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Practice Update

New Florida Legislation to Impact Development Process

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Florida's 2025 legislative session has concluded, and while there are several highlights, two bills in particular are poised to cause significant impacts to development approvals important to developers and homebuilders alike: SB 784, which relates to plat approval timing, and SB 1080, which relates to the processing of developer orders and changes to impact fees.

Below is a summary of these bills highlighting the proposed impact to ongoing or upcoming development review processes.

SB 784 – Plat Approval Timing

Under SB 784, plat approval authority has changed. The bill allows plats to be approved without the need to go before a governing body, such as a Board of County Commissioners, and instead designated administrative officials, such as a City Manager or Department Director, may approve a plat. The new bill also reduces deadlines for local governments to act on completed plat applications, aiming to eliminate unnecessary delays in the land development process. Under this new law, local jurisdictions are required to review plat applications for sufficiency within seven days and either approve or deny plat applications within another seven days.

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For developers, this change significantly improves predictability in the development timeline. Projects currently under review or in pre-application stages may benefit from this clearer timeline, especially in jurisdictions where plats have been historically delayed. As 14 days is a rather short turnaround for staff, it's critical to ensure all application materials are complete and well documented at submission to avoid a denial. Developers should coordinate closely with their consultants and local staff to track statutory review periods and ensure a timely response to requested revisions.

SB 1080 – Development Orders and Impact Fees

SB 1080 introduces several procedural and financial reforms affecting how development orders (DOs) are reviewed and how impact fees are assessed and applied:

- Most notably, the bill refines the uniform requirements for the timing and processing of DOs throughout the state, to include the 180-day timeline to amendments to avoid a project being withdrawn and doing away with the previously required second hearing for comprehensive plan adoption.
- The bill limits the number of times a local government can deem an application incomplete and sets new standards for transparency and consistency in agency responses, to include the refunding of application fees if application timelines are not met and the imposition of timeframes for approval — 120 days for non-quasi-judicial and 180 days for quasi-judicial approval, although changes to the plans may impact these timelines. It should be noted that a local government may not limit the number of quasi-judicial hearings.

Additionally, the law imposes tighter restrictions on local governments' ability to increase impact fees that go into effect on January 1, 2026.

- Any fee increases must now be phased in over multiple years, depending on the percentage of increase, and must be supported by updated data and studies and approved by a unanimous vote of the governing body.
- This change also impacts school impact fees in that a school district may not require any alternative fee to mitigate the impacts of development without evidence of associated need.

While there are other provisions in the bill, these changes help developers with long-range planning and budgeting as sudden fee hikes are no longer permitted without significant procedural steps.

Both SB 784 and SB 1080 have been signed by Governor Ron DeSantis and will take effect on July 1, 2025. As always, Akerman would be happy to assist with questions and anticipated results expected from this new legislation impacting your specific project.

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