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 compliance with specified provisions; specifying an applicant has a right to request that the application be reviewed at any time; prohibiting such a request from being made sooner than a specified time period; providing local government review requirements; providing notice requirements if the local government denies an application; providing that the blue ribbon plan governs the use of the property upon approval of the plan application by the local government; providing that a project may be located on land with any future land use designation or zoning designation; requiring the local government to record the plan following approval in the public records of the county in which the project property is located; requiring the local government to insert the text amendment into the comprehensive plan's future land use element and denote the site-specific amendment on the comprehensive plan's future land use map; prohibiting an applicant from amending a recorded plan or text amendment without undergoing a specified, limited review; authorizing an applicant to hire a private

company to conduct plan reviews and building inspections; providing appeal procedures for the denial and approval of a blue ribbon plan application, including certain amendments; providing environmental review requirements; providing an effective date.

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

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

163.3249 Blue ribbon projects.—

(1) PURPOSE AND INTENT.—The purpose of this section is to balance the protection of important state resources, such as the natural environment and existing agricultural and silvicultural uses, with the need to provide longer-term, well-planned communities and job opportunities for the state's future. It is the intent of the Legislature to accomplish this goal by incentivizing large landowners in this state to be good stewards of the natural environment and existing agricultural and silvicultural land while at the same time promoting a more sustainable pattern of development. The Legislature intends to create blue ribbon projects, and to provide a mechanism by which local governments shall implement those projects within their boundaries, in order to promote the goals of preserving natural areas, encouraging agricultural land uses and rural land

stewardship, protecting critical ecological systems, expanding wildlife corridors, and providing more compact mixed-use developments designed for long-term viability.

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

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

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

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

(d) "Blue ribbon project overlay" means an overlay district approved by a local government in its comprehensive plan which must adhere to the blue ribbon plan approved by the local government.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(b) At least 60 percent of the land contained in the project must be reserve area. Land contained in a conservation easement before July 1, 2026, does not qualify as reserve area for the purposes of meeting the 60-percent threshold. The

reserve area must meet all of the following requirements:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. The development area must have a dense, walkable,

mixed-use development pattern.

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

(4) DEVELOPMENT AREA DENSITIES AND INTENSITIES.—

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

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

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

2. Missing middle housing.

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

(c) The development area must be developed in phases. 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 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 government impact fee study in place at the time of enactment of this section.

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

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

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

(a) A landowner must apply to the local government for approval of a blue ribbon plan, including the proposed text amendment to the comprehensive plan's future land use element

and a site-specific comprehensive plan future land use map amendment to designate the property a blue ribbon project overlay. A blue ribbon plan that meets the requirements of this section is presumed, subject to rebuttal, to be consistent with the local government's comprehensive plan and in compliance with s. 163.3177(1)(f) and (6), as applicable. The presumption may be overcome by the local governing authority upon a finding that the blue ribbon plan is substantially inconsistent with the provisions of the governing comprehensive plan. At any time during the local government review of the plan application, the applicant shall have the right to request that the application be placed on the soonest-available agenda of the local government for a public hearing. However, such a request may not be made sooner than 60 days after public notice of the first public hearing conducted pursuant to paragraph (b).

(b) The local government must conduct two public hearings relating to the approval of a blue ribbon plan application, including the proposed text amendment to the comprehensive plan's future land use element and a site-specific comprehensive plan future land use map amendment. The first public hearing must be conducted by the local government's land planning agency. The second public hearing must be conducted by the local government's commission or council, at which time the application must be approved or denied by the commission or council. The local government shall give public notice of the

public hearings in the same manner as it provides notice for comprehensive plan amendment applications.

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

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

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

(f) Following approval by the local government of a blue ribbon plan application, the local government must record the plan in the public records of the county in which the property is located, and the plan shall run with title to the land. The

local government must also insert the text amendment into the comprehensive plan's future land use element and denote the site-specific amendment on the comprehensive plan's future land use map. The recorded plan or text amendment may not be amended or revised without local government review in accordance with paragraph (a), and such review is limited to the portions of the plan or text amendment which are being amended or revised.

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

(7) APPEAL PROCEDURE.—

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

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

(8) ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW.—A blue ribbon project must

comply with applicable provisions of chapters 373 and 403.

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