



What steps need to be taken to prepare a form-based code?

Work with the community to:

1. Analyze and inventory existing conditions.
2. Develop a vision plan
3. Determine appropriate spatial basis for regulation
4. Develop urban standards
5. Develop architectural standards

Why are form-based codes effective?

- Pictures tell the story
- Easy-to-find information
- Great for mixing uses
- Better, faster, cheaper process



Why Form-Based Codes?

Conventional zoning, as a whole, has produced undesirable urban sprawl, forcing an unsustainable way of life and consumption of resources. This has caused a convergence of various practitioners (including among others architects, engineers, planners, environmentalists, and futurists) to reexamine our communities and ways-of-life and figure out how to grow ourselves out of the problem. Older cities, towns, villages, and hamlets serve as great models, showing how planning was done when resources and mobility we take for granted were expensive and in short supply. Studying the three-dimensional form and the human scale of these older communities is the basis for new regulations, hence the term, form-based coding.

What Are the Fundamental Differences Between Conventional Zoning and Form-Based Coding?

Conventional zoning regulates primarily by land use, density and FAR (Floor Area Ratio), setbacks and parking. It assumes that there should be an "appropriate" distance between almost all different use types. Form is minimally, if at all, addressed.	Use/Density Management Form
Form-based codes focus on the design details that will form the type of community the citizens would like to have, therefore the land uses and densities become subject to the form of the desired outcome. Form-based codes establish categories for design, and control the relationship of buildings (or lots) to their streets often with the use of the build-to-lines instead of setback lines, and fenestration requirements.	Form Management Use/Density

For more information regarding Tampa's Community Planning Programs, go to www.tampagov.net/ldc or call (813) 274-8405.

City of Tampa Community Planning Through Form-Based Code Program

Seminole Heights Conceptual Redevelopment Drawing

The City of Tampa's Community Planning Through Form-Based Code Program is illustrated with a conceptual redevelopment drawing of Seminole Heights. The drawing shows a red brick building with arched windows and a green building across the street. A pen is shown pointing to the drawing, indicating the focus on design details and form.

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What is Form-Based Code?

A method of regulating development to achieve a specific urban form. Form-based codes create a predictable public realm primarily by controlling physical form, with a lesser focus on land use, through city or county regulations.

Form-based codes are drafted to achieve a community vision based on time-tested forms of urbanism. Ultimately, a form-based code is a tool; the quality of development outcomes is dependent on the quality and objectives of the community plan that a code implements.



Form-based codes address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. The regulations and standards in form-based codes, presented in both diagrams and words, are keyed to a regulating plan that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development rather than only distinctions in land-use types.

This is in contrast to conventional zoning's focus on the micro-management and segregation of land uses, and the control of development intensity through abstract and uncoordinated parameters (e.g., floor area ratio, dwellings per acre, setbacks, parking ratios, traffic level of service) to the neglect of an integrated built form.

Not to be confused with design guidelines or general statements of policy, form-based codes are regulatory, not advisory.



All text in this brochure provided by FBC Institute

Form-Based Codes Commonly Include the Following Elements:

- **Regulating Plan.**

A plan or map of the regulated area designating the locations where different building form standards apply, based on clear community intentions regarding the physical character of the area being coded.

- **Public Space Standards.**

Specifications for the elements within the public realm (e.g., sidewalks, travel lanes, on-street parking, street trees, street furniture, etc.).

- **Building Form Standards.**

Regulations controlling the configuration, features, and functions of buildings that define and shape the public realm.

- **Administration.**

A clearly defined application and project review process.

- **Definitions.**

A glossary to ensure the precise use of technical terms.

Form-Based Codes Sometimes Include:

- **Architectural Standards.**

Regulations controlling external architectural materials and quality.

- **Landscaping Standards.**

Regulations controlling landscape design and plant materials on private property as they impact public spaces (e.g. regulations about parking lot screening and shading, maintaining sight lines, insuring unobstructed pedestrian movements, etc.).



- **Signage Standards.**

Regulations controlling allowable signage sizes, materials, illumination, and placement.

- **Environmental Resource Standards.**

Regulations controlling issues such as storm water drainage and infiltration, development on slopes, tree protection, solar access, etc.

- **Annotation.**

Text and illustrations explaining the intentions of specific code provisions.

8 Advantages to Form-Based Codes

1. They state what you want rather than what you don't want; form-based codes (FBCs) can achieve a more predictable physical result. The elements controlled by FBCs are those that are most important to the shaping of a high quality built environment.
2. FBCs encourage public participation because they allow citizens to see what will happen where, leading to a higher comfort level about greater density, for instance.
3. They regulate development at the scale of an individual building or lot; FBCs encourage independent development by multiple property owners. This obviates the need for large land assemblies and the mega-projects that are frequently purposed for such parcels.
4. The built results of FBCs often reflect a diversity of architecture, materials, uses, and ownership that can only come from the actions of many independent players operating within a communally agreed-upon vision and legal framework.
5. FBCs work well in established communities because they effectively define and codify a neighborhood's existing "DNA." Vernacular building types can be easily replicated, promoting infill that is compatible with surrounding structures.
6. Non-professionals find FBCs easier to use than conventional zoning documents because they are much shorter, more concise, and organized for visual access and readability. This feature makes it easier for nonplanners to determine whether compliance has been achieved.
7. FBCs obviate the need for design guidelines, which are difficult to apply consistently, offer too much room for subjective interpretation, and can be difficult to enforce. They also require less oversight by discretionary review bodies, fostering a less politicized planning process that could deliver huge savings in time and money and reduce the risk of takings challenges.
8. The stated purpose of FBCs is the shaping of a high quality public realm, a presumed public good that promotes healthy civic interactions. For that reason compliance with the codes can be enforced.