order  
441        which is different from the determination it provided after  
442        review of the application under subsection (6).

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

447        (9) A blue ribbon project must comply with applicable  
448        provisions of chapters 373 and 403.

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