

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 certain easements or
22 property must be granted without charge; specifying
23 that a project may be located on land with any future
24 land use designation or zoning designation;
25 prohibiting the required amendment of a comprehensive

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

51 project meets certain requirements and issue a final
52 order; providing applicability; providing an effective
53 date.

54
55 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

56
57 **Section 1. Section 163.3249, Florida Statutes, is created**
58 **to read:**

59 163.3249 Blue ribbon projects.—

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

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

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

76 (b) "Blue ribbon plan" or "plan" means the plan required
77 by subsection (5).

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

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

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

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

90 (g) "Reserve area" means land that is set aside for
91 environmental conservation, wildlife corridors, wetland and
92 wildlife mitigation, productive agriculture and silviculture,
93 conservation easements granted to the Department of Agriculture
94 and Consumer Services pursuant to s. 570.71, activities
95 permitted by conservation agreements entered into with the
96 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services pursuant to s.
97 570.71, parks, recreational activities, utility sites,
98 reservoirs and lakes, and uses that support such activities.

99 (3) MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS.—A development project must meet
100 all of the following requirements to qualify as a blue ribbon

101 project:

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

106 (b) At least 60 percent of the land contained in the
107 project must be reserve area. If any project boundary is
108 contiguous to state-owned environmental preservation land or the
109 Florida wildlife corridor, a portion of the project's reserve
110 area must be located adjacent to the state-owned land or the
111 Florida wildlife corridor, as applicable.

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

115 1. Individual development areas within the project must be
116 designed to enhance walkability and mobility and must include a
117 mixture of land uses.

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

120 3. A portion of the development area must be allocated to
121 uses intended to provide economic development and create high-
122 wage jobs. The development area so allocated must be in a
123 location that is accessible to an interstate interchange, a
124 state road, a rail line, or an airport or other transportation
125 facility.

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

130 5. Types of residential units within the development area
131 must be varied and include single-family, multifamily, and
132 attached and detached residential units.

133 (4) DEVELOPMENT AREA DENSITIES AND INTENSITIES.—

134 (a) A maximum residential density of 12 units per gross
135 acre, and a maximum nonresidential intensity of 85 percent
136 impervious surface ratio per gross acre, is permitted within the
137 development area, as measured in combination throughout all
138 phases of the project.

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

142 1. Housing that is affordable, as defined in s. 420.0004,
143 for natural persons or families who meet the extremely-low-
144 income, very-low-income, or low-income limits specified in s.
145 420.0004.

146 2. Missing middle housing.

147 3. Housing that is affordable, as defined in s. 420.0004,
148 for persons eligible for the Florida Hometown Hero Program under
149 s. 420.5096.

150 (c) The development area may be developed in phases to

151 accommodate growth projections in the geographical area in which
152 the project is located. Development rights and mitigation of
153 project impacts shall be vested for at least 50 years. If the
154 applicant achieves development as defined in s. 380.04 of at
155 least 50 percent of the development area within 50 years after
156 the project's date of initial public dedication of
157 infrastructure, the vested period must be extended for an
158 additional 25 years.

159 (5) BLUE RIBBON PLANS.—A blue ribbon project must have a
160 blue ribbon plan, which is the master development plan for the
161 project. Blue ribbon plans must include a document that
162 addresses the requirements of this section and exhibits,
163 including maps, illustrations, and text supported by data and
164 analysis, that demonstrate compliance therewith. The plan must
165 include all of the following:

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

169 (b) Identification and analysis of necessary water
170 supplies and available sources of water, including water
171 resource development and water supply development projects, and
172 water conservation measures required to meet the projected
173 demand from each phase of the project. Water and wastewater
174 facilities must be provided in compliance with s. 163.3180. Such
175 facilities may be provided by the applicant, a special district,

176 a local government, or the state. Local governments are
177 encouraged to enter into public-private partnerships to
178 accomplish water storage and other water quality and capacity
179 improvements within the boundaries of blue ribbon projects
180 pursuant to s. 373.4591.

181 (c) Identification and analysis of the transportation
182 facilities and future transportation corridors necessary to
183 serve development area land uses in the master development plan,
184 including guidelines to be used to establish each modal
185 component intended to optimize mobility. Transportation
186 facilities must be provided in compliance with s. 163.3180. Such
187 facilities may be provided by the applicant, a special district,
188 a local government, or the state. Internal roads must be
189 designed in accordance with the Department of Transportation's
190 traditional neighborhood development guidelines provided in
191 chapter 19 of the Manual of Uniform Minimum Standards for
192 Design, Construction and Maintenance for Streets and Highways,
193 2023 Edition.

194 (d) Identification of other regionally significant public
195 facilities necessary to support the project's permitted density
196 as provided in paragraph (4) (a) for each phase of the project,
197 which facilities must include utilities, parks, and schools, and
198 policies providing the procedures to mitigate the impacts of the
199 project's permitted density on public facilities. Public
200 facilities must be provided in compliance with s. 163.3180. Such

201 facilities may be provided by the applicant, a special district,
202 a local government, or the state. Local governments are
203 encouraged to enter into public-private partnerships pursuant to
204 s. 255.065 to provide qualifying public facilities within the
205 boundaries of blue ribbon projects.

