

**The Rules That Shape Urban Form**

Form-based  
Zoning Grows Up

Rocky Mountain Land Use  
Institute

Denver, CO | March 14, 2014

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**CLARION** Clarion Associates, Denver, CO

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### Overview

- The path of zoning evolution
- What is form-based zoning?
- *The Rules that Shape Urban Form*
  - Six case studies
- Form-based controls & other planning goals
  - Sustainability
  - Housing affordability
  - Demographic changes
  - Historic preservation
- Six questions to consider before preparing form regulations...

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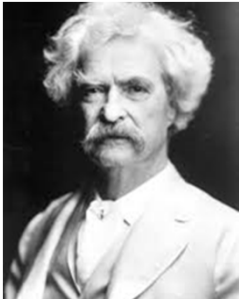
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### Form Based Zoning Grows Up

- What is it?
- How is it being used?
- What are we learning?



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## Form Based Zoning Grows Up



**First...**

**There were nuisances**

- From WAY back

**Then there was zoning**

- Remember Euclid

**Then zoning got too rigid**

- Too many districts and uses

**Then zoning got too flexible**

- PUDs and performance zoning reduce predictability

**Then zoning got form-based**

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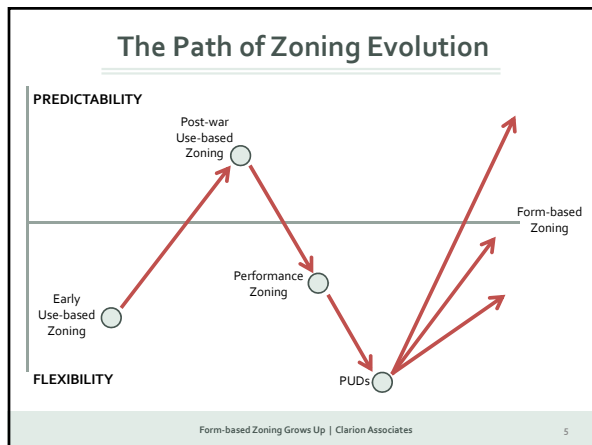
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## What is Form-based Zoning?

Uses

Process

Form

**Myth 1: Traditional zoning is based on use separation.**  
False: It is based on use regulation – but mixes are always allowed.

Uses

Process

Form

**Myth 2: Form-based zoning ignores uses: anything goes anywhere.**  
False: Uses are regulated – just more lightly – and secondarily.

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## What is Form-based Zoning?

Building Envelope

Downtown Building

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## What is Form-based Zoning?

**FBCI Core Elements List:**

- Building Form Standards
- Building Type Standards
- Frontage Type Standards
- Public Space Standards
- Block and Subdivision Standards
- Regulating Plan

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## What is Form-based Zoning?

### *Building Forms & Types*

Building Types	Districts					
	MB-1 (Main Street)	MB-2 (B Street)	MB-3 (Town Street)	MB-4 (B Street)	MB-5 (Flagship)	MB-6 (Main Street)
Storefront Building	●	●	●	●	●	●
General Store Building	●	●	●	●	●	●
Cottage Commercial	●	●	●	●	●	●
Civic Building	●	●	●	●	●	●
Row Building	●	●	●	●	●	●
Parking Structure	●	●	●	●	●	●

● Permitted within district  
 ▲ Permitted only on certain streets  
 ▲ Permitted on secondary street only

Table 1129.40 (1). Permitted Building Types by District.

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### What is Form-based Zoning?

#### Frontage Types

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### What is Form-based Zoning?

#### Public Space Standards

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### What is Form-based Zoning?

#### Public Space Standards

Sometimes include Thoroughfare Standards

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### What is Form-based Zoning?

#### Block and Subdivision Standards

Table 153.060-A. Maximum Block Dimensions

MAXIMUM BLOCK DIMENSIONS		
BSC DISTRICTS	LENGTH (FT)	PERIMETER (FT)
Residential	425	1,450
Office Residential	500	1,750
Office	500	1,750
Commercial	500	1,750
Historic Residential	200	800
Historic Core	200	800

"T" Configuration

"H" Configuration  
Historic Proportionate Street

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### What is Form-based Zoning?

#### Regulating Plan

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### What is Form-based Zoning?

