



Learn the Principles and Techniques of Form-Based Coding

“A zoning code based on form is a mechanism for making possible that return to the original and still popular pattern of urban life... Under such a zoning plan, the use to which buildings are put is not ignored, but it is relegated to secondary status. The emphasis is to establish rules that create a livable physical setting: safe for pedestrians, visually interesting, convenient, diverse and interactive.”

John Krist,
Ventura County Star,
February 2005

Civic leaders and planning professionals are turning increasingly to New Urban development approaches to avoid the well-documented pitfalls of sprawl. Unfortunately most zoning regulations still mandate outcomes that innovative planners would like to avoid— isolated single-use pods, overly wide roads, too much parking and excessive setbacks from nearby streets and buildings. Because existing regulations are so out of step with desired growth patterns, many communities are reconsidering their zoning ordinances; still others are revising or recreating them altogether. In facing the realities of limited time and budget, a common strategy is to layer guidelines over the existing zoning to achieve greater design control.

But will these new rules create better places or will they simply create watered-down hybrid developments and add greater friction to an already overburdened development review process? Furthermore, will well-intentioned design guidelines actually increase the risk of legal challenges caused by inconsistencies with a community’s underlying zoning?

One regulatory technique that is leading to successful outcomes across the country is **form-based coding**. This emerging approach recognizes that a community’s physical form is its most intrinsic and enduring characteristic. The form referenced in the name includes not just buildings and blocks

but other physical elements such as streets, sidewalks and squares; civic infrastructure such as bridges, rail lines and canals; and even natural features such as rivers, forests and bluffs.

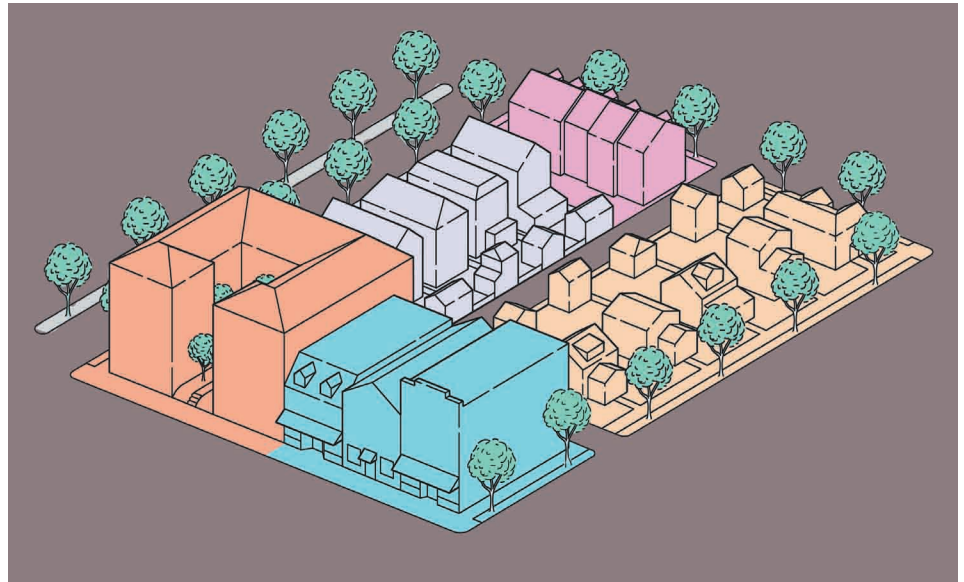
The process of form-based coding has proven successful in new growth locations and in already-urbanized areas. Since the process begins with an analysis of a community’s existing DNA, it is far more sensitive to local context. The technique defines a set of building/ frontage, street and open space “types” that build on local traditions.

The process also works well with public participation techniques such as the charrette process. Because the codes are expressed visually in a way that’s easily understandable to nonprofessionals, citizens are often more willing to accept higher density and/or greater intensity. And unlike the more vague, aesthetic- or style-based design guidelines that are sometimes mistaken for form-based codes, this approach offers a level of precision and legal consistency that many believe will enhance their enforceability and reduce the need for discretionary design review.

The Form-Based Codes Institute (FBCI), is pleased to announce a series of courses on the subject of form-based codes (FBC). The first course provides a general introduction to this emerging practice area. It is a prerequisite for two follow-on courses, one focused on design-related aspects of FBC

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Example of how a form-based code can specify different building types for each face of a block. By contrast, conventional zoning often assigns a single use/density category for an entire block or group of blocks.



and another focused on administrative and legal issues to further prepare professionals to make effective use of this promising regulatory methodology.

Faculty for the course series includes such FBC leaders as Rick Bernhardt, Paul Crawford, Victor Dover, Geoffrey Ferrell, Peter Katz, Joseph Kohl, Mary Madden, Dan Parolek, Karen Parolek, Stefanos Polyzoides, Sam Poole, Steve Price, Kaiser Rangwala, Robert Sitkowski, Dan Slone and Bill Spikowski.

Course activities include lectures by faculty, group discussions and hands-on team exercises. The series will cover such topics as:

- History and Principles of Development Regulation
- Philosophy of the Public Realm
- Existing Conditions Analysis: How to Read a Community's DNA
- Detailed Review of FBC Components
- Regulating Plan Variations
- Principles of Urban Block Structure

- Document Design and Writing Considerations
- Legal Issues Related to FBCs
- Urban Design / Street Design Considerations
- Coding to Address Public Policy Objectives
- The Town Architect and the FBC

The **Form-Based Codes Institute** is a nonprofit corporation engaged in research, standards setting, outreach and education related to its mission of advancing the use and acceptance of form-based codes.

FBCI offers courses across the United States in partnership with leading academic institutions such as Arizona State University, Rutgers University (New Jersey) and Virginia Tech. It also creates and administers courses and special programs tailored to the needs of municipalities, public agencies and private organizations.

For course locations, availability and for on-line registration go to our website at www.formbasedcodes.org or call the number below.

FBCI

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