

House Bill 1405 (AS PASSED HOUSE AND SENATE)

By: Representatives Roberts of the 52nd, Washburn of the 141st, Crowe of the 110th, Dreyer of the 59th, Paris of the 142nd, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Title 36 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to local governments,
2 so as to revise "The Zoning Procedures Law"; to revise provisions related to judicial review
3 of zoning decisions; to revise definitions; to provide for requirements for zoning decisions
4 by boards or agencies using delegated powers; to provide additional notice and hearing
5 provisions for changes to zoning ordinances that revise single-family residential
6 classifications and definitions so as to authorize multifamily residential property uses; to
7 require review procedures for decisions made by boards or agencies using delegated powers;
8 to provide for judicial review of zoning decisions; to require certain designations relating to
9 appeals of quasi-judicial decisions; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective
10 date and applicability; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

12 **SECTION 1.**

13 Title 36 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to local governments, is
14 amended by revising Chapter 66, relating to zoning procedures, as follows:

15 "CHAPTER 66

H. B. 1405

36-66-1.

This chapter shall be known and may be cited as ~~'The Zoning~~ the 'Zoning Procedures Law.'

36-66-2.

(a) While recognizing and confirming the authority of local governments to exercise zoning power within their respective territorial boundaries, it is the intention of this chapter to establish as state policy minimum procedures governing the exercise and means of judicial review of the exercise of that power. The purpose of these minimum procedures is to assure that due process is afforded to the general public when local governments regulate the uses of property through the exercise of the zoning power. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to invalidate any zoning decision made by a local government prior to ~~January 1, 1986~~ July 1, 2023, or to require a local government to exercise its zoning power.

(b) Consistent with the minimum procedures required by this chapter, local governments may:

(1) Provide by ordinance or resolution for such administrative officers, ~~bodies~~ boards, or agencies as may be expedient for the efficient exercise of ~~their~~ delegated, quasi-judicial zoning powers and to establish procedures and notice requirements for hearings before such quasi-judicial officers, boards, or agencies that are consistent with the minimum procedures provided for in this chapter to assure due process is afforded the general public; and

(2) Provide by ordinance or resolution for procedures and requirements in addition to or supplemental to those required by this chapter and, where so adopted, thereby establish the minimum procedures for such local government's exercise of zoning powers.

36-66-3.

As used in this chapter, the term:

(1) 'Local government' means any county or municipality which exercises zoning power within its territorial boundaries.

(1.1) 'Quasi-judicial officers, boards, or agencies' means an officer, board, or agency appointed by a local government to exercise delegated, quasi-judicial zoning powers including hearing appeals of administrative decisions by such officers, boards, or agencies and hearing and rendering decisions on applications for variances, special administrative permits, special exceptions, conditional use permits, or other similar permits not enumerated herein as a zoning decision, pursuant to standards for the exercise of such quasi-judicial authority adopted by a local government.

(2) 'Territorial boundaries' means, in the case of counties, the unincorporated areas thereof and any area defined in paragraph (5.1) of Code Section 36-70-2, and, in the case of municipalities, the area lying within the corporate limits thereof except any area defined in paragraph (5.1) of Code Section 36-70-2.

(3) 'Zoning' means the power of local governments to provide within their respective territorial boundaries for the zoning or districting of property for various uses and the prohibition of other or different uses within such zones or districts and for the regulation of development and the improvement of real estate within such zones or districts in accordance with the uses of property for which such zones or districts were established.

(4) 'Zoning decision' means final legislative action by a local government which results in:

(A) The adoption or repeal of a zoning ordinance;

(B) The adoption of an amendment to a zoning ordinance which changes the text of the zoning ordinance;

(C) The adoption or denial of an amendment to a zoning ordinance ~~which rezones to~~ rezone property from one zoning classification to another;

(D) The adoption or denial of an amendment to a zoning ordinance by a municipal local government ~~which zones to zone~~ to zone property to be annexed into the municipality; ~~or~~

(E) The grant or denial of a permit relating to a special use of property;

(F) The grant or denial of a variance or conditions concurrent and in conjunction with a decision pursuant to subparagraphs (C) or (E) of this paragraph.

(5) 'Zoning ordinance' means an ordinance or resolution of a local government establishing procedures and zones or districts within its respective territorial boundaries which regulate the uses and development standards of property within such zones or districts. The term also includes the zoning map adopted in conjunction with a zoning ordinance which shows the zones and districts and zoning classifications of property therein.

36-66-4.

(a) A local government taking action resulting in a zoning decision shall provide for a hearing on the proposed action. Where the proposed action includes any combination of zoning decisions under subparagraphs (C), (E), or (F) of paragraph (4) of Code Section 36-66-3 for the same property, only one hearing shall be required under this Code Section.

