

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

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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; 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; requiring such plan to contain certain
16 documents; requiring such plan to be based on a
17 specified period and specify certain information
18 during such period; providing that a plan is not
19 required to demonstrate certain need; requiring a
20 project to receive dollar-for-dollar credits from a
21 local government under certain circumstances;
22 providing that certain easements or property must be
23 granted without charge; prohibiting a plan from
24 contemplating the use of a certain district; requiring
25 a landowner to apply to the local government for
26 approval of a plan, including certain amendments;
27 providing that a plan that meets certain requirements
28 is presumed, subject to rebuttal, to be consistent
29 with the local government's comprehensive plan and in

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30 compliance with specified provisions; specifying that
31 an applicant has a right to request that the
32 application be reviewed at any time; prohibiting such
33 a request from being made sooner than a specified time
34 period; providing local government review
35 requirements; providing notice requirements if the
36 local government denies an application; providing that
37 the blue ribbon plan governs the use of the property
38 upon approval of the plan application by the local
39 government; providing that a project may be located on
40 land with any future land use designation or zoning
41 designation; requiring the local government to record
42 the plan following approval in the public records of
43 the county in which the project property is located;
44 requiring the local government to insert the text
45 amendment into the comprehensive plan's future land
46 use element and denote the site-specific amendment on
47 the comprehensive plan's future land use map;
48 prohibiting an applicant from amending a recorded plan
49 or text amendment without undergoing a specified,
50 limited review; authorizing an applicant to hire a
51 private company to conduct plan reviews and building
52 inspections; providing appeal procedures for the
53 denial and approval of a blue ribbon plan application,
54 including certain amendments; providing environmental
55 review requirements; providing an effective date.

56
57 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
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59 Section 1. Section 163.3249, Florida Statutes, is created
60 to read:

61 163.3249 Blue ribbon projects.-

62 (1) PURPOSE AND INTENT.-The purpose of this section is to
63 balance the protection of important state resources, such as the
64 natural environment and existing agricultural and silvicultural
65 uses, with the need to provide longer-term, well-planned
66 communities and job opportunities for the state's future. It is
67 the intent of the Legislature to accomplish this goal by
68 incentivizing large landowners in this state to be good stewards
69 of the natural environment and existing agricultural and
70 silvicultural land while at the same time promoting a more
71 sustainable pattern of development. The Legislature intends to
72 create blue ribbon projects, and to provide a mechanism by which
73 local governments shall implement those projects within their
74 boundaries, in order to promote the goals of preserving natural
75 areas, encouraging agricultural land uses and rural land
76 stewardship, protecting critical ecological systems, expanding
77 wildlife corridors, and providing more compact mixed-use
78 developments designed for long-term viability.

79 (2) DEFINITIONS.-As used in this section, the term:

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

82 (b) "Blue ribbon plan" or "plan" means the conceptual
83 master plan for the blue ribbon project that is required by
84 subsection (5).

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

87 (d) "Blue ribbon project overlay" means an overlay district

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88 approved by a local government in its comprehensive plan which
89 must adhere to the blue ribbon plan approved by the local
90 government.

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

95 (f) "Missing middle housing" means a range of for-sale and
96 for-rent housing types, including, but not limited to, duplexes,
97 triplexes, townhomes, small multifamily buildings, and small
98 detached single-family homes, that fill the gap between larger
99 single-family homes and larger apartment buildings. Such housing
100 may be vertically and horizontally integrated.

101 (g) "Reserve area" means land that is set aside for
102 environmental conservation, wildlife corridors, wetland and
103 wildlife mitigation, lakes, passive recreation, productive
104 agriculture and silviculture, conservation agreements granted to
105 the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services pursuant to
106 s. 570.71, activities permitted by conservation easements
107 entered into with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
108 Services pursuant to s. 570.71, and uses of public benefit and
109 that complies with the requirements of paragraph (3)(b). Reserve
110 areas may not contain golf courses, data centers, or solar
111 farms.

112 (h) "Uses of public benefit" means uses including parks,
113 active recreation, stormwater management facilities, flood
114 control facilities, utility facilities, and reservoirs.

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

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117 (a) The property must contain a minimum of 15,000 acres of
118 land which are contiguous, as defined in s. 163.3163(3), which
119 are owned by the same person or by entities owned or controlled
120 by the same person, and a majority of which are not located
121 within a municipality.

