

FORM-BASED CODES

Educate Gaines

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What are Form-Based Codes?

Form-Based Codes are a method of regulating development instead of Conventional Zoning Codes. Form-Based Codes emphasize the ultimate physical form of a building and how it relates to the street, as well as adjacent buildings. **Use is not the primary factor guiding development.**

Conventional Zoning Codes

- Auto-oriented, segregated land use planning principles
- Organized around single-use zones
- Use is primary
- Reactive to individual development proposals
- Proscriptive regulations, regulating what is not permitted, as well as unpredictable numeric parameters, like density and FAR
- Regulates to create buildings

Form-Based Codes

- Mixed use, walkable, compact development-oriented principles
- Based on spatial organizing principles that identify and reinforce an urban hierarchy, such as
- Physical form and character are primary, with secondary attention to use
- Proactive community visioning
- Prescriptive regulations, describing what is required, such as build-to lines and building heights
- Regulates to create places

FORM-BASED CODES

PROVIDED BY THE GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT

Components of the Code

REGULATING BUILDING TYPES Each context zone should offer a mix of housing and some level of commercial space; however, building types should be regulated based on their context zone. For example, a rural cottage is not compatible with a downtown site. Building types might include downtown sites, storefront sites, main street sites, cottage shop sites, courtyard building sites, rowhouse sites, apartment sites, cottage house sites, manor house sites, estate sites and rural cottage sites.

REGULATING STREET TYPES Street types should be regulated based on their context zone and the allowable building types within that zone. For example, a multi-lane boulevard might be appropriate in a more urban context zone rather than a more rural zone. Street types might include boulevards, multi-lane boulevards, avenues, connector streets, yield streets, mews and alleys.

Gaines Charter Township Master Plan Update

The 2008 Master Plan Update introduces Form-Based Codes as a zoning tool for the Dutton

Sub-plan area. Form-Based Codes would help accomplish the preliminary land use concepts discussed at the Design Charrette in 2008. The land use concepts include a mixed-use commercial concentration and traditional shopping district near the corner of 68th Street and Hanna Lake Avenue, traditional neighborhoods with grid streets and open spaces and sidewalks to connect pedestrians to shopping areas, the schools and the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail.



Downtown Grand Rapids

Form-Based Code Progress in Michigan

- The City of Grand Rapids has converted its 1967 zoning ordinance into a hybrid form-based code.
- The City of Farmington has adopted a form-based code as part of the central business district to maintain the community's character.
- The City of Beverly Hills, Michigan has created a "new urbanist" neighborhood with traditional homes (front porch, close to sidewalk, garage in back) on small lots with a pedestrian oriented streetscape.
- The City of Walker has adopted a form based code for its Standale Downtown District.

"Transect" or "Context" Zones

Form-based codes are defined around districts, neighborhoods and corridors, often called transect or context zones, whereas conventional zoning districts may bear no relationship to the transportation framework, streetscape/visual appeal and larger area.



Look for the upcoming
Vol. 1 No. 4



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Further information about
FBCs can be found online at:

Form Based Code Institute
www.formbasedcodes.org

or you can find local
information at:

Michigan Association
of Planning
www.planningmi.org