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HOUSE BILL NO. 1088

Offered January 12, 2022

Prefiled January 12, 2022

A *BILL to amend and reenact §§ 15.2-2201 and 15.2-2241 of the Code of Virginia, relating to planning; subdivision of land and zoning; subdivision.*

Patron—Leftwich

Referred to Committee on Counties, Cities and Towns

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. **That §§ 15.2-2201 and 15.2-2241 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:**
§ 15.2-2201. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Affordable housing" means, as a guideline, housing that is affordable to households with incomes at or below the area median income, provided that the occupant pays no more than thirty percent of his gross income for gross housing costs, including utilities. For the purpose of administering affordable dwelling unit ordinances authorized by this chapter, local governments may establish individual definitions of affordable housing and affordable dwelling units including determination of the appropriate percent of area median income and percent of gross income.

"Conditional zoning" means, as part of classifying land within a locality into areas and districts by legislative action, the allowing of reasonable conditions governing the use of such property, such conditions being in addition to, or modification of the regulations provided for a particular zoning district or zone by the overall zoning ordinance.

"Development" means a tract of land developed or to be developed as a unit under single ownership or unified control which is to be used for any business or industrial purpose or is to contain three or more residential dwelling units. The term "development" shall not be construed to include any tract of land which will be principally devoted to agricultural production.

"Historic area" means an area containing one or more buildings or places in which historic events occurred or having special public value because of notable architectural, archaeological or other features relating to the cultural or artistic heritage of the community, of such significance as to warrant conservation and preservation.

"Incentive zoning" means the use of bonuses in the form of increased project density or other benefits to a developer in return for the developer providing certain features, design elements, uses, services, or amenities desired by the locality, including but not limited to, site design incorporating principles of new urbanism and traditional neighborhood development, environmentally sustainable and energy-efficient building design, affordable housing creation and preservation, and historical preservation, as part of the development.

"Local planning commission" means a municipal planning commission or a county planning commission.

"Military installation" means a base, camp, post, station, yard, center, homeport facility for any ship, or other activity under jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Defense, including any leased facility, or any land or interest in land owned by the Commonwealth and administered by the Adjutant General of Virginia or the Virginia Department of Military Affairs. "Military installation" does not include any facility used primarily for civil works, rivers and harbors projects, or flood control projects.

"Mixed use development" means property that incorporates two or more different uses, and may include a variety of housing types, within a single development.

"Official map" means a map of legally established and proposed public streets, waterways, and public areas adopted by a locality in accordance with the provisions of Article 4 (§ 15.2-2233 et seq.) hereof.

"Planned unit development" means a form of development characterized by unified site design for a variety of housing types and densities, clustering of buildings, common open space, and a mix of building types and land uses in which project planning and density calculation are performed for the entire development rather than on an individual lot basis.

"Planning district commission" means a regional planning agency chartered under the provisions of Chapter 42 (§ 15.2-4200 et seq.) of this title.

"Plat" or "plat of subdivision" means the schematic representation of land divided or to be divided and information in accordance with the provisions of §§ 15.2-2241, 15.2-2242, 15.2-2258, 15.2-2262, and 15.2-2264, and other applicable statutes.

"Preliminary subdivision plat" means the proposed schematic representation of development or

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subdivision that establishes how the provisions of §§ 15.2-2241 and 15.2-2242, and other applicable statutes will be achieved.

"Resident curator" means a person, firm, or corporation that leases or otherwise contracts to manage, preserve, maintain, operate, or reside in a historic property in accordance with the provisions of § 15.2-2306 and other applicable statutes.

"Site plan" means the proposal for a development or a subdivision including all covenants, grants or easements and other conditions relating to use, location and bulk of buildings, density of development, common open space, public facilities and such other information as required by the subdivision ordinance to which the proposed development or subdivision is subject.

"Special exception" means a special use that is a use not permitted in a particular district except by a special use permit granted under the provisions of this chapter and any zoning ordinances adopted herewith.

"Street" means highway, street, avenue, boulevard, road, lane, alley, or any public way.

"Subdivision," unless otherwise defined in an ordinance adopted pursuant to § 15.2-2240, means the division of a parcel of land into three or more lots or parcels of less than five acres each for the purpose of transfer of ownership or building development, or, if a new street is involved in such division, any division of a parcel of land. The term includes resubdivision and, when appropriate to the context, shall relate to the process of subdividing or to the land subdivided and solely for the purpose of recordation of any single division of land into two lots or parcels, a plat of such division shall be submitted for approval in accordance with § 15.2-2258. *Nothing in this definition, section, nor any ordinance adopted pursuant to § 15.2-2440 shall preclude different owners of adjacent parcels from entering into a valid and enforceable boundary line agreement with one another. For any property affected by this definition, any division of land subject to a partition suit by virtue of order or decree by a court of competent jurisdiction shall take precedence over the requirements of Article 6 (§ 15.2-2240 et seq.) and the minimum lot area, width, and frontage requirements in the zoning ordinance.*

"Variance" means, in the application of a zoning ordinance, a reasonable deviation from those provisions regulating the shape, size, or area of a lot or parcel of land or the size, height, area, bulk, or location of a building or structure when the strict application of the ordinance would unreasonably restrict the utilization of the property, and such need for a variance would not be shared generally by other properties, and provided such variance is not contrary to the purpose of the ordinance. It shall not include a change in use, which change shall be accomplished by a rezoning or by a conditional zoning.

