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...

Form Based Zoning Grows Up

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

The Path of Zoning Evolution

PREDICTABILITY

FLEXIBILITY

What is Form-based Zoning?

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

What is Form-based Zoning?

Building Envelope  Downtown Building

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

What is Form-based Zoning?

Building Forms & Types
What is Form-based Zoning?

Frontage Types

Public Space Standards

Sometimes include Thoroughfare Standards
What is Form-based Zoning?

Block and Subdivision Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 150.089-A. Maximum Block Dimensions</th>
<th>&quot;F&quot; Configuration</th>
<th>&quot;H&quot; Configuration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAXIMUM BLOCK DIMENSIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BASE DISTANCES</strong></td>
<td><strong>LAND (FT)</strong></td>
<td><strong>FACING (FT)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Family Residential</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Use</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is Form-based Zoning?

Regulating Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is Form-based Zoning?</th>
<th>Regulating Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is Form-based Zoning?

Regulating Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is Form-based Zoning?</th>
<th>Regulating Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

The Rules That Shape Urban Form
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

---

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

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Nature of the Site or Building</th>
<th>Applicability to the Following</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Growth Corridors (South End)</td>
<td>Core Transit Corridors</td>
<td>All transit districts</td>
<td>Core Transit Corridors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Transit Corridors</td>
<td>2.2.3 Transit Corridors</td>
<td>Urban Roadway</td>
<td>Urban Roadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.4 Parking Corridors</td>
<td>Core Transit Corridors</td>
<td>Suburban Roadway</td>
<td>Suburban Roadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.6 Street Corridors</td>
<td>Core Transit Corridors</td>
<td>Highway or Hill Country Roadway</td>
<td>Highway or Hill Country Roadway</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Core Transit Corridors

- Core Transit Corridor
- Internal Circulation Route
- Urban Roadway
- Suburban Roadway
- Highway or Hill Country Roadway
The Rules That Shape Urban Form
Austin, Texas

• Core Transit Corridors: Sidewalks and Building Placement

1-POINT OPTIONS
Achieve City of Austin Green Building Program 1-star rating.

- Provide for linear streets in building façade.
- Provide façade articulation meeting specified standards.
- Provide entry design meeting specified standards.
- Provide building materials meeting specified standards.
- 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).

Building Design:
Menu of Additional Design Options

2-POINT OPTIONS
Achieve City of Austin Green Building Program 2-star rating.

- 75% of façade facing principal street consists of storefronts with at least 3 separate entrances facing principal street.
- Provide sustainable roof meeting specified standards.
- Integrate solar power generation into building design.

3-POINT OPTIONS
Develop VMU building.

Form-Based Tools
- Building Types
- Frontage Types
- Public Space Standards
- Block and Subdivision Standards
- Regulating Plans
- By-right Development

Design Standards
- Yes — vertical mixed-use buildings
- Yes — streetscape standards, and also provide comfort guidelines
- No — no significant change

The Rules That Shape Urban Form
Austin, Texas
The Rules That Shape Urban Form

Austin, Texas

Experience

• Good:
  • Overall: led to improved design quality and building-to-street relationships throughout the 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.

Mooresville, North Carolina

Form-based Zoning Grows Up | Clarion Associates
The Rules That Shape Urban Form
Arlington County, VA | Columbia Pike

- 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

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
The Rules That Shape Urban Form

The Takeaways

- Sustainability
- Housing Affordability
- Demographic Change
- Historic Preservation
The Rules That Shape Urban Form

Housing Affordability

Average market prices of housing have been rising faster than average wages for 50 years

- % of income spent on rent
  - 1960: 29%
  - 2005: 37%
  - 2015: 39%

- % of households spending more than 30% of income on housing
  - 1960: 29%
  - 2005: 49%

- % of households spending more than 50% of income on housing
  - 1960: 0%
  - 2015: 15%

Form-based controls can help "sell" the acceptability of small lot detached, attached, and multifamily building forms needed to address the growing demand for affordable housing

- and making low-density detached building forms unavailable in denser areas may prevent use of prime sites for less affordable housing types

- Don’t Forget Bonuses. Don’t remove height bonuses necessary to allow affordable builders to compete with market rate builders

- 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 density as needed to meet affordable housing demand
The Rules That Shape Urban Form

Demographic Change

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

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

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
The Rules That Shape Urban Form

Historic Preservation

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

The Rules That Shape Urban Form

The Takeaway on Historic Preservation

- 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

The Rules That Shape Urban Form

The Takeaway on Historic Preservation

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

The Rules That Shape Urban Form

• Remember to “Unpack” the idea...
• And then Take the Parts You Need

The Rules That Shape Urban Form

• Remember to “Unpack” the idea...
• And then Take the Parts You Need
Six Questions to Consider Before Preparing Form Regulations...

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
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

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

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.
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

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

Remember to Lighten Up on Use Controls
Form-based Zoning Grows Up

Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute
Denver, CO | March 14, 2014

Don Elliott, FAICP
Matt Goebel, AICP