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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to blue ribbon projects; creating s. 163.3249, F.S.; providing a purpose and legislative intent; defining terms; requiring that a development project meet certain requirements to qualify as a blue ribbon project; providing maximum residential density and nonresidential intensity permitted within the development area of a blue ribbon project; requiring that a specified percentage of the project's residential units meet certain requirements; requiring the development area to be developed in phases; requiring certain development rights and mitigation of project impacts to be vested for a specified period; requiring a blue ribbon project to have a blue ribbon plan; requiring such plan to contain certain documents; requiring such plan to be based on a specified period and specify certain information during such period; providing that a plan is not required to demonstrate certain need; requiring a project to receive dollar-for-dollar credits from a local government under certain circumstances; providing that certain easements or property must be granted without charge; prohibiting a plan from contemplating the use of a certain district; requiring a landowner to apply to the local government for approval of a plan, including certain amendments; providing that a plan that meets certain requirements is presumed, subject to rebuttal, to be consistent 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). Development areas may not
95 contain data centers.

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

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

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

116 (3) MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS.—A property must meet all of the

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117 following requirements to qualify as a blue ribbon project:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

145 3. A portion of the development area must be allocated to

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

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

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

156 (4) DEVELOPMENT AREA DENSITIES AND INTENSITIES.—

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

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

166 1. Housing that is affordable, as defined in s. 420.0004,
167 for natural persons or families who meet the extremely-low-
168 income, very-low-income, or low-income limits specified in s.
169 420.0004.

170 2. Missing middle housing.

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

174 (c) The development area must be developed in phases.

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Development rights and mitigation of project impacts shall be vested for 50 years. If the applicant achieves development, as defined in s. 380.04, of at least 50 percent of the development area within 50 years after the project's date of initial public dedication of infrastructure, the vested period must be extended for an additional 25 years.

(5) BLUE RIBBON PLANS.—

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

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

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

a. Reserve area and development area throughout the property.

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

c. Proposed civic and school sites.

d. Proposed utility sites.

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

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

4. A conceptual transportation and mobility plan to show

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the project's compliance with s. 163.3180. The plans may allow transportation facilities to be provided in phases.

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

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

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

(c) A blue ribbon plan must be based on a planning period longer than the generally applicable planning period of the local comprehensive plan and must specify the projected population within 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. If, under the plan, a project contributes land or funds or otherwise causes the construction of public facilities pursuant to s. 163.3180, 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 by s. 163.3180.

(d) All park and recreational uses in the parks and recreation plan required by subparagraph (b)5. must comply with the achieved level of service based on the latest local

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233 government impact fee study in place at the time of enactment of
234 this section.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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291 regulations. The blue ribbon plan shall serve as the governing
292 document for the blue ribbon project overlay.

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

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

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

311 (7) APPEAL PROCEDURE.—

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

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320 resolution procedures under s. 70.51.

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

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

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