206 (e) Identification of regionally significant natural
207 resources within the reserve area based on the best available
208 data and policies, and provision of mechanisms to ensure the
209 perpetual protection or conservation of specific resources,
210 consistent with the overall conservation and development
211 strategy for the project area.

212 (f) General principles and guidelines that do all of the
213 following:

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

216 2. Address the protection and, as appropriate, restoration
217 and management of reserve areas identified in the recorded blue
218 ribbon plan for permanent conservation and public use, which
219 must be phased in coordination with the phased development
220 within the development area as specified in the master
221 development plan.

222 3. Achieve a cleaner, healthier environment.

223 4. Limit urban sprawl.

224 5. Provide a range of housing types.

225 6. Protect wildlife and natural areas.

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

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

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

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

234
235 A blue ribbon plan must be based on a planning period longer
236 than the generally applicable planning period of the local
237 comprehensive plan and must specify the projected population
238 within the planning area during the chosen planning period. A
239 plan is not required to demonstrate need based on projected
240 population growth or any other basis. If under the plan a
241 project contributes land or funds or otherwise causes the
242 construction of public facilities pursuant to s. 163.3180, the
243 project must receive dollar-for-dollar credits against impact,
244 mobility, proportionate share, or other fee credits from the
245 local government for such facility improvements as required by
246 s. 163.3180. A blue ribbon plan must provide that any easement
247 granted to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
248 pursuant to s. 570.71 for portions of the reserve area that will
249 be reserved for uses consistent with that section must be
250 granted without charge. The granting of the easement shall occur

251 upon agreement between the Department of Agriculture and
252 Consumer Services and the landowner regarding allowable uses of
253 the easement interest. If an easement or property is granted to
254 any other state agency, water management district, or local
255 government, the easement or property shall be granted without
256 charge.

257 (6) LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OF BLUE RIBBON
258 PLANS.—

259 (a) A blue ribbon project may be located on land with any
260 future land use designation provided in the applicable local
261 government's comprehensive plan and with any zoning designation
262 listed in the applicable local government's land development
263 regulations. A comprehensive plan amendment or rezoning may not
264 be required for approval of a project.

265 (b) A landowner may apply to the local government for
266 approval of a blue ribbon project. A project that meets the
267 requirements of this section must be administratively approved
268 without further action by the local government or any quasi-
269 judicial or administrative reviewing body. Local government
270 review of a project is limited to review for compliance with
271 this section. If the local government fails to provide written
272 comments on a project application within 60 days after receipt
273 of the application, or within 30 days after the applicant files
274 amended application documents that are responsive to initial
275 local government review, the application is automatically

276 approved. At any point after the local government's initial 60-
277 day review period, the applicant may request a final
278 determination by the local government, and the local government
279 must provide the determination within 7 days after receipt of
280 such request. If the local government fails to provide the
281 determination within the 7-day period, the application is
282 automatically approved.

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

285 (d) If a blue ribbon project is approved, the applicant
286 must publish notice of such approval in a newspaper of general
287 circulation in the area in which the land is located. The notice
288 must include the local government order number, if any; the
289 section, township, and range in which the land is located; and a
290 description of the project. The notice must be published within
291 14 days after the approval is issued.

292 (e) After a blue ribbon project has been reviewed and
293 approved, the applicant must record the blue ribbon plan in the
294 public records of the county in which the project property is
295 located, and the plan shall run with title to the land. The
296 applicant may not amend the recorded plan without undergoing
297 local government review of the plan amendment in accordance with
298 paragraph (b). Local government review of a plan amendment is
299 limited to the portions of the plan which are being revised.

300 (7) APPEAL PROCEDURE.—

301 (a) If a local government denies an application for a blue
302 ribbon project, the applicant may appeal the decision by filing
303 a written petition with the Department of Commerce within 21
304 days after the date on which the applicant receives the local
305 government's written notice of application denial. The applicant
306 shall provide a copy of the notice of appeal to the local
307 government.

308 (b) Any person whose substantial interests are or may be
309 affected by the local government's approval of a blue ribbon
310 project may request an administrative hearing by filing a
311 written petition with the Department of Commerce pursuant to ss.
312 120.569 and 120.57. The petition must be filed with the
313 Department of Commerce within 21 days after newspaper
314 publication of the notice of the local government decision in
315 accordance with paragraph (6) (d). The petition must clearly
316 state the reasons for the petition and describe how the project
317 will adversely affect the person more substantially than the
318 general population of the geographical area in which the project
319 is located. A copy of the petition must also be provided to the
320 local government. If a petition is timely filed pursuant to this
321 subsection, the applicant may intervene as a party to the
322 hearing.

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

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

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

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