#### Regulating Plan

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### What is Form-based Zoning?

*By-right Development?*

**Not Really – All New Codes Try to Do That**

- All code reforms simplify uses
- Most code reforms try to define permitted shapes, forms, or types development to avoid site plan hearings whenever possible
- Form-based controls are a good way to sell use simplification

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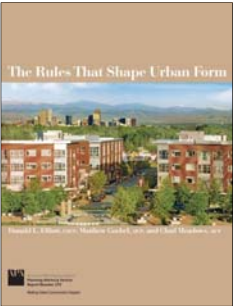

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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form



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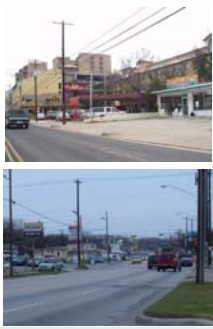
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## The Rules That Shape Urban Form

### Austin, Texas

- Background
  - Outdated, complex development code
  - Challenge to update because of politics, area-specific compromises
  - Urban core development indistinguishable from the suburbs
- Intent
  - Raise the bar of development quality in Austin, but within a regulatory structure offering flexibility, not strict requirements



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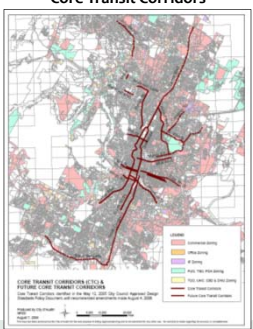
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## The Rules That Shape Urban Form

### Austin, Texas

- Goals
  - Raise the bar of development quality, but within a regulatory structure offering flexibility, not strict requirements
  - Achieve greater uniformity along the streetscape, despite variations in underlying zoning districts

- Core Transit Corridor
- Internal Circulation Route
- Urban Roadway
- Suburban Roadway
- Highway or Hill Country Roadway



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Section	Standard	Applies if the Principal Street Is:	Applies to the Following:
<b>ARTICLE 2: SITE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS</b>			
<b>2.2: Relationship of Buildings to Streets and Walkways</b>	2.2.2. Core Transit Corridors: Sidewalks and Building Placement	Core Transit Corridor	All zoning districts. Single-family residential uses are exempt, in addition to the general exemptions in Section 1.2.3.
	2.2.3. Urban Roadways: Sidewalks and Building Placement	Urban Roadway	All non-residential zoning districts.
	2.2.4. Suburban Roadways: Sidewalks and Building Placement	Suburban Roadway	All non-residential zoning districts.
	2.2.5. Internal Circulation Routes: Sidewalks and Building Placement	Internal Circulation Route	All non-residential zoning districts (development of any site subject to the internal circulation system requirements in Section 2.3.1.1).
	2.2.6. Building Entryways	Core Transit Corridor	All zoning districts.
		Suburban Roadway Highway Hill Country Roadway Urban Roadway	All non-residential zoning districts.
<b>2.3: Connectivity</b>	2.3.1. Internal Circulation System for Large Sites	Core Transit Corridor Urban Roadway	All zoning districts (development of any site five acres or larger). See additional exemptions in 2.3.1.8.
		Suburban Roadway Highway Hill Country Roadway	All non-residential zoning districts (development of any site five acres or larger). See additional exemptions in 2.3.1.8.
	2.3.2. Improvements to Encourage Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Vehicular Connectivity	All roadway types	Projects with a net site area of five acres or more in all non-residential zoning districts. Projects with a net site area of less than five acres that have parking between the building and the principal street in all zoning districts.
<b>2.4: Parking Reductions</b>	All standards	All roadway types	All non-residential zoning districts.