At least 15 but not more than 45 days prior to the date of the hearing, the local government shall cause to be published within a newspaper of general circulation within the territorial boundaries of the local government a notice of the hearing. The notice shall state the time, place, and purpose of the hearing.

(b) If a zoning decision of a local government is for the rezoning of property and the rezoning is initiated by a party other than the local government, then:

(1) The notice, in addition to the requirements of subsection (a) of this Code section, shall include the location of the property, the present zoning classification of the property, and the proposed zoning classification of the property; and

(2) A sign containing information required by local ordinance or resolution shall be placed in a conspicuous location on the property not less than 15 days prior to the date of the hearing.

(c) If the zoning decision of a local government is for the rezoning of property and the amendment to the zoning ordinance to accomplish the rezoning is defeated by the local government, then the same property may not again be considered for rezoning until the expiration of at least six months immediately following the defeat of the rezoning by the local government.

(d) If the zoning is for property to be annexed into a municipality, then:

(1) Such municipal local government shall complete the procedures required by this chapter for such zoning, except for the final vote of the municipal governing authority, prior to adoption of the annexation ordinance or resolution or the effective date of any local Act but no sooner than the date the notice of the proposed annexation is provided to the governing authority of the county as required under Code Section 36-36-6;

(2) The hearing required by subsection (a) of this Code section shall be conducted prior to the annexation of the subject property into the municipality;

(3) In addition to the other notice requirements of this Code section, the municipality shall cause to be published within a newspaper of general circulation within the territorial boundaries of the county wherein the property to be annexed is located a notice of the hearing as required under the provisions of subsection (a) or (b), as applicable, of this Code section and shall place a sign on the property when required by subsection (b) of this Code section; and

(4) The zoning classification approved by the municipality following the hearing required by this Code section shall become effective on the later of:

(A) The date the zoning is approved by the municipality;

(B) The date that the annexation becomes effective pursuant to Code Section 36-36-2;
or

(C) Where a county has interposed an objection pursuant to Code Section 36-36-11, the date provided for in paragraph (8) of subsection (c) of said Code section.

(e) A qualified municipality into which property has been annexed may provide, by the adoption of a zoning ordinance, that all annexed property shall be zoned by the municipality, without further action, for the same use for which that property was zoned immediately prior to such annexation. A qualified county which includes property which has been deannexed by a municipality may provide, by the adoption of a zoning ordinance, that all deannexed property shall be zoned by the county, without further action, for the same use for which that property was zoned immediately prior to such deannexation. A municipality shall be a qualified municipality only if the municipality and the county in which is located the property annexed into such municipality have a common zoning ordinance with respect to zoning classifications. A county shall be a qualified county only if that county and the municipality in which was located the property deannexed have a common zoning ordinance with respect to zoning classifications. A zoning ordinance authorized by this subsection shall be adopted in compliance with the other provisions of this chapter. The operation of such ordinance to zone property which is annexed or deannexed shall not require any further action by the adopting municipality, adopting county, or owner of the property annexed or deannexed. Property which is zoned pursuant to this subsection may have such zoning classification changed upon compliance with the other provisions of this chapter.

(f) When a proposed zoning decision relates to or will allow the location or relocation of a halfway house, drug rehabilitation center, or other facility for treatment of drug dependency, a public hearing shall be held on the proposed action. Such public hearing shall be held at least six months and not more than nine months prior to the date of final action on the zoning decision. The hearing required by this subsection shall be in addition to any hearing required under subsection (a) of this Code section. The local government shall give notice of such hearing by:

- (1) Posting notice on the affected premises in the manner prescribed by subsection (b) of this Code section; and

(2) Publishing in a newspaper of general circulation within the territorial boundaries of the local government a notice of the hearing at least 15 days and not more than 45 days prior to the date of the hearing.

Both the posted notice and the published notice shall include a prominent statement that the proposed zoning decision relates to or will allow the location or relocation of a halfway house, drug rehabilitation center, or other facility for treatment of drug dependency. The published notice shall be at least six column inches in size and shall not be located in the classified advertising section of the newspaper.

(g) A local government delegating decision-making power to a quasi-judicial officer, board, or agency shall provide for a hearing on each proposed action described in paragraph (1.1) of Code Section 36-66-3. Notice of such hearing shall be provided at least 30 days prior to the quasi-judicial hearing, with such notice being made as provided for in subsection (a) of this Code section and with additional notice being mailed to the owner of the property that is the subject of the proposed action.