122 (b) At least 60 percent of the land contained in the
123 project must be reserve area. Land contained in a conservation
124 easement before July 1, 2026, does not qualify as reserve area
125 for the purposes of meeting the 60 percent threshold. The
126 reserve area must meet all of the following requirements:

127 1. If any property boundary is contiguous to state-owned
128 environmental land or the Florida wildlife corridor, a portion
129 of the project's reserve area must be located adjacent to a
130 portion of the state-owned land or the Florida wildlife
131 corridor, as applicable.

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

134 3. Uses of public benefit may not exceed 15 percent of the
135 reserve area.

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

139 1. Individual development areas within the project must be
140 designed to enhance walkability and mobility and must include a
141 mixture of land uses.

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

144 3. A portion of the development area must be allocated to
145 uses intended to provide economic development within the area

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146 where the property is located. The development area so allocated
147 must be in a location that is accessible to an interstate
148 interchange, a state road, an active rail line, or an airport or
149 other transportation facility.

150 4. The development area must have a dense, walkable, mixed-
151 use development pattern.

152 5. Types of residential units within the development area
153 must be varied and include single-family, multifamily, and
154 attached and detached residential units.

155 (4) DEVELOPMENT AREA DENSITIES AND INTENSITIES.-

156 (a) A maximum residential density of 12 units per gross
157 acre, and a maximum nonresidential intensity of 85 percent
158 impervious surface ratio per gross acre, are permitted within
159 the development area, as measured in combination throughout all
160 phases of the project. A building that contains residential
161 units and nonresidential uses shall be considered residential.

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

165 1. Housing that is affordable, as defined in s. 420.0004,
166 for natural persons or families who meet the extremely-low-
167 income, very-low-income, or low-income limits specified in s.
168 420.0004.

169 2. Missing middle housing.

170 3. Housing that is affordable, as defined in s. 420.0004,
171 for persons eligible for the Florida Hometown Hero Program under
172 s. 420.5096.

173 (c) The development area must be developed in phases.
174 Development rights and mitigation of project impacts shall be

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175 vested for 50 years. If the applicant achieves development, as
176 defined in s. 380.04, of at least 50 percent of the development
177 area within 50 years after the project's date of initial public
178 dedication of infrastructure, the vested period must be extended
179 for an additional 25 years.

180 (5) BLUE RIBBON PLANS.—

181 (a) A blue ribbon project must have a blue ribbon plan that
182 complies with the requirements of subsections (3) and (4).

183 (b) A blue ribbon plan must contain the following
184 documents:

185 1. A long-term master development map that, at a minimum,
186 depicts the conceptual locations of:

187 a. Reserve area and development area throughout the
188 property.

189 b. Major planned transportation corridors, including roads,
190 multipurpose trails, and transit.

191 c. Proposed civic and school sites.

192 d. Proposed utility sites.

193 2. A conceptual phasing plan depicting land uses within
194 reserve areas and development areas, densities and intensities
195 of development within development areas, public facility
196 mitigation for such development within each phase, and
197 approximate acreage of reserve area in each phase.

198 3. A conceptual water supply plan and a conceptual
199 wastewater plan to show the project's compliance with s.
200 163.3180. The plans may allow water and wastewater supplies to
201 be provided in phases.

202 4. A conceptual transportation and mobility plan to show
203 the project's compliance with s. 163.3180. The plans may allow

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204 transportation facilities to be provided in phases.

205 5. A conceptual parks and recreation plan to show the
206 project's compliance with s. 163.3180. The plans may allow parks
207 and recreational facilities to be provided in phases.

208 6. A conceptual resource protection plan to show the
209 conservation of, and, as appropriate, restoration and management
210 of, regionally significant natural resources within the reserve
211 area. The protection of regionally significant natural resources
212 within the reserve area is determined to be a net ecosystem
213 benefit.

214 7. Development standards for each type of land use proposed
215 within the development area which is typically found in a
216 planned unit development as defined in s. 163.3202(5)(b).

217 (c) A blue ribbon plan must be based on a planning period
218 longer than the generally applicable planning period of the
219 local comprehensive plan and must specify the projected
220 population within the planning area during the chosen planning
221 period. A plan is not required to demonstrate need based on
222 projected population growth or any other basis. If, under the
223 plan, a project contributes land or funds or otherwise causes
224 the construction of public facilities pursuant to s. 163.3180,
225 the project must receive dollar-for-dollar credits against
226 impact, mobility, proportionate share, or other fee credits from
227 the local government for such facility improvements as required
228 by s. 163.3180.

229 (d) All park and recreational uses in the parks and
230 recreation plan required by subparagraph (b)5. must comply with
231 the achieved level of service based on the latest local
232 government impact fee study in place at the time of enactment of

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233 this section.