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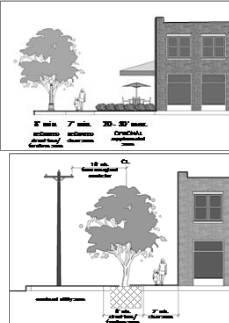
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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

*Austin, Texas*

- Core Transit Corridors:  
Sidewalks and Building Placement

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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

*Austin, Texas*

1-POINT OPTIONS	2-POINT OPTIONS
Achieve City of Austin Green Building Program 1-star rating.	Achieve City of Austin Green Building Program 2-star rating.
Provide for liner stores in building façade.	75% of façade facing principal street consists of storefronts with at least 2 separate entrances facing principal street.
Provide façade articulation meeting specified standards.	Provide sustainable roof meeting specified standards.
Provide primary entrance design meeting specified standards.	Integrate solar power generation into building design.
Provide roof design meeting specified standards.	3-POINT OPTIONS
Provide building materials meeting specified standards.	Develop VMU building.
Improve existing storefronts to meet new glazing requirements.	
100% of glazing on ground-floor facades facing street or parking lot with visual transmittance (VT) of 0.6 or higher.	
Comply with neighborhood design guidelines (if applicable).	

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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

*Austin, Texas*

Form-Based Tools	Design Standards
Building Types	Yes – for vertical mixed-use buildings
Frontage Types	No – keyed according to adjacent street type
Public Space Standards	Yes – streetscape standards, and also private common open space
Block and Subdivision Standards	Yes – connectivity stds for large sites of 5+ acres
Regulating Plans	No
By-right Development	No significant change

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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

*Austin, Texas*

#### Experience

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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

*Austin, Texas*

- Good:**
  - Overall: led to improved design quality and building-to-street relationships throughout city.
  - Form-based and design standards introduced into a complex code in a way that laid the groundwork for more ambitious future approaches.
- Not so good:**
  - Alternative compliance overused.
  - High staff turnover complicated implementation and led to overuse of alternative compliance provisions.
  - Organization as freestanding chapter made reconciliation with other parts of code challenging.

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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

*Mooresville, North Carolina*

		TABLE 6.1.4 TABLE OF ALLOWED USES (1)																
		ALLOWABLE BUILDING FORMS																
		DH - DETACHED HOUSE				AR - ATTACHED RESIDENTIAL				WP - WORKPLACE				FX - FLEX/INDUSTRIAL				
		MA - MANHOLE APARTMENT				NA - NOT APPLICABLE				CV - CIVIC				CE - COMMERCIAL/RETAIL				IR - LARGE RETAIL
		R-2	R-3	R-4	AMK	BMK	MM	TWO-C	AMK	CMK	WB	VC	WC	CI	BI	PC-C		
		USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	USE TYPE	
RESIDENTIAL	Single-Family Detached	Y																
	Single-Family Attached																	
	Two-Family Detached																	
	Two-Family Attached																	
COMMERCIAL	Office																	
	Retail																	
	Restaurant																	
	Bar/Club																	
INDUSTRIAL	Light Industrial																	
	Medium Industrial																	
	Heavy Industrial																	
	Warehouse																	

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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

Mooresville, North Carolina


Commercial/  
Retail



Workplace



Shop Front



Use Category	ALLOWABLE BUILDING FORMS									
	DR = Detached House					AR = Attached Residential				
	DR	DR-2	DR-3	DR-5	DR-6	DR-7	DR-8	DR-9	DR-10	DR-11
Residential										
Single-Family Detached										
Two-Family Detached										
Three-Family Detached										
Four-Family Detached										
Five-Family Detached										
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Ninety-Seven-Family Detached										
Ninety-Eight-Family Detached										
Ninety-Nine-Family Detached										
Hundred-Family Detached										

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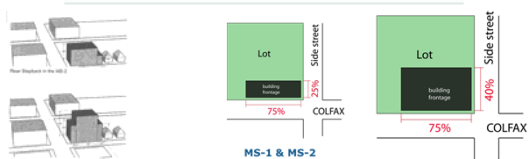
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Denver Main Street



MS-1 & MS-2

MS-1 35' Max Ht. MS-2 65' Max Ht. MS-3 100' Max Ht.

