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HOUSE BILL NO. 1078

Offered January 9, 2008

Prefiled January 9, 2008

A BILL to amend and reenact § 15.2-2307 of the Code of Virginia, relating to vested rights and nonconforming uses.

Patron—Suit

Referred to Committee on Counties, Cities and Towns

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 15.2-2307 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 15.2-2307. Vested rights not impaired; nonconforming uses.

Nothing in this article shall be construed to authorize the impairment of any vested right. Without limiting the time when rights might otherwise vest, a landowner's rights shall be deemed vested in a land use and such vesting shall not be affected by a subsequent amendment to a zoning ordinance when the landowner (i) obtains or is the beneficiary of a significant affirmative governmental act which remains in effect allowing development of a specific project, (ii) relies in good faith on the significant affirmative governmental act, and (iii) incurs extensive obligations or substantial expenses in diligent pursuit of the specific project in reliance on the significant affirmative governmental act.

For purposes of this section and without limitation, the following are deemed to be significant affirmative governmental acts allowing development of a specific project: (i) the governing body has accepted proffers or proffered conditions which specify use related to a zoning amendment; (ii) the governing body has approved an application for a rezoning for a specific use or density; (iii) the governing body or board of zoning appeals has granted a special exception or use permit with conditions; (iv) the board of zoning appeals has approved a variance; (v) the governing body or its designated agent has approved a preliminary subdivision plat, site plan or plan of development for the landowner's property and the applicant diligently pursues approval of the final plat or plan within a reasonable period of time under the circumstances; ~~or~~ (vi) the governing body or its designated agent has approved a final subdivision plat, site plan or plan of development for the landowner's property; *or* (vii) *the local government has issued a building permit, the building or structure was thereafter constructed in accordance with the building permit, and upon completion of construction, the local government issued a certificate of occupancy or a use permit.*

A zoning ordinance may provide that land, buildings, and structures and the uses thereof which do not conform to the zoning prescribed for the district in which they are situated may be continued only so long as the then existing or a more restricted use continues and such use is not discontinued for more than two years, and so long as the buildings or structures are maintained in their then structural condition; and that the uses of such buildings or structures shall conform to such regulations whenever ~~they are the square footage of a building or structure is enlarged, extended, reconstructed or the building or structure is structurally altered as provided in the Uniform Statewide Building Code (§ 36-97 et seq.)~~ *and may further* Further, a zoning ordinance may provide that no nonconforming building or structure may be moved on the same lot or to any other lot which is not properly zoned to permit such nonconforming use. *However, notwithstanding any other provision of law, if the owner of the building or structure has paid taxes to the locality for such building or structure for a period in excess of 15 years, a zoning ordinance may provide that such building or structure shall be nonconforming, but not illegal.*

~~If a residential or commercial building or structure~~ If a building or structure is damaged or destroyed by a natural disaster or other act of God, the zoning ordinance may require that such building or structure be repaired, rebuilt or replaced to eliminate or reduce the nonconforming features to the extent possible, without the need to obtain a variance as provided in § 15.2-2310. If such building or structure cannot be repaired, rebuilt or replaced except to restore it to its original nonconforming condition, the owner shall have the right to do so. The owner shall apply for a building permit and any work done to repair, rebuild or replace such building or structure shall be in compliance with the provisions of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (§ 36-98 et seq.) and any work done to repair, rebuild or replace such building or structure shall be in compliance with the provisions of the local flood plain regulations adopted as a condition of participation in the National Flood Insurance Program. Unless such building or structure is repaired or rebuilt within two years of the date of the natural disaster or replaced within two years of the date of the natural disaster or other act of God, such building or structure shall only be repaired, rebuilt or replaced in accordance with the provisions of the zoning ordinance of the locality. However, if the

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HB1078

59 nonconforming building is in an area under a federal disaster declaration and the building *or structure*
60 has been damaged or destroyed as a direct result of conditions that gave rise to the declaration, then the
61 zoning ordinance shall provide for an additional two years for the building *or structure* to be repaired,
62 rebuilt or replaced as otherwise provided in this paragraph.

63 Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent a locality, after making a reasonable attempt to
64 notify such property owner, from ordering the removal of a nonconforming sign that has been
65 abandoned. For purposes of this section, a sign shall be considered abandoned if the business for which
66 the sign was erected has not been in operation for a period of at least two years. Any locality may, by
67 ordinance, provide that following the expiration of the two-year period any abandoned nonconforming
68 sign shall be removed by the owner of the property on which the sign is located, if notified by the
69 locality to do so. If, following such two-year period, the locality has made a reasonable attempt to notify
70 the property owner, the locality through its own agents or employees may enter the property upon which
71 the sign is located and remove any such sign whenever the owner has refused to do so. The cost of such
72 removal shall be chargeable to the owner of the property. Nothing herein shall prevent the locality from
73 applying to a court of competent jurisdiction for an order requiring the removal of such abandoned
74 nonconforming sign by the owner by means of injunction or other appropriate remedy.

75 Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the land owner or home owner from removing a
76 valid nonconforming manufactured home from a mobile or manufactured home park and replacing that
77 home with another comparable manufactured home that meets the current HUD manufactured housing
78 code. In such mobile or manufactured home park, a single-section home may replace a single-section
79 home and a multi-section home may replace a multi-section home. The owner of a valid nonconforming
80 mobile or manufactured home not located in a mobile or manufactured home park may replace that
81 home with a newer manufactured home, either single- or multi-section, that meets the current HUD
82 manufactured housing code. Any such replacement home shall retain the valid nonconforming status of
83 the prior home.