"Working waterfront" means an area or structure on, over, or adjacent to navigable waters that provides access to the water and is used for water-dependent commercial, industrial, or governmental activities, including commercial and recreational fishing; tourism; aquaculture; boat and ship building, repair, and services; seafood processing and sales; transportation; shipping; marine construction; and military activities.

"Working waterfront development area" means an area containing one or more working waterfronts having economic, cultural, or historic public value of such significance as to warrant development and reparation.

"Zoning" or "to zone" means the process of classifying land within a locality into areas and districts, such areas and districts being generally referred to as "zones," by legislative action and the prescribing and application in each area and district of regulations concerning building and structure designs, building and structure placement and uses to which land, buildings and structures within such designated areas and districts may be put.

§ 15.2-2241. Mandatory provisions of a subdivision ordinance.

A. A subdivision ordinance shall include reasonable regulations and provisions that apply to or provide:

1. For plat details which shall meet the standard for plats as adopted under § 42.1-82 of the Virginia Public Records Act (§ 42.1-76 et seq.);

2. For the coordination of streets within and contiguous to the subdivision with other existing or planned streets within the general area as to location, widths, grades and drainage, including, for ordinances and amendments thereto adopted on or after January 1, 1990, for the coordination of such streets with existing or planned streets in existing or future adjacent or contiguous to adjacent subdivisions;

3. For adequate provisions for drainage and flood control, for adequate provisions related to the failure of impounding structures and impacts within dam break inundation zones, and other public purposes, and for light and air, and for identifying soil characteristics;

4. For the extent to which and the manner in which streets shall be graded, graveled or otherwise improved and water and storm and sanitary sewer and other public utilities or other community facilities are to be installed;

5. For the acceptance of dedication for public use of any right-of-way located within any subdivision or section thereof, which has constructed or proposed to be constructed within the subdivision or section

thereof, any street, curb, gutter, sidewalk, bicycle trail, drainage or sewerage system, waterline as part of a public system or other improvement dedicated for public use, and maintained by the locality, the Commonwealth, or other public agency, and for the provision of other site-related improvements required by local ordinances for vehicular ingress and egress, including traffic signalization and control, for public access streets, for structures necessary to ensure stability of critical slopes, and for storm water management facilities, financed or to be financed in whole or in part by private funds only if the owner or developer (i) certifies to the governing body that the construction costs have been paid to the person constructing such facilities or, at the option of the local governing body, presents evidence satisfactory to the governing body that the time for recordation of any mechanics lien has expired or evidence that any debt for said construction that may be due and owing is contested and further provides indemnity with adequate surety in an amount deemed sufficient by the governing body or its designated administrative agency; (ii) furnishes to the governing body a certified check or cash escrow in the amount of the estimated costs of construction or a personal, corporate or property bond, with surety satisfactory to the governing body or its designated administrative agency, in an amount sufficient for and conditioned upon the construction of such facilities, or a contract for the construction of such facilities and the contractor's bond, with like surety, in like amount and so conditioned; or (iii) furnishes to the governing body a bank or savings institution's letter of credit on certain designated funds satisfactory to the governing body or its designated administrative agency as to the bank or savings institution, the amount and the form. The amount of such certified check, cash escrow, bond, or letter of credit shall not exceed the total of the estimated cost of construction based on unit prices for new public or private sector construction in the locality and a reasonable allowance for estimated administrative costs, inflation, and potential damage to existing roads or utilities, which shall not exceed 10 percent of the estimated construction costs. If the owner or developer defaults on construction of such facilities, and such facilities are constructed by the surety or with funding from the aforesaid check, cash escrow, bond or letter of credit, the locality shall be entitled to retain or collect the allowance for administrative costs to the extent the costs of such construction do not exceed the total of the originally estimated costs of construction and the allowance for administrative costs. "Such facilities," as used in this section, means those facilities specifically provided for in this section.

If a developer records a final plat which may be a section of a subdivision as shown on an approved preliminary subdivision plat and furnishes to the governing body a certified check, cash escrow, bond, or letter of credit in the amount of the estimated cost of construction of the facilities to be dedicated within said section for public use and maintained by the locality, the Commonwealth, or other public agency, the developer shall have the right to record the remaining sections shown on the preliminary subdivision plat for a period of five years from the recordation date of any section, or for such longer period as the local commission or other agent may, at the approval, determine to be reasonable, taking into consideration the size and phasing of the proposed development, subject to the terms and conditions of this subsection and subject to engineering and construction standards and zoning requirements in effect at the time that each remaining section is recorded. In the event a governing body of a county, wherein the highway system is maintained by the Department of Transportation, has accepted the dedication of a road for public use and such road due to factors other than its quality of construction is not acceptable into the secondary system of state highways, then such governing body may, if so provided by its subdivision ordinance, require the subdivider or developer to furnish the county with a maintenance and indemnifying bond, with surety satisfactory to the governing body or its designated administrative agency, in an amount sufficient for and conditioned upon the maintenance of such road until such time as it is accepted into the secondary system of state highways. In lieu of such bond, the governing body or its designated administrative agency may accept a bank or savings institution's letter of credit on certain designated funds satisfactory to the governing body or its designated administrative agency as to the bank or savings institution, the amount and the form, or accept payment of a negotiated sum of money sufficient for and conditioned upon the maintenance of such road until such time as it is accepted into the secondary system of state highways and assume the subdivider's or developer's liability for maintenance of such road. "Maintenance of such road" as used in this section, means maintenance of the streets, curb, gutter, drainage facilities, utilities or other street improvements, including the correction of defects or damages and the removal of snow, water or debris, so as to keep such road reasonably open for public usage.