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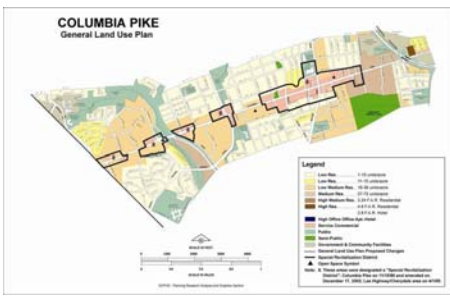
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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

Arlington County, VA | Columbia Pike



COLUMBIA PIKE  
General Land Use Plan

Legend

- Low Density (1-10 units/acre)
- Low Density (11-20 units/acre)
- Low Density (21-30 units/acre)
- Medium Density (31-40 units/acre)
- High Density (41-50 units/acre)
- High Density (51-60 units/acre)
- High Density (61-70 units/acre)
- High Density (71-80 units/acre)
- High Density (81-90 units/acre)
- High Density (91-100 units/acre)
- High Density (101-110 units/acre)
- High Density (111-120 units/acre)
- High Density (121-130 units/acre)
- High Density (131-140 units/acre)
- High Density (141-150 units/acre)
- High Density (151-160 units/acre)
- High Density (161-170 units/acre)
- High Density (171-180 units/acre)
- High Density (181-190 units/acre)
- High Density (191-200 units/acre)
- High Density (201-210 units/acre)
- High Density (211-220 units/acre)
- High Density (221-230 units/acre)
- High Density (231-240 units/acre)
- High Density (241-250 units/acre)
- High Density (251-260 units/acre)
- High Density (261-270 units/acre)
- High Density (271-280 units/acre)
- High Density (281-290 units/acre)
- High Density (291-300 units/acre)
- High Density (301-310 units/acre)
- High Density (311-320 units/acre)
- High Density (321-330 units/acre)
- High Density (331-340 units/acre)
- High Density (341-350 units/acre)
- High Density (351-360 units/acre)
- High Density (361-370 units/acre)
- High Density (371-380 units/acre)
- High Density (381-390 units/acre)
- High Density (391-400 units/acre)
- High Density (401-410 units/acre)
- High Density (411-420 units/acre)
- High Density (421-430 units/acre)
- High Density (431-440 units/acre)
- High Density (441-450 units/acre)
- High Density (451-460 units/acre)
- High Density (461-470 units/acre)
- High Density (471-480 units/acre)
- High Density (481-490 units/acre)
- High Density (491-500 units/acre)
- High Density (501-510 units/acre)
- High Density (511-520 units/acre)
- High Density (521-530 units/acre)
- High Density (531-540 units/acre)
- High Density (541-550 units/acre)
- High Density (551-560 units/acre)
- High Density (561-570 units/acre)
- High Density (571-580 units/acre)
- High Density (581-590 units/acre)
- High Density (591-600 units/acre)
- High Density (601-610 units/acre)
- High Density (611-620 units/acre)
- High Density (621-630 units/acre)
- High Density (631-640 units/acre)
- High Density (641-650 units/acre)
- High Density (651-660 units/acre)
- High Density (661-670 units/acre)
- High Density (671-680 units/acre)
- High Density (681-690 units/acre)
- High Density (691-700 units/acre)
- High Density (701-710 units/acre)
- High Density (711-720 units/acre)
- High Density (721-730 units/acre)
- High Density (731-740 units/acre)
- High Density (741-750 units/acre)
- High Density (751-760 units/acre)
- High Density (761-770 units/acre)
- High Density (771-780 units/acre)
- High Density (781-790 units/acre)
- High Density (791-800 units/acre)
- High Density (801-810 units/acre)
- High Density (811-820 units/acre)
- High Density (821-830 units/acre)
- High Density (831-840 units/acre)
- High Density (841-850 units/acre)
- High Density (851-860 units/acre)
- High Density (861-870 units/acre)
- High Density (871-880 units/acre)
- High Density (881-890 units/acre)
- High Density (891-900 units/acre)
- High Density (901-910 units/acre)
- High Density (911-920 units/acre)
- High Density (921-930 units/acre)
- High Density (931-940 units/acre)
- High Density (941-950 units/acre)
- High Density (951-960 units/acre)
- High Density (961-970 units/acre)
- High Density (971-980 units/acre)
- High Density (981-990 units/acre)
- High Density (991-1000 units/acre)

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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

*Arlington County, VA | Columbia Pike*

**Very Detailed Standards**

- Blocks and Alleys,
- Streetscape,
- Parking,
- Retail,
- Historic Preservation,
- Public Improvements, and
- Buildings

↓

- Height,
- Use Requirements,
- Building Placement,
- Building Elements,
- Architecture



↑

- Building
- Walls
- Roofs and Parapets
- Street Wall Required
- Windows and Doors
- Lighting
- Signage
- Mechanical Equipment

