What is a Form-based Code?

Marcy McInelly, AIA, Urbsworks, Inc.
Outline

What is an FBC?

Frequently Asked Questions

Common FBC Myths

Best Practices
What is a Form-based Code (FBC)?

Form-Based Codes Defined

**Form-Based Code**

/ˈfɔr-məd kəd/  

*noun*

1. A form-based code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. A form-based code is a regulation, not a mere guideline, adopted into city, town, or county law. A form-based code offers a powerful alternative to conventional zoning regulation.
How is it different from a conventional code?

Conventional zoning regulations were developed to protect property values by separating incompatible uses in a particular area or district. This separation was typically accomplished by creating single or limited use zones, which segregated different land uses, such as residential and commercial. Development with spatially separate land uses became the norm. This separation of uses, along with the automobile becoming the preeminent transportation mode, created the character of suburban communities we have today. Many zoning ordinances originated during the '50s and '60s, and although virtually all have been amended since then, most retain the principles of segregating land uses and neglecting all transportation modes except the automobile. Examples include commercial zones, which prohibit residential uses, or development regulations that have detailed automobile parking standards but no on-site circulation requirements for pedestrians.

Conventional zoning has resulted in the separation of uses and has created automobile-dependent environments. An example of a mixed-use neighborhood, where single-family, multifamily, and commercial uses are all within easy walking distance of each other.
How is it different from a conventional code?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Zoning</th>
<th>Form-Based Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often applied universally throughout a jurisdiction</td>
<td>Created for a specific planning area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive, focusing on preventing bad things from happening</td>
<td>Purposeful, “pro-active” and focused on implementation of community planning goals and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus is on land use</td>
<td>Connects urban form and land use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development standards inadvertently or intentionally discourage compact, mixed-use, and pedestrian-friendly development</td>
<td>Primary focus is on achieving compact, mixed-use, and pedestrian-friendly development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text-based presentation</td>
<td>Liberal use of graphics to define key concepts and requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a quick comparison...
Frequently Asked Questions

Why would we want to use one?

Are they being used and are they effective?

Is it just a new fad?

Why would we want to use one?
Why would we want to use one?

✓ By focusing on what the community wants, it promotes the vision
✓ Is easier to understand
✓ Is easier to administer
✓ Regulations are tailored to fit a specific place
✓ Gets everyone on the same page
✓ Gets to yes more quickly
Are they being used and are they effective?

From FBC Institute:
✓ Since 1981, 400 FBCs have been prepared
✓ Of those, more than 250 have been adopted
✓ 80% of FBC adoptions have taken place since 2000
Is it just a new fad?

✓ FBCs shift emphasis of regulations from use
✓ Represent a return to urban form as community identity
✓ Buildings and streets are built to last and adapt over time
✓ Emulates traditional or historically successful planning for cities and towns

Picture your favorite main street postcard view here
Common FBC Myths

Not instead of land use

Not just about building style
Not instead of land use

MIX OF USES AND HOUSING TYPES
FORM-BASED CODES BOTH ENCOURAGE AND ENABLE A BROAD MIX OF USES AND HOUSING TYPES WITHIN A PLANNING AREA.
Not instead of land use

REGULATING PLAN
THE REGULATING PLAN TRANSLATES THE COMMUNITY’S DESIGN VISION INTO A GRAPHIC PLAN. THIS EXAMPLE, TAKEN FROM THE SMART CODE (V. 6.5), ILLUSTRATES WHERE DIFFERENT DEVELOPMENT TYPES AND INTENSITIES SHOULD OCCUR WITHIN A GIVEN PLANNING AREA.

development standards are “keyed” into the regulating plan

- Regulating Plan (similar to a zoning code)
- Development Standards, usually in a table
Not just about building style

The design of the space between buildings is as important as the design of the buildings themselves. They are the public rooms of Ridgefield.

1. Countryside
2. Entry District
3. Downtown District
Best Practices

Plan for the area first; have a goal

Make it a priority

Bring public works and planning staff together

Ensure that the right people are involved

Integrate the new FBC with the current code
Plan for the area first

✓ Have a vision for the area
✓ Have a goals, objectives and actions
✓ A Strategic Plan
Bring public works and planning staff together
✓ Use form-based codes to transform the public realm
Make it a priority

Ensure that the right people are involved

✓ Public
✓ Development community
✓ Administrative staff
Integrate the new FBC with the current code

FBC implementation options

FBC IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS
FORM-BASED CODES MAY BE MANDATORY, OPTIONAL, OR MAY BE CREATED AS "FLOATING" ZONES.

Zoning Code
Form-Based Code
It’s about getting to yes as quickly as possible
Resources

Sacramento Area Council of Government (SACOG) Form-Based Code Handbook

Form Based Code Institute (FBCI)
http://formbasedcodes.org
Thank you

Questions?
Stakeholder Assessment Questions

Table Discussion

• How would you define short term success?

• How would you define long term success?

Written comments

• What do you consider to be the most controversial or difficult aspect of this project?