As used in this section, "designated administrative agency" means the planning commission of the locality or an agent designated by the governing body of the locality for such purpose as set forth in §§ 15.2-2258 through 15.2-2261;

6. For conveyance of common or shared easements to franchised cable television operators furnishing cable television and public service corporations furnishing cable television, gas, telephone and electric service to the proposed subdivision. Once a developer conveys an easement that will permit electric, cable or telephone service to be furnished to a subdivision, the developer shall, within 30 days after

182 written request by a cable television operator or telephone service provider, grant an easement to that
183 cable television operator or telephone service provider for the purpose of providing cable television and
184 communications services to that subdivision, which easement shall be geographically coextensive with
185 the electric service easement, or if only a telephone or cable service easement has been granted, then
186 geographically coextensive with that telephone or cable service easement; however, the developer and
187 franchised cable television operator or telephone service provider may mutually agree on an alternate
188 location for an easement. If the final subdivision plat is recorded and does not include conveyance of a
189 common or shared easement as provided herein, the local planning commission or agent designated by
190 the governing body to review and act on submitted subdivision plats shall not be responsible to enforce
191 the requirements of this subdivision;

192 7. For monuments of specific types to be installed establishing street and property lines;

193 8. That unless a plat is filed for recordation within six months after final approval thereof or such
194 longer period as may be approved by the governing body, such approval shall be withdrawn and the plat
195 marked void and returned to the approving official; however, in any case where construction of facilities
196 to be dedicated for public use has commenced pursuant to an approved plan or permit with surety
197 approved by the governing body or its designated administrative agency, or where the developer has
198 furnished surety to the governing body or its designated administrative agency by certified check, cash
199 escrow, bond, or letter of credit in the amount of the estimated cost of construction of such facilities, the
200 time for plat recordation shall be extended to one year after final approval or to the time limit specified
201 in the surety agreement approved by the governing body or its designated administrative agency,
202 whichever is greater;

203 9. For the administration and enforcement of such ordinance, not inconsistent with provisions
204 contained in this chapter, and specifically for the imposition of reasonable fees and charges for the
205 review of plats and plans, and for the inspection of facilities required by any such ordinance to be
206 installed; such fees and charges shall in no instance exceed an amount commensurate with the services
207 rendered taking into consideration the time, skill and administrator's expense involved. All such charges
208 heretofore made are hereby validated;

209 10. For reasonable provisions permitting a single division of a lot or parcel for the purpose of sale or
210 gift to a member of the immediate family of the property owner in accordance with the provisions of
211 § 15.2-2244; and

212 11. For the periodic partial and final complete release of any bond, escrow, letter of credit, or other
213 performance guarantee required by the governing body under this section in accordance with the
214 provisions of § 15.2-2245.

215 12. *For divisions of property located wholly within an agricultural zoning district for bona fide*
216 *agricultural use and not for development purposes, known as agricultural subdivisions, which may also*
217 *include one or more of the following provisions: (i) the original tract of land is divided into parcels*
218 *each consisting of no less than a number of acres specified in the provision that shall not exceed 15*
219 *acres, including the residual of the original tract; (ii) no new or extended public streets or other public*
220 *facilities are required to serve the parcels as divided; (iii) the plat depicting the division contains a note*
221 *stating that the property is to be used for bona fide agricultural purposes only; (iv) all parcels created*
222 *by the division conform with applicable minimum development criteria set out in the city's zoning*
223 *ordinance; and (v) no portion of the original tract of land is further subdivided for a period of one year*
224 *from date of recordation of the plat depicting the agricultural division of land, unless such property has*
225 *been appropriately rezoned for development.*

226 B. No locality shall require that any certified check, cash escrow, bond, letter of credit or other
227 performance guarantee furnished pursuant to this chapter apply to, or include the cost of, any facility or
228 improvement unless such facility or improvement is shown or described on the approved plat or plan of
229 the project for which such guarantee is being furnished. Furthermore, the terms, conditions, and
230 specifications contained in any agreement, contract, performance agreement, or similar document,
231 however described or delineated, between a locality or its governing body and an owner or developer of
232 property entered into pursuant to this chapter in conjunction with any performance guarantee, as
233 described in this subsection, shall be limited to those items depicted or provided for in the approved
234 plan, plat, permit application, or similar document for which such performance guarantee is applicable.