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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

*Livermore, CA | Hybrid Code*



- Smart Code structure for entire mandatory code
- Form controls only for T3 and T4 areas
- Form controls apply to <5% of land
- Remainder left in traditional /PUD zoning

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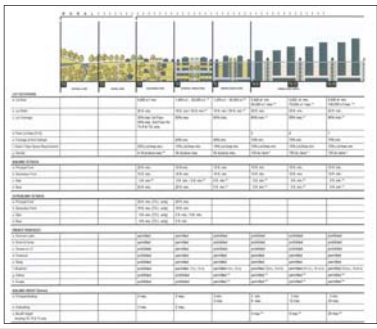
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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

*Miami 21*



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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

*The Takeaways*

	Austin	Mooreville	Denver MS	Arlington	Livermore	Miami
Building Types						
Frontage Types						
Public Space Standards						
Block & Subdivision						
Regulating Plans						
By Right Development						

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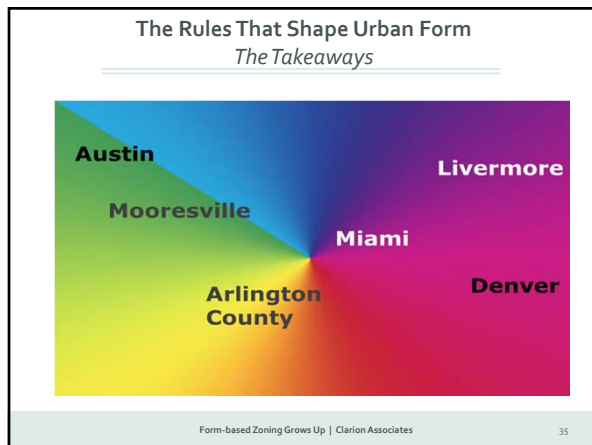
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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

*Form-based controls & other planning goals*





- Sustainability
- Housing Affordability
- Demographic Change
- Historic Preservation



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## The Rules That Shape Urban Form

### *Demographic Change*



- Average age increasing
- Household size decreasing
- Ethnic diversity increasing
- Multi-generational households increasing

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## The Rules That Shape Urban Form

### *The Takeaways on Demographic Change*

- **Forms Help Sell Good Planning.** Form-based controls can help "sell" the acceptability of small lot detached, attached, and multifamily building forms needed to address the growing number of smaller households, and aged households
- **Don't Define Forms Narrowly.** Be careful to define the forms and standards broadly enough to allow the types of specialized facilities (nursing homes, assisted care facilities, small hospitals, and social services facilities) needed to serve an aging and potentially poorer population
- **Don't Lock in Bad Forms.** Form-based controls based on current urban fabric can wind up "locking in" dispersed large lot single-family areas and make it harder for them to densify as needed to allow older families to age in place

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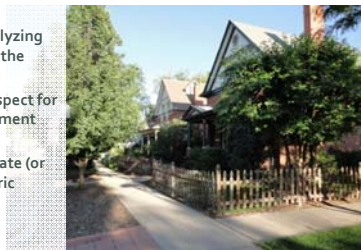
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## The Rules That Shape Urban Form

### *Historic Preservation*

- **Overlapping Goals**
  - Both start with analyzing and understanding the built environment
  - Both emphasize respect for traditional development patterns
  - Both seek to duplicate (or complement) historic patterns in new development



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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

#### *Historic Preservation*

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- The traditional preservation toolbox is stretched thin...
  - Surveys
  - Historic landmarks and districts
  - Certificates of appropriateness for major projects



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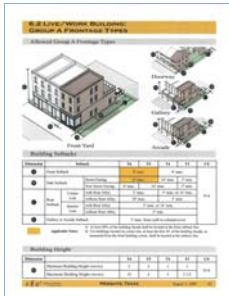
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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

#### *The Takeaway on Historic Preservation*

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- Form controls are a potentially valuable tool to meet preservation goals
  - Clearer, better illustrated zoning districts that reinforce historic development patterns
  - Introduce more sensitive and tailored building forms (= clarifying acceptable infill upfront)
  - Potentially easier to administer than case-by case reviews
  - However: Significant up-front time and resources are necessary to create standards that allow streamlined reviews



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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

#### *The Takeaway on Historic Preservation*

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- Neighborhood Conservation:
- Form-based controls may be particularly useful as a template for neighborhood conservation overlay districts



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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

#### *The Takeaway*

- Not surprisingly, some elements of form-based controls can help achieve planning goals related to sustainability, affordability, demographic change, and historic preservation.
- ...While others perform no better than traditional controls
- Be careful of locking in patterns and densities that will prevent the evolution and densification of lower-density neighborhoods over time – unless you really want that.

