Integrating Sustainable Design Into Form-Based Codes

New Partners for Smart Growth

3 February 2011
“Sustainability is a Low Standard”

- Kaizer Rangwala, in a forthcoming article to be published in the March issue of *Practicing Planners* writes “we have a long way ahead if we are going to restore the human habitat.” I submit to you today, that should be our challenge.
What are Form-Based Codes?

• “Form-Based Codes foster predictable built results by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. They are regulations, not mere guidelines. They are adopted into city or county law. Form-Based Codes are an alternative to conventional zoning.”
What are Form-Based Codes?

• As the name implies, FBCs focus on *form* – the relationship of buildings to one another and to the public way.
• FBCs are *place-based*, i.e. the code can vary street by street or block-face by block face
• FBC is a *tool* that enables communities to implement a shared vision.
How FBCs Differ from Conventional Codes

• Conventional land use regulation – Euclidean Zoning – requires separation into use zones (hence sprawl) and tries to control density with FAR – a blunt tool that does not address form.

• Furthermore, conventional zoning fails to look at the relationship among buildings, a major difference between Euclidean and Form-Based Codes.
How FBCs Differ from Conventional Codes

• Euclidean zoning does not distinguish between building types within a given density.
• The same zoning – as of right – allows either of the following, and there is no way to predict which one.
Regulating Mechanism:
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)
How FBCs Differ from Conventional Codes

• Conventional zoning requires the same FAR for a multi-block area.
• In FBCs, building forms can differ from block face to block face
FBCs Allow for Different Rules for Each Block Face
How FBCs Differ from Conventional Codes

• For each street Building Standards prescribe the height, placement and lot coverage, elements and, to a lesser extent the use, of the buildings.
Building Type in Elevation

Workplace Building Sites

Elements

Ferell Madden Lewis Example

Shopfront Buildings

The building height is between 24 and 30 feet, and the structure is typically one to two stories high. The building elements are designed to be visually appealing and functional.

The ground floor is dedicated to commercial use, while the upper floors may be used for residential purposes.

The roof is typically flat or slightly pitched to allow for efficient light and ventilation.

The building materials are chosen for their durability and aesthetic appeal.

The building is equipped with modern amenities to enhance the user experience.

The overall design is intended to complement the surrounding environment.
FBCs Enable You to Specify Results Between This:
...and this
Design of the Public Realm Combines with the Private Realm to Create Each Place

[Diagram showing a comparison of lane capacities, indicating 'Same Total Lanes' and 'More Capacity.']
The Public and Private Space Rules Combine to Create Place
Street and Sidewalk Width and Parking Rules Should Match the Intent for the Private Space
FBCs Vs. Conventional Zoning

- Conventional: Master Plan or Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map
- FBC: Vision, Illustrative and Regulating Plan
Where Are FBCs Being Used?

- City-Wide
- Town Centers
- Greenfields
- Brownfields
- Greyfields
- Built-Up Neighborhoods where change is desired
- Historic neighborhoods threatened by tear-downs and…
- even for sprawl repair!
What is the Form-Based Code Institute?

- **Mission:** To advance the knowledge and use of, and develop standards for, Form-Based Codes as a method to achieve a community vision based on time-tested forms of urbanism.
- **Composition**
- **Current Projects**
  - Teaching
  - Promoting – definition, evaluation, RFQ
  - Awards-deadline for the 2011 Driehaus FBC Awards is March 31st.
Where to Learn More

• www.formbasedcodes.org