Form-Based Zoning for Small Towns and Historic Neighborhoods

Recent Projects

City of Conway, SC

Unified Development Ordinance with Form-Based Provisions (2010)

New code will ensure new infill development is compatible with unique historic and cultural assets
Recent Projects

North Charleston, SC

East Montague Overlay Zoning Code
(2009)
New code will protect the form and architectural character of this pedestrian-friendly neighborhood

Oxford, GA Zoning Update

Zoning Code Update with Form-Based Code for Town Center (2010)
**What is a Form-Based Code?**

**Form vs. Use:** The primary focus of conventional zoning is use—what takes place on a property (commercial, residential, office).

Form-based codes focus primarily on form—building placement, bulk, and physical form of structures.

**Zoning Alternative:** Form-Based Codes provide an alternative to conventional zoning that focuses more on place-making than the strict separation of land use types.

**Place-Making:** By focusing on place-making, form-based codes encourage urban design, economic development, and pedestrian mobility.

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**What is a Form-Based Code?**

**Conventional Zoning:**
- Reactive — reacts to individual development proposal
- Unfocused
- ‘One size fits all’
- Forces strict separation of land uses

**Form Based Code:**
- Proactive — sets a community vision from the onset
- Purposeful & Priority-driven
- Area-specific standards
- ‘Place-making’ produces desired area characteristics
### Regulatory Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Zoning</th>
<th>Form Based Code:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Height maximums</td>
<td>Height Minimum &amp; Maximum – Adding a minimum height helps keep building heights relatively uniform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum lot width</td>
<td>Minimum, Plus Maximum Lot Width – creates desired development scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum parking requirement for each use</td>
<td>Parking Maximums &amp; Shared Parking Provisions – help reduce excessive surface parking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Steve H. Price

### Additional Advantages

**Visualization** – Form-based codes utilize diagrams and other illustrative features to visually articulate the standards of the code.

**User Friendliness** – Form-based codes try to organize standards and regulations that help guide a property owner or developer through the process.

**Ease of Review** – The code is not only easy to follow for the developer, but also for the reviewer.

**Source:** Grass Valley Development Code
Architectural Standards can provide basic or thorough regulations of a building’s architecture. Typically, the following are included:

- **Massing** – size, shape, roof types
- **Façade Composition** – arrangement of windows, doors, etc.
- **Materials** - permitted & prohibited materials
- **Signage** – types, sizes, placement
- **Other Elements & Details** - standards for ornamentation and other details

**Crossroads:**
- Location near both Corridor X and Future Northern Beltway
- Growth and development likely to increase significantly over time.

**Need:**
*A tool to preserve small-town historic character of downtown as development pressures increase.*
Purpose of the Form-Based Code

- Creating a vision for future development
- Accommodating desirable growth
- Enhancing the character and vibrancy of the downtown area
- Encouraging economic development and investment in downtown Graysville
- Creating uses and public amenities that are needed and/or desired by the community

Purpose of the Form-Based Code

- Creating a sense of place and community pride
- Improving pedestrian access and walkability
- Expanding retail and office opportunities
- Providing a variety of housing choices
- Promoting rehabilitation and reuse of older structures
- Providing for attractive streetscape and building design
Graysville Today

Overview
• Small-town character
• Downtown lacks vitality
• Development pressure
• Desire for quality growth

Demographics

Profile of Downtown Study Area
• Downtown has 259 people living in 118 households
• Most residential units are owner occupied (74%), rather than renter occupied (18%)
• Becoming more diverse
Existing Land Use

Overview
• Primarily single-family residential, centered around a commercial corridor
• Nearly all non-residential development occurs along Main Street.
• Main Street has high amounts of automobile oriented uses, surface parking lots, and single-family uses

Commercial
• 33 businesses located in downtown, employing 204 people
• Clustered mostly on Main Street, 1st. Ave SE, 2nd Ave SW.
• Primarily small store front retail
• High number of auto-oriented uses (9)
• Vacant commercial buildings
**Existing Land Use**

**Residential**
- Single-family residential is dominant land use
- Mostly small, one-story cottages
- 10 residences located on Main Street

**Institutional**
- Cluster of services and facilities located in downtown
- City government services
- Churches
- Public Facilities (Post Office, Public Library, etc.)
- Community Services
Irrelevant Zoning:
- Existing zoning geared towards suburban development.
  - Doesn’t prohibit, but does not encourage downtown (main street) type development.