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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

- Remember to "Unpack" the Idea...
- And then Take the Parts You Need



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### The Rules That Shape Urban Form

- Remember to "Unpack" the Idea...
- And then Take the Parts You Need



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Six Questions to Consider  
Before Preparing Form Regulations...



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**1** Will the form controls cover the entire community, or just certain areas?



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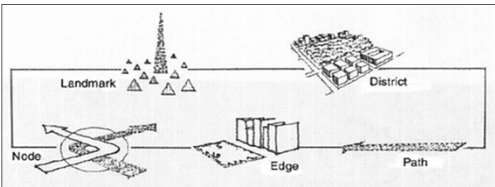
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**1** Will the form controls cover the entire community, or just certain areas?

Kevin Lynch's Key Elements in How We Understand Cities



There are "Places" and "places"

- and many "places" do not need form-based controls

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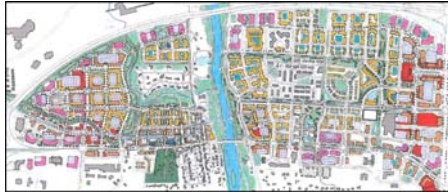
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## 2 If it applies to only a specific area, is there a plan for that area?



- Is the plan more than a drawing?
- Be careful of locking in too much detail
  - Life never turns out like the picture on the box
  - Lots of unanticipated events will take place before buildout
  - How much detail do you need to make the place a success

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## 3 Will the controls be mandatory or optional?



Many current codes are optional (parallel codes or floating zones)

- Mandatory codes may be harder to adopt
- Optional codes may make administration harder
- Both can be effective

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## 4 Are the regulations for:

### Greenfield sites?

- If one owner or cooperating owners, good to go.
- Really a more disciplined PUD.

### Major redevelopment sites?

- If one owner or cooperating owners, you're lucky.
- Watch out for proposals to reinvent street patterns – they often require re-subdivision, relocation of utilities, money.
- Will the new controls apply until the new streets are in place?

### Small infill redevelopment sites over time?

- Don't make the current owners nonconforming.
- Assume random timing/location of individual projects.
- Don't require neighbors to prepare a joint regulating plan before proceeding.

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## 5 Will the form-based tools be "contextual" or "prescriptive"?



Knowing the answer makes the job easier – and more transparent

Some benefits will depend on the answer

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## 6 How will you treat existing development that doesn't meet the standards?



- "The greenest building is the one that has already been built"
- DON'T put them in "zoning parole" -- nonconformities

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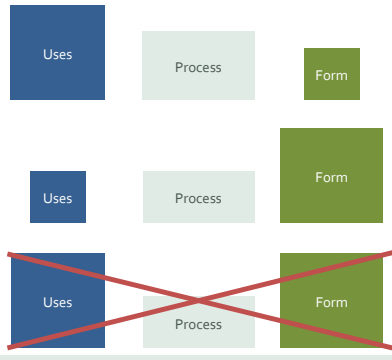
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## Remember to Lighten Up on Use Controls



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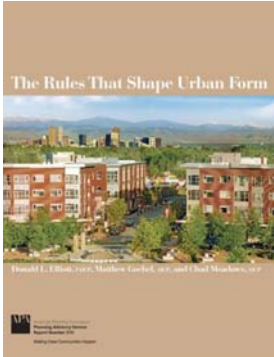
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**The Rules That Shape Urban Form**

Donald L. Elliott, Jane, Matthew Goebel, AICP, and Chad Monahan, AICP

**Form-based Zoning Grows Up**

*Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute*

Denver, CO | March 14, 2014

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**Matt Goebel, AICP**

**CLARION** Clarion Associates, Denver, CO

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