(h)(1) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this chapter to the contrary, when a proposed zoning decision relates to an amendment of the zoning ordinance to revise one or more zoning classifications or definitions relating to single-family residential uses of property so as to authorize multifamily uses of property pursuant to such classification or definitions, or to grant blanket permission, under certain or all circumstances, for property owners to deviate from the existing zoning requirements of a single-family residential zoning, such zoning decision must be adopted in the following manner:

(A) The zoning decision shall be adopted at two regular meetings of the local government making the zoning decision, during a period of not less than 21 days apart; and

(B) Prior to the first meeting provided for in subparagraph (A) of this paragraph, at least two public hearings shall be held on the proposed action. Such public hearings shall be held at least three months and not more than nine months prior to the date of

final action on the zoning decision. Furthermore, at least one of the public hearings must be held between the hours of 5:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M. The hearings required by this paragraph shall be in addition to any hearing required under subsection (a) of this Code section. The local government shall give notice of such hearing by:

(i) Posting notice on each affected premises in the manner prescribed by subsection (b) of this Code section; provided, however, that when more than 500 parcels are affected, in which case posting notice is required every 500 feet in the affected area; and

(ii) Publishing in a newspaper of general circulation within the territorial boundaries of the local government a notice of each hearing at least 15 days and not more than 45 days prior to the date of the hearing.

Both the posted notice and the published notice shall include a prominent statement that the proposed zoning decision relates to or will authorize multifamily uses or give blanket permission to the property owner to deviate from the zoning requirements of a single-family residential zoning of property in classification previously relating to single-family residential uses. The published notice shall be at least nine column inches in size and shall not be located in the classified advertising section of the newspaper. The notice shall state that a copy of the proposed amendment is on file in the office of the clerk or the recording officer of the local government and in the office of the clerk of the superior court of the county of the legal situs of the local government for the purpose of examination and inspection by the public. The local government shall furnish anyone, upon written request, a copy of the proposed amendment, at no cost.

(2) The provisions of paragraph (1) of this subsection shall also apply to any zoning decisions that provide for the abolition of all single-family residential zoning classifications within the territorial boundaries of a local government or zoning decisions that result in the rezoning of all property zoned for single-family residential uses within

the territorial boundaries of a local government to multifamily residential uses of property.

(3) This subsection shall not apply to zoning decisions for the rezoning of property from a single-family residential use of property to a multifamily residential use of property when the rezoning is initiated by the owner or authorized agent of the owner of such property.

36-66-5.

(a) Local governments shall adopt policies and procedures which govern calling and conducting hearings required by Code Section 36-66-4, and printed copies of such policies and procedures shall be available for distribution to the general public. Such policies and procedures shall specify a minimum time period at hearings on proposed zoning decisions or quasi-judicial decisions for presentation of data, evidence, and opinion by proponents of each zoning decision and an equal minimum time period for presentation by opponents of each proposed zoning decision, such minimum time period to be no less than ten minutes per side.

(b) In addition to policies and procedures required by subsection (a) of this Code section, each local government rendering a zoning decision shall adopt standards governing the exercise of the zoning power, and such standards may include any factors which the local government finds relevant in balancing the interest in promoting the public health, safety, morality, or general welfare against the right to the unrestricted use of property. Such standards shall be printed and copies thereof shall be available for distribution to the general public.

(b.1) In addition to policies and procedures required by subsection (a) of this Code section, each local government providing for a quasi-judicial officer's, board's, or agency's grant, denial, or review of a quasi-judicial matter may adopt specific standards and criteria governing the exercise of such quasi-judicial decision-making authority, and such standards

shall include the factors by which the local government directs the evaluation of a quasi-judicial matter. Such standards shall be printed and copies thereof made available for distribution to the general public.

(c) The policies and procedures required by subsection (a) of this Code section and the adoption of standards required by subsection (b) and permitted by subsection (b.1) of this Code section ~~may~~ shall be included in and adopted as part of the zoning ordinance. Prior to the adoption of any zoning ordinance enacted on or after ~~January 1, 1986~~ July 1, 2022, a local government shall conduct a public hearing on a proposed action which may be advertised and held concurrent with the hearing required by subsection (a) of Code Section 36-66-4 for the adoption of a zoning ordinance. The provisions of subsection (a) of Code Section 36-66-4 relating to notices of public hearings for the purposes of that subsection shall also apply to public hearings required by this subsection.

36-66-5.1.