Need:
A ‘Place-making’ code that encourages pedestrian-oriented downtown development.

Why Graysville?

What are the ground conditions?
- Photo documentation
- Lot & R.O.W. measurements
- Demographic Trends
- Land Use & Urban Design Analysis
  - Identification of Assets & Liabilities
Public Input

Methods Used:

• Stakeholder Interviews
• Image Preference Survey
• Design Charrette
• Presentation of Plan and New Code
Image Preference Survey

Innovative Approaches to Local Preservation Planning

2010 Landmark and Preservation Conference
March 4, 2010
The Regulating Plan sets the framework for the development code. It establishes the community vision and the means of regulation.

An Illustrative Plan is used to display the future vision. It typically shows:

- Boundaries
- Existing Buildings
- Future Development Form
- Areas for Parks, Plazas, Natural Space
- Landscaping Features
- Civic Buildings & Spaces
Most Form-based Codes are based on the **Rural-to-Urban Transect**.

- Categorizes land areas based on level of urbanization
- T-1 contains land that is kept in its natural state without any development
- The T-6 category consists of fully developed, urbanized areas
- Special Districts provide concentrations of a particular land uses/service - examples include industrial districts, college campus, or government services area.

**T3 is General Residential.** Most land parcels that do not face Main St. will be in this Transect Zone.

- These areas will be preserved as single-family residential areas.
- Duplexes and cottage home developments are also permitted.
- Institutional uses and small apartment buildings can be allowed through special permit.
T4 is the Village District. This area provides for higher density residential with some retail services and office uses allowed. This transect zone functions as a transition area between suburban residential areas (T3) and Main Street uses (T5).

- A variety of uses are permitted in this transect.
- Outdoor dining area standards are provided.
- Live-work units and mixed-use buildings are permitted.

T5 is Town Center. The Town Center is focused on Main Street. The goal is to provide a consistent downtown streetscape of retail and services that is vibrant and scaled to pedestrians.

- These areas will be preserved as single-family residential areas.
- Residential uses permitted on 2nd floor, above other uses.
- Small setbacks create a solid storefront along the street.
**TG is Government District.** This is a special district for government and institutional uses, so that they are centrally located in close proximity:

- Concentrates government services close to each other
- Other uses are permitted to prevent vacant areas and maintain a mix of uses
- Regulations permit flexibility in design for public service buildings to meet needs.

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**Transect Zones**

The following Transect Districts were used for Graysville’s Urban Core Code:

- **T3** - General Residential
- **T4** - Village District
- **T5** - Town Center
- **TG** – Civic/Government Special District
Each of the 4 Transect Zones has specific building types that are permitted in the zone. Some are permitted only by special permit.

Each T-zone contains a matrix of setbacks and lot widths, specific to each building type and T-zone.

Each building type has its own unique set of physical standards. This includes:

- site design,
- building layout,
- setbacks or build-to-lines,
- height regulations,
- parking & access standards

Diagrams and descriptions help the developer visualize the requirements of the building standards.
Street Design
The Street Frontage map categorizes streets by type, with unique standards for each.

Street frontage standards include street layouts, sidewalk widths, and build-to lines to create an ideal public realm within the public right-of-way.

Public Space Standards also includes general standards for:
- Intersections, Blocks & Access Management
- Off-street parking
- Sidewalks
- Street Lighting
- Plazas, Parks, & Greenways
- Street Trees

These standards will help shape a public realm that is attractive, safe, and efficient for pedestrians and motorists.
The Downtown Code includes all land within the Downtown area, as shown on the maps.

• The code will affect all new development
• Existing, occupied residences & businesses that do not conform to the code are 'grandfathered'
• Only redevelopment, significant expansion, or abandonment of a non-conforming use will trigger a code violation
• Changing from one non-conforming use to another, will also trigger a code violation

Thank you for your time!

We hope this presentation was informative and helpful. We will be happy to answer any questions at this time.