234 (e) A blue ribbon plan must provide that any easement
235 granted to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
236 pursuant to s. 570.71 for portions of the reserve area that will
237 be reserved for uses consistent with that section must be
238 granted without charge. The granting of the easement shall occur
239 upon agreement between the Department of Agriculture and
240 Consumer Services and the landowner regarding allowable uses of
241 the easement interest. If an easement or property is granted to
242 any other state agency, water management district, or local
243 government, the easement or property shall be granted without
244 charge.

245 (f) A blue ribbon plan may not contemplate the use of a
246 stewardship district.

247 (6) LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW OF BLUE RIBBON PLANS.-

248 (a) A landowner must apply to the local government for
249 approval of a blue ribbon plan, including the proposed text
250 amendment to the comprehensive plan's future land use element
251 and a site-specific comprehensive plan future land use map
252 amendment to designate the property a blue ribbon project
253 overlay. A blue ribbon plan that meets the requirements of this
254 section is presumed, subject to rebuttal, to be consistent with
255 the local government's comprehensive plan and in compliance with
256 s. 163.3177(1)(f) and (6), as applicable. The presumption may be
257 overcome by the local governing authority upon a finding that
258 the blue ribbon plan is substantially inconsistent with the
259 provisions of the governing comprehensive plan. At any time
260 during the local government review of the plan application, the
261 applicant shall have the right to request that the application

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262 be placed on the soonest-available agenda of the local
263 government for a public hearing. However, such a request may not
264 be made sooner than 60 days after public notice of the first
265 public hearing conducted pursuant to paragraph (b).

266 (b) The local government must conduct two public hearings
267 relating to the approval of a blue ribbon plan application,
268 including the proposed text amendment to the comprehensive
269 plan's future land use element and a site-specific comprehensive
270 plan future land use map amendment. The first public hearing
271 must be conducted by the local government's land planning
272 agency. The second public hearing must be conducted by the local
273 government's commission or council, at which time the
274 application must be approved or denied by the commission or
275 council. The local government shall give public notice of the
276 public hearings in the same manner as it provides notice for
277 comprehensive plan amendment applications.

278 (c) If the local government denies a blue ribbon plan
279 application, the local government must give written notice to
280 the applicant within 5 days after denial of the application,
281 stating the grounds for the denial, including any applicable
282 ordinances, rules, statutes, comprehensive plan provisions, or
283 other authority for the denial.

284 (d) Upon approval by the local government of a blue ribbon
285 plan, including the proposed text amendment to the comprehensive
286 plan's future land use element and a site-specific comprehensive
287 plan future land use map amendment, the plan shall govern use of
288 the property in lieu of applicable comprehensive plan future
289 land use requirements and applicable land development
290 regulations. The blue ribbon plan shall serve as the governing

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291 document for the blue ribbon project overlay.

292 (e) A blue ribbon project may be located on land with any
293 future land use designation provided in the applicable local
294 government's comprehensive plan and with any zoning designation
295 listed in the applicable local government's land development
296 regulations.

297 (f) Following approval by the local government of a blue
298 ribbon plan application, the local government must record the
299 plan in the public records of the county in which the property
300 is located, and the plan shall run with title to the land. The
301 local government must also insert the text amendment into the
302 comprehensive plan's future land use element and denote the
303 site-specific amendment on the comprehensive plan's future land
304 use map. The recorded plan or text amendment may not be amended
305 or revised without local government review in accordance with
306 paragraph (a), and such review is limited to the portions of the
307 plan or text amendment which are being amended or revised.

308 (g) An applicant may hire a private company to conduct plan
309 reviews and building inspections pursuant to s. 553.791.

310 (7) APPEAL PROCEDURE.—

311 (a) An applicant may appeal the local government's denial
312 of an application for a blue ribbon plan, including the proposed
313 text amendment to the comprehensive plan's future land use
314 element and the site-specific comprehensive plan future land use
315 map amendment, by filing a de novo action for declaratory,
316 injunctive, or other relief. The court may not use a deferential
317 standard for the benefit of the local government. Before
318 initiating such an action, the applicant may use the dispute
319 resolution procedures under s. 70.51.

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320 (b) The approval of a blue ribbon plan application,
321 including the proposed text amendment to the comprehensive
322 plan's future land use element and the site-specific
323 comprehensive plan future land use map amendment, may be
324 appealed in the same manner as provided in s. 163.3184(5).

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

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