(a) To ensure that the general public is afforded due process in an orderly way to petition the courts for review of a local government's exercise of zoning, administrative, or quasi-judicial powers as guaranteed by Article I, Section I, Paragraphs IX and XII of the Constitution, the General Assembly, pursuant to its authority under Article VI, Section IV, Paragraph I of the Constitution, provides the following mechanism by which each of the powers described in this chapter may be reviewed by the superior court of the county wherein such property is located:

(1) Zoning decisions as described in this chapter, being legislative in nature, shall be subject to direct constitutional challenge regarding the validity of maintaining the existing zoning on the subject property or the validity of conditions or an interim zoning category other than what was requested in the superior court pursuant to its original jurisdiction over declaratory judgments pursuant to Chapter 4 of Title 9 and equity jurisdiction under Title 23. Such challenges shall be by way of a de novo review by the superior court

wherein such review brings up the whole record from the local government and all competent evidence shall be admissible in the trial thereof, whether adduced in a local government process or not and employing the presumption that a governmental zoning decision is valid and can be overcome substantively by a petitioner showing by clear and convincing evidence that the zoning classification is a significant detriment to the petitioner and is insubstantially related to the public health, safety, morality, or general welfare; or

(2) Quasi-judicial decisions as described in this chapter and zoning decisions under subparagraph (E) of paragraph (4) of Code Section 36-66-3 shall be subject to appellate review by the superior court pursuant to its appellate jurisdiction from a lower judicatory body and shall be brought by way of a petition for such review as provided for in Title 5. Such matters shall be reviewed on the record which shall be brought to the superior court as provided in Title 5.

(b) All such challenges or appeals shall be brought within 30 days of the written decision of the challenged or appealed action.

(c) To ensure that the citizens of this state are not unnecessarily burdened by the review process as a mechanism of appeal, local governments shall designate by ordinance or resolution:

(1) The officer of the quasi-judicial board or agency who shall have authority, without additional board or agency action, to approve or issue any form or certificate necessary to perfect the petition described in Title 5 for review of lower judicatory bodies and upon whom service of such petition may be effected or accepted on behalf of the lower judicatory board or agency, during normal business hours, at the regular offices of the local government; and

(2) The elected official or his or designee who shall have authority to accept service and upon whom service of an appeal of a quasi-judicial decision may be effected or accepted

on behalf of the local governing authority, during normal business hours, at the regular offices of the local government.

(d) An appeal or challenge by an opponent filed pursuant to this chapter shall stay all legal proceedings in furtherance of the action appealed from or challenged, unless the local government, officer, board, or agency from which or from whom the appeal or challenge is taken certifies that, by reason of the facts stated in the certificate, a stay would cause imminent peril to life or property. In such actions, the applicant for the zoning decision or the quasi-judicial decision shall be a necessary party and shall be named as a defendant in the action and served in accordance with the requirements of Title 5 or Title 9, as appropriate.

36-66-6.

(a) In any local government which has established a planning department or other similar agency charged with the duty of reviewing zoning proposals, such planning department or other agency shall, with respect to each proposed zoning decision involving land that is adjacent to or within 3,000 feet of any military base or military installation or within the 3,000 foot Clear Zone and Accident Prevention Zones Numbers I and II as prescribed in the definition of an Air Installation Compatible Use Zone of a military airport, investigate and make a recommendation with respect to each of the matters enumerated in subsection (b) of this Code section, in addition to any other duties with which the planning department or agency is charged by the local government. The planning department or other agency shall request from the commander of such military base, military installation, or military airport a written recommendation and supporting facts relating to the use of the land being considered in the proposed zoning decision at least 30 days prior to the hearing required by subsection (a) of Code Section 36-66-4. If the base commander does not submit a response to such request by the date of the public hearing, there shall be a presumption that the proposed zoning decision will not have any adverse effect relative to

the matters specified in subsection (b) of this Code section. Any such information provided shall become a part of the public record.

(b) The matters with which the planning department or agency shall be required to make such investigation and recommendation shall be:

(1) Whether the zoning proposal will permit a use that is suitable in view of the use of adjacent or nearby property within 3,000 feet of a military base, military installation, or military airport;

(2) Whether the zoning proposal will adversely affect the existing use or usability of nearby property within 3,000 feet of a military base, military installation, or military airport;

(3) Whether the property to be affected by the zoning proposal has a reasonable economic use as currently zoned;

(4) Whether the zoning proposal will result in a use which will or could cause a safety concern with respect to excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, utilities, or schools due to the use of nearby property as a military base, military installation, or military airport;

(5) If the local government has an adopted land use plan, whether the zoning proposal is in conformity with the policy and intent of the land use plan; and

(6) Whether there are other existing or changing conditions affecting the use of the nearby property as a military base, military installation, or military airport which give supporting grounds for either approval or disapproval of the zoning proposal."

325 **SECTION 2.**

326 This Act shall become effective on July 1, 2022, and shall apply to all zoning and
327 quasi-judicial decisions occurring on and after that date; however, no zoning or quasi-judicial
328 decision prior to July 1, 2023, shall be rendered invalid or void because of a local
329 government's failure to implement language in their ordinances accomplishing the provisions
330 of Code Section 36-66-5.1.

331 **SECTION 3.**

332 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.