What is a Form-Based Code?

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Council Briefing
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Austin, TX
Conventional Zoning = Out of Date Operating System

Especially for Walkable Neighborhoods
Conventional Zoning Focus
The Response: Added Layers of Regulations in Attempt to Fix

- Use Based Zone
- Use
- Form
- Form
- Historic
- Environmental
Form-Based Code Focus
Not All Form-Based Zones Allow a Mix of Uses

T3 Neighborhood

Little Mix of Uses

T5 Main Street

Large Mix of Uses
Why Does this Matter?
Current System Recognizes by Use Not Form or Context

Both are Single Family Use, but Very Different Forms & Contexts

Allandale

Central East Austin
Current System Recognizes by Use Not Form or Context

Both are Commercial Use, but Very Different Forms & Contexts

Neighborhood Main Street

Strip Mall
It’s All About Understanding Different Contexts

Community Character Manual:

• Understand different places that exist throughout Austin.
Context Approach Enables Us to Reinforce Existing Patterns

Provide Compatible Yet Diverse Housing Choices
Clarity = Confidence

T4 Neighborhood 2 (T4N.2) Standards

Key
- - - - ROW/Property Line
| Building Area |
- - - - Building Setback Line
| Facade Area |

D. Building Placement
Setback (Distance from ROW/Property Line)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Type</th>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Front facade within area</th>
<th>Side Street/Civic Space</th>
<th>Side</th>
<th>Rear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>5' min.</td>
<td>12' max.</td>
<td>30' min.</td>
<td>15' max.</td>
<td>3' min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outbuilding</td>
<td>20' min.</td>
<td>4' max.</td>
<td>0' min.</td>
<td>3' max.</td>
<td>3' min.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Setback may match an existing adjacent building as follows. The building may be set to align with the facade of the frontmost immediately adjacent property, for a width no greater than that of the adjacent property's facade that encroaches into the minimum setback.

2. No side setback required between townhouse and/or live/work building types.

3. See Division 10-50.100 (Specific to Building Types) for additional building form regulations.

E. Building Form

Height

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Type</th>
<th>Stories</th>
<th>To Eave/Parapet</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>4 Stories max.</td>
<td>40' max.</td>
<td>52' max.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outbuilding</td>
<td>2 Stories max.</td>
<td>18' max.</td>
<td>28' max.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Footprint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Type</th>
<th>Depth, ground-floor residential</th>
<th>30' min.</th>
<th>space along primary street frontage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Lot Coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Type</th>
<th>Lot Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>80% max.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Miscellaneous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Type</th>
<th>Mansard roof forms are not allowed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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We Can Integrate Sustainability into FBCs
How one city overhauled its zoning code while combining form-based and conventional elements.

By Roger E. Eastman, AICP, with Daniel Parolek and Lisa Wise

LAGGSTAFF, ARIZONA, entered an exclusive club in November. It is now one of the few cities in the U.S. that have adopted a hybrid zoning ordinance with both form-based components and conventional Euclidian elements as part of a complete code rewrite.

“Simplified, streamlined, predictable” raved an editorial in the Arizona Daily Sun while praising both the code and the process used to adopt it. Getting the new code adopted wasn’t easy, but many city residents think the effort will be repaid in a more efficient, more equitable, and easier-to-use zoning system. The adoption of the new zoning code also caps off a successful public engagement process that has changed the generally negative perception of city planners.

TIME FOR AN UPDATE

An important first step in approaching a new code was differentiating between what Christopher Leinberger calls “walkable urban” areas from “drivable suburban” areas (The Option of Urbanism, Island Press, 2008). By making this distinction, Flagstaff could apply a form-based code to the walkable areas of the city while generally leaving the existing conventional code in place in those.

Thus, a new transit-oriented hybrid code resulted that defaults to promoting and allowing for walkable urbanism while seamlessly incorporating refined yet otherwise conventional Euclidian zoning tools for the drivable suburban areas. Because the regulations for the two different types of areas are not conflated together, the form-based code could be kept intact—and development opportunities could emerge in a more efficient, balanced way.

Flagstaff (pop. 62,000), at an elevation of about 7,000 feet, is the regional hub of northern Arizona. Established as a stop on the early transcontinental railway in 1882 and later Route 66 and Interstate 40, Flagstaff quickly grew as a logging and ranching town, and as a gateway for tourists visiting the Grand Canyon and other national parks and monuments. Residents appreciate the natural beauty of the area and enjoy outdoor pursuits such as hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, and camping.

The downtown and oldest neighborhoods were planned with small blocks and lots, and today are valued for their historic buildings and inherently walkable urban character. Typical of many American cities, Flagstaff’s urban form changed after World War II as auto-oriented suburban developments were added to the periphery of the city. Until recently, Flagstaff’s zoning ordinances have actively promoted those drivable suburban development patterns.

The need for a comprehensive update of the city’s land development code had been apparent for some time as developers, contractors, design professionals, and residents complained about the code’s complexity and inconsistency. Some even blamed the cumbersome nature of the code for contributing to the high cost of development and the failure of large-scale, economic developments.

American Planning Association 25

Austin Will Get A Hybrid Code: Form-Based and Conventional Elements
Austin Needs this New Operating System

Not Adding Additional Layers. A New Foundation